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## Spirituality, Creativity, Identity, and Art Therapy

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Spirituality, Creativity, Identity, and Art Therapy

by

Theresa Crooks

A research paper presented to the  
Faculty of the Department of Marital and  
Family Therapy Loyola Marymount  
University

In partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts

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### **Abstract**

This research explores the question: how does an art therapist's understanding of God as Creator form his/her identity and inform his/her clinical practice? A review was done in the art therapy, spirituality and psychology integration, and creation theology literature to look at existing research that answers this question. A lack of information in the art therapy literature prompted the development of this study to respond to this inquiry. This involved gathering data from LMU MFT graduates who expressed in a survey that they were willing to participate in this study. Four graduates were able to attend an art workshop to explore the research question. Qualitative data was gathered from observing the participants' process, artwork, and discussion in the workshop as well as their written reflections sent in three weeks later. This data was analyzed by looking at emergent themes that were then compared with the literature. Two significant conclusions were drawn from the data. The first was that an awareness and understanding of God as Creator can provide a unique perspective of self and others that has a considerable impact on an art therapist's view of his/her role and approach to clinical work. The second conclusion was that there is a powerful connection between spirituality and creativity, that when allowed to enter into the therapeutic space, can enhance transformation and healing. These conclusions have important implications for the training and practice of art therapists. Further research is recommended to expand the data as well as focus on specific areas that this research was unable to cover.

*Keywords:* spirituality, creativity, identity, art therapy

### **Dedication**

This research is dedicated to those  
who are searching for what it means  
to integrate their spirituality or faith in God  
into their lives, work, and vocations.

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I would like to first acknowledge my family—Carl, Madelyn, and Daniel—who are the most important people in the world to me. *Thank you for loving me, believing in me, inspiring me, encouraging me, and being willing to make sacrifices so I could pursue the path of becoming an art therapist.*

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## **Introduction**

### **The Study Topic**

The study topic of this research paper is a very personal one. It is an attempt to answer a question that I have been asking ever since I started my graduate work at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) in the Marital and Family Therapy (MFT) program. The question has revolved around if and how my spirituality or faith in God will make a difference in my identity and work as an art therapist. As I've thought about this over the course of my studies, I have begun to see how it is not just my spirituality but my understanding of God that will affect my work. Because there are so many different aspects of God I could look at, I have chosen to narrow down my topic to connect with the area of art and creativity. Thus my research question has become: how does an art therapist's understanding of God as Creator form his/her identity and inform his/her clinical practice?

### **Significance of the Study**

As an emerging art therapist still in graduate school, it is only natural that I would feel uncertain about my art therapist identity. This identity is just beginning to take shape. However, there have been many other areas of my life that have been unravelling, changing, rearranging, and re-forming to make the question about my identity more intense and important. My life—as I formerly knew it—has become unrecognizable at times, making it necessary for me to piece together the essential parts of me, the ones that are uniquely me that will not change over time.

Amid all that I am learning in my art therapy training, I am also beginning to see the importance of understanding how these essential, unique parts of myself help form my identity as an art therapist. Some of these parts include my sensitivity and creativity. However, an even more important piece for me is my spirituality or connection with God. My understanding of God and this connection is deeply important to me as it gives my life meaning and purpose. It is

because of this connection that I am in graduate school to begin with. I have felt unmistakably called to this work and believe that it has been God who has called me to be an art therapist.

So, it is not surprising that I would want to explore how my understanding of God forms my own unique identity as an art therapist and way of working with my clients. This is what I have set out to do in my research, believing that if I can have a better understanding of this, I will be more grounded and more effective in my work. Because art therapy includes the creative process, I have chosen to focus on how an understanding of God as *Creator* forms the identity of art therapists and informs their clinical work.

### **Background of the Study Topic**

In my search through the art therapy literature, I found very little written about how art therapists are integrating their faith or spirituality into their practice. My research led me to several student research papers exploring spirituality and art therapy which indicated to me that there is a growing interest in this subject. The general consensus in these papers was that more research needs to be done in this area and that there is a desire to learn more about how faith and spirituality can be integrated into the field of art therapy. My research is not meant to be exhaustive but to hopefully open the window for further conversations and research on the integration of spirituality, identity, creativity and art therapy.

## **Literature Review**

This literature review explores the question of how an art therapist's understanding of God as Creator forms his/her identity and informs his/her clinical practice. This work begins with an overview of the art therapy literature found on God, faith, religion, Christianity and/or spirituality. Literature on art therapists' identity and understanding of self is then considered. A closer look at the art therapy literature allows for discussion of art therapist's statements of how their own faith or spirituality enters into their professional identity and practice. An expanded search of books and articles outside the art therapy literature are reviewed next. This literature looks at integration of spirituality and psychology with a focus on interviews and stories of how psychotherapists see their spirituality and/or understanding of God affecting their identity and work. A more in depth look is made at how one's faith in God as Creator affects one's view of clients. Finally, theological literature on creativity is briefly reviewed. The literature chosen was written specifically on the implications of the Judeo-Christian belief that God is the Creator of the universe who created human beings in God's image with the capacity to also create. This was done in search of connections between spirituality, psychology and creativity.

### Art Therapy Literature

#### *Overview of Literature on Spirituality*

The literature written on art therapy and God, faith, religion, Christianity and/or spirituality reveals a diversity of belief, theoretical orientation, language, and understanding (Lawson, 2002). Although this will not be discussed in this paper, it is important to note that some of the literature included reasons why spirituality has historically been avoided in the field of psychotherapy (e.g., Horovitz, 2002; McKeen, 2008). Despite the diversity in the literature, all of the writing contained arguments for the importance of the inclusion of spirituality in art therapy (e.g., Farrelly-Hansen, 2001; Horovitz, 2002).

The vast majority of literature on art therapy and spirituality expressed some level of belief in an intrinsic connection between art and spirituality or the sacred (B. Moon, 1992; C. Moon, 2001; Farelly-Hansen, 2001; Marek, 2001; Mayo, 2009; Whitehurst, 1996). In fact, the title of Farelly-Hansen's (2001) book *Spiritual Art Therapy: Living the Connection* reveals the book's premise that "art making is inherently spiritual" and "spirituality is an important ingredient in...becoming whole" (p. 17). This relationship between art, spirituality, and wholeness comes through in other writings on the proposed healing properties of art (Horovitz, 2002; Lively, 2011; Marek, 2001; McNiff, 2004).

A significant amount of literature focused on the types of issues or populations believed to be more effectively treated with a spiritual component. Early literature written on the subject of art therapy and spirituality discussed the shared qualities of art, spirituality and recovery from addiction (Chickerneo, 1993; Feen-Calligan, 1995; Miller, 1995). All of this literature espoused that these shared qualities made art therapy a highly effective form of exploring spirituality and aiding the recovery of clients with chemical dependency. A number of articles advocated the need to enhance the spiritual as well as the psychological well-being of patients being treated for life-threatening or chronic medical conditions (Chen, L., & Ho, C., 2009; Gabriel et al., 2001; Piug et al., 2006). Similarly, literature on treatment for trauma, grief and loss discussed how art and spirituality can be used together in these cases to address questions regarding meaning and purpose (Baljon & Ganzevoort, 2011; Horovitz, 2002). Some authors also challenged art therapists to consider exploring spirituality in therapy with children by maintaining that children exhibit both an understanding and need for spiritual content (Koepfer, 2000; McAdams & Sweeney, 2006).

Some of the books and articles linked art therapy and spirituality to particular theoretical orientations and settings. Transpersonal psychology was frequently mentioned as a branch of psychology that easily embraces spirituality because it works on the development of the self and that which transcends the physical, mental and emotional realms (Farrelly-Hansen, 2001;



Horovitz, 2002; Liu, 2003; Marek, 2001; McNiff, 2004). The open studio or community-based art studio approach was also referenced to in the literature as a comfortable way spirituality could be integrated into the therapeutic setting (Allen, 2001; C. Moon, 2001; McNiff, 2004). Some of the other theories that the literature mentioned could easily embrace spirituality in art therapy included existential psychotherapy (B. Moon, 1995), Jungian psychology (M. Junge, personal communication, July 17, 2013; McKeen, 2008), a phenomenological approach (Fehlner, 2002), positive psychology (McKeen, 2008), object relations (Winiarz, 2005), and relational psychology (Fehlner, 2002). A unique setting where spirituality would clearly be addressed in art therapy is in the context of pastoral care and counseling which was proposed in some of the literature (Whitehurst, 1996; Collins, 2010). The idea of integrating spiritual direction and art therapy was also found (Fehlner, 2002).

Some of the more recent books and articles in the art therapy literature indicated a trend in medicine and psychotherapy toward a more holistic approach to health (Farely-Hansen, 2001; Lawson, 2002; Mayo, 2009). Horovitz (2002) and Koepfer (2000) discussed the importance of being aware of and addressing the whole person, including their beliefs and spirituality. Literature suggested that an awareness of spiritual and religious conflicts in the DSM-IV has led to changes in the field of psychology (McKeen, 2008). Mayo (2009) states that the research agenda in developing the DSM-V included consideration of how spirituality and religious beliefs impact diagnoses as one of their guidelines.

A look at graduate research projects conducted by students reveals a growing interest in the area of art therapy and spirituality. Many of these papers were written within the last decade. Lawson (2002) wrote a critical review of the art therapy literature in search of the extent art therapists were incorporating spirituality into their practice. This paper served to expand on the variety of literature written about art therapy and spirituality. Further graduated work concurred with her conclusions that there is a limited amount of art therapy literature that addresses spirituality (Lawson, 2002; Liu, 2003; Lively, 2011; McKeen, 2008; Morris; 2012). Lawson

(2002) did illuminate evidence, however, of an increasing openness to including spirituality in therapy. In contrast to this, McKeen (2008) and Morris (2012) discussed the absence of training in the area of spirituality in graduate school and expressed a desire for this to be included in art therapy curriculum. Another research project reflected the special interest and requirement of multicultural awareness in the field of art therapy by writing about the cultural implications of spirituality in healing (Lively, 2011). McKeen (2008) and Morris (2012) both described the importance of exploring one's own spirituality and wrestling with how to integrate it into their practice as an art therapist. McKeen (2008) advocated "extensive self-examination" (p. 102) in order to successfully integrate spirituality into one's art therapist identity.

### *Identity of the Art Therapist*

The research McKeen (2008) and Morris (2012) did regarding spirituality and professional identity. At the time of this writing, Maxine Junge was in the process of publishing a book on art therapist's identity and communicated that the major aim of the book was to encourage art therapists to recognize professional identity as an important consideration for them (M. Junge, personal communication, July 17, 2013). The table of contents of the book alone reveals how important this is not only to Junge but to many other art therapists including the over 20 art therapists who contributed essays on identity to the book (M. Junge, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

Some of the published literature emphasized that one of the art therapist's greatest tools is himself or herself (Horovitz, 2002; Moon, B., 2006). Bruce Moon (2006) states that "It is nearly impossible to discuss art therapists as professionals without taking into account personal characteristics. An art therapist's values, beliefs, and way of being in the world affect the way she or he functions in the workplace" (p. 87). B. Moon (2006) expressed his belief that it is important for all aspects of an art therapist's identity to be woven into their therapeutic relationships. Lumpkin (2011) recognized how unique and multifaceted the identity of an art

therapist can be stating that “being an art therapist is not one-dimensional; nor does one size fit all. In other words, there is no single definition that captures all that an art therapist is; nor does each art therapist define him- or herself the same” (p. 38).

Literature on the formation of the art therapist’s identity revealed the importance of art therapists knowing themselves well, and being aware of how their own culture, personality and spirituality enter into the therapeutic relationship. Bruce Moon (2006) describes this as an ethical issue stating “art therapists have an obligation to be deeply aware of their personal needs and ultimate concerns. Without a solid sense of self, art therapists can unintentionally impede the self-exploration and self-expression of their clients” (p. 91). Other literature expressed the view that identity is an important cultural issue (Lumpkin, 2011; Mauro, 1998). Mauro (1998) states that “culture contributes to a person’s sense of self and assists in developing cohesive psychological integrity” (p. 135). This self understanding includes one’s spirituality or relationship with God. In fact, Koepfer (2000) states that maybe even more important than including spirituality in therapy is the therapist’s own awareness of his or her spirituality.

### *Spirituality of the Art Therapist*

The graduate research provided a more personal look at an art therapist’s own faith and spirituality than most of the published work. Each of these papers contained some statement of how the research was motivated by the student’s personal spiritual experiences and relationship with God (Lawson, 2002; Liu, 2003; Lively, 2011; McKeen, 2008; Morris, 2012). However, the work of McKeen (2008) and Morris (2012) were the only works that specifically addressed the spirituality of the art therapist and how it affected their identity and clinical work. McKeen (2008) was especially interested countertransference that resulted from her own spirituality while Morris (2012) explored the integration of her artist, Christian, and art therapist identity.

To supplement, a more in depth study of the literature was necessary to find statements written by other art therapists on their own faith or spirituality in their work. These statements

were not necessarily in depth but existed in brief form within their writing. One book in particular, *Spiritual Art Therapy: Living the Connection* edited by Mimi Farrelly-Hansen (2001), stood out from the rest of the literature in this regard. This book contained chapters written by different art therapists addressing Farrelly-Hansen's question "What impact did [art therapists'] faith have on how they understood themselves and their clients and the healing journey through art?" (Farrelly-Hansen, 2001, p. 12).

Some of the writing made mention of intentional ways art therapists address spirituality or conduct some form of spiritual ritual or faith-informed intervention in their work with clients. Horovitz (2002) developed a Beliefs Art Therapy Assessment (BATA) she uses when she feels it is appropriate to explore the relationship between clients' issues and their belief systems. Franklin (2001) discussed the use of yoga and meditation to aid introspection in therapy. Zaphir-Chasman (2001) described gifts he gives to his clients at termination that bear the Hebrew words for "faith" and "hope." These are given as a reminder to the client of their time together, that they are not alone, "that they can trust themselves and use their higher power as a guide" (Zaphir-Chasman, 2001, p. 93). Several mentioned transparently using art to increase the awareness of God in their clients (Collins, 2010; Fehlner, 2002; Strydom, 2007; Whitehurst, 1996).

Catherine Moon (2001), on the other hand, spoke of "how traditional elements of a Christian belief system can inform a therapist's practice in a way that is affirming of the creative process and responsive to the client's needs without imposing any particular dogma or beliefs" (p. 31). For some, this means looking for spiritual themes in psychotherapy or interpreting their work through aspects of their faith or spirituality (Franklin, 2001; Marek, 2001; C. Moon, 2001; Morris, 2012). C. Moon (2001), for example, looks at her art therapy practice through the lens of three aspects of Christian theology: prayer, sacrament, and grace. Morris (2012) found connections in her Christian faith with the use of metaphor, narrative therapy, and the creative process in art therapy,

For others, a faith-informed practice simply means authentically living out their beliefs in

their work. Nearly all of the literature reviewed discussed how teachings, scripture, and values from their faith or spirituality surreptitiously enter into their work as art therapists because they are deeply ingrained in the art therapist's life (e.g., Marek; 2001 ; McKeen, 2008; C. Moon, 2001; Morris, 2012; Zaphir-Chasman, 2001). Morris (2012) explained that the way this works out for each art therapist varies stating "Christians root themselves and their lives in the Bible overall but each person has diverse ways of practicing their faith, spirituality, and relationship with God" (p. 10). McKeen (2008) found the spiritual values of "honesty, humility, joy, forgiveness, love, wisdom and self-control" (p. 80) — that she lives out in her life because of her faith in God — deeply influenced her work. Koepfer (2000) states that his own "spiritual convictions have provided purpose, comfort, and understanding of the resilience of suffering" (p. 192) he encounters. This perspective was echoed by several others as well (Busch, 2001; C. Moon, 2001; Zaphir-Chasman, 2001; Liu, 2003).

Many of the statements made by the art therapists refer in some form to the comfort that comes in believing that there is Something or Someone greater than themselves in control. Busch (2001) described how having an awareness of the presence of God gives perspective to his work as a therapist as being a facilitator who is trusting and open to God's guidance in therapy. McKeen (2008) discussed her desire to pray for her clients (outside of sessions) and how her belief in God's power and ability to do the impossible gives her hope for healing and change. This theme of spirituality providing hope and faith was emphasized in the writings of Zaphir-Chasmin (2001) as well.

Several art therapists wrote about how the relational aspects of their spirituality enters into their work (Fehlner, 2002; Lively, 2011; McKeen, 2008; Moon, C, 2001). This ties into one of the most important elements in therapy. McKeen (2008) argued that an art therapist's spirituality should be evident in the way one forms therapeutic relationships and works with clients. Busch (2001) discussed the importance of relationships or community in his own spiritual formation and in the growth of his clients. Similarly, McKeen (2008) mentioned how

art therapists can model spirituality and empower their clients. Moon (2001) goes a step further in suggesting that an art therapist can use art to facilitate interaction between the human and the divine. Lively (2011) summed up these relational components of spirituality in the definition she formed for spirituality. This definition revolved entirely around the idea of spirituality being an energy of connection that joins one to self, others, nature, and the divine, summing up the relational components of spirituality (Lively, 2011).

The art therapy literature provided a look at the connections that many have found between art, art therapy and spirituality. It also revealed a growing interest in incorporating spirituality into art therapy and showed a variety of ways that this can be done both implicitly and explicitly. The art therapy literature also revealed a connection between an art therapist's identity and approach to practice. This was found significant because identity includes not only personal characteristics and culture but spirituality as well. The literature which recounted personal stories of how faith or spirituality best revealed the unique ways art therapists' faith affects their practice.

### Spirituality and Psychology Integration Literature

#### *Integrating Spirituality and Psychology*

Literature in the wider field of psychology was examined to expand on what was found in the art therapy literature on spirituality. An initial look at the literature on integrating spirituality with psychology revealed a vast number of books and literature on this subject. Literature more specifically on the integration of Christianity and psychology then became the primary focus. Reviews within this literature exposed a variety of ways integration of spirituality and psychology have been classified or interpreted (Bouma-Prediger, 2007; Theule 1996). Bouma-Prediger (2007) stated that Finch distinguished these types as either integration between "theory and practice" or "faith and lifestyle" (p. 188). Others categorize integration as "principle, professional, or personal" (Bouma-Prediger, 2007, p. 188). After reviewing several

other ways integration could be defined, Bouma-Prediger (2007) formed his own categories: interdisciplinary, intradisciplinary, faith-praxis, and experiential. Faith-praxis integration was described as “integration of faith commitment with way of life” or “the attempt to live out one’s faith...as authentically as possible in everyday life, including one’s vocation or professional life” (Bouma-Prediger, 2007, p. 191).

The following literature concentrates on personal accounts of how psychologists have embodied their spirituality in their work through the various forms of integration Bouma-Prediger (2007) describes: lifestyle, personal, experiential, or faith-praxis integration. Some of the literature gives utmost importance to this type of integration holding that it validates other types of integration and ensures they are achieved (Bouma-Prediger, 2007; Theule, 1996). Hall (2010) argued that integration must be both conceptual and experiential. Theule (1996) stated, “Most of us easily *think* integration, but storying it, living it, making it our own personally and experientially, is often another matter” (p. xii). Theule (1996) cited a study that revealed that the predominance of literature on systematic over personal integration was at a ratio of 2.5 to 1 (p. 18). Since the writing of this thesis, the gap appears to be closing. Stevenson et al. (2007) acknowledges a movement in the literature toward a “greater focus on integration at the personal experience level and of faith praxis” (p. 377).

Some of the following literature reviewed on integrating spirituality with psychology is more academic and thus systematic in nature, but the majority of it contains personal stories of psychologists who have wrestled with integrating their faith with their practice. This paralleled the type of art therapy literature that exhibited the most information about how art therapists integrated their spirituality with their work. Literature from the past decade was the primary focus. However, some slightly older work is included in order to help give shape to and make sense of the newer work. The majority of the literature came from two books that were compilations of many psychologists’ writings (Stevenson, et al., 2007; Moriarty, 2010) and a doctoral dissertation which included interviews with several psychologists (Theule, 1996). The

following review reveals a cross section of several of these psychologists' thoughts on what integration is, the necessary elements of integration, and how integration can impact one's practice and therapeutic relationships.

### *What is Integration?*

The highly personal nature of the type of integration focused on in the stories and interviews with Christian psychologists was evident in the variety of unique descriptions given to integration of faith and practice. Evans (2007) stated that integration is "trying to see that faith, one's basic trust and reliance upon God, permeates every aspect of one's being" (p. 170). This way of being was echoed by several others who described integration as "living life well" (Hall, 2010, p. 120), "being fully alive" (Wagener, 2010, p. 243), and living one's life (even in the ordinary details) in a way that is pleasing to God (Wagener, 2010). Several suggested that integration also involves living a life of gratitude to God (McMinn, 2010; Tan 2010; Theule, 1996; Yarhouse, 2010). Yarhouse (2010) encouraged integration in his readers saying "live your life, including your professional life, in a way that gives God glory for all that [God] has done for you" (p. 148).

Integration was commonly characterized as being about wholeness, integrity and congruence (Theule, 1996; Bouma-Prediger, 2007; Johnson, 2007; Lee, 2010; Wagener, 2010). Hall (2010) states, "integration is a process of tearing down walls, of bringing together pieces of life that have always belonged together, but which have been artificially separated" (p. 112). Several of the psychologists that Theule (1996) interviewed made mention of the importance of being true to one's own self and not trying to fit where you don't belong. This connected with the idea of living with a sense of purpose as McNeil (2010) describes when he discussed how integration involves understanding what one's mission is and "to be used by God to do the thing we were born to do" (p. 208).



*What is Required for Successful Integration?*

The literature on integrating faith and practice put forth a variety of ideas on what was believed to be essential elements of integration. Integration in each of the personal narratives described some sort of faith in, belief about, relationship with or orientation toward God, and supported the idea that character formation along with having and maintaining a personal relationship with God was vitally important (e.g., Stevenson, Eck, & Hill, 2007; Worthington Jr., 2010). Propst (2010) identified practicing spiritual disciplines at the core of integration. The book *Integrating Faith and Psychology: Twelve Psychologists Tell Their Stories* included a section specifically for each psychologist to describe the spiritual disciplines they believed best nurtured their awareness of and connection with God. All of these included prayer and daily scripture reading as important spiritual disciplines for them to practice (e.g., Hall, 2010; Wagener, 2010). Others listed obedience or following God's leading (Worthington Jr., 2010), fasting (McNeil, 2010), sabbath rest (McNeil, 2010), and being in relationship or community with others—including a spiritual director—as vital to their faith (e.g., Hall, 2001; Hathaway, 2010; Propst, 2010; Wagener, 2010). Theule (1996), McMinn (2001), and Hall (2010) contrast this with their suggestion that times of solitude and retreat help maintain attentiveness to God. A few others also mentioned being out in nature and making space for creativity as forms of spiritual practice that have been useful to them (Theule, 1996; Wagener, 2010).

The literature seemed to reveal that one of the primary effects of practicing spiritual disciplines was a heightened awareness of God and God's work. This came through in the literature as a fundamental component of integrating faith and practice. Some of the areas of heightened awareness of God that were mentioned included understanding God's creative power (Bufford, 2007; Evans, 2007; Johnson, 2007; Kelly, 1995; McDonald, 2007), God's authority over all (Hall, 2010; McNeil, 2010; Worthington Jr., 2010), God's exhaustive knowledge (Johnson, 2007), God's infinite nature (Ripley, 2010), God's constant presence (Propst, 2010), and God's love and compassion (Fayard, 2006; Hall, 2010; Worthington Jr., 1993).

Much of the literature also stated that besides spiritual disciplines providing an awareness and understanding of God, they also gave one awareness and perspective of self. Theule (1996) stated that integration for her has become more focused on becoming more like Christ, and in the process becoming more fully herself. Many emphasized the need for awareness of one's self and one's beliefs in integrating faith and practice (Evans, 2007; Kahle & Robbins, 2004; McMinn, 2010; Wagener, 2010). Wagener (2010) elaborated that this does not just mean having an understanding of "who we are" but also of "who we are *not*" (p. 244). This understanding is a necessary step in accepting and working within the confines of one's own limitations (Tan, 2010). An additional perspective of self that many expressed in the literature was the sense of one's own call or purpose in life that provided orientation to one's work (Bufford, 2007; Kelly, 1995; McNeil, 2010).

Another essential element of integration that was revealed in the literature could appear at first glance to be in conflict with the need for awareness of God and self that was just recounted. This necessary component is what some described as disintegration (Theule, 1996) and others as struggle or suffering (Moriarty, 2010). Many of the personal accounts in the literature discussed the important role that suffering and feeling far from God played in their integration of faith and practice (Moriarty, 2010). Wagener (2010) expressed what many others wrote when she stated:

Our suffering as well as our awareness of our sinfulness can shape us in ways that better prepares us to be participants in God's creation. It heightens our sensitivity, develops our empathy, reminds us of our dependency and vulnerability, and ultimately opens us up to God. (p. 239)

Propst (2010) made the observation that it is often in times of weakness that God is able to work. Tan (2010) and Yarhouse (2010) expanded on this by stating that suffering could be a means by which one learns how to depend on God and avoid pride. A final thought on the necessity of suffering for integration mentioned that it is in suffering that true character is revealed (Ripley, 2010).

Some of the literature pointed to openness as another outcome of practicing spiritual disciplines which McNeil (2010) and Theule (1996) specified as a necessary component of integration. This included having an openness to being connected to God and God's work, and to acknowledging that God is in control and doesn't always work like we expect (e.g., Bufford, 2007; Kelly, 1995; McNeil, 2010; Tan, 2010; Worthington Jr., 2010). The literature also mentioned the need to be open to the present moment (Hall, 2010; Propst, 2010) to be accepting of alternative and differing points of view (Hall, 2010; Kelly, 1995), to live with ambiguity (Wagener, 2010), and to experience struggle or suffering (Moriarty, 2010; Theule, 1996).

Finally, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the intentionality, diligence and commitment that many felt were necessary to their own integration (Theule, 1996; Hall, 2001; Tan, 2001; Lee, 2010). Much of the literature presented the commitment to integration as a continual, on-going process of learning and growing (e.g., Hall, 2010; Propst, 2010, Tan, 2010). McNeil (2010) describes it as a transformative process that involves not only self-discovery and identity but service to others. Theule (1996) provided a different perspective on the hard work of integration by expressing the belief of a psychologist she interviewed. This psychologist stated that even if you don't have integration of faith and practice all figured out, at some point you just need to live, and that the important part of living is investing in the lives of others.

### *How Does Integration Impact Clinical Practice?*

It was immediately evident in the literature reviewed that there is a wide range of ideas about what integration of spirituality and clinical practice looks like. This was marked by descriptions of a whole spectrum of integration in practice from implicit and explicit integration of faith mentioned throughout the literature (Bouma-Prediger, 2007; Bufford, 2007; Kahle & Robbins, 2004; Kelly, 1995; Tan, 2010; Worthington, Jr., 1993). Worthington, Jr. (1993) and Bufford (2007) documented the beliefs that some hold that there should be marked differences in the role, theoretical orientation, and task of the therapist—with and without faith—along with

the goals and content of therapy. This extreme could be characterized as therapists that only use techniques derived from scripture or from within the faith communities (Worthington, Jr., 1993). Others like Vanderploeg cited by Bufford (2007) argued that there should be no differences between the goals, means and actual practice of the Christian and non-Christian therapist but that “the difference lies within the therapist themselves” (p. 255). This type of practice would be based more on the therapist’s personality, relationship with God, and relationship with the client (Worthington, Jr., 1993).

Bufford (2007) states his belief that the major distinguishing factors of a Christian approach to therapy lies in the personal *character* and *motivation* of the therapist. His research revealed seven possible distinctives of therapy practiced by those of Christian faith from those who do not hold their beliefs. These included the therapist’s pursuit of excellence, difference in world view, difference in values, personal faith, personal call, acknowledgement of God and the work of God, and use of spiritual intervention/tools (Bufford, 2007).

A prominent theme that emerged from the literature on integration of spirituality and practice centered around the unique perspective of the role of God and the role of the therapist in the clinical setting. Hall (2010) recalled a moment in her career when she was overwhelmed by her work and she came to the realization that “my role was to listen, to care, to be in relationship and to offer my skills. In comparison, God bore the lion’s share of the responsibility; (God’s) role was to change, to heal and to provide” (p. 122). McNeil (2010) and Tan (2001, 2010) both found it important in their clinical practice to acknowledge that it was the spirit of God at work healing, restoring, inspiring, empowering, reconciling, and revealing truth. Wagener (2010) made the statement of her belief that “we are ultimately dependent upon God for our wholeness” (p. 242). These ideas echo the understanding of the therapist’s role being one of coming alongside of, partnering with, or being the hands and feet of God that many others mentioned (Dueck, 2010; McNeil, 2010; Tan, 2010; Wagener, 2010).

The literature also spoke of how being a partner in God’s work should involve reflecting

the character of God. Fayard (2006) expressed his belief that a person of the Christian faith should demonstrate the heart of God through “true compassion and radical acceptance” (p. 21) that he believes works toward a holistic restoration of psychological, physical, social and spiritual wholeness. Worthington, Jr. (1993) explained that his work with clients should be distinguished by God’s “love, acceptance, mercy, and justice” (p. 240). Creating good therapeutic relationships, having empathy, (Tan, 2010), instilling hope (Ripley, 2010) and helping others fulfill their purpose in life (Johnson, 2007) were also mentioned as ways one can integrate their faith in practice and reflect God’s character. Lee (2010) summed up his view of the role of Christian therapists being “agents of God’s shalom, moving people toward the wholeness for which humans were created” (p. 263).

#### *How Does Integration Enter into Therapeutic Relationships?*

A theme that emerged from the literature on integration of faith and practice that has been briefly touched on already is that of the importance of understanding God as Creator (Kelly, 1995; Bufford, 2007; Evans, 2007; Johnson, 2007; McDonald, 2007). The review of the literature so far has discussed how this understanding of God can provide an awareness or unmistakably different perspective of both God and self. However, there have also been several references made in the integration literature to how the belief that God created the universe and that humans were created in God’s own likeness can have great impact on one’s view of humanity—including self and clients—as well (Dueck, 2010; Evans, 2007; Johnson, 2007; McDonald, 2007: ). This is the focus of the literature in this section.

The literature revealed several characteristics of God’s creative work that could have bearing on how one views God’s creation. All throughout the integration literature there was mention of how God made all of creation with purpose, meaning, and significance (Bufford, 2007; Johnson, 2007; Kelly, 1995; McNeil, 2010). Johnson (2007) also acknowledged his understanding that God designed all of creation with order and coherence (Johnson, 2007). In

addition to these characteristics, human beings bear the distinct privilege of being set apart from the rest of creation by being made in the image of God (Dueck, 2010; Evans, 2007; Johnson, 2007; McDonald, 2007). McDonald (2007) stated his interpretation that being created in God's image is exhibited in humans' bodily form, existence as spiritual beings, lordship over all of creation, male and femaleness, and rational and moral nature. Johnson (2007) and McDonald (2007) also wrote of how God created humans as complex beings possessing unique qualities and personal identities. Wagener (2010) added that another distinctly human trait is the ability to "enter into creation alongside God" (p. 240) and to be creators as well.

The literature that called attention to humans being made in the image of God made reference to several ways this could affect a person's clinical practice and provide perspective in therapeutic relationships. Johnson (2007) made the statement that when one encounters creation, one encounters a reflection of God's glory, wisdom and power. This should greatly affect one's view and level of respect for others, and have a profound impact on how one relates to clients. Evans (2007) communicated that a shift in thinking occurs when clients are viewed as made in God's image instead of the sum total of their symptoms. In a personal communication with a professor who teaches integration of faith and psychology at Rosemead School of Psychology, she discussed her view that it was an awesome privilege and responsibility to work with clients (C. Steinmeier, personal communication, August 4, 2013). Given the complexity and likeness of God that humans hold, Johnson (2007) stated his belief that one could not understand human beings without first making reference to or reflecting on God. However, Johnson (2007) acknowledged that even then only God can understand and know creation fully.

Evans (2007) and McDonald (2007) also made the observation that although humans are made in God's image and reflect the greatest of all creation, humans are made from dust and cannot exist without God. McDonald (2007) stated that this perspective of self and humanity is necessary to keep one in check. This brought the literature back around to the understanding of creations' complete dependence of God that was expressed in much of the integration literature

(Evans, 2007; Johnson, 2007; McDonald, 2007).

A look at literature specifically on integrating the Christian faith and psychology focused on integration as being reflected through one's whole approach to life. The literature revealed that intentionally developing one's faith could aid in heightening an awareness of and openness to God. This could also provide a different perspective of self and one's role as a therapist. A closer look at the integration literature showed that understanding God as Creator, who created human beings in God's image, could have an impact on how one views and treats clients.

### Creation Theology Literature

The literature on integrating faith and psychology shed light on how one's understanding of and faith in God can become an integral part of one's life and work as a psychologist. However, it did not adequately discuss the aspect of creativity which is essential to art therapy. A brief look at literature on creation theology was necessary to search for relationships between faith and creativity that were only covered in a limited fashion in both the art therapy and integration literature. This section of the literature review focuses on excerpts of articles and books found on-line along with a doctoral dissertation that discussed the Judeo-Christian beliefs that God is the Creator of the universe and that human beings were created in God's image.

For many, understanding God as Creator is an integral part of their faith. Bozzuti-Jones (2009) stated that "Our faith in God rests on our belief that God is the Creator...As people interested in the power of creativity, we know deeply that we...are created...in the image of God" (para 4). The creation account in the Bible says:

God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it

was very good.’ (Genesis 1: 26-27, 31, New Revised Standard Version)

From the creation story, Buckenham (2010) concluded that “human life is understood as something good, intended, celebrated and delighted in, and infused with an image of God’s own glory” (p. 76).

There is much in the literature that considers how human attributes reflect the image of God. Staub (2013) stated his belief that humanity is “imprinted with godlike characteristics” (para 3). For Staub (2013), these characteristics include “creative, spiritual, intelligent, communicative, relational, moral and purposeful capacities” (para 12) which are mentioned in some form or another in other writings (Buckenham, 2010; May, n.d.). Bozzuti-Jones (2009) believes that being made in God’s image means humans have the “ability to be rational, to be stewards of the earth, [and] to represent God to each other” (para 5). Sunshine (2010) quoted Dorothy Sayers from her book *The Mind of the Maker* in which she made the observation that there is really no detailed information about God given in the creation account to tell us what it meant for God to create humankind in God’s likeness. Sunshine (2010) stated that Sayers concluded that “we find only the single assertion, ‘God created.’” and that “the characteristic common to God and man is apparently...the desire and the ability to make things” (para 3). May (n.d.) admitted that human creativity is not equal to God’s creativity since human beings lack God’s “power, intelligence and artistry. But none the less, we have original, creative ideas” (para 10).

In light of the idea that creativity is a part of how human beings reflect and express God’s image, several ideas were put forth in the literature on what part creativity plays in human life. One thought centered around the belief that creativity connects humans to God or the sacred. Buckenham (2010) stated her understanding:

Human creativity is seen as an intention and image of God’s own creativity and being, an experience of God’s own being...that is in us as part of creation and gifted to us as the image of God’s divine creative energy. (p. 70)



Salingaros (2012) echoed Bruce Moon (1992) in the art therapy literature when he stated that creation can be seen as a sacred act. Buckenham (2010) expressed throughout her dissertation that there is an unmistakable relationship between spirituality and creativity. Buckenham (2010) even likened creativity to meditative or contemplative prayer that can facilitate a closeness and awareness of God much like Catherine Moon (2001) mentions. Sunshine (2010) discussed how J.R.R. Tolkien viewed creativity “as a form of worship, a way for creatures to express the divine image in them” (para 4).

Another theme that was found in the creation literature was that creativity is a way to experience pleasure. Salingaros (2012) is of the opinion that there was no other reason for God to create the universe except that it gave God great pleasure. Sunshine (2010) expressed his belief that God’s creativity reveals that God loves beauty. This pleasure and love for beauty can also be experienced in human’s own creativity. Buckenham (2010) stated that “human creativity is an awesome gift of the divine...It is...a process that enables us to see, encounter, grow, enjoy, delight and bring new life...to ourselves, others and the world” (p. 109).

The idea that the ability to create is a part of human’s God-given responsibility or obligation was yet another prominent belief that was expressed by several writers (Buckenham, 2010; Salingaros, 2012; Staub, 2013). In the creation account God gives humans the mandate to work and to take care of the rest of creation. Sunshine (2010) explained this by saying:

In every area of life, at our home, in our work, and in our recreation, creativity plays a major role. The reason is simple: part of our nature as image bearers of God the Creator is to be sub-creators, and...to carry out our original mandate which God gave us in the Garden, to create...as a function of our stewardship of the world. (p. 17)

The view of humans as co-creators or sub-creators was echoed by others (Buckenham, 2010; Sunshine, 2010; Salingaros, 2012). Buckenham (2010) explained that co-creating was not a concept only reserved for artists but for every human being. She states that “every person is born as a creative being, as co-creators with God in the image of God, and all have the need as well as

the responsibility to create” (Buckenham, 2010, p. 81). Salingaros (2012) stated his belief that humans’ creativity reflects a necessity to bring wholeness and order to the world.

The final concept that stood out in the creation theology literature—and is connected to the idea of creativity being a human responsibility—was that of the human need to be creative in order to be fully human and alive. Buckenham (2010) explained this by saying that in the act of creating, people are able to live, grow and fulfill God’s purpose by becoming who they are wholly made to be in the image of God. She goes on to say that by rejecting creativity humans reject and shut out God (Buckenham, 2010). Staub (2013) summarized the idea of his book *About You: Fully Human, Fully Alive* by saying:

To be fully human is to fully reflect God’s creative, spiritual, intelligent, communicative, relational, moral and purposeful capacities...Furthermore, though all humans possess these godlike capacities, each of us has the potential to express them distinctively, because God’s image has been imprinted uniquely on each of us. (para 12)

This brief look at creation theology revealed literature on the understanding that being made in God’s image means that humans have the ability to create, creativity can be sacred, the act of creating can be a way to experience pleasure, it is part of humanity’s responsibility to create, and creativity is an integral part of wholeness and being fully human.

### Conclusion

It was difficult to find how one’s understanding of God as Creator forms an art therapist’s identity and practice in the art therapy literature alone. It required an in-depth look into the art therapy literature, and research in literature on the integration of faith and psychology as well as creation theology. Although the literature came from different areas of study, several common themes emerged. Each revealed multiple approaches to integrating faith in practice including both the explicit and implicit application of faith and spiritual practices in therapy.

All of the literature discussed highly personal and unique expressions of faith in practice due to differing personalities, culture and experiences of each individual. This was also highlighted in the assertion of the importance of being aware of one's self, unique identity and spirituality in order to be an effective therapist. It was through the individual stories of both art therapists and psychologists that the most pertinent information was found which further emphasized the unique, personal nature of being a therapist.

What stood out in these personal stories was the idea that integrating faith in one's life and practice requires intentionality, discipline, openness, and awareness. It was also evident that a faith in God changes one's perspective and approach to all of life. This perspective is reflected in how one interacts and views their relationships with God, self and others. Many spoke in the literature of how a view of God as being in control, of self as being a facilitator or agent of God, and of self and others as a reflection of God's image greatly impacted their work as a therapist.

A common theme that came through in the art therapy and creation theology literature was the belief that creativity and spirituality are deeply connected. Art was described as either helping one get in touch with God or enhancing one's faith. The creation literature went as far as stating that creativity is an essential part of being human and being whole. This seems to be a key perspective for art therapists of faith to take into their practice. Perhaps this is a good connecting place for faith, therapy and art that needs more research and exploration.

Even though there was limited art therapy literature that focused on faith or spirituality, there was evidence of a growing interest in this topic. Much can be learned by exploring the research that has already been done on integrating spirituality in other fields. It is important to note that research in the study of creation and creativity was also found to be pertinent to this inquiry. The discovery of the richness of information coming from a variety of sources made a good case for the relatively new area of research in art therapy collaborating with other fields. However, it is important to note the uniqueness of the field of art therapy and the necessity of research on faith, creativity, and therapy being conducted from this distinct perspective.

### **Research Approach**

The qualitative approach is applied to the research in this study using methods of survey, interview, transcription, and art-making utilizing the hermeneutic model of narrative analysis (Mischler, 1986; Weiss, 1994; Kapitan, 2010). This model is used to construct meaning from the artwork and data gathered. Participants are selected by voluntarily responding to a survey (Appendix B) and indicating their interest in the study. Individuals willing to participate are to either be interviewed face-to-face through a series of questions and dialogue or attend a workshop where they create artwork through a series of prompts (Appendix F). The artwork serves as the source of dialogue in regard to the participant's spirituality and view of God as Creator in relationship to their identity and practice. These dialogues are tape recorded and transcribed to conduct a narrative analysis. This analysis serves the purpose of looking for and amplifying meaning from the narratives in regard to identity and practice of art therapy. Participants also create artwork in response to the interview or dialogue to provide further dialogue and information about the participants' ideas about spirituality, creativity, identity and art therapy. The narratives and artwork are analyzed for common themes, contradictions, and unique ideas.

A quantitative approach is briefly used to analyze data extracted from the initial survey. This analysis looks at the number of art therapists from a selected group who find their spirituality to be an important aspect of their practice. The demographics of this group is compared to those who do not include spirituality as a part of their work to see if there are any trends in these groups.

## Methods

### Definition of Terms

#### *Spirituality*

Spirituality is an important term to define in this research not only because it is the underlying focus of the research but because it is an aspect of life that is intangible and not understood. It is also viewed by many as an essential and very personal part of life. In looking at several definitions for spirituality, there is no solitary description that captures its meaning. Estanek (2006) concludes from her own research that a common definition of spirituality does not exist. Not only does it mean different things to different people but Lawson (2002) quotes Catherine Moon saying:

Spirituality is a loaded word. It is loaded with ancient history and trendy New-Ageism.

It is loaded with reactions of a scientific methodological culture and the reactions of a people hungry to fill the void they feel. It is loaded with the good and bad of religion. It is loaded with hope and meaning and mistrust and cynicism. (p. 15)

Although spirituality is oftentimes associated with the New Age movement, religion and/or its tensions with scientific reasoning, it is not the purpose of this paper to define or discuss, make any distinctions from, or connections with any of these. However, it is because of these associations that it is important to find a way to get at the essence of how the term is used throughout this paper. An adequate definition requires looking at both the dictionary and the meaning that others have extracted from their own research and experience.

A dictionary definition may only scratch the surface of what spirituality is but it is a good place to start. “Spiritual” is defined as:

Of, relating to, consisting of, or having the nature of spirit; not tangible or material; of, concerned with, or affecting the soul; of, from, or relating to God; deific; of or belonging to a church or religion; sacred; relating to or having the nature of spirits or a spirit; supernatural. (Spiritual, 2013)

What stands out in these definitions is the relational aspect that has been seen in much of the research found on the meaning of spirituality (Dyson, Cobb & Forman, 1997; Estanek, 2006; Lively, 2011). Lively (2011) formed her own definition of spirituality entirely around this idea stating that it is the energy of connection that joins one to self, others, nature, and the divine. Dyson, et al. (1997), who concluded that the key elements in defining spirituality were self, others and God, found that relatedness or connectedness was a crucial part of this definition. Estanek (2006) deepens this idea through a quote from Tisdell who wrote that “spirituality is about an awareness and honoring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things through the mystery of what many...referred to as the Life-force, God, higher power...or Great Spirit” (p. 274). Whatever the term used, the idea is that spirituality includes a connection to a power beyond human power and existence. Dyson, et al. (1997) add that this power or God can oftentimes be what “an individual takes to be of highest value in his/her life.” (Dyson, et al., 1997, p. 1183)

Descriptions of the relational aspect of spirituality reveal that it is not only communal but deeply individual (Estanek, 2006). Spiritual development includes a wholeness within self or “moving toward greater authenticity or to a more authentic self” (Estanek, 2006, p. 274). In addition to this, much of the research that has been done in the literature review portion of this paper reveals that spirituality is a force in providing purpose, hope and making sense or meaning of one’s existence (e.g., Baljon & Ganzevoort, 2011; Estanek, 2006; Horovitz, 2002).

Spirituality can be expressed in a variety of ways, practices and/or disciplines (Dyson, Cobb & Forman, 1997). Estanek (2006) quotes Tisdell as saying that “spirituality is about how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes, often made more concrete in art forms such as music, art, image, symbol, and ritual which are manifested culturally” (p. 274). This is especially relevant to the topic of this paper.

Finally, although it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the meaning of faith, belief systems, or religion, it is important to note that for many individuals these are interrelated with

and inseparable from their spirituality (Estanek, 2006). For the purposes of this paper, these terms are used interchangeably.

### *Creativity*

The definition for creativity that pertain to this research is “the ability to create meaningful new forms, etc.” (Creativity, 2013) Create is defined as “to cause to exist; bring into being; to give rise to; produce; to produce through artistic or imaginative effort.” (Create, 2013)

### *Identity*

Two definitions of identity that describe how the term is used in this paper include “the state of having unique identifying characteristics held by no other person or thing; the individual characteristics by which a person or thing is recognized” (Identity, 2013). The following definitions provide a deeper understanding of identity:

the state or fact of remaining the same one, as under varying aspects or conditions; the condition of being oneself or itself, and not another; condition or character as to who a person or what a thing is; the sense of self, providing sameness and continuity in personality over time. (Identity, 2013)

### *Art Therapy*

The American Art Therapy Association (2013) defines art therapy as:

the therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development. Through creating art and reflecting on the art products and processes, people can increase awareness of self and others cope with symptoms, stress and traumatic experiences; enhance cognitive abilities; and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of making art.” (para. 3)

### Design of Study

This study was designed to yield the desired information of how art therapist's spirituality or understanding of God as Creator can form their identity and inform their clinical work. This data will be obtained through an interview process or holding a workshop for LMU MFT alumni who are currently practicing art therapy. The interview will include questions that guide participants into discussing how their spirituality forms affects their identity and clinical work. The workshop will involve each participant creating artwork to depict their idea or understanding of their spirituality, identity as a creative person, and how their spirituality and creativity manifests itself in their clinical work as an art therapist (Appendix F). The interviews and/or workshop will be audio taped. Transcripts will be created to compare and contrast data in relation to the research question. The artwork will be photographed while being created in the workshop and in their final form. The photographs will then be analyzed by looking for common, differing and unique themes on spirituality, creativity identity, and art therapy.

### *Sampling*

Participants will be recruited based on the fact that they are graduates from the MFT program at LMU. Participants will include all graduates, both male and female, ages 20 and up. Approximately 400 participants will be initially contacted to take part in a Qualtrics survey. Participants will be told that their response to the survey is purely voluntary and that all responses will remain anonymous. Through a series of survey questions (Appendix B) participants who see spirituality as an integral part of their identity and practice will be determined and given the invitation to either be interviewed face-to-face or attend a workshop should they desire to be a part of this study. This selection process should provide participants who are highly interested in the subject matter and motivated to participate.



### *Gathering of Data*

A Qualtrics survey will be administered in order to collect data and select participants. Quantitative data will be gathered through the responses to the survey to denote any trends in these responses. Qualitative data will be gathered either by personally conducting face-to-face interviews or utilizing the expertise of a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist to lead a workshop using predescribed art directives (Appendix F) with those who have indicated they are willing to participate in the study in the survey. The discussion in the interviews and workshop will be audio taped and transcribed. The artwork will be photographed in the process of being created and when it is completed.

### *Analysis of Data*

The information gathered from the survey will be analyzed to find any existing trends in demographics of those art therapists who find their spirituality as an important part of their practice and those who do not. The information from the interviews and workshop will be transcribed and similarities and differences will be extrapolated and recorded to compare/contrast data. Analysis will be based on how the participants addressed the study questions formulated from the data and literature review findings. Artwork will be analyzed in much the same process with information recorded on a chart (Appendix H). Data will then be compiled in a written form based on common and differing themes.

## Results

### Presentation of Data

The data that was gathered for this research is both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data comes from a survey that was sent to LMU MFT graduates to recruit participants for this study. The results of this survey were not intended to provide evidenced-based proof in support of the research question so will not be presented here. However, some of the data was thought-provoking and is discussed in the data analysis section of this paper. The results of the survey appear in Appendix C should anyone be interested in looking at the data.

The data that is presented in this section is the qualitative data gathered at an art workshop held on Spirituality, Creativity, Identity, and Art Therapy. The participants of the workshop were graduates of the LMU MFT program who responded to a survey that distinguished them as good candidates for this study. The qualitative data that was gathered from these participants includes observations of their art process, their artwork, discussions that followed the art making, and written reflections submitted three weeks after the workshop. Images of the art process and the final art pieces created by the participants are included.

### *Workshop Notes*

A survey was sent out to 404 LMU Marital and Family Therapy alumni to determine research subjects for the study. 147 (36.4%) responded to the survey. Individuals who have worked in the field of mental health and have utilized art in therapy 113 (77%) were directed to a series of questions on spirituality. Thirty-three of these 113 individuals (29%) responded that spirituality plays a part in their life, included a power outside them self that they believed was God, and that they saw in God as Creator. Of these respondents, twenty-seven answered that their spiritual practice or tradition influenced their identity as an art therapist and twenty-two stated that their spiritual practice or tradition impacted their clinical work. These respondents

were then asked whether or not they were willing to participate in a workshop or face-to-face interview exploring how their spiritual practice or tradition impacted their identity and clinical work. Eighteen of these individuals were willing to participate. An email was sent to these LMU MFT graduates with four options for workshop times and dates. They were asked to respond by providing their top three options. From the responses, January 12, 2014 from 2:00-5:00 p.m. was chosen for the art workshop. An invitation was sent out to the eighteen respondents (Appendix D). Six stated they were able to attend a workshop on that day. Four actually attended.

The room for the workshop was set up with a large work surface area approximately 10 feet by 10 feet in the center of the room. The work surface had 8 spaces, two on each side, set with oil pastels, markers, water color, colored pencils and a piece of white 18" x 20" paper. The additional spaces gave the participants multiple options of where to sit and work. Other materials were set out on a counter top on one side of the room. These materials included various found objects such as shells, seed pods, sand, feathers, leaves, wood, and brightly colored sequins and buttons; yarns, ribbon and string; various textured and colored papers; cheese cloth; and collage images.

As participants arrived, they introduced themselves to each other and noted their connections. They situated themselves on 2 sides of the work surface facing each other with two on one side and two on the other. The workshop facilitator and researcher sat on another side perpendicular to them. Before the art workshop began, the participants were thanked for their willingness to be a part of the study. The reasons for exploring the research topic were explained, and the role of the researcher as observer/recorder in the workshop were disclosed. The participants were provided with informed consent forms, subject bill of rights, and a list of facilities in the area that could be useful to them should the topic of discussion create a need for mental health services. A desire was expressed that the participants not only be involved in the workshop to contribute research data but to use the art making about their spirituality, creativity and art therapy practice as a valuable learning experience for each of them as well.

*Workshop Introduction*

The art workshop facilitator, Debra Linesch, PhD, MFT, ATR-BC., began the workshop by expressing her personal interest in the topic and by asking each participant to introduce themselves and state how they identified their spirituality or spiritual practice/tradition. The workshop facilitator started off by saying that her spirituality was something she has only recently begun exploring. She stated that she was seeking to figure out what God was within the practice of Judaism. She also stated she had previously separated spirituality from her art therapy practice.

Participant #1 was female, 74 years of age, graduated from LMU in the late 1980s, and practiced art therapy in multiple settings which include adolescent inpatient residential facilities, state hospitals, earthquake counseling clinics, children's clinics, schools, forensic programs, and adult behavioral health clinics. This participant was retired but was doing volunteer art therapy at a residential facility for women recovering from substance abuse. This participant stated that she grew up in the Baptist church, connected with her spirituality through nature, depended greatly on prayer in life's difficult circumstances and in her art therapy practice, currently does not attend church but has recently considered becoming a part of the Unitarian church.

Participant #2 was male, 51 years old, and had recently graduated from LMU. He has practiced art therapy in a veterans mental health organization, substance abuse program, an arts-based organization that works with children and adolescents who are developmentally challenged and/or at-risk. This participant was in a group private practice and working to build his client load through holding workshops at the time of this research. Participant #2 stated that he grew up in the Catholic church, had not considered his spirituality as being a part of his art therapy practice while he was in school but has seen how it is an important part of his client's lives. He, too, is beginning to explore what it means to integrate this into his work as an art therapist.

Participant #3 was female, 39 years old, graduated from LMU in the early 1990s, and has practiced art therapy with foster youth programs, adoption agencies, family preservation groups,

chronic mentally ill, teen moms, and middle schools. At the time of the workshop, she was working in private practice, art therapy groups at a treatment center, a clinic for teen moms. This participant grew up in the Quaker tradition and finds her spirituality to be an extremely important part of her life. She stated that the Quaker teaching that God is in everyone has made a big impact on how she views her clients and work as an art therapist. Her spiritual practice includes mindfulness which she incorporates in her practice.

Participant #4 was female, 25 years old, had recently graduated from LMU, and has practiced art therapy in several settings including an orphanage, program for at-risk teens, juvenile hall, and residential boys home. This participant was working as an intern at a county behavioral health facility when the workshop occurred. There she provided individual, family, and group art therapy in clinics, homes, and schools. Participant #4 identified herself as a non-denominational Christian. She stated that she grew up in a household where they “church shopped” never finding the perfect church. This participant stated that it has only been in the last few years that she has found a church home where she has become involved. Participant #4 expressed that she currently serves as a Sunday School teacher where she teaches the Bible to children which she enjoys. She stated that her spirituality involves practicing her spiritual gifts which she believes are creativity and service.

The facilitator had initially thought a warm-up exercise would be helpful to familiarize the participants with each other and the materials that were provided. However, after observing the responses given in the introductions, the facilitator decided this wasn’t necessary and moved on to the next part of the workshop. This included looking at quotes from the literature review compiled from Creation Theology literature prior to the workshop and discussing them. The facilitator handed out the quotes for each of the participants to read to themselves. She then asked each participant to read them out loud and discuss them. The following are the edited quotes that were read:

“To be fully human is to fully reflect God’s creative...capacities” (Staub, 2013, para 12).

“[Creativity is] a form of worship, a way for creatures to express the divine image in them” (J.R.R. Tolkien quoted by Sunshine, 2010, para 4).

“Every person is born as a creative being, as co-creators with God in the image of God, and all have the need as well as the responsibility to create” (Buckenham, 2010, p. 81).

“Artistic creating is a space of encounter...with an energy other than oneself, that some say is God.” (Buckenham, 2010, p. 85).

“Human creativity is...a process that enables us to see, encounter, grow, enjoy, delight and bring new life...to ourselves, others and the world” (Buckenham, 2010, p. 109).

There was a strong response to the quotes as they were read. Most of the participants expressed some kind of identification and agreement with these quotes. Participant #3 expressed feeling as if she had already gained a lot from the workshop just from the content of the quotes alone. J.R.R. Tolkien’s quote about creativity being a form of worship spurred on a conversation about whether or not we are helping our client’s worship and express the divine image in them when we ask them to create art. The discussion about the quotes segued nicely into the art directives that were designed to build toward answering the research question of how an art therapist’s understanding of God as Creator forms their identity and informs their clinical work.

#### *Directive #1*

After discussing the quotes, the facilitator gave the participants the first directive “using the available materials, create an image that depicts your experience of your spirituality and/

or your identity as a spiritual person.” She requested that this image be created on an 18" x 24" sized piece of paper set at each place. The facilitator explained that this directive was multi-stepped and to keep this as well as the research question and quotes in mind while creating their art. Although the participants expressed that the directive of imaging their spirituality was a complex task, none of them appeared to struggle to engage with the materials and get started in the process of creating their art.



**Figure A: Directive #1–Participant #1–Process**

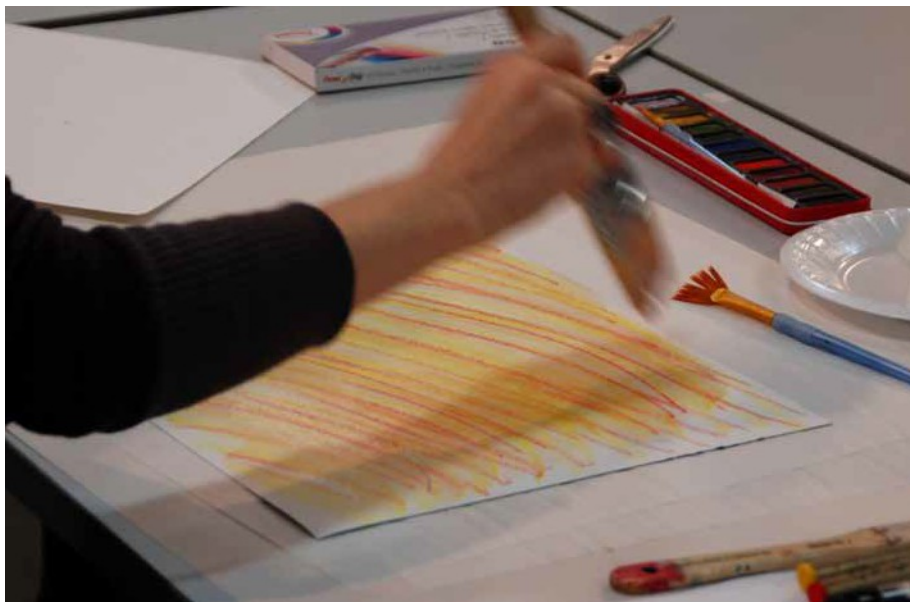
Participant #1 began by finding a textured paper to work with. She then mixed watercolors on a plate of water. She ripped and crumpled up the paper then dipped it in the watercolors. She tentatively played with the paper, rearranging it in different ways on the 18" x 20" piece of paper and then glued it down. She continued to work with mixing different colors and dripping them onto the crumpled paper. She lifted up the large piece of paper and moved it around to allow the watercolor to run and drip off the page. She worked and reworked the colors and placement of the different pieces of torn and crumpled paper for quite some time.

Participant #2 concentrated intensely as he very deliberately drew the image of a cross

and a figure with the water pastels. He reworked the pastels with water and layered more colors on top of what he had already laid down. He continued to work and rework the colors on top of each other. As time progressed, he emphasized the central figures by intensifying the color and adding details. The color and distinct line divided the page to the left of the center of the page.



**Figure C: Directive #1–Participant #2–Process**



**Figure E: Directive #1–Participant #3–Process**



Participant #3 immediately jumped up from the work surface to explore the other materials that were available. After a few minutes she chose some paper and asked if there were water pastels available. Participant #2 and #4 also responded to the need for water pastels and took boxes to use them in their work. Participant #3 began to use these as soon as they were provided to her. She drew with long, bold strokes across the 18" x 20" paper. She referred to the quotes from time to time as she worked. The participant found a piece of textured paper and appeared to repeat the process of coloring with bright yellow and orange pastels, blending the colors with a brush and water. She took this paper and began to cut it up into tear drop or flame-like shapes. She glued these shapes down onto her large piece of paper.



**Figure G: Directive #1–Participant #4–Process**

Participant #4 started her piece by creating a tree in pastels that filled the entire page. She surrounded the tree in black and created the appearance of light beneath the tree by smearing the pastels beneath it. The tree's roots reached down deep into a light blue. The tree had a deep hole in the trunk and in the hole a eye was glued. Darkness and chaotic lines surrounded the tree. Participant #4 added upside down lit up light bulbs hanging in the tree. She then glued an acorn

below the tree. She also referred to the quotes as she worked.

It became apparent that the 15 minutes that was given the participants to complete the artwork was not enough so 10 more minutes were given. When the participants seemed finished with their work, the facilitator asked them to hang their artwork up on the wall and to express their thoughts about the process of the first directive. Participant #4 stated that the process felt freeing. She expressed that the directive gave her an open door to talk about her spirituality which she had not felt before. Participant #2 agreed and said that as he worked he sensed a spontaneity that took the art in a different direction than he had intended it to go. He stated that he began with a structure which he saw as religion which he felt resistant to. This moved to a shape of a person which represented receptivity or creativity outside that structure. This receptivity was what he felt was a unique expression of being in the world. For participant #3, the image she created was insistent to her. She expressed that her immediate idea could not emerge and become a part of the art until something else happened. She needed to work awhile before her original idea became a part of the art. Participant #1 stated that her art became free flowing lines that communicated being open to spirituality and what is going to happen next.



**Figure D: Directive #1–Participant #2–Artwork**

Discussion about the content of the art followed. Participant #2 discussed his artwork first by explaining that his spirituality included the idea of putting a light out for others as was evident in the lantern that he had placed near the hand of the human figure in his artwork. He stated that he had intended for the hand to be holding the lamp but instead the art depicted the figure reaching out for it. The participant returned to the idea he had mentioned earlier about the structure or rigidity of his Catholic faith he had created in the cross image. He had originally seen this as opposed to the image of himself he had shown in the human figure but realized that in the finished art, the cross was actually supporting him. He also had seen his leg as shackled to the cross but thought that it now looked to him as if he was growing out of it. The final feeling he got from his piece was one of warmth. He made the statement that the “material was transformed” in the art making process.



**Figure F: Directive #1–Participant #3–Artwork**

Participant # 3 resonated with Participant #2 in his depiction of his spirituality as a light. Her spirituality included the idea that God is light in everyone. Her artwork showed a flow of energy in streaks of yellow and orange. She stated that this energy was a light in her that was not

just her own light. Little cut pieces were created on a paper that she specifically chose because of its rich texture that created a different effect she placed the colors on them. She stated that these cut pieces depicted that it was “not just me on this journey.” Participant #1 expressed that these shapes were difficult to see so she got up close to the art to examine them. Her reaction was that these other shapes “look richer up close.” Participant #3 responded by saying that many times you cannot see a differentiation between yourself and others until you get up close.



**Figure H: Directive #1–Participant #4–Artwork**

Participant #4 had difficulty explaining her artwork at first saying that it was “complicated” and that there was “a lot to explain.” She stated that her spirituality could be put into three pieces or categories which were all represented in the image of a tree in the midst of chaos and darkness. These three categories were nourishment, energy, and light. Participant #4 stated that the image of the tree she created represented herself with its roots going down into water that was nourishing the tree. A large hole in the trunk contained an eye that she said represented reading the Word of God. The participant expressed that a big part of her spirituality was about using her spiritual gifts which she believed were her creativity and heart of service.



She stated that serving others was an act of worship for her. The tree in the midst of darkness and chaos contained dangling yellow light bulbs that the participant described as “shining out to others.” She stated that she believed, “Jesus is the light of the world and I should be the same.” An acorn was attached to the artwork which the participant explained symbolized the planting of seeds. Participant #4 expressed that there was so much to get out of the symbolism of the tree that she would need some time to understand it all.



**Figure B: Directive #1–Participant #1–Artwork**

Participant #1 described her piece of torn and painted paper as representative of nature which is a big part of her spirituality. She mentioned picking out a leaf to use in her artwork because it symbolized nature and growth but it did not appear in her finished piece. Her imagery was somewhat chaotic and disorganized but very thoughtfully placed on the page. This participant talked a lot about prayer and its importance to her spirituality. She discussed how prayer became even more important to her during her husband’s illness. Participant #1 began crying and apologized for being so emotional. She explained that she realized that she

was suffering from PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder) after having to revive her husband by CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) after he passed out from a coronary arrest. The facilitator responded by stating that getting through the worst challenges of life many times depends on our spirituality. Participant #1 continued by discussing the autumn colors she used in her art which she stated represented the stage of life she was in. She talked again about how she received a healing comfort from the sky and nature and using prayer to center herself.

### *Directive #2*

The discussion around the first directive ended and the facilitator gave the participants a quick break and went on to the next directive. The facilitator gave the directive “using the available materials, create a companion piece that depicts your experience of your creativity and/or your identity as a creative person.” This was also to be done on an 18" x 24" piece of paper like the first piece. The participants were more reticent to begin this directive than the last. The directive needed to be repeated and the participant’s discussed how difficult it was before beginning their art processes.



**Figure I: Directive #2–Participant #1–Process**

Participant #1 soaked paper in watercolors for this directive similarly to what she had done for the first directive. This time the colors were muted rather than bold like the colors used in her first piece. She tore the paper into smaller and smaller pieces and used a lot of glue to attach it to her background paper. She spent quite awhile playing with the idea of attaching grape twigs to the art but in the end did not include them.



**Figure K: Directive #2–Participant #2–Process**

Participant #2 picked out several different colors of tissue paper in greens and yellows. He asked for Modge Podge and participant #3 also used it. Participant #2 ripped and layered the tissue paper applying the Modge Podge to each layer. As he laid down the tissue, he either added color with water color or the color from the tissue paper bled to create soft colors around the tissue. The Modge Podge and tissue created transparent layers that created new colors as the pieces of tissue overlapped other colors. Participant #2 then began to apply color with the pastels and layered other tissue paper over the lines he drew with the pastels. Later, he created new images on top of these lines. The process was an emergence of shapes, colors, and lines.

Participant #3 gravitated to the textured papers. For this piece, she used muted colors of

blue that she drew on transparent paper with the water pastels smearing the color with water and a large brush. She ripped these pieces into strips and bunched them together to create dimension to the paper using her entire body. She then began to create a brown piece, using the Modge Podge to add texture with sand. This she cut showing great care, as in the first piece, to create the shape precisely as she wanted. She then glued this brown piece onto the blue bunched up paper in a way that made it appear to be holding the blue in place.



**Figure M: Directive #2–Participant #3–Process**

Participant #4 went through the collage images and chose several of them which she moved around on her work surface in different configurations. She chose three photograph images: one of a horse, one of a desert mountain and one of a tree in a grassy field. She glued them all in a row. Although the media was more controlled than the last piece, she added pastels to the images which loosened the look of the artwork. The participant appeared to enjoy the process of adding to these images, spending a lot of time and care on her additions. When she was done, she looked for more to add from the materials and she chose 3 stickers of a shell, wood, and a flower. She put one sticker on each photograph.





**Figure O: Directive #2–Participant #4–Process**

The participants finished up their art and hung up their second piece below their first piece. They gathered around the art to discuss the process and content.



**Figure N: Directive #2–Participant #3, Artwork**

Participant #3 went first as she discussed how her creativity is about solving problems. She stated that she likes to create problems to solve in her artwork. She talked about her grandfather who was an artist and said she had felt intimidated by his work which was primarily painting. She said that she purposefully went into ceramics instead and has moved into using cut paper in layers. This was exactly how she worked in the workshop. The participant explained that her blue and brown images depicted how she is a “vessel that the spirit moves through.” The image she created, appeared to be water flowing through an earthen jar. She talked about how she sees that what is flowing through her is not from herself. Participant #3 stated that she believes that both water and creativity is sustenance for life. She made the statement that she became an art therapist to solve challenges in people’s lives similarly to her solving problems she created in her artwork. She added that art making was an act of vulnerability for her.



**Figure P: Directive #2–Participant #4–Artwork**

Participant #4 explained that her collage image of a horse being led by a hand that ending abruptly at the next collage image, depicted how for her creativity is a vessel to move from one

state to another. She pointed out how the shell, wood, and flower also depicted transformation. She talked about how her artwork was frequently chaotic and dark. She said that she believed that it takes time and repeated effort to move on from this state. The participant mentioned that she realized that the tree image she had created in her previous piece was an image that her aunt, who was also an artist, used repeatedly in her artwork. She mentioned that the hole in her tree was used in her aunt's artwork that seemed to symbolize her continual working something out. The facilitator posed the question in response to both participant #3 and #4's art, "do we make art to help us solve problems?"



**Figure L: Directive #2–Participant #2–Artwork**

Participant #2 stated that he began his artwork by creating an image of a mountain. He explained that this image came from a mountain meditation that he did with clients where they imagined themselves as mountains. He was unsure of how this linked to creativity but he decided to just go with it. An image of a lantern appeared in this piece on creativity just as it had in the piece on spirituality. The participant explained that the image of a lantern symbolized warmth and making things new. He stated that the art he created gave the impression of a map.

He said that creativity is “mapping things out,” observing, looking, finding beauty, engaging and enjoying the process. Participant #2 talked about his creative process and how he used to get frustrated because he didn’t feel like he had control over the materials. He stated that now he just tries to enjoy the materials, and doesn’t feel the need to think things out before creating his art. He also made the comment that the artwork that he had created on his spirituality helped him create this one. The facilitator posed the question, “what would have happened if we had reversed the order of the directives?” The participants agreed that the results would have been very different.



**Figure J: Directive #2–Participant #1–Artwork**

Participant #1 said that in her second piece on creativity, she used left over pieces of paper from her artwork on spirituality. Her creativity image was torn pieces of paper in muted colors of pink and purple scattered all over the page. She commented that her creativity like these pieces of paper was scattered in different directions with her interests in bonsai, jewelry making, cooking, and a new class on soldering techniques. The diversity of her creativity caused her to create artwork of images that were spread out and disconnected. She stated that her

creative works frequently surprise her and that mindfulness is an important component of her work. Participant #1 expressed that it was easier for her to get a handle on the topic of creativity than spirituality.

### *Directive #3*

After the creativity directive discussion ended, the participants did not seem interested in taking a break so the facilitator went right into the next directive. Her directions to the participants were “using the available materials, and if you want, incorporating your first two art pieces, create an image that integrates your identity as a spiritual person and as a creative person, depicting how these identities inform your practice as a clinical art therapist.” This was to be done on a larger 24" x 36" piece of paper on the color of their choice. The facilitator reminded the participants to again consider the quotes that were read at the beginning of the workshop as they worked. They were also asked to keep in mind their common belief of God as Creator and the idea that humankind is creative because of being made in God’s image. Even though using the first two pieces of artwork in this final piece was optional, all of the participants chose to do this. There was a lot of cutting, ripping and gluing that began to occur almost immediately. New materials were also incorporated into the art.

Participant #1 used the technique of ripping and cutting to transform her original two pieces into a new piece of art. She struggled to tear apart her art on creativity but she worked persistently to get what she wanted. She tore and cut her art on spirituality into several pieces and arranged and rearranged them on the larger piece of paper. She kept moving these pieces around, adding some on the background and then taking them away. She did not seem to be satisfied with any one place for these pieces. She then began to crumple up some of the pieces. When instructions were given to finish up the art, she quickly began to glue things down, adding some yellow watercolor and finishing up after everyone else.





**Figure Q: Directive #3–Participant #1–Process**



**Figure S: Directive #3–Participant #2–Process**

Participant #2 very intentionally ripped and cut his first two pieces around the edges. He worked to combine these two new shapes adding tissue paper, pieces of his art he had torn off, pastels and paint. He worked quickly, moving the pieces around until they fit together the way he

wanted. He applied all of these pieces with Modge Podge until these two shapes became a single form. As a finishing touch he added a shape with water pastels which he worked on intently for quite awhile. This shape appeared as a green bird in flight.



**Figure U: Directive #3–Participant #3–Process**

Participant #3 tore the edges off of her first two pieces and rearranged them on the larger sheet of paper. She created a new brown piece in darker shades and cut this into different shapes. She also created more blue similarly to what she made for her art on creativity. She worked with a lot of energy with the same broad strokes that she had on the two previous pieces. She bunched up her blue paper and glued everything down, including a yellow flame-like shape similar to what she had created on her piece on spirituality. For her final touch, she added long pine needles which seemed to connect the two bunches of blue paper.

Participant #4 cut out the tree she had drawn for her spirituality piece and arranged it on the larger piece of paper with her creativity piece. She then took the paper she had cut off of the tree image and vigorously ripped it up into tiny 1" square-sized pieces. These she arranged on the larger piece of paper to one side of the tree. The participant then tore up pieces of green and

yellow tissue paper, bunched and glued them to the green and yellow colors on the tree. She also glued on natural twigs and berries. She added white and light blue semicircular lines in pastels which contrasted with the dark color of ripped paper placed on the opposite side of the artwork.



**Figure W: Directive #3–Participant #4–Process**

When the discussion about the art process and content began, the facilitator observed that all of the participants had chosen to use their first two art pieces in the final piece. In discussing this, the overall consensus was that it had been helpful to be given the option to integrate their original pieces into their final art.

Participant #2 discussed his artwork first stating that the weaving and patching of the two pieces together symbolized the healing aspect of art therapy to him. He talked about the excitement that he experiences being in the room with someone (a client) who is gaining insight and “putting things together.” The facilitator made the comment that this could echo the idea of being “co-creators” mentioned in the quotes read at the beginning of the workshop. The participant talked about the brown lines that he had added as “echoes” of the light radiating out of the lantern image. He felt that it represented the work that carries on or goes forward in the



healing process without him. Participant #2 stated that he asked himself the question “where is the client in this [image]?” The participant did not answer this question. Instead he reported on how the image of the bird appeared in the artwork which he emphasized by drawing and painting over it. The participant stated that the flying bird represented the impermanence of his work as an art therapist. This impermanence was something he was learning to love, pay attention to, be guided by, and allow to help him go further with his clients. He expressed how he appreciates how art captures the healing process.



**Figure T: Directive #3–Participant #2–Artwork**

Participant #3 mentioned that the concept of “space” came up for her as she worked on her piece. She talked about how art therapy is about creating a space for clients. She also mentioned how she needed to create space for herself as well. She stated that she must exercise both creativity and spirituality outside of her work as an art therapist. In regard to her clients, the participant stated that her artwork depicted the space or vessel that she provided her clients through a brown chair. In this final piece on spirituality and creativity in art therapy, she stated she had added the flame-like shape of yellow without realizing that it was creating the image of

a candle or “letting light shine.” She made the comment that she thought about how “lighting another candle does not diminish the light of the original candle.” The participant mentioned that she had wanted to add nature to her other pieces but was not able to until now. In this piece, she used pine needles which connected the two sides of the artwork. This participant made the statement that spirituality and creativity are not cordoned off from “being” as it is in MFT programs. It was creativity and spirituality that enabled her to be more herself in her work. The facilitator made the comment that spirituality seems to have been taken out of culture.



**Figure V: Directive #3–Participant #3–Artwork**

Participant #4 explained that she had chosen a blue piece of paper which represented water as the foundation of her final piece. She stated that the water symbolized God, the One who gave and sustained life. The participant described her creativity as a gift from God. Her artwork on her identity as a creative person rested on the top of the tree, her self-symbol. The tree was surrounded by torn pieces of paper which she described as the dismantling she sees necessary in creativity. The torn pieces also represented “torn clients” and their quest for wholeness. The participant made the statement about her own creative expression that “learning

more about myself helps me understand more about my clients.” Light blue and white lines gave a feeling of movement to her piece as the lines arched from the base of the tree up to the images of creativity. The participant made mention of how she says a quick prayer that gives her a surge of energy before meeting with her clients which may have been represented in these lines.



**Figure X: Directive #3–Participant #4–Artwork**

Participant #1 started talking about her final piece by saying that she really enjoyed combining the first two pieces. A small piece that she had cut and torn from her artwork on her spiritual identity reached down from the top left corner of her final artwork into her torn out piece on her creativity. She described this as depicting her “past blessings of spirituality.” She had painted with yellow watercolor on the upper left, bottom right, and various other places to symbolize light. She talked about how when she was practicing as an art therapist, she would sometimes create artwork along side her clients. She describe doing this as an act of healing for herself as well as her clients. She made the statement that art is very revealing. Participant #1 also commented that she believed that her creativity and spirituality have made her a better therapist.



**Figure R: Directive #3–Participant #1–Artwork**

The participants discussed the statement that Participant #4 made that learning about herself helped her understand her clients better. This mirrored what B. Moon (2006) has written about the need for art therapists to have “solid sense of self” (p. 91) in order to be effective as therapists. A comment was made that this would imply that it is important to have a solid understanding of one’s creativity and spirituality. This brought the group back to the conversation about how spirituality and creativity were a part of what it meant to be fully human or whole.

Participants discussed how the workshop opened up a way for these art therapists to discuss their spirituality in a way that they had not been able to while attending school at LMU. A participant inquired about the possibility of adding a class on spirituality or expanding on it in the Cultural Awareness class. The facilitator stated that the best possibility was to offer an elective class on spirituality. Participants talked about how surprising it was to them that this was not already a part of the curriculum especially since LMU is a religiously-based university. The facilitator interjected that the lack of spirituality in the LMU program was reflective of most MFT programs. The participants discussed how this did not fall in line with the movement

toward a holistic approach to practicing the healing sciences. This tendency within the field to shy away from approaches that were difficult to quantify is also indicative of the challenge of art therapy becoming a recognized viable form of treatment.

The facilitator had made a comment earlier that the program at LMU had changed since some of the participants had attended the program. The changes included adding art making into the curriculum. She stated that there had been less art making in the beginning because it was important to establish the clinical side of art therapy and prove that it was an evidence-based practice within the field of mental health. Participant #3 made the observation that this may have been a necessary step for the field and for learning, however, she also expressed frustration with the emphasis on the need for quantifiable proof for art therapy's effectiveness. Another comment was made that even the healing process (as well as wholeness) is hard to quantify.

At the close, participants agreed to follow up their experience in the workshop with written reflections of their time together. It was agreed that photographs taken during the workshop would be sent to help remind them of their process and work along with questions to guide the participant's reflections (Appendix G).

### *Written Reflections*

A week after the workshop, a link to a slide presentation of photographs taken at the workshop and follow-up questions (Appendix G) were emailed to each of the four art workshop participants. Two weeks later, all four participants returned their written reflections in response to the questions. The following paragraphs contain summaries of these reflections.

Participant #1 stated that she enjoyed the workshop. She revealed that participating in the art directive on spirituality caused her to realize her need for therapy after the trauma of her husband's sudden cardiac arrest 7 months prior. She is currently being treated by a graduate from the LMU MFT program who is using art therapy to help her work through her PTSD. Participant #1 expressed that creating the art in the workshop has caused spirituality to

be a more conscious part her art. She commented that the workshop was helpful as it gave the participants permission to create art and discuss their spirituality in a group setting, and provided an awareness of the different ways spirituality and creativity are manifested in individuals. A surprise in the workshop for her was how it exposed the depth of the trauma she had experienced. Participant #1 stated that “having something about spirituality in the [art therapy] curriculum would have been helpful.” She recognized a “definite split between spirituality and psychology” in the program. She also mentioned the role that her spirituality played in her art therapy education as she felt both directed and sustained by her “higher power” while in the MFT program at LMU.

Participant #2 found the reflective process of the art workshop help him acknowledge how he experiences his spirituality. Phrases that he used to describe this were “a knowing that feels greater than intellectual curiosity or rational interpretations,” “paying attention to inner guidance,” “moment-to-moment inspiration available to me if I am attuned to it,” “resonance with something received in my interactions,” “[making] meaning and [finding] purpose by connecting with others and the natural world,” “becoming aware,” and “[being] more present.” He stated that creating art in the workshop affected his ability to express his spirituality and creativity by providing “contemplation, inquiry, and ephemeral qualities of spiritual experience.” He communicated his belief that art “is an emotional medium that taps into our deepest felt convictions and longings,” “gives testimony to knowledge beyond our present awareness,” “points to the mystery of our shared meaningfulness,” and is a “non-linear way to express our spiritual connection to self and others...beyond the boundaries of time and space.” Participant #2 expressed that the group setting of the workshop gave him permission to explore his spirituality in a way that “felt liberating and validating.” In previous settings this participant stated that he had felt awkward discussing his spirituality but that the art “allowed me to honor the questions rather than worrying about positioning myself” and that he “felt respected and seen as I openly expressed faith that rarely fits words.” Participant #2 stated that the workshop had prompted his

thinking that spirituality might be “the essential component in the creative act of becoming more than what we once were.” He wondered about this in relation to how faith is “unseen,” “greater than ourselves,” and “gives us power to accept and move toward possibility despite the fear and uncertainty that life’s inevitable suffering has taught us.” Participant #2 expressed that the topic of spirituality comes up often in his practice and that “training in how to navigate the exploration of spirituality and its role in our client’s identity would strongly contribute to developing cultural competence as a therapist.” He also stated that “therapists should be prepared to dialogue about [their clients’] religious or spiritual beliefs and concerns.” He lamented that spirituality’s healing potential and connections to mental health are “largely ignored due to lack of empirical evidence.”

Participant #3 described her experience in the workshop as “wonderful,” “[promoting] much thought,” and “rejuvenating.” She expressed that the use of art to explore spirituality and creativity was helpful and enabled her to “explore the topics well.” She liked looking at and answering questions in a group setting with a variety of ages and experiences. She stated that the workshop provided a place to deepen “my understanding of my own beliefs and how they fit with my work.” Participant #3 also expressed that spirituality would be a good addition to the curriculum in the MFT program at LMU. She stated that “it almost felt taboo when I was there.” She also commented that she liked “the more inclusive focus of this workshop.”

Participant #4 stated that her overall experience of the workshop was “very positive,” “stretching,” “eye-opening,” “freeing,” and “inspirational.” She stated that she experiences art as “a spiritual gift,” and an “outlet to problem-solve and converse with my inner parts of self.” In the workshop she found the artwork helped her “think, identify, concretize, name” and find “my voice” to discuss her spirituality with the other workshop participants. She admitted that discussing spirituality can be anxiety provoking for her and that using the art materials to express herself was “incredibly therapeutic.” Participant #4 stated that being in the group setting was difficult in some ways because she is used to creating her art in isolation. She communicated

feeling very vulnerable, the pressure to work faster, and like she needed to choose her words carefully. This participant stated that there were “unexpected moments” and “powerful surprises” in her process. She expressed catching herself overanalyzing thing and realizing that this was “driven by my fear of judgement and rejection for my beliefs.” She remembered a part in her art process when glue started dripping down her art and she saw it as her self symbol crying and she suddenly realized the pain and frustration she has harbored for “not feeling completely free to share my spirituality in my field of work.” This participant stated that she experienced a “powerful freedom” being able to discuss spirituality in the workshop and that she believed that clinicians need to be prepared and trained to explore spirituality for themselves so they can do this with their clients. She also mentioned that spirituality comes up a lot in her work and that she believes spirituality is “innate in everyone” that “connects us to each other, ourselves, and for me, my Creator.”

All four of the participants enthusiastically responded that they would be interested in being a part of workshops on spirituality in the future.

### Analysis of Data

The primary focus of this research is on the qualitative data gathered, however, it has been determined that some of the quantitative data from the survey sent in search of participants for this study is worth highlighting (Appendix C). The analysis of the quantitative data is not comprehensive but concentrates on information that is deemed most pertinent to the research question. Qualitative data obtained from the workshop held on Spirituality, Creativity, Identity, and Art Therapy will be the main source of the data analyzed. The qualitative data that is examined in most detail is that which best answers the research question of how art therapists’ understanding of God as Creator form their identity and inform their clinical practice.



### *Quantitative Data*

A Qualtrics survey was sent to graduates of the MFT program at LMU to find suitable participants for the study. A series of questions in this survey eliminated individuals who could not identify with the research topic. The answers to these questions provided various pieces of data about the respondents. The analysis of this data is not comprehensive in this paper but concentrates on general data about the respondents, information that was gathered that is most pertinent to the research question, and the demographics of the individuals who reached the end of the survey where they were given the opportunity to participate in a face-to-face interview or workshop on how their spiritual practice or tradition impacts their identity as an art therapist and clinical work.

### *General Data*

404 MFT graduates were sent an email by the department chair and program director requesting their participation in a graduate student's research survey. The content of the survey was not revealed. The 147 or 36% of the 404 graduates who responded seem to represent a better than average response rate. This may reveal several characteristics of the alumni from LMU which could include loyalty, continued connection, respect for the department chair, empathy for the graduate research process, and/or a close identification with anyone in the relatively new and small field of art therapy. Of the 147 who responded, 120 (80%) stated that they are working in the field of mental health with 113 (77%) currently utilizing art therapy in their work. These percentages are important as they may relate to the success of the MFT program at LMU, the sense of intentionality of the individuals who go through the program, and the importance of using art in these individuals' clinical work. 112 (76%) responded that they strongly agreed or agreed that spirituality plays a part in their lives. This percentage seems surprisingly high and may suggest that spirituality plays a much more important role in the lives of art therapists than the comparably small amount of art therapy literature on spirituality

suggests. This high percentage may also reveal natural connections between art/creativity and spirituality, or the possible influence that the Catholic background of LMU may have on the type of students it attracts. These 112 individuals who responded that spirituality was a part of their life helped begin to distinguish the alumni who would be most interested participating in the study.

#### *Data Pertinent to Research Question*

Further questions in the survey determined specific information about the respondent's understanding of their spirituality. If answers to these questions did not correspond with the premise of the research question, the graduates were led to the end of the survey. If they *did* correspond to the premise, another clarifying question was presented. Thus the percentages used in this section are based on the number of respondents who were led to that question rather than the total number of respondents. Because the research question includes a belief in God, it seemed important to this study that there be a deep conviction of a power outside the individual. Therefore, it was the 48 (43%) of the 112 who *strongly agreed* that their spirituality includes a power outside themselves that were sent on in the survey and not the ones who just *agreed*. This most likely accounts for the high number of 40 (83%) out of these 48 respondents who also stated that their spiritual practice or tradition includes a belief in God. 33 (83%) out of the 40 responded that their spiritual practice includes a metaphor for God as Creator. This number is significant because it represents 33% of those who responded that spirituality is a part of their life and 22% of the 147 total respondents. These relatively high percentages may again reflect the influence of Catholicism on LMU's students but could also speak to a significant group of art therapists who hold God as Creator as a somewhat important aspect of their lives.

The research question calls for a clarification of whether or not this belief in God as Creator has influence over the identity and clinical work of an art therapist. That is what the final two questions were designed to distinguish this. Of the remaining forty respondents, twenty-five

(76%) expressed their spiritual practice or tradition influenced their identity as an art therapist and twenty-two out of these twenty-five (88%) believed their clinical work was impacted as well. It is interesting to note that there were those three (12%) who saw their spirituality as part of their identity as an art therapist but not as impacting their clinical work. The twenty-two who stated that their clinical work was impacted by their spiritual practice or tradition were determined to be suitable participants for the research study. The number of respondents who expressed an interest in participating in either a face-to face interview or art workshop on how their spirituality and creativity forms their identity and informs their clinical work totaled eighteen. This number is 82% of the twenty-two who stated their clinical work was impacted by their spirituality, and 12% of total respondents. This was a much higher percentage than expected and provided information that could possibly indicate a particular interest in the subject of spirituality and art therapy among art therapists.

#### *Demographics of Respondents Suitable for Study*

Several pieces of information on the demographics of these 22 who stated their clinical work was impacted by their spirituality was gathered, however, only four areas were chosen to be analyze. These four areas are age, gender, years since graduating, and years in art therapy practice. These categories were chosen because it seemed interesting to note whether or not these factors played a part in these art therapist's belief that their clinical work was impacted by their spirituality. This data is presented and analyzed not as it appears in the survey results (Appendix C). It is, instead, shown as percentages of the final 22 respondents as well as percentages out of the total number of individuals who responded from the same category. This latter information is important as it represents a more accurate representation of the significance of the number responding in that category.

## Age

# out of final 22 respondents	# out of all respondents in each age group
20-29: 3 (14%)	3/13 (23%)
30-39: 7 (32%)	7/50 (14%)
40-49: 3 (14%)	3/27 (11%)
50-59: 4 (18%)	4/28 (14%)
60-69: 4 (18%)	4/20 (20%)
70+: 1 (5%)	1/9 (11%)

The data about age shows that out of the final respondents the largest age range represented was those age 30-39. However, it is important to note that although it appears that the largest group of respondents were in this age bracket 30-39, if you look at the percentages out of the number of individuals who responded to the survey in that age range (50), the percentage is less than half at 14%. Instead, the highest percentage of finalists are in the 20-29 and 60-69 age range. This is an interesting split in age suggesting that perhaps spirituality or faith has been a more important aspect of the lives of clinicians who are older than younger art therapists but that there has been a renewed interest 40 years later. It may also indicate that older art therapists have found a way to integrate their spirituality into their lives that has taken a matter of time to realize. The lower percentages from age 30-59 is noteworthy. Phase of life issues and/or trends in spirituality during their life span may contribute to this statistic. It is difficult to speculate the actual reasons for this apparent difference within this age group of art therapists without doing a thorough study in these areas.

## Gender

# out of final 22 respondents	# out of all respondents of each gender
M: 1 (5%)	1/6 (17%)
F: 21 (95%)	21/141 (15%)

The significance of gender stands out simply because a very small percentage of males have been a part of the MFT program not only at LMU but within the entire field of art therapy. It is notable that out of the six male respondents, this study was able to capture one. This one male represented almost the same percentage of total male respondents at 17% as the 21 females who represented 15% of the total female respondents.

#### Years Since Graduating

# out of final 22 respondents	# out of all respondents in each range of years
0-5: 8 (36%)	8/50 (16%)
5-10: 4 (18%)	4/31 (13%)
10-15: 4 (18%)	4/27 (15%)
15-20: 0 (00%)	0/11 (00%)
20-25: 2/22 (9%)	2/12 (17%)
25+: 4/22 (18%)	4/16 (25%)

#### Years in art therapy practice

# out of final 22 respondents	# out of all respondents in each range of years
0-5: 10/22 (45%)	10/42 (24%)
5-10: 3/22 (10%)	3/19 (16%)
10-15: 2/22 (9%)	2/25 (8%)
15-20: 0 (00%)	0 (00%)
20-25: 2/22 (9%)	2/7 (29%)
25+: 1/22 (5%)	1/11 (9%)
No answer:	4/22 (18%)

The data gathered about the number of years since the respondents have graduated from the MFT program and that they have been practicing art therapy was chosen to analyze because it posed the question of whether or not time and experience affects an art therapist's perceptions of whether or not their spirituality enters into their practice. Again, the percentages of respondents out of the final 22, provides much different data than the percentages out of the total number of respondents in each category. As was suspected, the latter data shows that it is, indeed, the percentage of individuals who graduated 25+ years ago (25%) that is the highest in regard to seeing their spiritual practice or tradition as affecting their clinical practice. All other years are significantly lower. It is also worth noting that if you combine the 5 year spreads into 10 year spreads as the age groups are created, the percentage of finalists from the total respondents who graduated 20+ years ago, encompass 42% of this group. The data from the years in therapy shows a similar split in the age data with 24% who have been practicing for 5 years and 29% who have been practicing for 20-25 years. It is interesting to note that in both of these the 15-20 year group contain no (00%) members who got to the final questions in the survey. A study in trends in the art therapy world and spiritual practices would be necessary to make sense of this data. Another interesting piece of data is that there were 4 or 18% who did not answer the question about years practicing art therapy. Perhaps these individuals have practiced sporadically and could not answer this question accurately.

It is necessary to emphasize that the quantitative data analyzed here was not gathered to provide evidence of anything in particular. The surveys were not sent to specifically pinpoint trends or empirical data. The information in this section is simply observations made that could be relevant to the topic of spirituality and art therapy. An appropriately designed study would be required for more accurate data.

### *Qualitative Data*

The qualitative data for this study comes from an art workshop titled Spirituality, Creativity, Identity, and Art Therapy. The participants of the workshop were graduates of the

LMU MFT program, selected through the use of a survey (Appendix B). These individuals created artwork from a series of three directives designed to examine the research question (Appendix F). The participants' art process, artwork, discussion and written reflections were recorded through written notes and photography. An audio-recording of the event was part of the data gathered but was unusable. The qualitative data analysis in this section first looks at the demographics of the participants and the method of using charts to analyze the data. The data from the charts is then used to discuss comparisons of the different participant's data recorded in each category, of individual participants' responses to all three directives, and of the participant's later reflections of the workshop. A summary of these comparisons follows with an analysis and discussion of the emergent themes. Finally, a brief look at the limitations of this study will qualify the data.

### *Demographics of Workshop Participants*

The data that was gathered about the make up of the participants of this workshop is worth noting. The data reveals that one male and three females participated. The ages of these participants were 25, 39, 51, and 74. The years since graduation included 1, 21, and 25. Three of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian and one as a mixed Caucasian-asian. The art therapy experience of these individuals encompassed populations ranging from children to geriatrics, individuals to groups, and mentally ill to natural disaster victims. The participants have practiced in a variety settings including government agencies, hospitals/large institutions, residential homes, independent clinics/treatment centers, non-profit organizations, and private practice. The majority of the settings appeared to work with populations of lower socioeconomic status. The spiritual practices of the participants were described as Unitarian, Catholic, Quaker, and Non-Denominational Christian.

For the purposes of this research, this group appears to represent a good cross section of age, cultural diversity, and experience. The fact that one of the participants was a male is

significant in this study due to the small percentage of males who identify themselves as art therapists. This group is exceptional as it ranges from 25 to 74, filling the gap between the ages of 30 to 59 that was poorly represented in the demographics of all those who were determined to be suitable participants for the research study. Although there is a wide range of time (1 to 25 years) since these participants graduated, there is a gap in those who graduated between 15 and 20 years ago as was seen in those who reached the end of the survey. Besides a good range in age and time since graduation, a variety seen in the culture, experience and spiritual practice of these individuals also provides the possibility for diversity in the research data.

There are many similarities within the group of workshop participants as well. To start, they are predominantly Caucasian, of middle to upper class socioeconomic status, and graduates from the LMU MFT program. Similarities were also established through the survey results. The survey displayed that these individuals considered spirituality an important part of their lives and that their spiritual practice included a metaphor for God as Creator. In addition to this, the survey also revealed that these participants believed that both their identity as an art therapist and their clinical practice were affected by their spirituality. In essence, what these individuals hold in common is that they were determined by the survey to be good candidates for the workshop.

### *Explanation of Charts*

Charts were developed for this study to provide a systematic and organized way of analyzing the data (Appendix H). These charts served to break down the data from the workshop notes and photographs into predetermined categories. These categories include an overall description of the artwork, media used, colors used, description of the art process, themes/content in the artwork, metaphors used, and points made in the participant's discussion about their artwork. An additional category titled "Connections" records common themes in the data and is discussed in the *Emergent Themes* portion of this paper. Data from the workshop notes and photographs were entered onto separate charts for each of the three art directives given. Each



chart provides a place for side-by-side comparisons, highlighting noteworthy data, observing differences, and connecting similarities. Additionally, the three pieces of artwork that each participant made over the course of the workshop are compared side by side. This is done to look at how the process and imagery unfolded in the three directives by examining similarities and differences.

### *Observations and Comparisons of All Participants' Artwork*

#### Directive #1

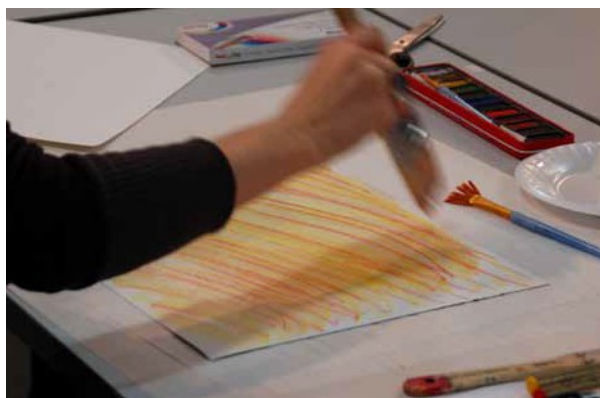
The first art directive that was given in the workshop was to use the available materials to create an image that depicted the participants experience of their spirituality and/or their identity as a spiritual person on an 18" x 24" piece of white paper.



**Figure A: Participant #1-Process**



**Figure C: Participant #2-Process**



**Figure E: Participant #3-Process**



**Figure G: Participant #4-Process**

All of the participants appeared to easily engage in the art directive and materials despite the fact that they expressed it was going to be difficult to create art depicting their spirituality. They each entered into the task in their own unique ways with a perceived confidence that something meaningful would emerge as they started working with the materials they had chosen. The primary media choices included watercolor, different types of textured paper, water pastels, water, found objects, and glue. Three of the four participants' (Participants #2, #3, and #4) predominantly used the water pastels. It seems important to note that the use of these pastels were requested by Participant #3 as they were not a part of the materials originally put out for the workshop. The pastels, though used by most of the individuals, were used differently. Participant #2 used heavy, intense, intentional strokes while seated. Participant #3 used wide, whole-bodied strokes while standing; and Participant #4 used a lighter, more sketchy, tentative approach with the pastels. This participant blended the colors with her finger where the other two used water. Participant #1, who used water color and additional paper, also approached her work more tentatively, mixing colors, soaking the paper in the paint, dripping the paint. In addition to her tentativeness, there was an angst about the way she tore, used the watercolor, and crumpled and glued the additional paper. This contrasted with the way she slowly moved the paper to allow the dripped watercolor to flow on the page. Her piece was three-dimensional and went off the page while the others' were two-dimensional and contained. This participant used intense, bright colors as well as more watered-down colors which was similar in Participant #2's artwork. Participant #2 worked earnestly on his art as if he were searching for something in his art. Participant #3's work was monochromatic with the use of yellows and oranges only. Glued pieces of textured paper were colored the same and almost indistinguishable from the background. Her immediate engagement and bold gestures in the art makings was more noticeable than from the others. Participant #4 used light, more natural tones with a contrasting, intense black surrounding her art. Her process was much more careful and internal than the rest of the participants. She seemed to ponder every stroke that she made.



**Figure B: Participant #1–Artwork**



**Figure D: Participant #2–Artwork**



**Figure F: Participant #3–Artwork**



**Figure H: Participant #4–Artwork**

The finished pieces of artwork that the participants created for this directive were quite diverse although the media choices, process, themes and discussion showed some similarities. Participant #1's work did not contain any recognizable image, although it seemed to depict some sort of confusion and lack of control. In her discussion about her artwork she mentioned that it represented how nature played a huge role in her spirituality. Notably she mentioned choosing a leaf to use in her artwork but it does not appear in her finished art. The drips of splattered paint, intense colors, and torn and crumpled paper that comes off the page seems to portray the participant's state of being. This was especially brought to light in the participant's discussion on the importance of prayer in difficulties. At this point, she broke down and revealed her sudden awareness that she has suffered from PTSD following the near death of her husband. In her attempt to create art about her spirituality she depicted her trauma instead. It is possible that

taking the time to be mindful of her spirituality provided a safe place for this participant to access this deep trauma. It is notable that Participant #1's initial description of the art did not match the content. Her decision to discuss nature and not use the leaf may have signified how the familiar forms of comfort were now not enough. However, creating art about her spirituality became an outlet for this participant's emotional experience.

Participant #2's piece held a lot of tension in it as well. The intense and multi-colored image appeared to hold two opposing forces. On one side, there is a gothic-styled window and cross in complementary colors to the other side that contains a human figure and lantern. The side with the cross has an oppressive feeling where the side of the figure is bright and hopeful. Parts of the human figure cross over the line between the two sides. The participant's discussion about the piece described feelings of resistance to the structure of his Catholic faith which was represented in the stained-glass window and cross. This was to depict his early ideas of his spirituality. This included the human figure's leg on the other side being bound to the cross with chains. The other side was to show a new receptivity and openness to spirituality through the use of the figure holding out a lantern in front of it. What the participant stated that he saw emerge from his art was something different. Instead of being bound to the cross, Participant #2 saw the figure being supported by, rooted and growing out of the cross. In addition to this, instead of the figure holding out the lantern, it now appeared to be reaching for it. At first he stated the two sides as "resistance versus receptivity" but as he spoke this turned into "structure and rigidity" becoming the source of "growth and openness." As with Participant #1, deep emotion was expressed in Participant #2's art. The intensity of the process and finished art externalized the conflict that has resided within this participant in regard to his spirituality. It also provided a way for the participant to begin working through the conflict and create a positive reframe for his past views of spirituality. Even his view of holding out a lantern in his quest for a more positive view of spirituality seems to have shifted so that he is now reaching out for it, rather than feeling responsible to hold the light on his own. Participant #2 expressed sensing something that took

the art in a direction that was different than he had intended it to go. This seems similar to what happened in Participant #1's art.

Participant #3's artwork displayed a simplicity that was very different from the artwork of Participant #1 and #2. She stated that the yellow and orange streaks across the page showed a "flow of energy" or light. This light symbolized the idea in her spiritual practice that God is light in everyone. She expressed that the flame-shaped images that she placed on the yellow-streaked page were created on a different textured paper to create a subtly different effect with the colors. These shapes depicted that the light was not just her own but others' who are also "on this journey" with her. Participant #3 stated that when she began her art she had an immediate idea of what she wanted to create. However, she had to work at the art and allow other things to happen before her original idea could emerge. This seemed different from Participant #2 as his final art piece became something different than he had first intended. Participant #3 did say the free flowing lines that stretched across the page depicted her "being open to spirituality and what is going to happen next" which, in this case, was similar to what Participant #2 stated about his artwork. The simplicity of her art, idea of light, and description of openness all seem to reflect important aspects of Participant #3's Quaker tradition. These aspects of her spiritual practice were also apparent in the way she approached and expressed herself in the art process. This seemed to indicate that this participant's spirituality is well integrated into her being.

Participant #4's artwork was relatively light which made it difficult to see the subtle complexities without looking at it closely. Her artwork displayed contrasting images as Participant #2's artwork did. Her central image was a tree that contained upside-down light bulbs from it. Streaks of light emanated from the tree. The roots of the tree were fairly prominent and reached down into a solid base of blue water where it appears to be drawing its nourishment. It also appears that there are drops of water falling from the tree. This water looks like it is falling on the contrasting images of a desert with a jagged line of mountains and cactus. The most intense color in the artwork appears in the black sky that surrounds the tree. To the left of

the tree Participant #4 used pencil to create a series of intensely drawn circles that were used to depict chaos. A googly eye was glued in the deep hole in the tree. An acorn was glued in the desert area. The participant explained that the tree was a self symbol, that the eye represented her need to read God's Word, the acorn depicted her understanding that she is to "plant seeds." She stated that it was difficult to discuss her artwork as her spirituality was so complex. The sketchiness and lightness of the image seemed to show evidence of a hesitancy or difficulty in expressing her spirituality. The three things she was able to articulate about her artwork was that her spirituality was the nourishment, energy and light depicted in the image of the tree drawn in the midst of darkness, dryness, and chaos. These contrasting images were reminiscent of Participant #2's artwork. Unlike the artwork of Participant's #1-3, no water was used to create Participant #4's work. However, water is depicted in the her artwork as nourishing her tree. Also, unlike any of the other participants, Participant #4's depiction of her spirituality includes images and metaphors for other people. This came out in her statement that an important part of her spirituality was using her gift of creativity to serve others.

## Directive #2

The second art directive that was given to the participants was to use the available materials to create a companion piece to the first directive that depicted their experience of their creativity and/or identity as a creative person. This was also to be done on an 18" x 24" piece of white paper. Surprisingly, the participants were unable to engage in the art making right away as they did when they created their art on their spirituality. The participants asked for the directive to be repeated and spent time discussing it awhile before beginning their art. Even though, the participants expressed some difficulty in conceptualizing this next piece, the process and final products showed they were much more relaxed about making this piece. This may have been because the participants had already familiarized themselves with the materials and surroundings, were more comfortable with the group, or that they were more at ease at creating art about their creativity than their spirituality.





**Figure I: Participant #4-Process**



**Figure K: Participant #4-Process**



**Figure M: Participant #4-Process**



**Figure O: Participant #4-Process**

Participant #1 stayed with the same media she had used for her piece on spirituality while the others all continued to use the water pastels but added new media. Participant #2 chose to add tissue paper and asked for Modge Podge. Participant #3 added translucent paper to her materials and also chose to use the Modge Podge. Participant #4 used almost entirely different materials of collage and stickers with the exception of the use of the water pastels. Participant #1, #2 and #3's process involved ripping paper. The types of paper used was different but all pieces were transparent. Participant #1 chose to soak the remnants of the paper she had torn for her spirituality artwork and tore them up into smaller pieces. This time she soaked the paper to completely absorb the color. Soaking up the paper in color seemed to be soothing to her. The colors she used were muted, calming colors of pink and lavender. Participant #1 arranged the colored pieces of paper on her background and glued them in place. She played around with

placing a piece of grape branch on the piece but in the end left it off. Participant #2 tore sheets of tissue in greens, blues, orange, yellow and brown. He applied these pieces in layers to his background with the Modge Podge. Part of his process involved drawing in the water pastels and covering some of what he drew with the tissue paper. Because the tissue paper was transparent, these images could be seen through the paper and in some instances, the participant redrew over the covered image. As Participant #2 worked at layering his art, new and interesting shapes and colors emerged. Participant #3 used a similar technique as her first piece with the bold strokes of blue in water pastels and bold brush strokes with water to blur and blend the lines into a softer color. This time her use of a thin, translucent paper allowed her to manipulate the paper in a different way. She tore the paper and bunched it up and glued it in place on the 18" x 20" background. This made her piece three-dimensional like Participant #1's art. Participant #3 then colored a piece of textured paper, added sand to it with Modge Podge, cut and tore it into a rectangle shape, and glued it on top of the light blue, translucent paper. It appeared to hold the blue pieces of paper in place. Participant #4's departure into collage media was done thoughtfully. Several images were chosen but in the end three photographs were chosen. One of a man leading a horse, another of a desert scene, and lastly a field with a tree. Three stickers of a shell, a piece of wood, and a flower were arranged in each collage image. The participant then drew over the photographs with water pastels. It appeared as if she were communicating that she viewed her creativity as adding her own unique touch to creation. Although there was a simplicity to what she created, the photographs in the collage images provided much more color and complexity in this piece than any of the other participants' artwork. In looking at all of the second directives' artwork together, there is a striking similarity in the colors found in nature (blues, greens, yellows, oranges, and browns) used by in the artwork of Participant # 2 and #4. Participant #3's piece incorporated some of these colors (blue and brown) as well. Participant #1 piece was quite different with its softer, muted tones of pink and lavender.





**Figure J: Participant #1–Artwork**



**Figure L: Participant #2–Artwork**



**Figure N: Participant #3–Artwork**



**Figure P: Participant #4–Artwork**

With the exception of Participant #4's collage images, the participant's art pieces were obscure and abstract. The content and metaphors in the art were recognized and understood mostly through the discussion that followed the art making. The content and metaphors seemed to be much less complex than the ones used in first directive representing the participant's spirituality.

Participant #1 explained that the scattered pieces of paper in her artwork represented the many different ways she expresses her creativity. She observed that the pieces of paper were disconnected because her interests are so diverse. The more muted tones and softness of the art reflected her comment that it was much easier for her to depict her creativity in art than her

spirituality. Besides using the same media, it is interesting to note that in this directive as well as the second directive, this participant played with using pieces of nature that she stated was a significant part of her spirituality, but for some reason chose in both occasions to leave them out of her artwork. Participant #1 also mentioned that mindfulness was an important part of creating her artwork.

Mindfulness was discussed as a part of Participant #2's artwork as well. He explained that he began by creating an image of a mountain from a mindfulness exercise he uses with his clients where they imagine themselves as a mountain. In addition to the mountain, he also stated that he had depicted another lantern that symbolized "warmth" and "making things new." It is possible that his idea of making things new came from the recent shift he had experienced creating his first piece in his view of spirituality. As Participant #2 looked at his artwork, he said he saw an image of a map. He believed that "mapping things out" was a part of creativity. This involved engaging and enjoying the process of creating and letting the art emerge without the need to figure things out first. The layering effect and transparent images depicted a complexity and depth to his understanding of his creativity. He discussed how creating the piece on his spirituality first helped him in figuring out how to approach his piece on creativity. This seemed to reveal a natural link between the two and may suggest that spirituality plays a huge role in his creativity.

Participant #3 stated that as she worked on her second piece, she saw that creativity for her was all about creating a problem in her artwork and then solving it. It is interesting to note that the idea of problem solving spurred Participant #3 to talk about how she did not paint because she had been intimidated by her grandfather who had been a painter when he was alive. Both of her pieces actually involved a form of painting that seemed to have resolved her need to avoid her grandfather's artistic medium by using a unique expression that was all her own. She went on to explain that the brown piece in her art was an earthen jar. The blue dimensional pieces of paper represented water moving through the earthen jar. Participant #3 stated that

this was a “vessel that the spirit moves through.” This depicted the sustenance for life that she saw in both water and creativity. She talked about how the image of water she had created that was coming through her, a vessel, was coming from more than just herself. This echoed the statement that she had made about her piece on her spirituality depicting a flow of light in her that was not just her own light.

Participant #4’s piece of artwork on her identity as a creative person appeared to be very different from her first piece as well as the others’ art. Her artwork was broken up into 3 parts that depicted how her creativity was a vessel for transformation. Movement from each of the 3 parts to another may have represented what she described as the “time and repeated effort” that it takes to move from one state to another. The participant recalled how the image of the tree used in her art as a self-symbol was also used by her aunt who repeatedly used holes in her own artwork as an effort to work things out. Creativity described as an “effort to work things out” or “transform things” had a similar feel to Participant #2’s “mapping things out,” and Participant #3’s “problem solving.”

It seems noteworthy that the artwork on creativity seemed to be much more abstract than the pieces on spirituality. The fact that both sets of art pieces contained obscure images may not be surprising as both topics are fairly abstract, complex, and difficult to depict in a single image. However, it is interesting that there seemed to be more recognizable images in the artwork on spirituality than on creativity. It is difficult to say why this occurred.

### Directive #3

The third and final directive was for the participants to use the available materials to create an image that integrated their identity as a spiritual person and as a creative person to depict how these identities inform their practice as clinical art therapists. The participants were given the option to incorporate the first two art pieces into this final piece. A larger 24" x 36" piece of paper was provided to accommodate this. There were different choices of color made

available in this larger paper. All of the participants chose white except for Participant #4 who chose blue paper.



**Figure Q: Participant #1–Process**



**Figure S: Participant #2–Process**



**Figure U: Participant #3–Process**



**Figure W: Participant #4–Process**

All of the participants chose to use their first two pieces of art in this directive. Each of these individuals also used the method of cutting and tearing their original pieces in order to incorporate them into this final piece. For the most part, the same media was used as in the previous pieces with the exception of Participant #3 who added some natural found objects and Participant #4 who explored the use of tissue paper. Because these pieces included the artwork created on spirituality and creativity, the color palettes remained mainly the same. Again, there were striking similarities in the colors used by Participant #2, #3, and #4. However, Participant

#2's stained glass window in his piece on spirituality mimicked the pinks and lavenders that Participant #2 used in her piece on her creativity. Although all of the participants, used the method of partially dismantling their original pieces with scissors or by tearing the paper, each of them used this method in different ways. Participant #1 both cut and ripped her piece on spirituality. The shape that she cut and tore resembled something like flames for one piece. She only used two small portions of this piece. Perhaps there was a potency in this piece that prompted her to include only a small amount of it. In contrast, she used almost the entire piece on creativity, tearing around the outside of the original 18" x 20" paper. It appeared to be a struggle for her to rip through this paper and it took a lot of effort to get it torn all the way around. Arranging the pieces on the 24" x 36" piece of paper seemed to take a lot of effort as well. She seemed unsure of how the pieces actually fit together as she arranged and rearranged the pieces several times. It was as if she were trying to work out and understand how her spirituality and creativity entered into her clinical work as she created this piece. In the end, when she finally glued these pieces down, she painted yellow on the top left and bottom right corners and on various places on the art. Participant #2's technique of ripping was intriguing. He ripped strips from both of his pieces, wove and patched these pieces together, and assembled these in an almost seamless new piece of artwork with Modge Podge. In addition to this, he added pastels and paint to further blend the torn pieces. Participant #2 brought his art together beautifully, depicting a very integrated approach and understanding of how his spirituality and creativity enter into his clinical practice. Participant #3 created additional pieces for this final directive. Her process mimicked what she had done for her artwork depicting her creativity and ended up looking very similar to it in this final piece. She tore her piece on spirituality and placed it in the center of these two blue pieces connecting them with long pine needles. For this participant, spirituality appeared to be central to her creativity and clinical work. As with Participant #3, all three elements were portrayed as being very connected for her. Participant #4's process included cutting out her tree image from the spirituality piece and tearing up the dark, chaotic part into



small pieces that were placed to the left of the tree. She rested her creativity piece on top of the tree and to the right side, she drew lines that connected the collage images to the tree. She ripped up brightly colored tissue, bunching it up and gluing it to the tree. To finish up, she added a sprig of berries picked from a bush outside that was included in the materials with the natural found objects. These additions transformed the lightly sketched tree and light bulbs into a prominent image on the page. This piece showed more confidence in both herself, and how her spirituality and creativity enters into her clinical work than in her first piece.



**Figure R: Participant #1–Artwork**



**Figure T: Participant #2–Artwork**



**Figure V: Participant #3–Artwork**



**Figure X: Participant #4–Artwork**

The discussion about the content and metaphors provided more insight into the thought processes of each participant and provided more meaning to their artwork. The overall

consensus was that each of the participants thought it was helpful to be given the option to integrate their original pieces into their final art. This method of progression seemed to make a lot of sense for this final directive since both the participants' spirituality and creativity existed prior to their work as an art therapist.

Participant #1 talked about the pieces reaching from the top of her art as "past blessings of spirituality." The interpretation of this is unclear as it could mean that this participant sees her spirituality as something of the past or that her past experiences with her spirituality are what she sees in her clinical work. The yellow paint that she added to the art is what she described as symbolizing light. She made the statement that art can be very revealing. She also discussed how she has experienced the healing properties of art in her clinical practice, not just for her clients but for herself as well. Participant #1 expressed her belief that creativity and spirituality have made her a better therapist. However, her artwork does not seem to express that the two are very connected for her.

Participant #2's art on the other hand, showed that he sees his spirituality and creativity as intertwined and almost indistinguishable from each other as they work together in his clinical work. His discussion about his art included the ideas of weaving and patching or the client's "putting things together." This is a similar idea to using art as a way of "co-creation," "problem-solving," or "working things out" that came out in the workshop earlier. His artwork provided images of light as did Participant #1's. The lines that radiated out from the lantern image depicted Participant #2's idea that the healing work went beyond his own work with the client. This image of light seemed to imply a belief in a power beyond himself that is working with and without his help in the healing process. The artwork seems to communicate, however, that this participant is definitely a part of spreading the light out beyond himself. An image of a green bird is most prominent in this piece which the participant described as representing the impermanence of his work as an art therapist. This may again refer back to his belief in a power outside of himself that is at work and that his clinical work is just a fleeting part of the entire

healing process. This participant communicated that this understanding guided him in his work. He also mentioned his appreciation of the way art beautifully captures the healing process.

Participant #3 explained that as she created this last piece the concept of “space” came to her. She expressed that she not only needed to create a space for her clients but for herself as well. She saw exercising her spirituality and creativity outside of her work as an art therapist as a vital part of her clinical practice. Her space for her clients is depicted in a brown chair which mimics the brown vessel in her artwork on creativity where she had stated the “spirit moves through.” Perhaps this indicated that the space she created for her clients contained a place where the spirit moved. Another image she discussed was the flames she took from her art on spirituality which she placed to rest on each of the brown pieces of paper (the earthen jar and chair). When she stepped back to look at her art, she realized that the flame above the jar created a candle which she thought represented “letting light shine.” The flame—like the blue flow of water—seemed to provide another depiction of “spirit.” This participant’s experience of creating this final piece created a visual way for her to show how inseparable she believes spirituality, creativity and her art therapy practice are. In fact, she stated that it was her spirituality and creativity that enabled her to be more fully herself in her practice. This seems to indicate that she does not believe she could work without the two.

Participant #4 used blue paper for her background because she stated that it represented water symbolizing God, the sustainer of life. This continued the theme of water where her drawing of the tree received its nourishment. It is interesting that in this piece this symbol of God went from being beneath her self symbol to encompassing all of herself and her clients. This is similar to the blue paper Participant #3 used to communicate how water and creativity sustain life. Participant #4 was the only one who discussed the significance of the torn paper. She used the tearing to show the dismantling she sees necessary in creation and the state of her clients searching for wholeness when they come in for therapy. The lines that she drew in her final art piece represented a surge of energy which she described as prayers she offers up



before her sessions with clients. This could perhaps be similar to the flow of energy described by Participant #3 in her work or the spreading of light that Participant #2 described in his work. Participant #4 echoed what both Participant #1 and #3 said about the need for their own creative expression to enhance their clinical practice. This participant expressed that she was surprised by her reaction to some glue that started dripping down her art when she hung it up. When she went to wipe it up, she was stopped short by the impression that the tree was crying. She stated that this tear evoked the pain that she has felt from not feeling completely free to express her spirituality within her practice.

#### *Comparisons of Pieces Each Participant Made*

In trying to understand how an art therapists' understanding of God as Creator forms their identity and informs their clinical work, breaking the question down into parts seemed to be a good way to look for data. A series of directives provided a way to look at each participant's identity as a spiritual person, as a creative person, and then how these aspects of their identity connects with their work as an art therapist. The decision to use directives that could build upon each other and culminate into a final piece provided a simplified approach to the complex subject matter of the research question. It also created an additional way to compare the pieces that each participant made by looking at the progression of art from one directive to the next. The following analysis provides additional information regarding the participants' understanding of or connection with the research question.

#### *Participant #1*

Even though the materials that were used in all three pieces that Participant #1 made, there is a marked difference in them. The first piece on spirituality was the most complex, most colorful, and perhaps the most chaotic looking. The elements of this piece go off the page and hold a lot of energy and emotion. The colors and the colored pieces of paper overlap and intertwine. The participant was also able to acknowledge that in the process of creating



**Figure B: Participant #1-Directive #1**



**Figure J: Participant #1-Directive #2**



**Figure R: Participant #1-Directive #3**

this piece on her spiritual identity, she became aware of a deep trauma that she had not yet processed. It is difficult to say exactly why this occurred. It is possible that the act of creating evoked this response or it could be that something about the connection this participant made to her spirituality prompted this recognition of her need for healing. It could also be a perfect example of the connection between spirituality and creativity as well as the powerful healing properties they have when held together. The participant's discussion on the importance of prayer in relation to this piece may also provide information about the channel through which her spirituality leads her toward wholeness. Participant #1's second piece on her creativity was much simpler, much softer, less connected and more resolved than her first piece. This could reflect this participant's views of her creativity in comparison to her spirituality. It could indicate

a greater significance, depth and complexity in regard to her spirituality that is not present in her creativity. It is also possible that the tension that was created as she made the piece on spirituality was worked out in the act of making it so that when she approached her second piece, it portrayed a calmer image than the first. The participant stated that her creative work has a tendency to surprise her. It was quite apparent that her piece on spirituality did surprise her. The creation of this first piece definitely carried much more weight than the second. It is interesting to note, however, that Participant #1 used much less of her piece on spirituality than her creativity in her final piece. There appeared to be a tentativeness about how to integrate these two pieces with her clinical practice even though she stated that she believed they both made her a better therapist. The pieces did not touch although one of the spirituality pieces seemed to be reaching out toward the creativity piece. The addition of yellow paint which was added to all of the elements of Participant #1's final piece provided a connection but this, too, seemed tentative and uncertain. This final piece seemed to leave the question about whether or not this participant had thought much about how her spirituality and creativity integrate with her practice as an art therapist prior to the workshop. Participant #1's response to the reflection questions sent after the workshop, made it clear that the workshop caused spirituality to be a more conscious part of her art. She stated that the workshop brought about an awareness of spirituality and creativity in relation to art therapy that she had not thought about before.

#### Participant #2

Much like Participant #1's first piece, Participant #2's artwork on his spiritual identity revealed much more complexity and intensity than his piece on his creative identity. His first piece contained much more recognizable figures than the second, and seemed to beg the telling of the story that is behind these images. There was also much more of a sense of agitation and a trying to work something out in his spirituality artwork. This was reflected in the participant's discussion of his struggle with the structure and rigidity of his faith, his understanding of humans



**Figure D: Participant #2-Directive #1**



**Figure L: Participant #2-Directive #2**



**Figure T: Participant #2-Directive #3**

as spiritual beings, and his desire to allow his spirituality to enter into the clinical setting. It is possible, much like Participant #1's experience with her first piece, that accessing his spirituality brought this struggle to light. It is also important to note that the first piece might have also provided some resolve for Participant #2's struggle that may be seen in the progression of his art. It is uncertain if Participant #2 was looking at his first piece when he was creating his second piece, but there is an uncanny resemblance between the two even though the media and process were very different. Although the second piece is simpler and more abstract, when these two pieces are seen side by side, there are divisions on the page, lines, colors, and movement that are almost the same. It is possible that the second piece on creativity unconsciously mimicked the first. The images themselves and the participant communicated the idea of light in both these

pieces. The similarities in these two pieces could reflect the mysterious connection between spirituality and creativity. The final art piece on spirituality and creativity as the participant saw it affecting his clinical practice portrayed a beautiful integration of the two for him. The way the creativity piece connected to the spirituality piece portrayed the idea of the participant's creativity as an extension of his spirituality as the lines radiated out from the lantern continue out into his creative identity. The bird that appeared at the center seemed to be a part of the lines radiating out with the bird coming back toward the image of the person and the cross. There appeared to be a natural give and take, movement, and energy within the two pieces. The way the creativity piece extended out from the spirituality piece provides a feeling of freedom, openness and receptivity beyond what was communicated with the spirituality piece alone. This seemed to exemplify that both spirituality and creativity alone are not enough. The participant's written reflections and the progression of his artwork communicated that spirituality and creativity are vital parts of healing and wholeness for him.

### Participant #3

Participant #3's pieces used mostly the same media although they were used in different ways. They were all quite simple, yet they became slightly more complex for each directive. The piece on the participant's spiritual identity was brighter and depicts more energy than her piece on her creative identity. It communicated the flow of energy and light that the participant saw as an important part of her spirituality. However, the spirituality piece was less distinct and was less dimensional than the final two pieces. This could communicate the unknowable, mysterious aspect of spirituality. The participant's piece on her creativity also showed a less intense flow of energy or water in a more soothing blue color that is three-dimensional. The brown earthen jar image, which the participant seemed to use as a self-symbol does not show up in the first piece. Comparing these two pieces of art, gives the impression that this participant's spirituality involved something much greater than herself and that she could identify herself or her part in her creativity much more than in her spirituality. It is interesting that in her final



**Figure F: Participant #3-Directive #1**



**Figure N: Participant #3-Directive #2**



**Figure V: Participant #3-Directive #3**

piece, the image that she created to depict her clinical practice mirrors her piece on her creativity. Each of these pieces have the blue flow of energy, a vessel, and a flame taken from the spirituality piece. These two pieces are placed on either side of the spirituality artwork giving it the greatest importance and prominence in her final piece. The flames that the participant took from her spirituality piece showed the presence of spirituality in both her creativity and her clinical practice. The addition of natural found objects to this final piece communicated a different dimension to the combination of spirituality, creativity and art therapy.



## Participant #4

The differences in Participant #3's process and finished art pieces were the most striking. Each of the pieces use very different media, look very different, and evoke different feelings. Despite the many differences of each of her three pieces, there were also several common



**Figure H: Participant #4-Directive #1**



**Figure P: Participant #4-Directive #2**



**Figure X: Participant #4-Directive #3**

elements in them. All of Participant #4's artwork contained the most recognizable images of all of the participants' artwork. These images, however, were not literal but full of metaphor. The tree was her self symbol which appeared in all of her pieces as did images of water. The final piece was mounted on a piece of blue paper which the participant stated represented water. Other elements that were repeated throughout were images of chaos, desert, and light. A final

similarity between these very different pieces of art was that they were all broken down into three parts. The first piece was described as depicting three important elements of the participants spirituality: nourishment, energy and light. This seemed to describe her view of how God enters into her life. This piece also showed water, land and sky. The collage images in the participant's second piece was broken up into three parts depicting transformation. The last piece of art was broken into three by the nature of the directive to depict spirituality, creativity and art therapy. However, it also seemed to show God in the blue background holding the entire piece, the therapist as depicted in the tree and collage, and the client in search of wholeness as in the ripped paper. There was an interesting progression in Participant #4's artwork. Her first piece on her spiritual identity was very complex, yet lightly and tentatively sketched. This depicted her later statements that she felt anxious about discussing her spirituality with others. It also reflected the difficulty she expressed she had in articulating the depth and complexity of her spirituality. This all seemed to communicate how very important her spirituality was to her and possibly her desire to express as much as she could understand. Her piece on her creative identity was more simply made, brightly colored and somewhat whimsical. This may have shown the participant's greater comfort level with discussing her creative identity. The use of collage images and stickers could also reflect the use of her creativity to pull back from the intensity of working on her art on spirituality. Her final piece on how her spiritual and creative identities enter into her clinical practice progressed into the boldest, brightest piece of all. This piece seemed to communicate a bringing together of two parts of herself that provides a perfect place for her to be and express herself. The addition of color and texture to her self symbol could also suggest a lessening of anxiety in discussing her spirituality as time progressed in the workshop. In this participant's written reflections sent in after the workshop, she wrote of her fear of judgement and rejection for her beliefs, and the freedom she felt at being able to create art and discuss it in the workshop. She communicated how seeing the tree in her art as crying—because the glue dripped down the art—evoked her pain of not being able to express her spirituality fully. This is a perfect example



how powerful art can be when something like spirituality is difficult to put into words. This participant's art response to the directives showed an intense belief that her understanding of God as Creator is an integral and very important part of her identity and practice as an art therapist.

### *Comparisons of Participants' Written Reflections*

The artwork that was created at the workshop was full of meaning for the participants and it was evident that they had not had enough time to fully take in their experience and connect their artwork with the research topic. It seemed appropriate to give these participants time to reflect and respond after they had been given time to sit with their art, reflect on the process, and gain insight from the images they had created. A week after the workshop a link to the slide presentation of the workshop and a list of follow up questions (Appendix G) were emailed to each of the participants. Two weeks later all of the participants returned their responses. These responses varied in length and detail but all provided information that enhanced this study.

Each of the participants expressed that the overall experience of the workshop was positive for them. They all stated in their own ways that the workshop had provided a place to think about their spirituality in a way that they hadn't done before. Many of them expressed feeling as if they had been given the permission to discuss their spirituality, and that this was both validating and liberating for them. Each of them provided examples of insights that had been revealed to them in their art. All mentioned some form of internal struggle that was brought to light through the process. Many expressed a deepening of their understanding of themselves and their spirituality. This seems to show how powerful art can be and possibly the positive effects of the combination of spirituality and creativity. The group setting of the workshop seemed to be a positive experience for most of the participants as it provided a place for an exchange of a variety of points of views and ideas. For one, it created some anxiety but in the end seemed to be freeing. All of the responses stated that the workshop gave the participants a freedom to discuss their spirituality in a way that they hadn't felt able to in the MFT program at LMU.

Although at least some of the participants did not see spirituality as an important part of the art therapy education at first, all of the participants seemed to agree that they now see spirituality as a vital part of their clinical practice. This connects to the idea that was communicated in the participants' responses that human beings are spiritual beings and this needs to be addressed in therapy. Some of the ways that the participant's wrote that spirituality comes up in the clinical setting is with issues of meaning/purpose, connection with a higher power and others, support systems, awareness, openness and mindfulness. It was also acknowledged that for some clients their spirituality is a source of conflict and pain which needs to be addressed as well. Finally, what was communicated in the participant's reflections was a desire and need for training in the area of spirituality. All of them stated that it would have been helpful to have had more of a focus on spirituality in the MFT curriculum and that they would enjoy being a part of workshops on spirituality in the future. These participants communicated that they believed that this training was important in order to understand themselves, their clients and how to integrate and address spirituality into their practice better.

### *Summary and Discussion of Emergent Themes*

Analyzing the data gathered from the process, artwork, discussions, and reflections from the workshop on Spirituality, Creativity, Identity, and Art Therapy revealed several common themes. Many of these themes overlapped and were interrelated to each other. To examine these themes in a meaningful way it was helpful to look at the emergent themes from each directive and discuss possible interpretations.

#### **Directive #1**

Themes found in the directive on spiritual identity ranged from images and discussion of light, water and energy. These themes seemed to form a single idea that spirituality for these participants involved a force or power beyond themselves. This power appeared to be mysterious

and in many ways unexplainable. It also appeared from the discussions with the participants that this is the source and driving force behind creativity and healing. All of these participant's responded in the survey that their spiritual practice held a belief in God so that this power can be identified as God in this analysis.

#### Directive #2

Various words were used to describe the participant's creative identity such as vessel, conduit, mindfulness, transformation, problem solving, working things out, and putting things together. This seemed to indicate an understanding that the participants see themselves as a channel through which God's creative energy flows. The descriptions of the creative energy that flows through them revealed that it provides light, life, transformation, healing, and wholeness. In addition to this, several participants expressed they use this creative energy to work through and solve problems. They seemed to view their own creativity as coming from God and that creativity was activated through spirituality. This seemed to imply that they did not see themselves as ultimately in control of their lives and the outcomes of their work. Instead they were vessels through which God accomplishes transformation and wholeness. Openness, awareness and mindfulness were important with this understanding as these nurture a position of receptivity to allowing God to work through them. This view of themselves and their creativity signified a close connection between their spiritual identity and creative identity, and provided a significantly different way to approach life and service to others than those who do not see this connection.

#### Directive #3

The final directive on how the participants' spiritual and creative identities enter into their clinical practice revealed ideas of healing, ripping/tearing/dismantling, and wholeness. Themes of light and water also appeared in this directive. The themes that emerged in the first

two directives come together beautifully in this final directive. The participants' artwork and discussion revealed that they see God or a power outside themselves that is the force behind their creativity, that works through them, and ultimately provides healing for their clients. The ripping and tearing that was done to create these pieces provides an interesting picture of what happens in the creation of art and the therapy room. This reflected the idea behind the participant's understanding of creativity as "problem solving," "working things out," and "putting things together." The participants discussed their belief that both they and their client's are spiritual and creative beings and that accessing these parts of themselves and others can lead to greater wholeness. This was evident even in the way the artwork that was made in the workshop led to greater awareness, transformation and self-discovery for the participants. A strong belief in the connection and power of spirituality and creativity in their clinical practice was also evident in the themes found in the artwork, discussion, and reflections of the participants.

### *Limitations*

A brief discussion on the limitations of this study seems appropriate as the specific nature and content of the research question has not been examined for any prior art therapy studies. As in any pilot study, much can be learned not only from the data received but that which was not received and the methods by which the data was gathered. Should this study be replicated in the future, these limitations should be taken into consideration.

The limitations to this study are all related to the small scope of the research. The most obvious limitation lies in the size of the group of individuals who were able to participate in the workshop and contribute to the research data. Flaws were found in the survey programming that did not allow some respondents to continue on in the survey who might have been suitable participants for the workshop. Despite these flaws, there was a sizeable group of eighteen respondents who indicated that they were willing to be a part of this study. This group was reduced to four, however, due to difficulties in finding a mutual time and place where everyone

could meet at the same time. The use of face-to-face interviews was considered, and could have provided opportunity for more to participate but due to limited time this was not possible. The four participants represented a fairly mixed group of art therapists in regard to age, culture, experience and spiritual practice. However, they lacked ethnic diversity. The group was also limited to LMU graduates only. It is possible that participants from a wider range of ethnicities and educational settings could have provided different findings for this study. However, none of these limitations are difficult to overcome should there be interest in doing further studies. Creating opportunities for more workshops and/or face-to-face interviews could enhance this study and supply additional informative data.

The fact that the design of the study worked within the limitations of time and focused on a relatively small group of individuals can also be seen as a strength. The size of the group of workshop participants allowed for a more intimate discussion in the workshop and more in depth data analysis that provided more than adequate information for this study.

### Findings or Meanings

To organize the findings and bring meaning to the data that was gathered from the literature and the art workshop for LMU MFT graduates on Spirituality, Creativity, Identity, and Art Therapy, it is helpful to refer back to the research question. The question that this research is meant to answer is: how does an art therapist's understanding of God as Creator form his/her identity and inform his/her clinical practice? This question can be broken down into three parts much like the three directives given in the workshop. However, the three parts that this section follows more closely come from the definition of spirituality found in the literature review. This definition states that spirituality is the connection between *God* (or the divine), *self*, and *others* (Lively, 2011). The following discussion focuses on themes derived from the data gathered from both the literature and what the participants communicated in their art process, product, discussion that centers around this three-way connection. This discussion includes how the

data gathered from different sources illuminate and bring meaning to each other in this regard. The themes that are examined reflect how an understanding of *God* as Creator (spirituality and creativity) affect an art therapist's perception of *self* (identity), and view of *others* and their clinical work (art therapy). Because these three are so interconnected, it is hard to separate out some of the themes so there is a noticeable overlap. In addition to these three parts, two other themes that stood out in the research are also discussed in this section. These include the deep connection between spirituality and creativity, and the expressed desire and need for training in spirituality in the art therapy field.

### *God*

A prominent theme that was revealed in the workshop process, images, and discussion was that spirituality for these participants involved an energy or power beyond themselves. Although not all of the participants directly stated that this power was "God" in the workshop, they identified this belief in their responses to the survey. This corresponds with the focus on personal narratives in the literature whose spirituality reflected a faith, belief, or relationship with God (Farrelly-Hansen, 2001; Moriarty, 2010; Stevenson, Eck & Hill, 2007; Theule, 1996). All of the participants identified some form of spiritual practice or tradition that helped form their understanding of God, and provided the framework for an openness to and awareness of God's work and power. The literature provided several examples of this understanding of God as having creative power (Bufford, 2007; Evans, 2007; Johnson, 2007; Kelly, 1995; McDonald, 2007), authority over all (Hall, 2010; McNeil, 2010; Worthington Jr., 2010), exhaustive knowledge (Johnson, 2007), an infinite nature (Ripley, 2010), a constant presence (Propst, 2010), and as loving and compassionate (Fayard, 2006; Hall, 2010; Worthington Jr., 1993). The participants' responses to the art directives revealed an understanding of God as the source and driving force behind life, creativity and healing. This was seen in the metaphors they used of light, energy, and water. It was also evident in the discussions on prayer, creativity as a gift from

God, and how the movement toward wholeness occurred beyond and outside of one's own power. The literature and the workshop participants' artwork communicated that an understanding of God as Creator—or the source and driving force behind all of life—provides a unique perspective that affects one's view of self and one's approach to life.

### *Self*

The understanding of God as the Source of all things or the One who created all things—including human beings—has a huge impact on one's view of self. From the creation literature Buckenham (2010) stated that one way it can impact our perspective is that “human life is understood as something good, intended, celebrated and delighted in, and infused with an image of God's own glory” (p. 76). This idea was seen in the metaphors used by the workshop participants for themselves as a reflection of God's light and life. Staub (2013) stated that humanity is “imprinted with godlike characteristics” (para 3) which includes “creative, spiritual, intelligent, communicative, relational, moral and purposeful capacities (para 12).”

The artwork that the participants made to represent their creative identity, revealed a parallel view of self that Wagener (2010) described as having the distinctly human ability to “enter into creation alongside God” (p. 240) and to be creators as well. The literature kept this idea in check by pointing out that although humans are made in God's image and reflect God's creative nature, humans are made from dust, cannot exist without God, and are completely dependent on God (Evans, 2007; McDonald, 2007). This shows that understanding God as Creator provides a unique perspective of self that does not only incorporate having a better understanding of “who we are” but also “who we are *not*” (Wagener, 2010, p. 244). This view of self provides a way of accepting and working within one's limitations (Tan, 2010). The metaphors of *vessels* or *conduits* the workshop participants used for themselves showed this by indicating their understanding that they are channels through which God's creative energy flows, not the source of the energy.

The metaphors of being vessels and reflections of God's light used by the workshop participants also echoed the perspective found in the literature that God made all of creation with purpose, meaning, and significance (Kelly, 1995; Bufford, 2007; Johnson, 2007; McNeil, 2010). The participants communicated that this gave them a sense of their own call, giftedness or purpose in life, and a unique orientation to their work much like what was described in the literature (Kelly, 1995; Bufford, 2007; McNeil, 2010). All of the workshop participants expressed that this unique orientation included being mindful of or open to God. The literature described this openness to God and God's work as acknowledging that God in control and being aware that God doesn't always work as one would want or expect (Bufford, 2007; Kelly, 1995; McNeil, 2010; Tan, 2001; Tan 2010; Worthington Jr., 2010). Both the participants and the literature stated that this included being open to the present moment (Hall, 2010; Propst, 2010), to living with ambiguity (Wagener, 2010), and to experiencing struggle or suffering (Moriarty, 2010; Theule, 1996).

This leads to another interesting view of self that came out of the workshop which was that a part of human existence not only includes being created in God's image but being *torn apart*. In the literature it was described as disintegration (Theule, 1996), struggle, and suffering (Moriarty, 2010). Many of the personal stories in the literature as well as the discussion in the workshop mentioned this as an important aspect of connecting them to God and forming their clinical practice (Moriarty, 2010). Wagener (2010) summed this up by saying "our suffering... can shape us in ways that better prepares us to be participants in God's creation. It heightens our sensitivity, develops our empathy, reminds us of our dependency and vulnerability, and ultimately opens us up to God (p. 239)."

It was apparent from the literature and the workshop that an awareness of self in reference to God as Creator provides the framework from which one can exist, understand, and be in relationship with others.



### *Others*

The literature and data gathered from the workshop indicated that it is important for a psychotherapist—who has a belief in God—to develop an awareness of God not only to form a better understanding of self, but to also gain an understanding of others, their clients, and their clinical work. McKeen (2008) advocated “extensive self-examination” (p. 102) while others described the need for becoming aware of how one’s own culture, personality and spirituality enters into the therapeutic relationship (Koepfer, 2000; Lumpkin, 2011; Mauro, 1998; B. Moon, 2006). Bruce Moon (2006) stated that having an awareness of these aspects of self was essential because “without a solid sense of self, art therapists can unintentionally impede the self-exploration and self-expression of their clients” (p. 91). Workshop Participant #4 communicated that learning more about herself helped her understand more about her clients.

One way that an art therapist’s view of others is affected by their understanding of God as Creator is that it causes them to see both self and client as God’s creation. The integration literature expressed the belief that God made all of creation with purpose, meaning, and significance (Kelly, 1995; Bufford, 2007; Johnson, 2007; McNeil, 2010). This gives value not only to one’s own existence but to the existence of every human being. It provides a perspective that one is encountering not just a client but God’s glory, wisdom and power (Johnson (2007). This idea was reflected in Participant #3’s belief that “God is light in everyone,” and Staub’s observation that human beings have “God’s image...imprinted uniquely on them” (Staub, 2013, para 12). This view evokes a level of respect and awe for others that allows a therapist to see a client as a privilege to work with rather than a sum total of their symptoms (Evans, 1984, 2007).

A part of the belief that God has created all with a purpose enters into one’s relationships and the understanding that one has a certain responsibility toward others. The literature discussed how therapists can view their work as coming alongside of, partnering with, or being the hands and feet of God (Dueck, 2010; McNeil, 2010; Tan, 2010; Wagener, 2010). In doing this, they should be reflecting the character of God. Some of the participants’ art responses

that showed their belief that they were to live a life of service, “shine out to others” or reflect God’s light, life and creative energy. Along with these characteristics, the literature included the importance of demonstrating God’s love, mercy, justice, compassion, acceptance, hope, and peace in their lives and clinical work (Fayard, 2006; Lee, 2010; Ripley, 2010; Worthington, Jr., 1993). This included helping others fulfill their purpose in life (Johnson, 2007) and “moving people toward the wholeness for which humans were created” (Lee, 2010, p. 263).

The participants’ use of metaphors of self being vessels, conduits, or channels through which these characteristics of God flows provides a unique perspective of the role of God and the role of the therapist in the clinical setting. In the literature, Hall (2010) concluded that her “role was to listen, to care, to be in relationship and to offer [her] skills. In comparison,...[God’s] role was to change, to heal and to provide” (p. 122). This was reflected in the workshop participants’ view that the transformation, healing, and wholeness that occurred in both their lives and their clients’ came from and continued beyond themselves. This takes the burden off of the therapist and places the ultimate responsibility for healing, restoring, inspiring, empowering, reconciling, and revealing truth on God (McNeil, 2010; Tan, 2001 & 2010). Again, the idea of openness, awareness and mindfulness are important as these nurture a position of receptivity to allowing God to work through them in their role as art therapist. This perspective shows an understanding of a complete dependence on God for the outcome of their life and work that can significantly impact how an art therapist approaches and practices his/her clinical work.

Just as the understanding that God made human beings in God’s image and all of creation impacts an art therapist’s view of themselves, it also affects the art therapist’s view of their clients and their work.

### *Spirituality and Creativity*

The artwork that was created in the workshop provided a visual example of what was expressed throughout the art therapy, integration, and creation theology literature. This was that there is an unmistakable relationship between spirituality and creativity (e.g., Buckenham, 2010;

B. Moon, 1996; Wagener, 2010). The literature discussed the idea of a deep connection between creativity and spirituality while the artwork from the workshop demonstrated it.

The workshop participants communicated through their artwork and discussion that creativity was a good method for them to get in touch with and express their spirituality. The literature described the act of creating as a way to connect humans to God or the sacred. Creativity was characterized as a sacred act (B. Moon, 1992; Salingaros, 2012), facilitating a closeness and awareness of God (Buckenham, 2010; C. Moon, 2001), “a form of worship, a way for creatures to express the divine image in them” (Sunshine, 2010, para 4), and a way to experience God’s own being...and creative energy (Buckenham, 2010). This seems to show that creativity can be the vehicle through which human beings are put in touch with their spirituality or God. The reverse—that spirituality activates and enhances creativity—seems to have been equally demonstrated in the workshop. This was established through the participants’ visual representations of how God or a power outside themselves is the source of their creativity. Much of the artwork that was created for the final piece on spirituality and creativity as experienced in art therapy revealed the two as interconnected and interdependent.

Further evidence of the significant relationship between spirituality and creativity was seen in what transpired in the workshop when time was taken to focus on the two together. Each of the participants expressed some form of insight, shift in thinking, or affirmation that occurred as they focused on their spirituality, creativity, and clinical practice. The participants also discussed their belief of the importance of viewing both themselves and their clients as spiritual and creative beings. Their artwork and discussion led to for the idea that accessing these parts of themselves and others can lead to greater wholeness. The literature enforced this idea by describing spirituality and creativity as essential components of being complete and fully human (Staub, 2013). More powerful than what was communicated through words was the artwork that the participants created. The process, artwork, and reflections on spirituality and creativity provided evidence of greater awareness, transformation, freedom, and self-discovery for the

participants when they explored their spirituality and creativity in relationship to each other.

The idea that spirituality and creativity can be brought together to bring about powerful transformation seems to be an important consideration for art therapists in their practice.

### *Training on Spirituality*

Although it was not the intent of this research to explore training in spirituality as a part of MFT curriculum, it came up in both the literature review and the workshop. Conclusions in graduate student's work (McKeen, 2008; Morris, 2012) revealed both a lack of and desire for training in their art therapy instruction. There was substantial evidence of the importance of the inclusion and exploration of spirituality in the therapeutic relationship both in the art process and discussion during the workshop. All of the participant's expressed a sense of liberation in creating and discussing their art about their spirituality. It was apparent in their art process and product that spirituality was an integral part of their identity. In the literature on identity it was clear that a therapist brings all of him or herself—including their spirituality—into the therapeutic relationship. It would then seem important to encourage art therapists to access and bring into full awareness this part of their identity. This also applies to clients. Several mentioned how often spirituality comes up in sessions with clients which further proves its significance in the therapeutic relationship.

Aponte (1996) and G. Corey, M. Corey & Callanan (2011) both present strong arguments for the inclusion of some level of training on spirituality for MFTs in order for students to become more aware of their own beliefs and values, to learn how to discuss their clients' own view of spirituality with them, and to find ways to allow the clients' experience with their own spirituality to become a part of the healing process. Aponte (1996) stated that MFT institutions need to take on the responsibility for training their students about spirituality. He goes as far as to say that not taking a strong position on including spirituality in a therapist's work could make them liable for training ignorant, neglectful, and irresponsible clinicians. His belief is that a

complete training includes preparing a therapist to work not only with their clients' minds and emotions but their spirit as well. Similarly, G. Corey, M. Corey & Callanan (2011) presented lack of training about spirituality as an ethical issue:

There is widespread interest in the spiritual and religious beliefs of both counselors and clients and in how these beliefs and values can be an integral part of the therapeutic relationship. Because spiritual and religious values play a vital role in the lives of many who seek counseling, these values can be viewed as a valuable resource in therapy rather than as something to be ignored. In short, spirituality is a major source of strengths for many clients and an important factor in promoting healing and well-being. It is important for clinicians to be open to addressing spiritual and religious issues in the assessment and therapeutic process. Counselors need to receive specialized training to address these concerns therapeutically. (G. Corey, M. Corey & Callanan, 2011, p. 109-110)

As a point of clarification, G. Corey, M. Corey & Callanan (2011) do not advocate prescribing a way for clients to express or practice their spirituality to fulfill the therapist's needs but instead provide a space "to help clients clarify their own pathway" (p. 109-110). This echoes what C. Moon (2001) stated about how an art therapist's spirituality "can inform a therapist's practice in a way that is affirming of the creative process and responsive to the client's needs without imposing any particular dogma or beliefs" (p. 31).

Finally, the deep connection and transformative power of the combination of spirituality and creativity that was witnessed in the workshop is further evidence for the inclusion of curriculum on spirituality in art therapy programs.

## Conclusions

### *Research Synopsis*

The design of this research was developed around answering the question: how does an art therapist's understanding of God as Creator form his/her identity and inform his/her clinical practice? It began with gathering data from art therapy, spirituality and psychology integration, and creation theology literature to establish the research that has already been done that might help answer the research question. The conclusion from the literature review was that there have been several studies in other fields that are pertinent to this study but very little in the field of art therapy. This prompted research that specifically examined the experience of art therapists in regard to how their faith in God or spirituality entered into their clinical work. This focused on gathering new data from LMU MFT graduates who responded to a survey which indicated that their belief in God as Creator affected their identity and work as an art therapist. Four of these graduates became participants in an art workshop on Spirituality, Creativity, Identity, and Art Therapy conducted by LMU MFT's department chair and program director. Qualitative data was gathered from observing the participants' process, artwork, and discussion in the workshop as well as written reflections sent in three weeks later. This data was analyzed and compared with the literature.

Two significant conclusions were drawn from the literature review and participants' responses to the art workshop. The first was that an awareness and understanding of God as Creator can provide a unique perspective of self and others that has a considerable impact on an art therapist's view of his/her role and approach to clinical work. The research revealed that this perspective includes a God that is the source and driving force behind all things. This perspective forms a view of human beings as created by God, to reflect God, to create, and be an agent of God or God's work. This establishes the framework from which one can exist alongside of, be in relationship with, and serve others. In the capacity of art therapist, one can then approach their work with the perspective of God as the source of life, creativity and wholeness;

the therapist as a reflection of God as a spiritual and creative being, and a channel through which God's transformation and healing can occur in others; and their clients also as reflections of God to whom it is their responsibility and privilege to serve. The second conclusion was that there is a powerful connection between spirituality and creativity. The data suggested that providing a place where spirituality and creativity can enter into the therapeutic space enhances transformation and healing. These conclusions have important implications for the training and practice of art therapists.

### *Personal Reflections and Applications*

When I first started conceptualizing what my research question could be, I struggled to work on something as personal as how my faith or spirituality connected to my work as an art therapist. I thought it was something that would only benefit my own curiosities and desires. I resigned myself to the fact that this research would solely be for me with the hopes that this would in turn make me a better therapist to my clients. In finally coming up with my research question, I initially thought I would design my data gathering around my own explorations and art making. My research for my literature review revealed other studies on spirituality and the field of psychology that had received valuable information from the personal experiences and stories of others. This guided me to look beyond my limited experience and gather data from other art therapists. When I sent my survey to LMU MFT alumni to find suitable participants, I wasn't sure if anyone would be interested in contributing to my study. However, I was pleasantly surprised when eighteen people stated they were willing to be a part of my research.

Now that my research is complete I have a new perspective on my research question. I now realize that there are many who share my quest for making meaning out of their work as art therapists in light of their spirituality or connection with God. There are many more who encounter clients every day who are grappling with issues of purpose and meaning, finding support within their faith communities, and holding on to their belief in a higher power to

pull them through their pain. Still others are dealing with wounds that misrepresentations and misconceptions of their spiritual practices have caused. Even beyond this, is a beautiful and mysterious connection between spirituality and creativity that make this study extremely pertinent in the field of art therapy.

The difficulty comes in trying to measure or prove the effects of both spirituality and creativity in the therapeutic process. In this study, I found myself struggling to trust the meaning that I was pulling from the artwork because it felt so subjective and unquantifiable. Spirituality and creativity are abstract and outside the physical realm, but their influence on people's lives is undeniable. In all of the literature that addresses the need to incorporate spirituality and creativity into the therapeutic relationship, there is a palpable struggle to prove that this is vital and valid. However, as Debra Linesch stated in a personal communication on 2-24-14, the art itself can be the evidence or proof. This was beautifully demonstrated in the art from the workshop that provided a snapshot of the influence that spirituality and creativity has on us all.

My own personal conclusions about the research question after studying different types of literature and the art workshop findings is that an understanding of God as Creator impacts *everything* in my life. Gaining a better understanding of God as the Creator and Sustainer of life, and of human beings as made in God's image and completely dependent on God has already begun to make a difference in how I view myself and my work as an art therapist. It has given me more of an openness to, a dependence on, hope in, and an appreciation for God's transforming work in my own life and in the lives of my clients. It has also given me the motivation to provide the best conditions I can to enhance healing and allow God to work through me. This includes nurturing both my spirituality and creativity as a form of self care, self awareness, being more fully myself, and opening myself up to God and others.

In preparing for this study, I realized how difficult it was for me to articulate what my faith and spirituality means to me. I wondered how the workshop participants would be able to do this. I had to trust that the utilizing the art process would help them. At the beginning



of the workshop, I expressed that although the workshop had been designed for my master's research project, my hope was that it would also allow the participants to explore their own spirituality, creativity, identity and work as an art therapist in a meaningful way. Even though I said this, what I expected was that the data I gathered would simply inform me of the ways these participants experienced their spirituality and creativity in their clinical practice. This ended up being only a small part of what I learned from the workshop. A more important discovery for me was in seeing the transformative effects of spirituality and creativity being brought together in the art process.

I feel privileged to have witnessed the process, artwork, discussion, and reflections of four individuals who were willing to be open and vulnerable to where their art would lead them. These individuals—who when given the time and space to examine their spirituality and creativity—gained insight into their own pain and struggles, discovered new ways to reframe or view their experiences, and felt affirmed and liberated by being allowed to explore their spirituality and creativity in their clinical work. All of these participants expressed experiencing some sort of shift in their view of God, themselves and/or others in the workshop. To me, this reveals the transformative power of bringing spirituality and creativity together that should not only be brought to the attention of art therapists but our clients as well. This has convinced me that it is vitally important for me to learn more about and find ways to access and incorporate my clients' spirituality and creativity in their healing process.

A final conclusion that I made from my research was one that I never intended to explore. This was the idea that training in spirituality should be a part of the curriculum for psychotherapists. Although it has been mentioned in passing in the classroom, spirituality has been glossed over in a way that communicates that it is either not very important or too controversial and/or personal to discuss. As I did my research, I found a plea for training on spirituality in the clinical setting in other graduate students' work. I was not entirely convinced of this until I listened to the workshop participants' discussion and studied the data I gathered.

Subsequently, I have read literature that presented the need for training as an ethical issue. The shift in perspective that spirituality or a faith in God produces, the understanding and meaning it can provide, the support it can be for both the therapist and the client, the awareness of humans as spiritual beings, and the transformative power of the combination of spirituality and creativity are commanding evidence that spirituality is far too important to merely mention in classroom. The literature and research of this study demonstrates that spirituality deserves a much more recognized and intentional place in an art therapist's training than most institutions provide. Looking back, my desire to understand—and consequently do my research on—how my spirituality or faith in God impacts my identity and work as an art therapist should have been evidence enough. However, this study has confirmed that an understanding of God as Creator can make a huge difference in the way I view myself, others and my clinical work, and that this can, in fact, help make me a better and more effective art therapist.

### *Implications for Further Research*

It is impossible to state that the findings in a pilot study such as this are conclusive. The research for this paper merely took the first steps in initiating an in depth study on spirituality, creativity, identity and art therapy. It is important and advisable to do further investigation. This study was able to establish, however, that additional research is merited as there appears to be a desire and need for gaining a better understanding of the place that spirituality and/or a belief in God as Creator can play in the field of psychotherapy and—more specifically—art therapy. Further research could not only address the limitations of this study by providing more diversity in the participants and more data, but focus on specific areas that were not adequately addressed in this study. Some of these areas include a closer look at: specific trends in openness to spirituality that might effect art therapists' and clients' views of treatment, cultural differences in openness to and effectiveness of spirituality in treatment, quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of treatment that accesses clients' spirituality in tandem with their creativity,

and possible effective methods of training art therapists in the awareness and use of spirituality in their clinical work. More in depth and specific research could expand on the information that was gathered in this study to provide a better understanding of the impact that spirituality or a faith in God can have on the identity and practice of art therapists.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: IRB Proposal Acceptance Email**

Dear Ms. Crooks,

Thank you for submitting your IRB application for your study titled Spirituality, Creativity, Identity and Art Therapy. All documents have been received and reviewed, and I am pleased to inform you that your study has been approved.

The effective date of your approval is October 16, 2013 – October 15, 2014. If you wish to continue your project beyond the effective period, you must submit a renewal application to the IRB prior to September 1, 2014. In addition, if there are any changes to your protocol, you are required to submit an addendum application.

For any further communication regarding your approved study, please reference your new protocol number: LMU IRB 2013 FA 15.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Julie Paterson

## Appendix B: Survey (page 1)

1. What is your age?  
☐ 20-29  
☐ 30-39  
☐ 40-49  
☐ 50-59  
☐ 60-69  
☐ 70+
2. What is your gender?  
☐ Male  
☐ Female  
☐ Other
3. When did you graduate from the LMU MFT program?  
☐ 0-5 years ago  
☐ 5-10 years ago  
☐ 10-15 years ago  
☐ 15-20 years ago  
☐ 20-25 years ago  
☐ 25+ years ago
4. Are you currently working in the field of mental health?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
If “No” then:

## Appendix B: Survey (page 2)

5. Have you ever worked in the field of mental health?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If “No” then skip to the end of the survey.

6. How would you identify yourself?

☐ Marriage and Family Therapist

☐ Art Therapist

☐ Marriage and Family Art Therapist

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are you currently utilizing art therapy in your work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If “No” then:

8. Have you ever utilized art therapy in your work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If “No” then skip to the end of the survey.

If “Yes” then:

9. How long have you been practicing art therapy?

☐ 0-5 years

☐ 5-10 years

☐ 10-15 years

☐ 15-20 years

☐ 20-25 years

☐ 25+ years

### Appendix B: Survey (page 3)

Please answer the following questions on a 5-point scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree:

10. Spirituality plays a part in my life.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

If “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” then skip to the end of survey

11. My spirituality includes a power outside of myself.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

If “Agree,” (this was a mistake) “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” then skip to the end of survey (“Disagree” was supposed to be included but was not)

12. I adhere to a practice or tradition that supports my spirituality.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree



## Appendix B: Survey (page 4)

13. My spiritual practice or tradition includes a belief in God.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

If “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” then skip to the end of survey

14. My spiritual practice or tradition includes metaphors for God.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

If “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” then skip to the end of survey

15. One of the metaphors for God in my spiritual practice or tradition includes God as Creator or a creative being.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

If “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” then skip to the end of survey

## Appendix B: Survey (page 5)

16. My spiritual practice or tradition influences my identity as an art therapist.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

If “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” then skip to the end of survey

17. My spiritual practice or tradition impacts my clinical work.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

If “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” then skip to the end of survey

18. Would you be willing to participate in a workshop that would include creating artwork and exploring how your spiritual practice or tradition impacts your identity and clinical work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If “Yes” then skip to “Please provide your contact information below:”

Appendix B: Survey (page 6)

19. Would you be willing to participate in a face-to-face interview and art response regarding the way your spiritual practice or tradition impacts your identity and clinical work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If “Yes” then skip to “Please provide your contact information below:”

Please provide your contact information below:

Name

Address

City

State

Postal Code

Home Phone

Cell Phone

Email Address

## Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 1 &amp; 2)

## Initial Report

Last Modified: 10/23/2013

## 1. What is your age?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	20-29		13	9%
2	30-39			34%
3	40-49			18%
4	50-59			19%
5	60-69			14%
6	70+		9	6%
	Total		147	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	3.13
Variance	1.98
Standard Deviation	1.41
Total Responses	147

## 2. What is your gender?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Male		6	4%
2	Female		141	96%
3	Other		0	0%
	Total		147	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.96
Variance	0.04
Standard Deviation	0.20
Total Responses	147

## Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 3 &amp; 4)

## 3. When did you graduate from the LMU Marital and Family Therapy program?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	0-5 years ago			34%
2	5-10 years ago			21%
3	10-15 years ago			18%
4	15-20 years ago		11	7%
5	20-25 years ago		12	8%
6	25+ years ago		16	11%
	Total		147	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	2.67
Variance	2.87
Standard Deviation	1.69
Total Responses	147

## 4. Are you currently working in the field of mental health?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		120	82%
2	No			18%
	Total		146	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.18
Variance	0.15
Standard Deviation	0.38
Total Responses	146

Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 5)

5. Have you ever worked in the field of mental health?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		22	88%
2	No		3	12%
	Total		25	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.12
Variance	0.11
Standard Deviation	0.33
Total Responses	25

## Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 6)

## 6. How would you identify yourself?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
5	Marriage and Family Therapist		13	9%
6	Art Therapist			16%
7	Marriage and Family Art Therapist			51%
8	Other			23%
	Total		146	

Other
I say MFT AND Art Therapist
psychiatric evaluator
Artist, Art Therapist, Marriage and Family Therapy Intern
mosaic artist
Marriage and Family Therapist and Art Therapist
both MFT and Art therapist
Both MFT and Art Therapist
MFT intern, ATR-BC
graphic designer
Marriage and Family Therapist and Art Therapist
both MFT and ATR
Marriage & Family Therapist & Clinical Art Therapist
marriage and family therapist and clinical art therapist
marital and family therapist and art therapist
artist/ therapist
Teacher
Crisis Evaluator
administrator
Marital and Family Therapist/Art Therapist
MFT Intern/Art Therapist
Marriage and Family Therapist/ Art Therapist (2 separate versus 1, as stated above)
Mental health counseling
LMHC and Art Therapist
Registered psychotherapist
Psychotherapist with specialization in art therapy and substance abuse
Art Therapist, Family Therapist, Clinical Psychologist
First two, depending on audience
Marriage and Family Therapist/Art Therapist
marriage and family therapist and clinical art therapist
Marriage Family Therapist/Clinical Art Therapist
Psychotherapist

Statistic	Value
Min Value	5
Max Value	8
Mean	6.89
Variance	0.75
Standard Deviation	0.86
Total Responses	146

## Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 7 &amp; 8)

7. Are you currently utilizing art therapy in your work?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		113	77%
2	No			23%
	Total		146	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.23
Variance	0.18
Standard Deviation	0.42
Total Responses	146

8. Have you ever utilized art therapy in your work?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		31	94%
2	No		2	6%
	Total		33	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.06
Variance	0.06
Standard Deviation	0.24
Total Responses	33



## Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 9 &amp; 10)

9. How long have you been practicing art therapy?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	0-5 years			37%
2	5-10 years			17%
3	10-15 years			22%
4	15-20 years		9	8%
5	20-25 years		7	6%
6	25+ years		11	10%
	Total		113	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	2.58
Variance	2.71
Standard Deviation	1.65
Total Responses	113

10. Please answer the following questions on a 5-point scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree: Spirituality plays a part in my life.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree			44%
2	Agree			33%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree			13%
4	Disagree		7	5%
5	Strongly Disagree		6	4%
	Total		144	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	1.91
Variance	1.15
Standard Deviation	1.07
Total Responses	144

## Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 11 &amp; 12)

11. My spirituality includes a power outside of myself.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		48	43%
2	Agree		41	37%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		18	16%
4	Disagree		3	3%
5	Strongly Disagree		2	2%
Total			112	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	1.84
Variance	0.84
Standard Deviation	0.92
Total Responses	112

12. I adhere to a practice or tradition that supports my spirituality.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		34	67%
2	Agree		12	24%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		5	10%
4	Disagree		0	0%
5	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
Total			51	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.43
Variance	0.45
Standard Deviation	0.67
Total Responses	51

## Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 13 &amp; 14)

13. My spiritual practice or tradition includes a belief in God.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		34	74%
2	Agree			13%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		2	4%
4	Disagree		4	9%
5	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
	Total		46	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.48
Variance	0.88
Standard Deviation	0.94
Total Responses	46

14. My spiritual practice or tradition includes metaphors for God.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree			52%
2	Agree			30%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		4	9%
4	Disagree		3	7%
5	Strongly Disagree		1	2%
	Total		46	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	1.76
Variance	1.03
Standard Deviation	1.02
Total Responses	46

## Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 15 &amp; 16)

15. One of the metaphors for God in my spiritual practice or tradition includes God as Creator or a creative being.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		25	68%
2	Agree		8	22%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		3	8%
4	Disagree		1	3%
5	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
Total			37	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.46
Variance	0.59
Standard Deviation	0.77
Total Responses	37

16. My spiritual practice or tradition influences my identity as an art therapist.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree			39%
2	Agree			36%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree			18%
4	Disagree		2	6%
5	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
Total			33	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.91
Variance	0.84
Standard Deviation	0.91
Total Responses	33

## Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 17 &amp; 18)

17. My spiritual practice or tradition impacts my clinical work.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		11	44%
2	Agree		11	44%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		3	12%
4	Disagree		0	0%
5	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
Total			25	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.68
Variance	0.48
Standard Deviation	0.69
Total Responses	25

18. Would you be willing to participate in a workshop that would include creating artwork and exploring how your spiritual practice or tradition impacts your identity and clinical work?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		18	82%
2	No			18%
Total			22	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.18
Variance	0.16
Standard Deviation	0.39
Total Responses	22

Appendix C: Questionnaire Results (page 19 & 20)

19. Would you be willing to participate in a face-to-face interview and art response regarding the way your spiritual practice or tradition impacts your identity and clinical work?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		12	55%
2	No		1	45%
	Total		22	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.45
Variance	0.26
Standard Deviation	0.51
Total Responses	22

20. Please provide your contact information below:

Name	Address	City	State	Postal Code	Home Phone	Cell Phone	Email Address
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Appendix D: Workshop Invitation

LMU ArT TherApy STUDenT reSeArch WorkShop  
For DepArTMenT ALUMni

# Spirituality, Identity, Creativity & Art Therapy

led by Debra Linesch

January 12

2-5:00pm

LMU  
Marital & Family Therapy Art Studio  
(new location)

Light refreshments will be provided.  
parking is free in the University hall parking garage.

## Appendix E: Consent Form (page 1)

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

# Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation 10-1-13

Loyola Marymount University

Spirituality, Creativity, Identity and Art Therapy

1. I hereby authorize Theresa Crooks to include me in the following research study:  
Spirituality, Creativity, Identity and Art Therapy.
2. I have been asked to participate in a research project which is designed to explore how an art therapist's understanding of God as Creator forms their identity and informs their clinical work. This will last for approximately 3 hours.
3. It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I am a graduate of the Marital and Family Therapy program at Loyola Marymount University and a practicing art therapist.
4. I understand that if I am a subject, I will participate in a workshop to create artwork about my spirituality, creativity, identity and art therapy practice. The investigator will conduct a discussion about the artwork that I create. These procedures have been explained to me by Theresa Crooks.
5. I understand that the workshop will be audio recorded and my artwork will be photographed in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that these recordings and photographs will be used for research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the recordings will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that the photographs of my artwork may be reproduced in the final research paper. I understand that I have the right to review the recordings and photographs made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or deleted in whole or in part.
6. I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts of disclosing personal and private information.
7. I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are expanded knowledge and deeper understanding of the impact that spirituality and a belief in God as Creator has on the identity and practice of art therapists.
8. I understand that Debra Linesch, PhD, MFT, ATR can be reached at 310-338-4562 to answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.



## Appendix E: Consent Form (page 2)

9. If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
10. I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice.
11. I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.
12. I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.
13. I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.
14. I understand that in the event of research related injury, compensation and medical treatment are not provided by Loyola Marymount University.
15. I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Hardy, Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 310-258-5465, david.hardy@lmu.edu.
16. In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

Subject's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Workshop Directives (page 1)

1. Warm-up directive to familiarize participants with materials and build rapport:  
Create a piece of artwork from the materials provided that shows something that is unique about you. (Materials: collage images, different papers, fabric, string/yarn, natural objects, watercolor, pastels...)

2. Discuss warm-up.

3. Discuss research question and quotes from literature review:

“To be fully human is to fully reflect God’s creative...capacities” (Staub, 2013, para 12).

“[Creativity is] a form of worship, a way for creatures to express the divine image in them” (J.R.R. Tolkien quoted by Sunshine, 2010, para 4).

“Every person is born as a creative being, as co-creators with God in the image of God, and all have the need as well as the responsibility to create” (Buckenham, 2010, p. 81).

“Artistic creating is a space of encounter...with an energy other than oneself, that some say is God.” (Buckenham, 2010, p. 85).

“Human creativity is...a process that enables us to see, encounter, grow, enjoy, delight and bring new life...to ourselves, others and the world” (Buckenham, 2010, p. 109).

## Appendix F: Workshop Directives (page 2)

## 4. Research directive:

Create a piece of artwork from the materials provided keeping in mind the research question and quotes read. Additional prompts will be given. As you respond to the prompts, consider the possible connections between each directive and the way that they may build on each other.

- a. Image your experience of your spirituality.
- b. Image your identity as a creative person.
- c. Image how your spirituality and your creativity manifests itself in your clinical work as an art therapist.

## 5. Discuss research directive.

## Appendix G: Workshop Follow-up Questions (page 1)

Dear Spirituality, Creativity, Identity & Art Therapy Workshop Participants--

Thank you all for taking part in the workshop on Sunday. I enjoyed meeting all of you, and appreciate your willingness to share a part of yourself and experiences with me. You may access a slide presentation of the photos I took at the workshop on YouTube at:

<http://youtu.be/7wQiCFnIX10>

Below are questions for you to answer in response to the workshop. Please feel free to answer as briefly or in detail as you wish.

1. Please provide some basic demographic information about yourself:
  - a. Age
  - b. Ethnicity
  - c. Year graduated from LMU
  - d. Work and volunteer experience in practicing Art Therapy
  - e. What you are currently doing in the field of mental health
2. What was your overall experience of the workshop on Spirituality, Creativity, Identity and Art Therapy?
3. How did your experience with creating art affect your ability to express your spirituality and creativity?

## Appendix G: Workshop Follow-up Questions (page 2)

4. How did your participation in a group setting affect your experience of the workshop?
5. Did you discover anything new about yourself, spirituality, creativity and art therapy practice through the workshop? Were there any surprises to you?
6. Do you think it would have been helpful to have something specific in the curriculum in your art therapy education that addressed spirituality? If so, why?
7. Would you be interested in participating in other art therapy workshops on spirituality in the future?

Please email your responses to me by January 31.

Thank you.

Appendix H: Artwork Data Analysis Chart

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Analysis				
	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4
Photograph				
Description				
Media				
Process				
Colors				
Themes				
Metaphors				
Discussion				
Connections				