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## Effectiveness of Digital Response Art

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EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL RESPONSE ART

by

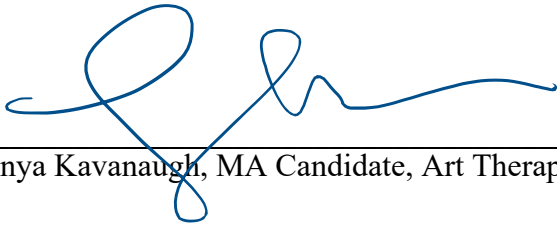
Anya L. Kavanaugh

A research paper presented to the  
FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree  
MASTERS OF ARTS

May 1, 2020

**Signature Page**



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### **Abstract**

This study looks at the effectiveness of digital media to create response art and deepen attunement with adolescent clients as well as develop self-awareness in the therapist. An arts-based qualitative heuristic self-study was used to analyze data gathered over a six-week period. The subject was the researcher/therapist and the data was gathered during the second-year practicum while working with adolescents at a non-public school. Data was gathered through a process of creating two post-session response artworks using video, animation, or digital drawing and a written reflection for each artwork. Nine artworks and eight written reflections were created in total. The data was analyzed using a phenomenological lens and a digital art therapy lens. Certain themes, such as use of color, rhythm and pace, self as subject, client process, progression of affect, management of environment, and representation of containment were analyzed. These themes revealed a high probability for digital media to assist in deepening attunement with an adolescent client and a more limited chance of development of self-awareness.

*Keywords:* digital art, heuristic research, arts-based research, response art, phenomenology, digital response art, art therapy



### **Dedication**

This research is dedicated to past, current, and future art therapists. I hope to inspire more personal use of and experimentation with digital media as a method for creation. I would also like to dedicate this research to art therapists under COVID-19 quarantine. Socially distancing from clients is challenging; however, I hope to show that we can maintain connection to our clients through use of digital technologies. Separating from our studios filled with brushes and paints does not mean that creation has to cease.

### **Acknowledgement**

Thank you to my parents for the constant support and guidance; thank you to my peers and the faculty in the Marital and Family Therapy with a Specialization in Art Therapy program at Loyola Marymount University for witnessing and providing space for professional and personal growth.

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## **Introduction**

### **The Study Topic**

This study utilizes response art created with digital media to deepen my understanding of an adolescent client as well as the potential benefits and faults of digital media. Digital technologies have inundated contemporary culture as a means of communication, connection, expression, and escape. The rapid pace of technological development as well as the expansive nature of the material seems to cause hesitancy and fear within the art therapy field as it contemplates the use of digital interventions with clients (Kapitan, 2009; Orr, 2012). The adolescent in particular uses digital technologies to form their 21st century identity and self-image. In order to attune to the contemporary adolescent, it seems crucial for the art therapist to utilize digital vernacular in (Orr, 2012) and out of session. A personal affinity for digital media and acknowledgement of its pervasive nature led to the development of this research topic. Response art created by the clinician/researcher will be analyzed to assess the impact of technological interventions for self awareness as well as its use as a tool for a deeper clinical understanding of adolescents.

### **Significance of the Study**

The majority of contemporary adolescents seem to use digital technologies in their everyday life. However, many novice and established art therapists seem hesitant to engage in digital interventions. Art therapists who are hesitant may be ignoring a crucial part of the adolescent culture and the therapeutic process may be at a disadvantage due to digital illiteracy (Carlton, 2014; Orr, 2012). Orr (2012) informs readers that art therapists should be familiar with the same tools and language the adolescent uses in order to best assist them in personal growth. Through creating response art with digital media and analyzing the data with a

phenomenological lens, results may show the development of self-awareness about countertransference. This may bridge the gap between clinician and client, establishing a deeper sense of equality and understanding of one another. In addition, analysis of the response art may facilitate dialogue regarding the advantages and disadvantages of digital media. The results of this qualitative self-study may encourage art therapy graduate programs to include investigations of new media in curricula in order to inspire use of technology for personal self-awareness and a deeper clinical practice. As this research was finalized during the COVID-19 outbreak, it is also imperative to consider the benefits of using digital media in art therapy as clinicians, clients, and supervisors transition to telehealth.



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

The review of the literature about digital art therapy (DAT) looks at adolescent development, contemporary DAT ideals in the field, new media options, DAT with the general population, DAT with adolescents, and theories about and uses of response art for clinicians. In terms of development, research finds that identity formation is one of the first developmental tasks of the adolescent (Erikson, 1950; Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014). This formation includes self-image as well as identity through the search for durability and fidelity in social contexts (Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014). However, if events impede development, such as trauma, the authors state the youth may experience identity confusion or foreclosure (Erikson, 1988; Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014). The contemporary adolescent identity forms with digital technologies as an influential and integral factor. Some research encourages digital use as it provides connection to others (Kay, 2018; Cohen, 2013; Huffaker & Calvert, 2017; Whitlock, Powers, & Eckenrode, 2006), while others state it may increase social isolation (Kay, 2018; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009; Whitlock et al, 2006).

Currently, the literature emphasizes the lack of DAT in the field due to resistance and hesitancy among practitioners (Orr, 2012; Kapitan, 2009). Some authors describe fear regarding technological interventions (Kapitan, 2009), while others emphasize the necessity of attuning to adolescent culture in practice (Carlton, 2014; Orr, 2012). New media in the literature varies greatly and includes video, animation, digital drawing applications, digital collaging, blogging, gesture-based technology, and unstructured internet use.

When working with the general population, contemporary research shows DAT assisted with a decrease in social isolation (Orr, 2012; Diggs, Lubas & De Leo, 2015), increased engagement in the therapy process (Orr, 2012; Hallas & Cleaves, 2017), increase in

communication and interpersonal awareness, engagement in perspective taking (Johnson & Alderson, 2008), and development of self-confidence and self-esteem through self-expression (Peterson, Stovall, Elkins, & Parker-Bell, 2005; Hallas & Cleaves, 2017). DAT with adolescents in the literature shows an improvement in therapeutic and social engagement (Dean, Girouard, & Witherspoon, 2019; Daley et al., 2005; Whiteley et al., 2018) associated with a decrease in social isolation (Daley et al., 2005), development of interpersonal awareness (Gardano, 1994), and increased self-confidence and self-esteem through free self-expression (Ehinger, 2009; Dean et al., 2019; Daley et al., 2005; Gardano, 1994; Boniel-Nissim & Barak, 2013).

In terms of response art, the literature encourages creation of art by the clinician in order to contain intense feelings brought about in session. The clinician can become aware of countertransference and enact self-care routines through creation of response art (Fish, 2012; Moon, 1999; Nash, 2019).

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The literature reviewed consists of art and creative therapy, medical, psychiatric, psychological, and computer science journals, books and dissertations. It is important to look at the way therapists are working with adolescents and digital interventions because technology is a large part of the vernacular of contemporary youth. The therapist's ability to be versed in digital language and their willingness to incorporate new media into therapy sessions may strengthen attunement and access to the youth's psychological crises. Utilizing digital art to create response art may assist in deeper attunement between clinician and client.

This review of the art therapy literature surveys research from 2004 to 2019, with one article from 1994, to assess contemporary applications and feelings surrounding DAT. Literature regarding adolescent development does not have such time constraints. The review utilizes a funnel approach in order to fully understand the factors that influence DAT with adolescents. First, authors and philosophies of adolescent development are reviewed. Next, the influence of digital technologies on adolescent development is discussed. DAT, including the art therapy field's current relationship to DAT comes after, along with a review of new media tools stated in the literature. A review of DAT with the general population and DAT with adolescents follows, culminating in a dialogue regarding the theories about and uses for response art as clinicians.

### **Adolescent Development**

The literature articulates that adolescent development revolves around self-image and identity (Erikson, 1950; Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014). Ventegodt and Merrick (2014) define self-image as one's conceptualization of oneself irrespective of social processes. They say it is developed early in life and maturity is necessary in order to fully develop a reflective stance.

According to the authors, a positive self-image may result in a rigid ego that is unwilling to modify and change whereas a negative self-image may result in stunted identity formation. A positive or negative self-image may lead to mental health issues resulting in diminished ability for social functioning, thinking and perceiving. The authors reiterate that the goal is to exist without self-image, which would allow the individual to experience their thoughts and feelings about themselves without necessarily believing in them (Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014).

Identity, on the other hand, is the formation and conceptualization of the self through the social lens, according to Erikson (1988) and Ventegodt and Merrick (2014). They believe the adolescent searches for mentors and philosophies that validate the young person's plight in the community. This confirmation translates reciprocally into the community which solidifies loyalty between youth and community, assisting in social identity formation (Erikson, 1988; 1950). Erikson (1950) continues by saying that in leaving behind childhood tasks while facing adult tasks ahead, the adolescent is primarily concerned with their presentation of identity compared to their internal self-concept. He states that in order to engage in this identification with a community, an adolescent necessarily chooses potentially well-meaning individuals as adversaries (Erikson, 1988). This rejection of what are oftentimes authority figures is an important task in adolescent development as it allows the youth to test the loyalty and durability of idols and philosophies in order to achieve identity formation (Erikson, 1950). Erikson (1950) says that questioning and testing one's social environment in adolescence may be a mimesis of childhood questioning as the youth's body is once again shifting and changing, this time due to puberty.

The physical changes that occur in puberty lend themselves well to intrapsychic self-reflection in order to psychologically adapt to the changes, as stated by Ventegodt and Merrick

(2014). However, the authors state the adolescent is still developmentally young and intellectual skills may not be refined enough to instinctively self-reflect and adapt. Therefore, they believe the adolescent may need guidance through puberty in order to match self-image with identity (Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014). The ego is comprised of one's self-image, which Ventegodt and Merrick (2014) state does not include sexual identity since self-image is not a social formation. However, they argue that internal tension regarding sexual identity may cause identity confusion in terms of social, sexual and mental functioning (Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014).

Erikson (1988) suggests that during the physical and mental changes an adolescent experiences, they seek consistency through community engagement, educational curriculum, artistic inquiry, and/or honest engagement with others. He says this test of fidelity and durability mirrors the adolescent's task of challenging authority figures as a means of finding continuity to support their identity formation (Erikson, 1950).

If an adolescent experiences abuse, neglect, or trauma in childhood or thereafter, the literature notes there is serious risk of identity confusion and development of an idiosyncratic self-image (Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014; Erikson, 1988). It states this may result in a disturbed personality that may be expressed as emotional lability, incongruence, and/or maladaptive boundaries and unformed integrity (Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014). Erikson (1988) claims that if the adolescent's search for durability goes unmet, the youth may experience indecisiveness regarding their position in the community, resulting in identity diffusion. He cautions about another developmental danger: choosing an identity too quickly, also known as foreclosure. This preemptive formation may result in a decreased identity plasticity and ability to try on different roles, which may result in mental health concerns and loss of identity (Erikson, 1950).

### ***The Interaction Between Adolescent Development and Digital Media***

The internet in its current state in 2019 is inherently a social entity according to the literature (Kay, 2018; Cohen, 2013; Huffaker & Calvert, 2017; Whitlock, Powers, & Eckenrode, 2006). Kay (2018) believes logging onto the internet leads users to worlds far beyond their computer and chair, or wherever they may be with their device, whether that is a computer, smartphone, tablet, or wearable technology. He says access to these varying and diverse worlds on the internet can assist users in cultural awareness and exposure (Kay, 2018). Multiple authors found users are more able to find like-minded individuals (Kay, 2018; Whitlock et al., 2006) regardless of their immediate and surrounding environment. Whitlock et al. (2006) show interactions online can bring people together to support one another in tough situations and may be easier to do so due to removal of social codes witnessed in real-time. When facial gestures and body language are taken out of the equation, Valkenburg and Peter (2009) and Mazur and Kozarian (2010) say participants may feel less inhibited and more able to converse about intimate topics. Valkenburg and Peter (2009) continue to say mutual disclosure of intimate topics between adolescents can assist in the development of high-quality friendships.

Within this physical anonymity on the internet, Huffaker and Calvert (2017) saw adolescents were open to discussing sexual orientation and/or identity. In their study that examined online identity construction and how teenagers present and express themselves on online blogs, half of all adolescents discuss sexual identity, love relationships, and crushes. They found a large percentage of the adolescents that discussed homosexual identity were male, perhaps indicating the internet is a safer place for males to discuss sexual identity than IRL (in real life) (Huffaker & Calvert, 2009).

The literature shows that social media occupies a large percentage of how the internet is used. According to Kay (2018), users no longer solely consume via the internet, but oftentimes

contribute to it. With the advent and strong presence of social media, he states the adolescent's development of individuation has turned into a "networked individualism" (Kay, 2018, p. 267). He describes this concept as the adolescent forming a self in accordance to and with the messages output by people who may have nothing in common with them. The literature comes together to agree that the inundation of content posting and absorbing philosophies from others may lead the adolescent to put their self-image formation on hold to develop a social identity (Kay, 2018; Hevern, 2004; Mazur & Kozarian, 2010).

Multiple researchers found blogging online to be a popular means of communication for adolescents (Mazur & Kozarian, 2010; Hevern, 2004; Huffaker & Calvert, 2017). Similar to the way in which individuals use a paper diary, Mazur and Kozarian (2010) showed blogs serve as a canvas for expression of thoughts, emotions, and activities. Huffaker and Calvert (2017) found adolescent blogs are usually personal in nature, disclosing autobiographical information that is true to self rather than augmenting oneself. However, Mazur and Kozarian (2010) found that adolescents prefer to express a more flattering version of themselves, negating their challenging sides while simultaneously attempting to shock readers into appreciation. Researchers state the blog functions as an ongoing, tracked exploration of oneself (Mazur & Kozarian, 2010; Hevern, 2004) and assists in creating a multidimensional formation of the adolescent self (Hevern, 2004). This personal and relatively solitary act of content creation forms a facilitated social identity. Through page layout, design, music, language choice and content, the adolescent self-expresses an impression of self, causing the audience/reader/viewer to ask, who is this person? (Huffaker & Calvert; Mazur & Kozarian, 2010; Hevern, 2004).

The literature reveals digital technology's adverse and advantageous impacts on adolescent development. For example, multiple authors found there may be a decrease in overall

well-being, social withdrawal, delayed identity formation, and inundation with messages (Kay, 2018; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009; Whitlock et al., 2006), possibly exposing vulnerable youth to maladaptive subcultures such as self-harm (Whitlock et al., 2006). On the other hand, researchers discovered digital communication may increase closeness in relationships and improve well-being (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009; Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, Kraut, & Gross, 2001), and increase sociability, independence, and involvement in political issues (Kay, 2018).

### **Digital Art Therapy**

Using digital means in the art therapy process is called Digital Art Therapy, or DAT. According to Orr (2012), the current status of DAT is a general lack of use and competence as to digital media. She found that in 2011, 56% of art therapists were not using technology with clients (Orr, 2012). Kapitan (2009) postulates that this hesitation and resistance to using digital technologies in art therapy may stem from therapists' fears regarding the conceptual and material vastness inherent in the technological media. Carlton (2014) gives the example that within one app, a user may be able to choose from hundreds of brushes. The virtual canvas, art therapists argue, lacks the sensory qualities of creating with tangible art materials and is therefore inferior, perpetuating resistance to introduce new media into the therapeutic space (Hsin & Garner, 2013; Austin, 2009; Orr, 2012).

Orr (2012) and Carlton (2014) found that a principal culprit for an art therapist's resistance to use DAT is the lack of training and/or education curriculum regarding use of digital technology as a method for intervention procedures. Carlton (2014) discovered those who do engage in new media interventions with clients are often self-taught and isolated within the art therapy field.



The literature states that neglecting digital technologies in therapeutic work with adolescents possibly unintentionally ignores a large and important part of an adolescent's lived experience (Carlton, 2014; Orr, 2012). In order to sit with a client and meet them where they are, Orr (2012) says the art therapist needs to become familiar with the same tools the adolescent uses in order to best assist them in personal growth.

### ***Digital Media Options***

In reviewing the literature on digital media options, there is a seemingly wide variety of material opportunities for technological interventions. Daley et al. (2005) details a case study working with an adolescent boy with psychosis and cites general internet usage as a therapeutic intervention. The client used a Virtual Pet website to play games, socialize with peers, and join chat rooms for other virtual pet owners. The researcher states the client also used the internet to join chat rooms for other individuals who experience similar seizures as the client. He found the client used the internet to create his own website and stay in contact with his inpatient psychiatrist after termination (Daley et al., 2005). Daley et al. (2005) found the client was able to ignore the psychotic voices when he engaged in computer based activities.

The therapeutic value of online blogging for adolescents was shown by Boniel-Nissim and Barak (2013). Potash (2009) explains through two case studies how pop culture imagery can be used to create personally meaningful imagery. Through a quasi-experimental mixed-methods study with 12 pairs of volunteers with dementia and their informal caregivers, Tyack, Camic, Heron and Hulbert (2017) developed an art-viewing app to allow dementia patients to reminisce about past experiences without triggering traumatic memories. The app contains over 100 images of objects, paintings, and photography representing early Greek and Egyptian objects, representation and abstract European art from the 16th to the 21st centuries, and photography of

urban and rural scenes (Tyack et al., 2017). In Whiteley, Brown, Mena, Craker and Arnold's (2018) research, app developers created a mobile gaming app for youth with HIV to increase adherence to treatment and empower the youth.

According to the literature, preexisting tablet, computer, and phone applications serve as tools for digital interventions. Kruger and Swanepoel (2017) discuss the process of creating digital metaphoric imagery in trauma treatment with four female adolescents. The artworks created consisted of a combination of pictures of animals copied and pasted from the internet as well as digital drawing (Kruger & Swanepoel, 2017). Diggs, Lubas, and De Leo (2015) review the benefits and disadvantages to using applications in the art therapy process. Their research discusses a wide variety of applications, such as: Craft Artist 2, FotoFusion5 Enhanced, Fotowall, Google Picasa, MemoryMixer 4, Mymemories Suite, Photo Collage Studio, Photoshop Element 12, PhotoMix 5.3, Photoscape, Photovisi, Picture Collage Maker Pro, Shape Collage, Smilebox, Studio Scrap 4, The Print Shop Deluxe 3.0. According to the research, these applications range from over \$100 to free (Diggs et al., 2015). Digital drawing applications were used with adults with developmental disabilities in a phenomenological art-based study by Darewych, Carlton, and Farrugie (2015). The researchers used a Lenovo Yoga 13.3-inch windows 8 Convertible Ultrabook and a Samsung 7-inch Galaxy Tab 3 Android Touch tablet with the patients. Interventions utilized apps such as: ArtRage, Fresh Paint, Crayola Art Studio, Coloring Mandalas, Sand Draw, ZenBrush, Sticker Tales, PuzzleTouch, Number Link, and GS Kids! Shapes N Colors (Darewych et al., 2015).

In reviewing the literature, the use of video in therapy can vary greatly depending on intent. Johnson and Alderson (2008) used therapeutic filmmaking to combine talk, art, and narrative therapies into one. Clients used video cameras to create stream of consciousness-like

films about their worlds (Johnson & Alderson, 2008). Ehinger (2009) used green screen technology with at-risk adolescents to tell a narrative of a dream space. An adolescent client with T-Cell Leukemia created a video narrative in Pereira, Muench and Lawton's (2017) research. Gardano (1994) engaged in short-term video therapy with a group of adolescent girls with adjustment problems. The researcher utilized video to have the girls role-play social situations and discuss themes that appeared (Gardano, 1994).

A more nuanced technical intervention found in the literature is gesture-based technology. Hallas and Cleaves (2017) used sensory technologies with adults with developmental disabilities that allowed for physical involvement without tangible material. For example, clients were introduced to an interactive projection of a sun/cloud application that allowed them to interact with the large-scale projected images on the ground. The Somantics 'paint' application was projected onto the wall, where colors would appear and change according to movement that was made in front of the sensor. An iPad was plugged into a projector and passed from client to client so each member could witness the other's mark on the iPad (Hallas & Cleaves, 2017).

In Dean, Girouard and Witherspoon's (2019) research, The Animation Project (TAP) is utilized in school and clinical settings to engage adolescents in digital animation training. The program worked with drama therapists to assess embodiment within the process of animation. Professional animators assist with the development of technical animation skills (Dean et al., 2019).

In summation, the literature displays that through general internet usage, blogging, digital collaging and drawing, video, gesture based technology, and animation, clients were able to use new media as therapeutic interventions. Populations varied from school-age children, teens,

adults and older adults and despite varying cognitive and developmental ages, participants were able to engage with the technological material.

### ***Digital Art Therapy with the General Population***

Using digital technologies in therapy sessions with clients was shown by the literature to lower client resistance to treatment (Orr, 2012; Hallas & Cleaves, 2017). Peterson, Stovall, Elkins, and Parker-Bell (2005) discussed in a survey of art therapist's own use of digital technologies that special effects tools allow resistant clients to explore art media without fear about ruining the final product. Having the power to control the technology reduced resistance in Hallas and Cleaves's (2017) work with adults with developmental disabilities. The sensory nature of digital technologies, although often cited as a disadvantage (Hsin & Garner, 2013; Orr, 2012), can serve as an advantage for sensory-sensitive clients. For example, some individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and/or developmental disabilities may be sensitive to sensory items and may not enjoy working with tangible art materials. Darewych et al. (2015) found digital art materials served as a valuable mess-free replacement to tangible art materials without sacrificing psychological projection. The literature conceded individuals who engaged in DAT experienced growth relating to creativity, current emotional state, overall well-being, and social skills (Darewych et al., 2015; Austin, 2009, Johnson & Alderson, 2008; Tyack et al., 2017).

In addition to lowering resistance, DAT has been shown in research to alter community engagement by decreasing social isolation (Orr, 2012; Diggs et al., 2015) and increasing interpersonal awareness through engagement in a shared activity (Hallas & Cleaves, 2017). DAT, particularly the use of video in therapy, was shown by Johnson and Alderson to lend itself to shifting clients' perspectives through re-watching the videos made in session. In the playback,

clients witnessed thoughts and behaviors in a new way in order to change future interactions (Johnson & Alderson, 2008).

In support of DAT, the literature found the freedom of choice and control in digital technologies allows clients to experiment without fear, building self-confidence and self-esteem (Peterson et al., 2005; Hallas & Cleaves, 2017). Using prior knowledge of digital technologies gave adults with developmental disabilities a sense of empowerment in Darewych et al. (2015). This technical prowess of technology propelled clients using DAT in the study to independently choose apps, colors, brushes, images from the internet with ease, building their sense of mastery (Darewych et al., 2015). Orr (2012) showed mastery in DAT assisted in client psycho-social growth, ability for self expression, and an increase in self-awareness. If clients were new to DAT, Johnson and Alderson (2008) found gaining mastery over a new skill allowed for psychological growth and change. Peterson et al. (2005) encouraged the use of the undo and redo functions on technological media, as they found the functions allowed clients to experiment without fear, a confidence unavailable with other media. Hallas and Cleaves (2017) declare the separation from person to machine allows for further installment of confidence for DAT clients, as the technology serves as an automatic container for challenging emotions and conversations.

### ***Digital Art Therapy with Adolescents***

Similarly to using DAT with the general population, the consensus stated in the literature is that using digital media in session can increase engagement and reduce resistance to therapy (Dean et al., 2019; Daley et al., 2005; Whiteley et al., 2018; Gardano, 1994). Focusing on the technical aspects of the digital material can serve as a less threatening way of facilitating the initial stages of treatment (Dean et al., 2019) and contribute to a stronger therapeutic alliance (Daley et al., 2005). Much of the literature found that DAT contributed to developmental growth

(Gardano, 1994; Whiteley et al., 2018; Boniel-Nissim & Barak, 2013; Pereira et al., 2017; Potash, 2009) through contained self-expression, reflection, and adherence to treatment. However, Potash (2009) states that the immediate gratification inherent in the way digital technologies are navigated by adolescents may limit the slowness necessary for self-discovery.

Researchers found the communicative aspects of contemporary technologies allows for an increase in community engagement and support (Daley et al., 2005; Whiteley et al., 2018, Pereira et al., 2017; Boniel-Nissim & Barak, 2013). Authors state that adolescents are able to share their psycho-social concerns with peers on online blogs and decrease social isolation (Daley et al., 2005), increase knowledge regarding diagnosis and treatment (Whiteley et al., 2018) and share works made in DAT to increase presence of support systems (Pereira et al., 2017). However, Pereira et al. (2017) states that DAT facilitators who encourage sharing works made in therapy with an audience should be weary of cyberbullying, access to private information, and potential breach of confidentiality. Ehinger (2009) states that adolescents are more interested in the communicative and entertainment aspects of technological devices than they are interested in the digital media itself. Gardano's (1994) use of DAT allowed for an improvement in communication skills between adolescents and discussion of internal conflicts that may have been too difficult to access directly. Gardano (1994) advises that the social advantages in DAT can lead adolescents to an advancement of interpersonal awareness as they may have the ability to observe non-verbal and verbal interactions through video playback. Researchers state that the reading and re-reading capabilities of blogging online allows adolescents to search for identity formation in the personal and interpersonal context with visible proof (Boniel-Nissim & Barak, 2013). Advancing social engagement through DAT can also allow adolescents to enact and experiment with potential roles according to Dean et al. (2019)

and Gardano (1994). Multiple authors contribute that through video and animation DAT, adolescents were given an opportunity to role play and give feedback in a safe environment (Gardano, 1994), leading to formation of self (Dean et al., 2019) and ability to problem solve independently (Gardano, 1994). The literature suggests that having an audience to witness one's social enactments and therapeutic growth may lead to greater self-confidence (Dean et al., 2019) and validation by a community that may be neglecting them (Ehinger, 2009).

Through multiple research projects, working with DAT gave adolescents an improvement in self-confidence and self-esteem (Ehinger, 2009; Daley et al., 2005; Gardano, 1994; Boniel-Nissim & Barak, 2013). Through role plays and being vulnerable with each other in Boniel-Nissim and Barak (2013), they were able to strengthen peer interactions leading to greater self-esteem and self-awareness. Having a sense of control over the DAT process, whether through making the decisions to create a video in Gardano (1994), using a mobile game application to fight HIV with weapons in Whiteley et al. (2018), or sharing one's video narrative online in Pereira et al. (2017), led to empowerment and improved personal growth.

Free self-expression in DAT literature with adolescents takes place through the projective and embodiment qualities of digital animation (Dean et al., 2019), accessible re-reading and editing of online blogs (Boniel-Nissim & Barak, 2013), and creation of video self-narratives and sharing them with peers (Pereira et al., 2017). Potash (2009) warns of the potentially restrictive qualities of pop culture on free expression as it can decrease creative thought and projection. Boniel-Nissim and Barak (2013) contribute that the anonymity available to youth when using internet based DAT allows for confidence in sharing one's self without IRL social codes. Researchers say the familiarity of using digital media in their personal lives can assist in safe therapeutic self expression (Daley et al., 2005; Gardano, 1994).

## **Response Art**

Response art is the creation of artwork by a clinician in the presence of a client during a session, in private after the client has left, and/or in supervision regarding treatment with a client. The literature refers to the importance of creating response art in order to find release of strong feelings elicited in session with a client (Fish, 2012; Miller, 2007; Moon, 1999; Nash, 2019). The art acts as a container for the strong feelings, allowing the therapist to continue working without holding onto lingering feelings (Fish, 2012; Moon, 1999; Nash, 2019). Having released one's immediate reactions into response art, the literature states the therapist is more capable of being open and accessible in the therapeutic relationship (Fish, 2012) as well as maintaining objective distance from the client's issues (Moon, 1999). The response art then serves as a concrete tool to illuminate and examine countertransference (Fish, 2012; Miller, 2007).

An examination of countertransference through response art can aid in facilitating empathic engagement with a client (Fish, 2012; Moon, 1999). Moon (1999) encourages the use of response art to gain a deeper understanding of the client and get to know them from the artist's perspective. This access to a client from the artist's perspective that illuminates countertransference and facilitates empathic understanding can deepen the interpersonal relationship between therapist and client (Fish, 2012; Moon, 1999; Nash, 2019).

In addition to creating a deeper understanding of a client, the literature states response art can serve as a mindful intervention for the therapist as it encourages important introspection regarding a particular moment in time (Fish, 2012; Fish, 2019). This turn inward through response art can assist the therapist in negating the development of vicarious trauma (Nash, 2019) as well as building the skill of self-care to find balance as a clinician (Fish, 2012, Nash, 2019).



## Summary

When working with adolescents in DAT, there are many factors to consider. The first is the developmental tasks and challenges of the youth. The literature discusses identity formation as the most immediate task. It states that identity is a social process whereas self-image is formed independently. The adolescent seeks durability and fidelity of others through accepting and rejecting philosophies. Authors claim that if the adolescent incurs obstacles, such as trauma, they may experience identity confusion, leading to an unfulfilled identity formation. If the adolescent chooses an identity too quickly and does not have time to experiment with multiple roles, they may experience identity rigidity and may be unable to complete the developmental phase. In terms of the interaction of adolescent development with digital means, research places contemporary technology as a social process that allows for closer communication between users; however, opposing authors state that it may result in an interruption of the development of autonomy as the adolescent may be more concerned with social processes due to the high prevalence of social media in youth culture. Some research states that utilization of digital means during adolescent development may increase sociability and connectedness, whereas others claim it may increase social isolation and withdrawal.

The current status of DAT in the field according to the literature is that there exists significant resistance to the use of new media in session due to a lack of education and training, intimidation of the vastness of technology, and belief the DAT that removes the sensory qualities necessary in art therapy. However, multiple authors state that it is necessary to become versed in DAT in order to connect to adolescent culture.

Media options in the literature regarding DAT vary greatly. Researchers use video art to tell narratives and engage in fictional role plays, animation, digital drawing apps, digital collaging, blogging, gesture-based technology, and unstructured internet use.

In working with DAT with the general population, many themes emerged from the literature. There is a consensus that participants are likely to remain engaged in the therapy process due to sensory specifications and psychological growth. In terms of the community, the literature suggests social isolation decreases in DAT as it increases communication and interpersonal awareness. Through DAT, participants in the research were able to use feedback from videos to gain new perspectives. Overall, the literature refers to the development of self-confidence and self-esteem through empowerment and mastery over a new skill. Free expression is not limited in DAT, according to DAT researchers, as users are able to utilize specialized functions such as re-do and are able to feel more distanced from reality and overwhelming expression.

There are many similarities in the literature when working with adolescents compared to working with the general population. For example, the literature refers to positive therapeutic engagement when using DAT with adolescents, stating the embodiment and interactive nature of digital technologies encourages participation as well as psychological growth. Overall, DAT in the literature regarding adolescents had a social engagement as it decreased social isolation and increased communication between peers. There was mention of development of interpersonal awareness as the adolescent was able to explore roles and use an audience to gain perspective and feedback. Similarly to working with the general population, DAT with adolescents appeared to increase self-confidence and self-esteem according to the research as it increased empowerment through utilization of pre-established technical skills with digital media. The free

expression of DAT with adolescents was cited to stem from the anonymous nature of digital work, the familiarity and safety the adolescent felt when using digital technologies, the psychological distance possible as well as the self-exposure opportunities.

According to the literature, response art allows clinicians to find relief from difficult feelings that arise in treatment with clients. The art acts as a container, allowing the clinician to externalize lingering feelings. This externalization provides a foundation for the illumination of countertransference and the development of empathic engagement with clients. The literature states that response art allows for deeper development of interpersonal understanding of clients as well as an important introspection for the clinician. This introspection through response art can build a self-care routine that can counteract the development of vicarious trauma.

### **Future Directions**

The literature covers a variety of new media options; however, the field and the literature may benefit from further research into additional digital means. For example, research is needed regarding the use of photography, virtual reality, augmented reality, wearable technology and audio recording amongst many others as treatment interventions. In order to deepen the field's understanding of DAT overall, replication studies are needed as well as larger-scale controlled studies. Following Orr's (2012) investigations, art therapy graduate programs should instill curriculum studies involving digital interventions in treatment in order to encourage and enrich DAT research and practice in the field. As telemedicine becomes the new normal due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, there is much needed research regarding the use of DAT in distance sessions.

### **Research Approach**

The research approach for this study is an arts-based qualitative heuristic self-study in which I will be analyzing digital response art to an adolescent client through a phenomenological lens. Within the phenomenological lens, other theoretical subsections surface, such as existential and process. Sofaer (1999) states that qualitative methods are beneficial in the beginning phases of analysis as it is a useful tool for researching phenomena. In order to reflect on response art created post-session and after processing, Sofaer (1999) suggests that qualitative methods allow researchers to witness the context as well as the events themselves. In this way, response art can be analyzed as a spontaneous creation and/or after further processing. The phenomenological lens can be utilized to witness deeper contextual information, such as existential meaning and importance of process.

Heuristic research, according to Bloomgarden and Netzer (1998) requires active participation of the researcher as a subject for inquiry. Through a phenomenological approach where the researcher makes the art, this can lead to personal growth as well as deeper knowledge regarding the community as a whole. The clinician/researcher creating digital response art will gain knowledge about themselves as well as the adolescent in question. In particular, the clinician/researcher will gain information about the manner in which adolescents can interact with digital technologies. An arts-based approach lends itself well to facilitating a qualitative heuristic self-study as art is inherently subjective, existential, and phenomenological (Bloomgarden & Netzer, 1998).

## Methods

### Definition of Terms

The following sections outline specific terms used in the literature review. Understanding the dictionary and functional definitions to these terms are integral to contextualizing the research.

#### *Digital Media*

The term *media* in terms of technology may tend toward the definition of information spread by the press and news sites. This is not applicable in this study. For this research, *digital media* has more similarities to the term *artistic medium*. According to the Tate Museum website, *medium* is defined as the type of art, whether painting, sculpture or printmaking, and the materials the art is made from (“Art term: Medium,” n.d.). With this in mind, *digital media* refers to art created through technological means, such as via computer, video camera, phone, tablet, photography, LCD screen, and so on (“Definition of Digital Media,” 2011). The research uses this definition of digital media to refer to the application of any technological device to create art as well as the resulting art product itself. Synonyms include: digital art, digital material, and digital medium.

#### *Digital Art Therapy*

Malchiodi (2011) defines digital art therapy as the therapist’s utilization of digital media with clients to create art and advance therapeutic treatment. Within this research, Malchiodi’s (2011) definition is applicable as digital art therapy is understood as using technology to create art and serve as therapeutic interventions.

#### *Countertransference*

The intense positive or negative emotions that arise within the therapist in response to a client's projection is referred to as countertransference (Dosamantes-Alperson, 1987).

Dosamantes-Alperson (1987) explains countertransference as parts of the therapist's personality that may impede treatment, resulting in possible blind spots or prejudices.

### ***Response Art***

Artwork created by therapists to contain or explore clinical treatment with clients is referred to as response art (Fish, 2019). Fish (2019) explains response art is used to facilitate introspection and maintain connected to the artist within the art therapist through art making.

### **Design of Study**

The following sections detail the components of the qualitative methods utilized in this research. The design of the study is a heuristic art-based inquiry utilizing my art response in the form of digital media intended to deepen the researcher/therapist's understanding of a client's experience as well as adolescent use of digital material.

The design of the study is a heuristic art-based inquiry utilizing digital media to create response art. The data will be created after examining documentation of artifacts from art therapy sessions with a client, such as artwork created and clinical notes. Subsections within the design of the study include: sampling, gathering of data and analysis of data.

### ***Sampling***

For this study, the subject was myself as researcher and art therapist/trainee. The data was gathered and analyzed during second-year practicum while working with adolescents who have experienced significant adversity at a non-public school. The creation of art responses occurred from January 22 to February 25, 2020. I decided to utilize digital media as the means for art-based inquiry in order to deepen my understanding of the adolescent experience and their use of

technology as a means for communication and expression. In order to examine countertransference and personal feelings about the client, I engaged in response art with digital technologies and written reflections.

### ***Gathering of Data***

Data was collected during a six-week period from January 22 to February 25, 2020 during clinical practicum training at a non-public school. During this time, I engaged in art and talk therapy with a 17-year-old client. I engaged in creating digital works of art under a 15-minute time constraint after meeting with a client, an un-timed piece created at the end of the week, and written reflections for both processes. The approach to the post-session digital work was largely spontaneous to attune to immediate thoughts and feelings about the client experience. The un-timed work, on the other hand, originated with a planned and formed concept in order to express thoughts about the session after having time to process more deeply. For each artwork made, a written reflection was created after the making of the art piece in order to cognitively contextualize the artwork.

The client was chosen based on their active involvement in the art therapy process and their reliability in terms of weekly attendance. My reflective art pieces were intended to express my personal feelings about the weekly sessions, focusing on emotional reactions. Ten art pieces in total were gathered as data.

### ***Analysis of Data***

Information will be gathered through creation of 15-minute timed response art after each session with the client, untimed response art in the comfort of my living quarters at the end of the week, and respective written reflections. A phenomenological lens will be utilized in order to analyze the artworks created. The artwork will be compared and contrasted in multiple ways: the

spontaneous post-session artwork with the more formed pieces, the spontaneous works altogether, the formed pieces altogether, and the entire series as a whole. The respective written reflections will be included in the compare and contrast process. This process is to explore for emergent themes using a phenomenological lens to deepen my understanding of the client and how digital media may be beneficial or disadvantageous to understanding the adolescent.

Themes will be double checked through re-examination of data and the researcher will find clear examples of themes within the data. The written reflections will be analyzed alongside the art-products in order to provide context to the phenomenological experience of creating digital in response to therapy sessions with an adolescent client. Data analysis from the art-making and writing will be member checked by researcher and research mentor in order to ensure accuracy before publication.



## Results

### Presentation of Data

During the six week period between January 22 and February 25, 2020 I engaged in five psychotherapy sessions with a 17-year-old client at a non-public school. In total, I created nine post-session digital response artworks and eight respective written reflections. Four of the nine artworks were created under a 15-minute time limit immediately after meeting with the client. Five of the artworks were created without a time limit at the end of the week in the privacy of my living quarters or at my research institution. The eight written reflections were created at the end of the week after creation of the respective response artworks at my research institution. The following table (Table 1) displays the process and timeline in which the data was recorded:

**Table 1**

#### *Data Timeline*

Session with client	First response art: post-session	Second response art: end of week	First written reflection	Second written reflection
1	Video	Animation	Written	
2	Digital Drawing	Video	Written	Written
3		Animation		Written
4	Digital Drawing	Video	Written	Written
5	Digital Drawing	Animation	Written	Written

The data will be presented chronologically, starting with session one and ending with session five. Within the descriptions of each session, I will break down the data with the following subsections:

1. Perception of the session
2. First response art: intention and response to session
3. First response art: description
4. First response art: written reflection

5. Second Response art: intention and response to session
6. Second Response art: description
7. Second Response art: written reflection

### ***Session 1***

**Perception of Session.** During the first session recorded for the purpose of this research, which was the 16th session in art therapy treatment with me, the client and I worked on creating a book comprised of the artwork she had made in treatment. The intention of the intervention was to initiate integration of her self-concept. My impression of the client's process was one of intense focus and perseverance. I was mesmerized by the client's use of a hole punch. The echoing quality of the action resonated with me throughout the session.

**First Response Art: Intent and Response.** The intention for the first post-session response video was to directly experience the materials the client was utilizing (hole punch and paper) to build empathy and personal understanding of the client's process. The piece is an amplification of the cadence of the client's use of the hole punch and the manner in which the sound occupied the therapy room.

**First Response Art: Description.** The video is a 15-minute video of myself hole-punching a border around cardstock paper at a slow, steady pace. The video was filmed by propping up an iPad against a stack of papers on a cabinet adjacent to the table. As the subject of the video, I am sitting in the chair the client normally sits in during session. The video records my profile from my left side (see Figure 1). My affect at the start of the video is relatively flat and focused. The video is quiet except for the microphone static and the echoing sound of the hole punch. The sound of the hole punch takes place in a rhythmic, repetitive manner. At about a quarter way through the video, it seems as though my right hand engaging in the hole punching

starts to tense up more than in the beginning. I start to sigh, take more breaks, and my posture changes from rigid and upright to slouched with high shoulders. As the video progresses, my body starts to move and tense along with the action of the hole-punching. My eye, nose, and mouth begin to twitch simultaneously with the sound of the hole punch. Halfway through the video, I empty the hole punch of its contents for the second time and continue the process of hole punching borders around cardstock. My breaks and facial twitching continue at an increasing rate. The rhythm of the sound of the hole punching remains constant (excluding the breaks). Starting three-quarters of the way through the video, along with my body tensing with each hole punch, the cardstock in my left-hand starts to rattle. I let out an emphatic sigh, stack and count the papers I hole punched, and continue. Nearing the end of the video, the hole punching process seems to lose its systematic rhythm between my emphatic sighing and vigorous rattling of the paper. At 14:45 I finish a hole-punched border, quickly throw the paper and hole punch down on the table, lean back, look at my hands, rub them together, and stop the video at 14:51 (Figure 2).

### Figure 1

*Session 1 First Response Art Still #1*



**Figure 2***Session 1 First Response Art Still #2*

**First Response Art: Written Reflection.** Client and Art Therapist worked together to complete her book comprised of the artwork done in session up to this point. Client had already measured where to punch the holes. In this session, client hole punched her work. At first, she seemed afraid. She'd let out gasps of distress, afraid she'd mess it up. Eventually her body language changed as it seemed more relaxed. I watched for the 30+ minutes the entire hole punching process. I was mesmerized by the repetitive sound. She and I had processed each page already, so I let her work without saying anything. I thought the hole punching process would go a lot faster. I understand now she had to go at her pace, reminiscent of the pace in the video, to ensure proper placement but also because it's painful! The palm of my hand was sore and beet red at the end of 15 minutes. I was angry by the end and said "F--- it" to myself and gave up. I felt lost in the process but the physicality interfered greatly. I felt my face muscles tighten as I'd

use the hole punch. Unlike my experience, the client was able to use the process to integrate her emotional states whereas I was left frustrated. She was given closure. Pain for growth.

The video seems meaningless, the task at hand seems meaningless. It is impossible to watch the whole thing. It would drive anyone nuts to watch the whole video. Why is she hole punching around the edges of these pieces of paper? It's like the waiting game. It seems meaningless but in the context of the room it seems like there is intention.

**Second Response Art: Intent and Response.** The second response work is a nine second animation made on the iPad with the Apple Pencil using the application *Flipaclick*. The intention of the work was to focus more deeply on the way in which the session progressed treatment goals, that is the way in which the client was able to organize her emotional self-concept through creating a book using her own artwork. It is a response to the manner in which the client discusses emotions through colors as well as the chosen sequence of her book.

**Second Response Art: Description.** The animation starts with 6 small differently colored dashes scattered on the page. There is black, green, blue, pink, orange, and red. They represent different emotions according to the client's definitions. Within the first second of the animation, the colors quickly explode into various shapes. Black becomes a circle, green a long zig zag, red and orange are curly lines, blue is wavy, and pink becomes a curved line. As the animation continues, the black circle almost immediately dominates the most space, growing so large in size it occupies about 90% of the picture frame within the first second of the animation (Figure 3). The black ball rapidly moves from the left side of the screen to the right side with only a few of the other colors remaining visible. When the black ball hits the right side of the screen, it shrinks in size almost as quickly as it grew and becomes a line-drawing of a circle. As the black shape shrinks, so do the other colors. By the third second of the animation, the colors

have reverted back to small dashes, resembling their beginnings. The dashes then dance around the page and grow in size to become straight horizontal lines that reach from the left side of the screen all the way to the right side. The lines are all equal in thickness except for the black line. The black line is about two to three times thicker than the rest. For the last four seconds of the animation, the horizontal lines wiggle up and down in their respective locations until the animation comes to an end (Figure 4).

**Second Response Art: Written Reflection.** There is no written reflection for the second response artwork for session 1.

### *Session 2*

**Perception of Session.** Session two took place eight days after the first one. The client and I used watercolor to discuss dreams and nightmares and used index cards to discuss triggers, thoughts/feelings, and actions in response to jealousy. The goal for the session was to increase positive self-talk and build insight. I felt as though the topics of conversation were anxiety inducing for the client and the session required more containment.

**First Response Art: Intent and Response.** The intention for the first response art was largely spontaneous to attune to any immediate personal feelings or countertransference that arose during the session. The digital drawing responds to the session by representing the way in which the client and I discussed her dreams and nightmares and how we used art to work through her fears.

**First Response Art: Description.** Two figures are seated next to each other (Figure 5). They seem to be facing forward with their knees oriented toward one another, revealing only their backs. Only one figure is recognizable as a figure. They are on the right-hand side and drawn with energetic black lines layered with white marks to form a curly-haired dark skinned

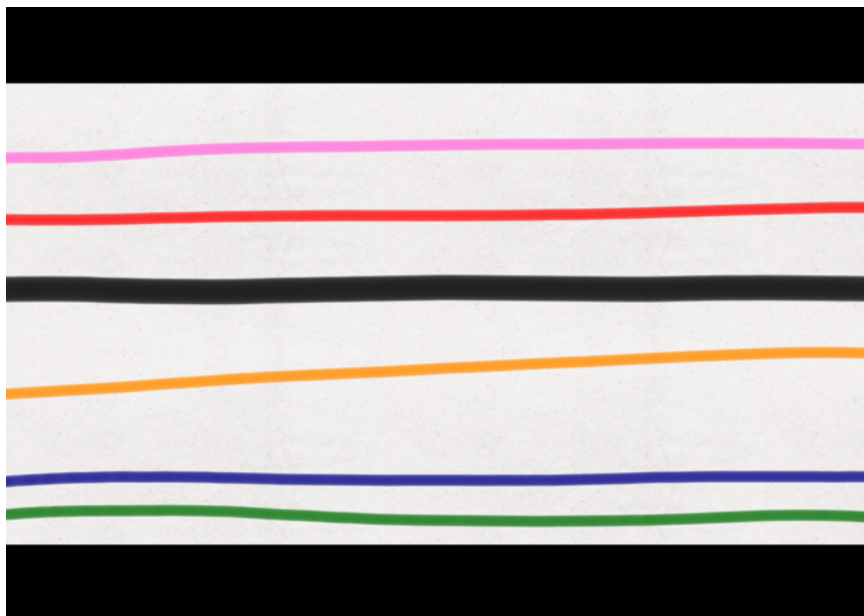
**Figure 3**

*Session 1 Second Response Art Still #1*



**Figure 4**

*Session 1 Second Response Art Still #2*

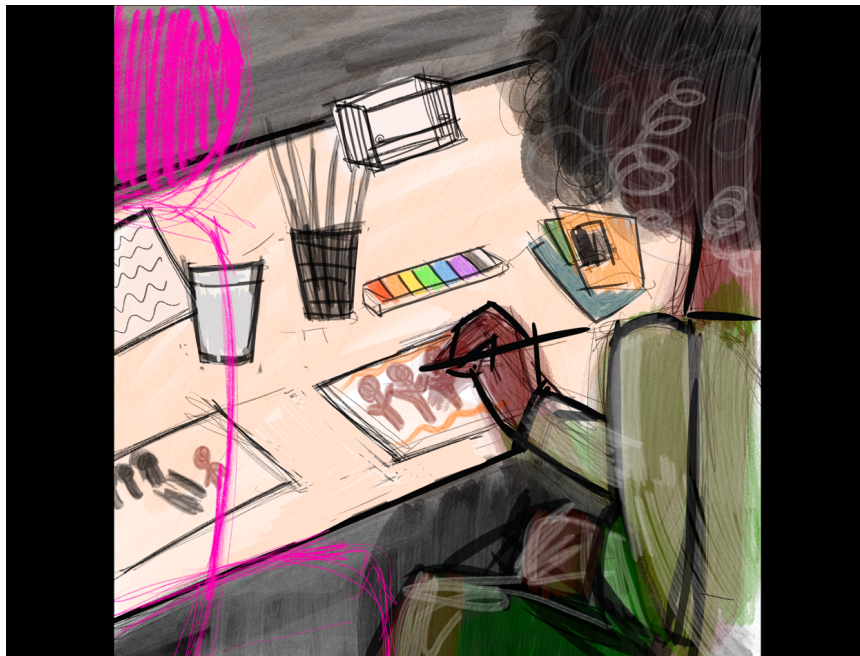


individual. The figure occupies about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the picture plane—their head is cut off at the top of the picture plane and their lower back cut off by the bottom of the canvas. The other figure is merely an outline scratched in with fuschia pencil-like marks. This half-present figure is seated on the left-hand side of the picture plane. Their head is a circle cut off by the left side and top of the canvas and is roughly colored in with the same fuschia texture. Their body is composed of a series of vertical lines connecting the circle to the bottom of the canvas. Diagonal horizontal lines reach out from the bottom of the body-shape to form a vague contour of knees.

A peach-tan table is visible in front of the two figures. The table holds various papers, cups, a palette, and other various indiscriminate objects. The figure on the right extends a hand holding a writing utensil to reach an art object on the table. The table and its various objects is visible through the fuchsia outlines of the figure on the left. Above and below the table is a grey wash.

**First Response Art: Written Reflection.** The feeling in creating the drawing was one of observation and normalcy. Art supplies are strewn about and a person is in the act of making an art object. In knowing what occurred in the session, I know she is working on the second part of the directive, intended to train and flex her positive self-talk muscle. But the hot pink shape to the left is partially there and partially not there. That is me. The pink figure is visually containing the first part of the directive which was a drawing representing her fear of abandonment that comes out in her dreams while her figure is drawn and colored in with hints of a ghostly white, my figure is a vague representation, like a place holder. Does this mean I am or I'm not there? Does this perhaps mean I'm presenting the tools and I'm providing containment, but I'm letting the client do the work? Maybe the drawing is an impulsive acknowledgement of how important

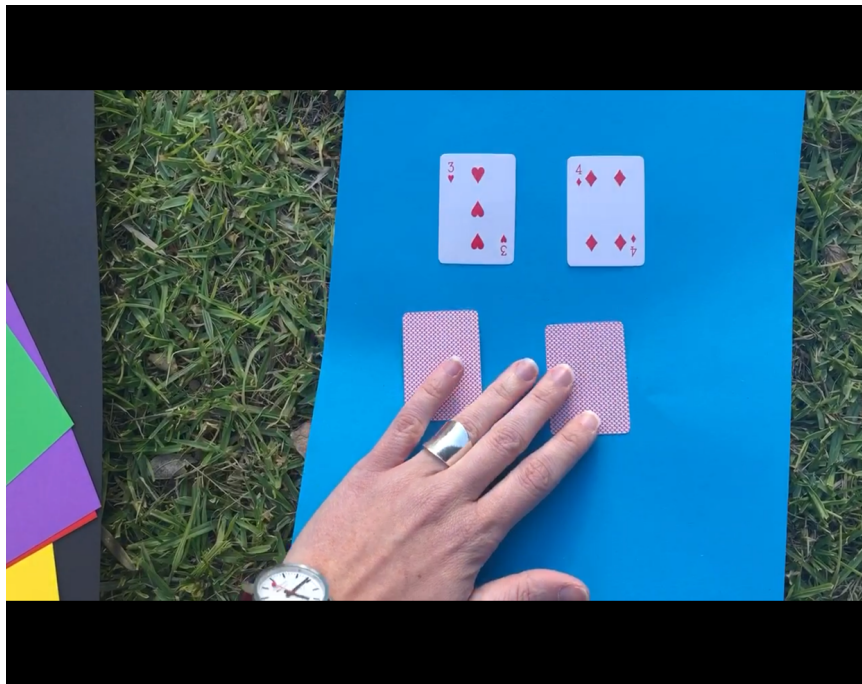


**Figure 5***Session 2 First Response Art*

very distinct figures. The drawing is about her, the space is about her, the creation is about the art and the art itself.

**Second Response Art: Intent and Response.** The second response artwork for session two responds to the way in which the client and I discussed her triggers, thoughts/feelings, and behaviors when she experiences jealousy. The video utilizes playing cards to symbolize the index cards that were used in session. The intention behind the work was to conceptualize how cards are used to assess options and play various hands.

**Second Response Art: Description.** The second response art piece is a 2:23 video and starts with a blue piece of paper placed on grass (Figure 6). My right hand holds the camera as my left hand holds a deck of mini cards, shuffles through half the pile, and places chosen cards on the top edge of the blue paper. I place two queens on the top row and a king and jack underneath the queens. I grab the cards, place the square arrangement in the middle of the paper

**Figure 6***Session 2 Second Response Art*

and flip them over so the faces are no longer visible. I reorganize the order and add new cards face down. The camera wobbles. I take cards away and flip over the remaining three in a row. I flip over the king card and replace it back into the deck. I take two more cards from the deck and form another square arrangement with the remaining cards. I hold the cards down so they don't blow away in the wind. The blue paper lifts off the grass for a split second from the wind. I take all the cards away and off the screen. I take the deck face down and place four more cards in a square arrangement. I flip the top two cards over and take them off screen. The camera jolts around and the deck of cards is visible for a moment. I place four cards face down, flip two over and remove the other two. I reorder the cards on the paper. I switch them out with two different face up cards. I line them up vertically. I replace them again with two black Ace cards. The video ends.

**Second Response Art: Written Reflection.** A hand deals cards.

Searches through the deck for specifics.

K, Q, Q, J

It's like she had a general idea of what she was looking for.

They're flipped over and traded.

It's like options are known, hidden, revealed, replaced...

It's outside, the elements interfere. Sometimes it needs to pause and take a break.

The camera shakes. The artist holds the viewpoint. It was a struggle to navigate choosing which cards to display, putting them on the paper, flipping them over, videotaping the activity, and making sure they don't blow away in the wind.

It's like I'm watching myself juggle the various aspects of the session.

My hand is the protagonist and I'm dealing options.

But I'm still navigating all the various factors that make dealing the cards shaky.

### ***Session 3***

**Perception of Session.** My perception of the third session was that the client needed guidance engaging in positive self-talk to decrease negative thoughts. We worked on representing how she was affected by her negative thoughts and used art materials to make the feeling and thoughts more manageable. It seemed as though the client felt relief after the art activity.

**First Response Art: Intent and Response.** There was no creation of a post-session response art piece. The presentation of the data for the third session will continue with the intent and response for the untimed end of the week art response, referred to as the second response piece.

**Second Response Art: Intent and Response.** In order to connect to how the client used art to make her negative affect more manageable, I created an animation recreating her process. My intention was to more deeply understand the client's experience from negative thoughts to positive ones.

**Second Response Art: Description.** The response artwork is a 0:29 second animation created using a drawing application that records the drawing process. The work starts with a quick layering of multiple thick black lines to create an image that resembles a hairball (Figure 7). Oval pieces of the black shape are cut and rearranged to create a geometric structure. Thick light blue lines with neon green leaves are drawn overlapping the structure. Two pink hearts are added to the image, a small one rests on top of the structure and a larger half pink half purple one hovers above the structure to the right hand side. Text saying, "You're okay... You can grow... You experience love... And you are loved... There is hope..." is added to the picture plane above and around the structure, leaves, and hearts (Figure 8). The image disappears and different parts of the drawing flicker in appearance and disappearance for the next 20 seconds of the animation (Figure 9).

**Second Response Art: Written Reflection.** It's stressful.

It's fast.

It repeats.

It's fragmented.

It's process then integration.

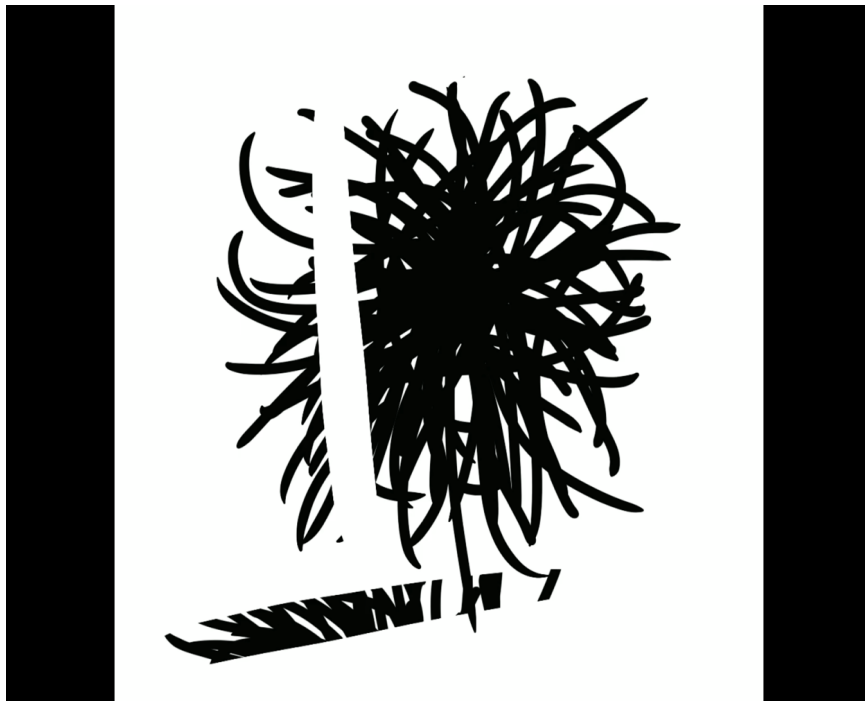
The integration are flashes.

It's encouraging and scary.

It returns back to scary.

**Figure 7**

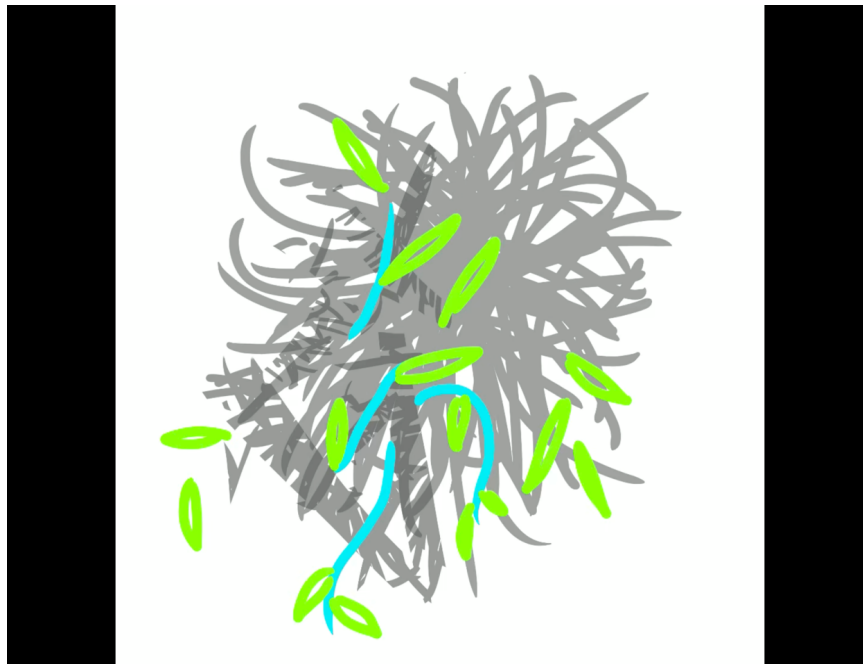
*Session 3 Second Response Art Still #1*



**Figure 8**

*Session 3 Second Response Art Still #2*



**Figure 9***Session 3 Second Response Art Still #3****Session 4***

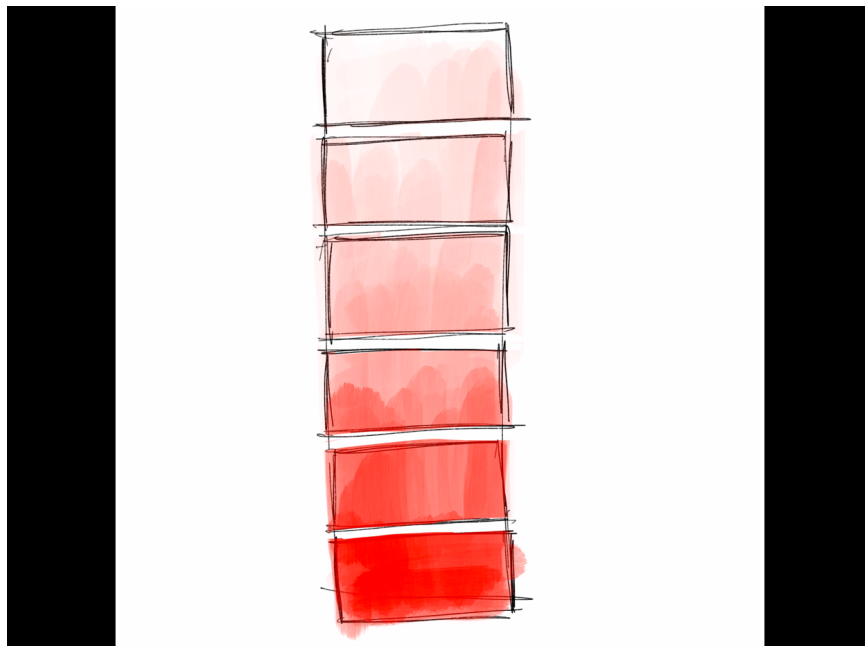
**Perception of Session.** The fourth session entailed discussion of anger as the client seemed agitated during the session. We worked together to discuss and make index cards regarding triggers, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, consequences and needs in order to cognitively understand her management of her anger. It seemed as though the client felt solace in witnessing a tangible record of her anger, from trigger to consequences.

**First Response Art: Intent and Response.** The intention behind session four's first response piece was to spontaneously visually represent the scale of index cards used in the session through creation of a digital drawing. I wanted to conceptualize the psychological and emotional weight of looking at all the cards together in order to better understand the client's experience of the intervention. The piece responds to the session because it utilizes the layout of the index cards from the intervention.

**First Response Art: Description.** Six drawn rectangles are stacked on top of one another with small frames separating them from one another (Figure 10). The bottom rectangle is deep red and each consecutive rectangle is a bit lighter than the previous one, ending with a light pink, nearly white rectangle on top.

**Figure 10**

*Session 4 First Response Art*



**First Response Art: Written Reflection.** The rectangles are stacked. It's like a fire burning at the bottom and the smoke clears on top. None of the spaces seem safe though. It's like a hopscotch template. The bottom is too hot to stand though, better quickly move up. The process of drawing was quick and straightforward.

**Second Response Art: Intent and Response.** Through creation of a 2:40 second video, I intended to respond to the way in which the client and I engaged in a verbal exchange about options of how to manage her anger.

**Second Response Art: Description.** The video was recorded by propping up my phone to record a peer juggling red clay spheres in front of a large wall. She tosses one sphere up and catches it with her other hand. She repeats this a few times. She drops the red sphere she's carrying. An outside figure (myself) throws another sphere at her feet and tells her to try juggling both spheres. The juggler exclaims with hesitation. She throws the spheres up and drops both of them. I say to her "it's okay!" and she retorts, "I don't know if I can do this!" She tries again and drops both of the spheres again (Figure 11). I continue to encourage her to keep trying as she continues to drop them. As she's retrieving a sphere she dropped, another ball is tossed to her feet. My voice tells her to replace the red spheres she is juggling with two white balls I toss at her feet. She attempts, I praise, and I tell her to drop one of the spheres. She repeatedly easily juggles one. I tell her to put it down and take a red sphere. She juggles a red sphere and I warn her to continue and another ball is going to bounce off the wall behind her. She continues to juggle, drops it a few times, but her face seems more relaxed than when the video started. She successfully juggles a white ball as I toss in more options to her feet. One hits her foot and she exclaims "that hurt." I then tell her to switch and take whichever two spheres she wants (Figure 12). She asks me if she can toss them straight up. She does so and I praise her for her successful change in technique. She continues to succeed and I continue to praise her. I tell her to switch the colors again and juggle with white ones. She focuses intently to juggle two spheres. She succeeds, drops them, then we resign and end the video.

**Second Response Art: Written Reflection.** The red balls represent the client's current maladaptive patterns. The white balls represent where I'm trying to guide her.

She's currently juggling the red balls. An ominous voice gives her praise or other options.

The juggler is me and the client. Telling her what to do. People telling me what's best.

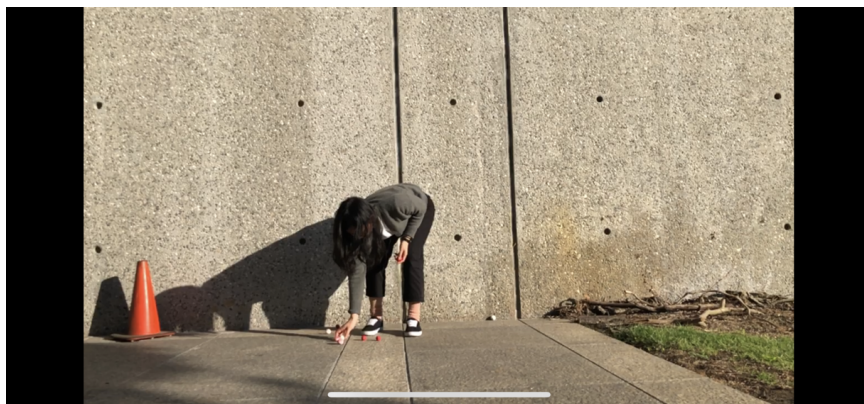


**Figure 11**

*Session 4 Second Response Art Still #1*

**Figure 12**

*Session 4 Second Response Art Still #2*



How do you manage?

Practice.

She eventually gains in confidence, but it takes time.

She gets to choose on her own (with guidance).

### ***Session 5***

**Perception of Session.** Through treatment it seemed as though client benefits greatly from mindfulness interventions. In order to build client's use of coping skills, we worked on an art-based breathing exercise in which the client creates two paintings: one representing calm

colors and the other representing toxic ones. Together, we internalized the colors of the two paintings and engaged in a breathing exercise in which we breathed in the calm colors and exhaled the toxic ones. The client seemed to benefit greatly from the exercise as afterward she said she experienced the room as lighter and brighter. We utilized previous paintings and new paintings to create a spectrum of calm to toxic in order to decrease black and white thinking. We then revisited an art piece we made previously to which the client recreated her representation of hope to be a clearer, more contained image. I felt as though the breathing exercise gave the client a sense of hope for change originating in the containment of the therapeutic space.

**First Response Art: Intent and Response.** Because the client seemed to take so much solace in the breathing exercise, I recreated a representation of the arts-based scale the client used during the intervention in a digital drawing. My intention was to observe my personal internal responses to the colors the client chose and if it assisted me in the same way it assisted the client. I responded to the session by using the same colors and layout as the client.

**First Response Art: Description.** One horizontal line and two vertical lines divide the picture plane to create six rectangular spaces (Figure 13). From left to right, top to bottom, watercolor-like strokes fill the boxes. It starts with pastel colors, the next box has bright colors, then neutrals are introduced, and darker colors are within the fifth box. The space on the bottom right corner says “FROM 1-10 WHERE ARE YOU?”

**First Response Art: Written Reflection.** Straightforward and legible.

Progressive.

Start and finish? No...

Understanding Place.

**Figure 13***Session 5 First Response Art*

**Second Response Art: Intent and Response.** The final untimed response art is another animation, 0:12 seconds in length. Because the exercise seemed to be influential to the client, I wanted to respond to the rhythm of the exercise. Its intention was to attune to the pace in which the breathing exercise took place.

**Second Response Art: Description.** The animation consists of a small light blue ball growing in size, changing to the color red and shrinking down to nothing (Figures 14, 15, 16, 17). It repeats two more times; however after the blue ball grows in size it freezes in place for a short moment before switching to red and shrinking down.

**Second Response Art: Written Reflection.** Increasing blue.

Decreasing red.

Familiarity brings about consistency.

Fast process for a slow activity.

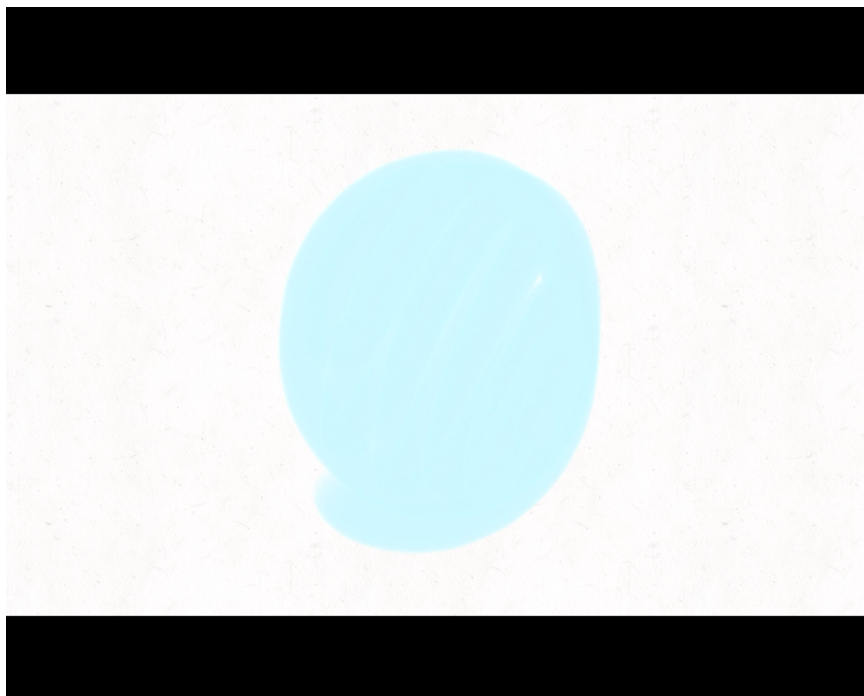
**Figure 14**

*Session 5 Second Response Art Still #1*



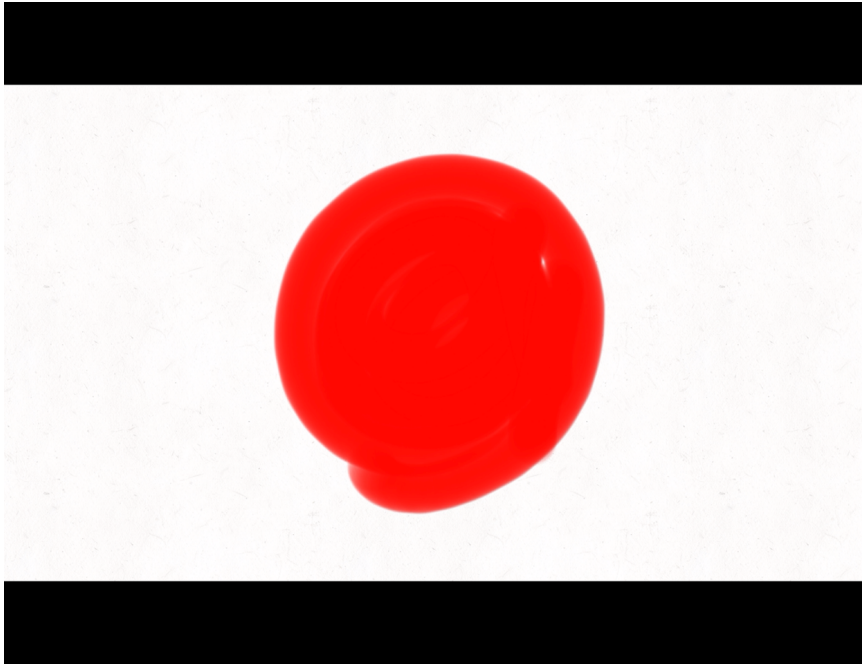
**Figure 15**

*Session 5 Second Response Art Still #2*



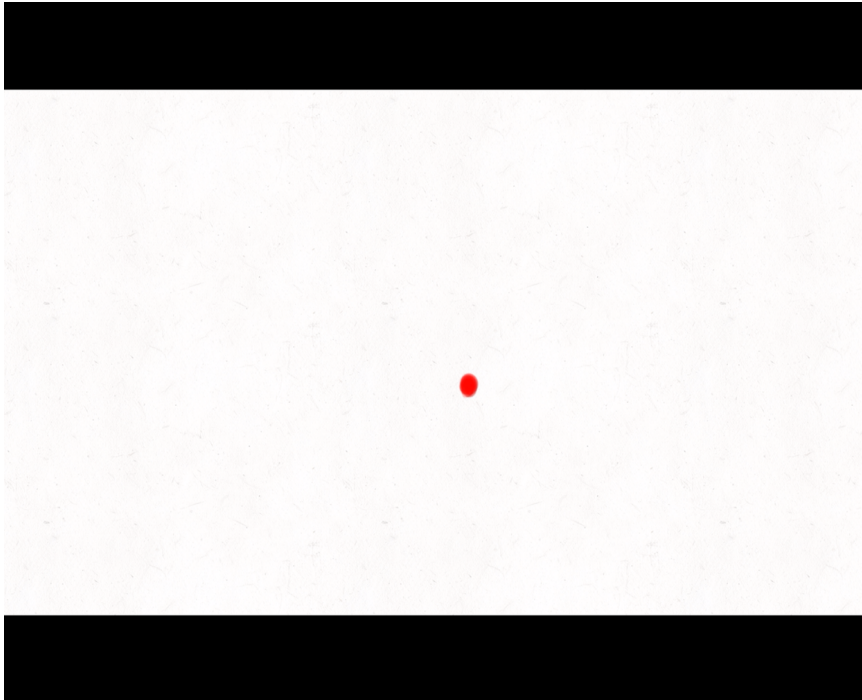
**Figure 16**

*Session 5 Second Response Art Still #3*



**Figure 17**

*Session 5 Second Response Art Still #4*





## Analysis of Data

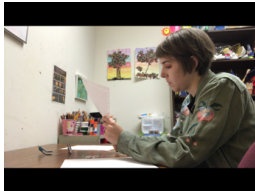

In order to analyze the total 18 pieces of data in this study, I used the lenses of phenomenology and digital art therapy. Analysis began 21 days after all the data had been collected.

### *Using a Phenomenological Lens*


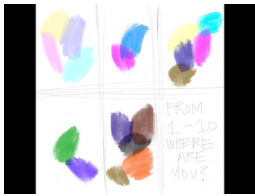
Creswell's (2007) detailing of the phenomenological process guided the first step in analyzing my data. I reviewed and assessed all my data which included the visual artworks created and their respective written reflections. My goal was to discover what the data have in common in order to reveal "a description of the universal essence" (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). In order to do so, I distilled each session and its corresponding subsections into descriptive sentences that represent the session as a whole (Table 2).

**Table 2**


### *Phenomenological Distilled Descriptions of Data*

Session	Response Art	Distilled Description of Art	Distilled Description of Written Reflection
1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Experience of pain in creating the artwork.</li> <li>● Reflect and respond to the client experience to build empathy.</li> <li>● Use self as the subject.</li> <li>● Subject began with flat affect and ended with frustration.</li> <li>● Take into account the rhythm of the hole punch sound.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Long and in paragraph form.</li> <li>● Content of the art piece seemed meaningless.</li> </ul>
1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on the session and treatment goals in order to attune to the client treatment process.</li> <li>● Goal was to organize emotional self-concept.</li> </ul>	

Session	Response Art	Distilled Description of Art	Distilled Description of Written Reflection
2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The process included disorganized colors evolving into organized colors.</li> <li>Goal was to increase positive self-talk and insight.</li> <li>Creation of the artworks as spontaneous.</li> <li>Intent was to attune to personal feelings or countertransference.</li> <li>Content responds to client-therapist relationship within the art.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority is a written explanation of the art piece.</li> </ul>
2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilization of an object in the artwork to symbolize an object in session.</li> <li>Focus on the rhythm and pace cards are dealt.</li> <li>Conceptualize use of the object.</li> <li>Use self as the dealer.</li> <li>Seemingly long, random and continual process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starts with third person and ends with first person.</li> <li>Utilization of choppy sentences.</li> </ul>
3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intent of the artwork was to re-create client process.</li> <li>The artwork appears half present and half not which may represent battling negative thoughts.</li> <li>The disappearing act has a certain rhythm and pace to the animation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very short sentences.</li> </ul>
4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal in session was to discuss anger including triggers in order to advance cognitive understanding.</li> <li>Intent in artwork was to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short paragraph.</li> <li>Use of projection with a metaphor.</li> </ul>

Session	Response Art	Distilled Description of Art	Distilled Description of Written Reflection
		<p>understand psychological and emotional weight of intervention in order to attune to the client experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The art piece is linear, use of ombré color, and a simple grid drawing.</li> </ul>	
4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Artwork consists of a verbal exchange which may represent the client-therapist interactions.</li> <li>Third party serving as subject while self intervening and orchestrating.</li> <li>Focus on pace and rhythm of the subject to learn a new skill.</li> <li>Utilize color as a metaphor for habits and new skills.</li> <li>Long process to keep trying as subjects improves with practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observational about confidence and practice.</li> </ul>
5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal in sessions as to provide containment within the therapeutic space.</li> <li>Goal in sessions as to provide containment within the therapeutic space.</li> <li>The content represents management of calm and toxic feelings to increase hope within the therapeutic space.</li> <li>Goal in the art was to recreate the client process and aesthetic product.</li> <li>Important use of color in session and in the art to self-regulate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One to three word sentences.</li> </ul>
5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of color to self-regulate.</li> <li>Integration and focus on rhythm and pace in session and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Familiarity brings out consistency.”</li> </ul>



Session	Response Art	Distilled Description of Art	Distilled Description of Written Reflection
		in response art.	

Once I summarized each data collection point into descriptive sentences that represent the sessions, I looked through the distilled descriptions for repeating words in order to gather “clusters of meaning” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). These clusters come together to form emerging themes. Themes that emerged from the distilled descriptions include:

- *Color* to assess emotions and self-regulation.
- Use and reflection of *rhythm and pace*.
- *Self* as the subject in terms of client-therapist relationship, interaction and therapeutic space.
- Use of art to recreate and understand the *client process*.

### ***Using a Digital Art Therapy Lens***

After a basic phenomenological structure was created and initial themes were brought forth, I imposed a digital art therapy lens to the distilled descriptions in order to witness further emergent themes that may overlap with the phenomenological lens. I looked at the various media used to create the response art and analyzed the latent content within each respective media. My goal was to discover main objectives within a certain medium and the differences between media. Themes emerged within each section (Table 3).

**Table 3***Data Through A Digital Art Therapy Lens*

Media	Latent Content
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of self as subject, pace and the use of time and sound, as well as progression of emotional affect during the process of creation or learning.</li> <li>• Necessity to manage the natural elements (wind, third person protagonist, tangibility and physicality of materials).</li> </ul>
Animation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aesthetic image created through the use of imitating the client process for treatment planning purposes.</li> <li>• Notable flowing or jolting nature of the art piece.</li> </ul>
Digital Drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response art represented containment of intervention and of therapeutic space.</li> <li>• Content represented a still drawing of the intervention.</li> <li>• Drawings consisted of a highlighted importance and reflection of the use of color in session.</li> </ul>

Themes that arose for each respective media through utilization of the digital art therapy lens include:

- Video: *self* as subject; utilization of *time and sound*; progression of emotional *affect*; management of *environment*.
- Animation: imitate *client process* for treatment purposes; intentional and conscious *pace* of artwork.
- Digital Drawing: representation of *containment* provided; still image of *intervention*; use of *color*.

### ***The Lenses Together***

I combined both the phenomenological lens and the digital art therapy lens in order to witness any shared themes. The phenomenological lens shared all of its themes with the digital

art therapy lens; however, the digital art therapy lens did not share all of its themes with the phenomenological lens (Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Themes Among Phenomenological and Digital Art Therapy (DAT) Lenses*

Shared Phenomenological and DAT Themes		Exclusively DAT Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use of color</li> <li>● Rhythm and pace</li> <li>● Self as subject</li> <li>● Imitation of client process</li> </ul>	<p>Video</p> <p>Digital Drawing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Progression of affect</li> <li>● Management of environment</li> <li>● Representation of Containment</li> </ul>

**Themes**

This section will review the themes that emerged through the phenomenological and digital art therapy lenses separately in order to witness any similarities and/or differences within the themes respectively. In order to visualize the how the themes are spread amongst all nine response artworks, see Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Themes Among Response Artworks*

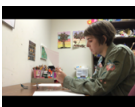








Figure / Artwork	Color	Rhythm and pace	Self as subject	Client Process	Affect	Environment	Containment
1 		X	X	X	X		
3 	X			X			
5 	X		X	X			X

Figure / Artwork	Color	Rhythm and pace	Self as subject	Client Process	Affect	Environment	Containment
6 		X	X	X		X	
7 		X		X			
10 	X			X			X
11 	X	X	X	X	X	X	
13 	X			X			X
15 	X	X		X			

**Use of Color.** Figures 3, 5, 10, 11, 13, and 15 utilize color as a means to respond to treatment with the client. Figure 3 is an animation that explicitly uses color to represent various emotions. These color/emotion connections were determined in session by the client. In comparison, Figure 5 uses color to represent myself as the therapist/entity. The color choices are not defined by the client. Figures 10 and 11 intentionally use the colors red and white to represent both emotions as defined by the client as well as intentions defined by the therapist. In Figure 10, red is used to exaggerate and project the client's color-emotion relationship onto a directive used in session in order to assist the researcher/therapist in developing a deeper understanding of what the client may have experienced emotionally during the session. Figure 11 uses red clay juggling balls to represent the client's definition of red as anger and white ones to

represent the researcher/therapist's goal for the client. Lastly, Figures 13 and 15 use color as self-regulating means as defined by the client.

**Rhythm and Pace.** The theme of rhythm and pace emerged from Figures 1, 6, 7, 11, and 15. The intention behind the first response art (Figure 1) and the last response art (Figure 15) was to highlight the rhythm and pace of the client's process in order to build empathy. In comparison, the rhythm and pace within Figure 6 arose as a consequence from the conceptual intention behind completion of the response art. The rhythm of the video strives for consistency, but the natural elements (wind) make that challenging. This is similar to the way in which rhythm and pace is utilized in Figure 11. Contrasting those works is Figure 7 which utilizes rhythm and pace in an unsettling, jolting and anxiety producing manner in order to express concerns about the process of internalization.

**Self as Subject.** As the researcher/therapist it appears that self as subject came to light as a theme for Figures 1, 5, 6 and 11. In Figure 1, I am the main protagonist of the piece; however, in Figures 5, 6, and 11 I am a secondary subject. The main character in Figure 5 is the client and the main protagonist in Figure 11 is a peer-actor. It is arguable in Figure 6 the cards, myself, and the environment are competing for role of protagonist. Similar could be said for Figure 11 in which I am an outside figure orchestrating the actor's behaviors.

**Imitation of Client Process.** The theme of the client's process manifests in all nine of the response artworks. It seems as though for some pieces (Figures 1, 5, 7, 13) I create or re-create an exact replica of what occurred in the session in order to build psychological and emotional awareness of the impact of the intervention. In other works, I exaggerated the client's process by conceptualizing the work through alternative objects or images (Figures 3, 6, 10, 11, 15).

**Progression of Affect.** Progression of affect arose through utilization of the digital art therapy lens. It appears that Figures 1 and 11 connect to this theme. Figure 1 has an obvious progression of affect as the protagonist of the video starts out with flat affect and ends in frustration and pain. Figure 11's progression of affect is a bit more subtle as the actor starts her task with hesitation and doubt, believing she will fail, and ends the video with a bit more confidence in her skill. Progression of affect is visible in these artworks because they are both video-response-artworks, allowing for time as an artistic medium to give rise to affect development.

**Management of the Environment.** Once again, the nature of the video medium allowed management of the environment to come forth as a theme in Figures 6 and 11. In the card-dealing artwork (Figure 6), the environment plays a strong role in the creation of and conceptual underpinning of the piece. The environment becomes a means for hesitation, doubt, and regression while dealing the cards. On the other hand, in Figure 11, the ominous self as therapist uses the surrounding environment to throw the juggling balls into and off of in order to make the environment and intervention more threatening for the actor.

**Representation of Containment.** Three of the nine pieces (Figures 5, 10, and 13) allude to the containment provided in the therapy session for the client. Figure 5 is an explicit representation of containment provided by the art therapist during session, whereas Figures 10 and 13 are more concrete representations of containment of color-emotions through the use of grids.

## **Findings**

The intention behind this research study was to determine whether or not digital art therapy responses would allow for greater attunement between the clinician and the client as well

as its capability to increase self-awareness in the therapist. The following section will use the presented and analyzed data alongside the literature referenced to reveal the effectiveness of using digital response art to build empathy for an adolescent client as well as develop insight regarding the self as the therapist.

### ***Greater Attunement to Client***

The data within Themes Among Response Artworks (Table 5) show all nine artworks share *client process* as a common theme. This means that imitating the client process proves to be a “universal essence” (Creswell, 2007, pg. 58) when creating response art. The rest of the themes seem to support this researcher/therapist attunement to the client through aesthetic and conceptual content. Whereas Fish (2012), Miller (2007), Moon (1999) and Nash (2019) state that response art is a place where the therapist can release strong emotions stirred up in session, it appears that in this data set the release of strong emotions was second tier to connecting to the client’s artist process. *Progression of affect* arose from only two works of art (Figure 1, Figure 11) out of the nine total. This aligns with Moon’s (1999) belief that the art therapist has an advantage in that they can attune to their client through the artist lens, possibly simultaneously attuning to their psychological and emotional states due to the nature of artistic expression.

As all of the data imitate the adolescent client’s process in one way or another, it seems as though my digital responses simultaneously attune to portions of the adolescent developmental stage. They are likely the aspects of adolescent development the client is currently facing. For example, the theme *use of color*, utilized by six out of nine response artworks, often represents emotional states, whether volatile or stable. Figure 3, highly representative of this theme, is a direct conceptual response to the client’s treatment goals of organizing the their emotional self-concept. The beginning of the animation represents emotional

chaos, possibly reflecting the adolescent task to form a congruent self-image according to Ventegodt and Merrick (2014). The authors discuss the limited capability for adolescents to witness this struggle and change it themselves, therefore they require assistance from outside guidance. The slowing down and organizing of the color squiggles that follows the chaos in the animation speaks to Ventegodt and Merrick's (2014) notion of guided assistance, as this organization represents my therapeutic intervention. Figures 5, 10, 11, 13, and 15 are further examples of the way in which I as the art therapist assist in guiding the client's emotional instability (represented by color) into focused organization or containment in order to provide the adolescent a chance to match their self-image with their identity and avoid identity confusion, which can be a common obstacle for adolescents according to Erikson (1988).

In terms of digital means, of these six response artworks that speak to organizing one's emotional self-concept through the use of color, three are digital drawings, two are animations, and one is a video. This may be because, as Dean et al. (2019) reiterate, animation allows for a non-threatening projection of thoughts and feelings as the medium provides containment for fictional and metaphorical movement. Therefore, digital drawing may be even less threatening than animation. In Table 5, it is shown that all three digital drawings possess the theme *containment*. This similarity may represent the inherently containing nature of digital drawings. Video, on the other hand, may have been on the other end of the spectrum, possibly not containing enough to engage in such formidable emotional expression and experimentation. Two of the three videos possess the theme *management of the environment*. This navigation of the environment in the videos may have contributed to limited metaphorical representation of emotions as the conceptual focus seems to have been usurped by the fourth dimension of time and space. Figure 11 is the sole video that uses color to reflect on the client's emotional



composition and its conceptual content represents the ability for therapeutic interventions to become aggressive and threatening (or challenging for a less dramatic interpretation). On the other hand, a theme shared among all the videos is *progression of affect*, possibly representing an even stronger ability for videos to be utilized to express emotions and feelings. This higher capacity may have contributed to their lack of metaphorical expression as the videos did not require personification or externalizations to express emotions due to their real-world recording of self and others.

The theme *rhythm and pace* that appears in five out of the nine response artworks connects to the client process and therefore adolescent development in a manner different from the *use of color*. It could be that utilizing rhythm and pace to reflect on treatment interventions and psychological growth in response art emulates the adolescent's desire for consistency during an age of turbulent changes as summarized by Erikson (1950). Conceptual projection of the use of predictable and constant rhythm and pace in Figure 1 may signify Erikson's (1950) philosophy that the adolescent seeks consistency while they simultaneously question the routines and rules of childhood. The goal of the session that the video response artwork addressed was to integrate the client's self-concept. The subject of the video experiences and expresses physical pain, and the respective written reflection implies psychological torment in the activity and final product. However, the subject of the video continues the rhythmic task for an entirety of 15 minutes. Therefore, the piece may represent my projection of the adolescent client's possible discomfort during treatment's psychological and physical growth accompanied by growing pains led by puberty.

Figure 11, on the other hand, uses rhythm and pace to reflect on the client's rate of internalization and utilization of techniques learned in session. The pace of the video is

represented by the time it took for the juggler to become comfortable with her task. The rhythm is the rate of interventions occurring or how many times the outside figure yells a command or throws a new clay ball for the actor to incorporate into the developing skill. Figure 7 utilizes pace in a similar manner, in that the animation represents my projection of the rate at which the interventions will disappear and be forgotten after the session has ended. Conceptually, these two pieces seem to contain Ventegodt and Merrick's (2014) allusion that the adolescent likely requires assistance to form a congruent self-concept. If this is the case, the response artworks assist in connecting to the client as I am able to witness whether or not the client is able to withstand the task put forth during session. The actor in Figure 11 appears afraid at the start of the video as she knows nothing about her task. However, after struggling with the orders and clay balls being thrown at her, she appears calmer and more determined to succeed by the end of the video. This may connect to Erikson's (1988) description of the adolescent's desire to honor those who support them in their causes in order to regenerate alongside and beyond their childhood selves and into a newly formed and integrated self. The initial struggle the actor experiences with the demanding voice may represent the youth's appropriate rejection of authority figures (such as myself as the therapist) in order to test their durability and consistency as suggested by the literature (Erikson, 1950). As I keep supporting the actor past their hesitation and fear and confirming their successes, the actor persists and continues to hone their new skill and develops confidence.

All of the data contained the theme *imitation of client process*. Through connecting the artwork back to the literature, it appears as though recreating the client's artwork either directly or conceptually allowed me as the researcher/therapist to experience the adolescent's struggle to form an integrated self concept directly. Through response art I was able to express physical

pain, emotional needs, and psychological conflict, possibly mirroring the adolescent client's experience through treatment. This assisted in developing empathy and a deeper understanding for the client's needs. The ability to attune to the client through response artworks seems to be possible through all digital means used in this study as all of the digital drawings, animations, and videos imitated the client's process. The literature reinforces this idea that technology is inherently containing (Hallas & Cleaves, 2017) for emotional and psychological expression and growth (Darewych et al., 2015; Austin, 2009, Johnson & Alderson, 2008; Tyack et al., 2017), successfully allowing the art therapist to reflect and gain insight regarding the client's process.

### ***Therapist's Development of Self-Awareness***

*Self as subject*, compared to the high volume of data containing *client process*, came forth in only four of nine artworks. Therefore, the utilization of digital response art in order to deepen the therapist/artist capacity for self-reflection may be limited compared to its high capacity for attunement to the client.

Within these four artworks, three are videos and one is a drawing, possibly revealing the better proficiency for video response artwork to assist in self-reflection. According to the literature, this may have been the case because video artwork allows for a realistic rendering of one's self captured and solidified in time (Ehinger, 2009), deepening the ability for self-reflection.

Although I am a subject in four of the artworks, it could be argued that I am a subject as a surrogate for the client. For example, in Figure 1, my intention was not to act as myself, the therapist, but to act as the client in order to understand her better. Therefore, I am not sure this utilization of myself as subject corresponds to development of self-awareness in my role as the therapist. Figures 5, 6, and 11, however, include conceptualization of myself as the therapist.

Figure 5 is a drawing of the therapy room in response to session with the client. I represent a container for the client's expression of trauma through paint. In Figure 6, I am the dealer of the cards, representing the giver of the interventions. In the data, I summarize the process as relatively random, possibly symbolizing my sensation that my method is haphazard and without much prior intention. This could reflect an impulsive manner in the way I deliver interventions. My role in Figure 11 is once again the orchestrator; however, I am only present through my voice that is giving both commands and praise to the juggler. Reflection on the artwork helped me witness the potential for aggression as the intervention-giver and the necessity to slow down to the juggler/client's speed. It is tough for the juggler to juggle their own habits, let alone develop and attempt to juggle new ones. These videos negate Orr's (2012) description that some art therapists believe that digital media is not valid art material and therefore should not be used in art making because these videos allowed me to express myself and develop insight into my role as the therapist. Gardano (1994) and Johnson and Alderson (2008) confirm the idea that video art allows for the creator to self-reflect as they are able to witness themselves in a new light and a new perspective upon re-watching the video. This change in view of the self allows the artist to develop insight and initiate psychological, social, or emotional change if desired.

Although each response artwork is a projection of my feelings about the client, Figure 7 is the epitome of this phenomenon and feels a bit different than the rest in this regard. Although it does not directly fall under the theme of *self as subject*, Figure 7 depicts my fear as the therapist that the client will forget what was gained in the therapeutic session. The rhythm and pace of the artwork is not consistent but instead it is disjointed and anxiety producing. It has the opposite rhythm of Figure 15, which represents slow meditation and mindfulness. Reflecting on the animation allowed me to witness and understand this countertransference so I could manage

the anxiety privately outside of session and not hold onto them, as Fish (2012) and Miller (2007) describe.

In addition to witnessing countertransference, creation of digital drawings, animations, and videos allowed me to witness the importance of the color-emotion relationship in treatment. Each artwork that falls under the theme *use of color* includes an implicit imposition of containment within the artwork. For example, Figure 10 represents my containment of the client's anger. Figure 13 represents containment of negative and positive thoughts in order to create a scale. Figure 3 depicts containment and organization of chaotic emotion-colors. The theme *containment* only arose for three artworks: Figure 5, 10, and 13 because they are explicit representations of containment. However, the implicit use of containment throughout the response artworks informed me of my role as the therapist with this client, similar to the way in which Fish (2012; 2019) encourages the use of response art to facilitate introspection. In addition to deeper attunement to the client, it allowed for more focused treatment planning and development of containing exercises and interventions to benefit the client.

Although all the artworks facilitated greater empathy for the client's process through treatment, many of the digital response artworks also allowed for me to develop understanding of my role as the therapist for this client. In one instance, I gained awareness of countertransference and was able to manage such feelings outside of session in supervision so as to not project those feelings in session. The data and its connection to the literature revealed the significant availability of video art to achieve self-reflection due to the multidimensional quality to video, including self-imposition, movement, and playback.

### **Conclusions**

An arts-based phenomenological approach was utilized to investigate the effectiveness of digital response art to attune to an adolescent client and develop self-awareness within myself as the researcher/therapist. Nine response artworks were created using either digital drawing, animation, or video. Although each work contained differing subject matter, the consensus among all of the artworks was that they reflected the client's process in one way or another. The varying types of media showed respective benefits and inadequacies. For example, through analysis, video appeared to be the most appropriate for self-reflection and digital drawing seemed to emulate containment. In this way, all of the digital response art assisted in deeper attunement to the client; however, not all digital media is sufficient for self-reflection through response art. Implications for clinical practice suggest art therapists can successfully use digital media to create response art to gain deeper attunement to their adolescent clients. This finding may represent an ability for clinicians to maintain strong attunement with clients by using DAT in and out of session despite COVID-19 stay-at-home orders.

Researching DAT seems more crucial now than before the COVID-19 pandemic as clinicians are forced to physically separate from their clients. Clients may have a lack of art supplies in their homes; however, they may have access to a computer or a smartphone which can serve as a creative canvas. Future research may analyze the use of digital art therapy in telehealth as clinicians become more familiar with distance sessions due to the COVID-19 quarantine. Additional directions might include comparing and contrasting more traditional means of creating response art (paper, pencil, pastel) with digital media for themes that arose in this study. Future studies could expand upon the digital media used to include gesture-based technologies, photography, mobile gaming applications, etc. Deeper analysis can take place

within one digital media, such as digital drawing, compared to classical methods of drawing in order to witness more specific similarities and differences between the two.

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