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Art-Making During a Global Pandemic: A Collaborative Autoethnography

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Art-Making During a Global Pandemic:

A Collaborative Autoethnography

Caitlin Carey, Parisa Frost, Jon Harguindeguy,
Sarah Heller, Susan Lee, Christina Smith and Eva Wang

A research paper presented to the
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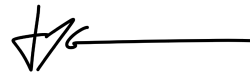


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Abstract

Between March 11, 2020 and May of 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) counted over 100 million cases of COVID-19, resulting in three million deaths worldwide (WHO, 2021). In order to examine the effects of art-making on social and psychological well-being, seven graduate students from the Marital and Family Art Therapy Program at LMU conducted the following study utilizing a qualitative, arts-based research approach through collaborative autoethnography (CAE). The research question — What are the effects of personal art-making on well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic? — was posed by the seven graduate student authors. The data revealed that pandemic-time art-making impacted well-being through three primary avenues: by acting as a means to cope, to adapt, and to process. Each of our emerging themes highlighted the use of art-making as a tool, and each theme described this phenomenon in a unique and pointed way. First, our art-making impacted our well-being during the pandemic by serving as a tool to cope with the stressors of the pandemic by minimizing, banishing, or making them tolerable. Going one step further than coping, art-making also served as a tool for adapting. It acted as the mediating force between the pandemic's external impacts and our ensuing internal experiences. Finally, art-making impacted well-being throughout the pandemic by serving as a tool to process corporeal experiences, emotional experiences, and other personal realities. In order to build upon our findings, we propose future research on the impacts of personal art-making on wellness through collaborative autoethnography by participant-researchers representing diverse cultures within their social and environmental contexts.

Keywords: Collaborative autoethnography, COVID-19, pandemic, art-making, response art, art therapy, wellness

Dedication

We dedicate this work to each other.

“Happiness is being able to fully experience every moment no matter what is happening, pleasant or unpleasant. It is to live the moment with every ounce of being. It is not about pleasure or attaining anything. It is about being fully alive and present.”

Phyllis Mirsky, LCSW

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Joyce Yip Green, PhD, LMFT, ATR-BC

For her guidance, support, and constant encouragement to “trust the process.”

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Introduction

The Study Topic

This study utilizes a qualitative, arts-based research approach through Collaborative Autoethnography (CAE), in order to examine the effects of art-making on well-being during a global pandemic. Notably, within this research design, the role of the researcher is dual: as participant and researcher. Further, the self is always considered within the context of society. The authors of this paper self-identify as emerging art therapists and will themselves be conducting research based on the exploration of personal art-making. Thus, for the purpose of clarity and soundness, it becomes necessary to clarify that personal art-making is distinct from art therapy. The ultimate hope for this paper is to disseminate the effect of personal art-making on individual and collective well-being for the participant-researcher during COVID-19 through a diverse socio-cultural lens.

Significance of the Study

Given that the pandemic is still ongoing, existing research may be preliminary in nature. The present study serves to contribute to the body of knowledge outlining the social and psychological needs of individuals during COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the role of art-making amid a crisis in general. Further, the results may reveal a potential relationship between personal art-making and well-being during a global health crisis. With this insight, we as art therapists may better support the specific psychosocial needs of the communities we serve during the ongoing pandemic, as well as furthering our own knowledge, and the field's clinical knowledge regarding crisis intervention.

The collaboration within this study is also what may both heighten and separate this work from quantitative research as well as conventional autoethnography as this research team is able

to deepen understanding of both self and others through their collaborative exploration within a specific socio-cultural context. The authors of this paper offer a multi-voiced dialogue that can directly connect to and inform sociopolitical processes (Shapiro & Atallah-Gutiérrez, 2020). The authors postulate that, within the context of a collaborative autoethnography, personal art-making—and the organic internal/external dialogues that unfold throughout the creative process—may function to promote well-being (in conjunction with opportunities for advocacy) in the multi-layered discourse with self and others. The following research question was posed by the seven graduate student authors:

R1: What are the effects of personal art-making on well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Background

Between March 11, 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic, and at the completion of this research paper in May of 2021, WHO has counted over 100 million cases of COVID-19, resulting in over three million deaths worldwide (WHO, 2021). In addition to the effects of physical illness resulting from the virus itself, secondary physiological impacts have included weight gain, cardiorespiratory dysfunction (Wang et al., 2020, p. 945), hormone imbalance (Bzdok & Dunbar, 2020), disordered sleep (Kutana & Lau, 2020), and cognitive impairment (Boals & Banks, 2020, p. 255). Psychological impacts are no less devastating with research confirming increased rates of depression, anxiety, stress, and substance use (Xiong et al., 2020). Additionally, concerns have been raised about potential increases in Adjustment Disorder and suicidality. These physiological and psychological impacts are not distributed equally. The crisis has exacerbated existing social inequalities and marginalized communities not only lack necessary support but are also treated as scapegoats (Marmarosh et al., 2020).

Art-making and other creative pursuits saw a spike in popularity during the ongoing worldwide crisis of COVID-19, and many perspectives seek to explain why (Braus & Morton, 2020). Researchers suggest that this lean into art-making in its various forms such as baking, music making, and arts and crafts, may be motivated by a natural drive in humans to use self-expression and creativity as a form of mindfulness and grounding (Braus & Morton, 2020). A suggested benefit of art-making in crisis times is increased self-awareness of the art-maker and an expanded understanding of their life (Braus & Morton, 2020). This may be an especially significant advantage during a crisis marked by ambiguity and lack of control over one's

circumstances. Other individuals have offered insights into this art-making trend and cite additional psychological and emotional benefits that may be obtained through art-making during a crisis (Huss, Sarid, & Cwikel, 2010; Gupta, 2020).

The following Collaborative Autoethnography (CAE) was conducted and participated by seven graduate students in the Loyola Marymount University Marital and Family Therapy with Specialization in Art Therapy Program. Our findings were extrapolated through a qualitative research method known as collaborative autoethnography wherein the role of the authors is dual: as participant and as researcher (participant-researchers). In order to understand the range of effects that COVID-19 has had on individuals, the following study will explore the impact of COVID-19, within the context of California, the third largest state in the United States, where the researchers reside. This exploration will take place through collaborative autoethnography and arts-based research methodologies. While this method is not a common methodology for research within the field of psychology (Hargons et al., 2017), the collaborative autoethnographic method culminates as a transformative process wherein researchers join forces, build community, advance the field, and provide scaffolding for future research to continue (Chang et al., 2013). Within this paper, the authors have strived to honor the diversity of the systems and cultures of each author, through the promotion of trust in the sharing of vulnerabilities to gain an understanding of self and others during a difficult, collective experience.

As art therapy students, the authors of this paper have been taught to think critically about the symbolism of imagery and the process of art-making in relation to well-being. Because of this, arts based research approaches allow the authors to deepen their individual and collective understanding of social changes from a unique perspective.

Literature Review¹

Literature Search Procedure

Several search techniques were used to retrieve applicable articles for inclusion in this literature review. Articles were identified via electronic library databases (OneSearch+ and PsycINFO); forward and backward searches of selected manuscripts; and a web-based search engine (Google Scholar). Computerized searches involved all possible combinations of terms reflecting well-being (happiness, coping, self-care, self-regulation), COVID-19 (COVID-19, coronavirus, Covid-19, pandemic), impacts of a pandemic (mental health, anxiety, depression, isolation, loneliness), collaborative autoethnography (autoethnography, collaborative) and art-making, (art-making, artmaking, painting, drawing, creating). As the pandemic is a current event that is still unfolding, and thus has a limited body of dedicated literature, it was necessary to include international research.

Impacts of Pandemic

Stay-At-Home Impacts

Because COVID-19 continues to influence daily life, a complete understanding of the impacts (i.e. psychological, social, political, physical, etc.) of this virus is not yet ascertainable (Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2020). On March 19, 2020 Governor Gavin Newsom issued a Stay-At-Home order for the state of California which occurred approximately one week after Los Angeles County reported its first COVID-19 death, and a few days after schools were closed within the Los Angeles Unified School District (Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2020).

¹ Literature review and background research also from *Art-making and Wellbeing with Professional Artists During a Pandemic*. Ilyse Lindsey, Schelsey Mahammadie-Sabet, and Nicole Rademacher. (May, 2021). Digital Commons at LMU.

Similar public health measures have been taken in many other states and nations which utilize verbiage such as (voluntary) quarantining, social-distancing, or shelter-in-place orders (de Lima, 2020; Hamm et al., 2020; Tomczyk et al., 2020). COVID-19 has been disproportionately affecting people of color, under-resourced communities, and other minority groups (Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2020). Many are concerned about the intersectional impact of this virus on these individuals and families as well as how quarantining or staying at home may be experienced by various populations (Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2020). Regarding families and especially women, researchers Xiong and colleagues (2020) purport that those in caregiving roles of children or the elderly tend to exhibit more adverse psychological symptoms. Similarly, increased anxiety and fear has been studied across elderly populations and there have been global reports of an increase in domestic violence (Dubey et al., 2020). In order to understand how these public health measures are utilized to curb the rising numbers of this virus, further impacts will be specifically explored.

Physiological Impacts

The secondary physiological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are diverse, significant, and develop in concert with psychosocial dysfunction. In addition to the COVID-19 virus itself, physiological issues include weight gain and loss of cardiorespiratory fitness as a result of being quarantined (Wang et al., 2020, p. 945). Quarantine has also contributed to “mind wandering,” which is a defense against stress. This wandering competes for resources within the brain and has a deleterious effect on working memory (Boals & Banks, 2020, p. 255). Thus, Boals and Banks (2020) conclude that cognitive impairments are inevitable during the pandemic, even for the most resilient individuals (p. 256). Sleep health is another casualty of increased anxiety, which is

exacerbated by decreased quality of social support and activity, and increased light exposure (Kutana & Lau, 2020). The absence of social connection has also been found to contribute to hormone imbalance, brain damage (Bzdok & Dunbar, 2020), cardiovascular events, cerebrovascular events, and cancer (Tyrrell & Williams, 2020, p. 214).

Research suggests that physical and social activity can modify physiological impacts for better or worse (Amatraian-Fernandez et al., 2020). Kutana and Lau (2020) argue that sleep quality can be improved by maintaining a regular schedule, exercising daily, and using technology to stay in contact with family and friends (p. 5). Physical exercise has also been shown to alleviate stress and decrease risk of obesity, stroke, and cancer (Amatraian-Fernandez et al., 2020, p. 265). These recommendations must be practiced cautiously, as gathering and dining in groups puts those assembled at risk for infection. Males, specifically, have shown a predilection for gathering unsafely. This vulnerability, as well as relatively frequent use of public transportation and relatively infrequent hand washing, may contribute to the gender imbalance in early-confirmed cases of COVID-19 (Chan et al., 2020).

Psychological and Social Impacts

Depression and Anxiety. It is generally understood that prolonged isolation due to Stay-at-Home orders and other quarantine procedures suggested during COVID-19 may lead to psychological dysfunction, due to stressors such as isolation, boredom, and financial losses experienced over long periods of time (de Lima et al, 2020, p. 253). At present, the research on the psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are largely focused on anxiety and depression. In Canada, Dozois (2020) found that the number of respondents who indicated their anxiety was “high to extremely high” in the summer of 2020 was four times greater than those

reporting high anxiety before the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of respondents with high self-reported depression in the summer of 2020 was more than twice the number reporting depression before the pandemic (p. 5). In the United States, Twenge and Joiner (2020) found that, compared to 2019, adults from the United States in April and May 2020 were more than three times as likely to screen positive for depression or anxiety disorders, or both (p. 955). They relate these changes, recorded by the U.S. Census Bureau, to the spread of COVID-19 in the United States. While anxiety decreased from April to May, depression increased. Twenge and Joiner (2020) theorized that reduced anxiety could show adaptation to a new lifestyle during the COVID-19 pandemic, while increased depression may reflect growing resignation to the same (p. 956).

Depression and anxiety do not impact all groups equally. Research on populations in China, Spain, Italy, Iran, the United States, Turkey, Nepal, and Denmark suggests that males and people aged 65 and above are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety during a pandemic such as COVID-19 (Xiong et al., p. 60; Chan et al., 2020, p. 6). Groups that appear to be more vulnerable include females (Chan et al., 2020, p. 6), people who are younger than 40, students, the unemployed, people who frequently access news and social media related to COVID-19, people with chronic illness, and people with preexisting mental illness (Xiong et al., p. 60). The last category is complicated by a United States study which found that older adults with pre-existing depression showed resilience during the initial phase of the pandemic, as they were already familiar with mental health maintenance strategies (Hamm et al., 2020, p. 928). As the sample was predominantly white, female, and urban or suburban, these results may not be generalizable (Hamm et. al., 2020). Also in the United States, Fitzpatrick and colleagues (2020)

found that COVID-19-related fear, which is linked to anxiety and depression, was especially prevalent in more densely populated communities, communities with higher presumptive and reported COVID-19 case concentrations, and urban locations. In their study, vulnerable groups included females, Asian people, Hispanic people, immigrants, families with children, married people, and persons who are currently laid off or furloughed.

Other Psychological Problems. In addition to anxiety and depression, researchers have identified a rogue gallery of disorders that may arise or worsen during the pandemic. These disorders include PTSD, which has increased worldwide (Xiong et al., 2020, p. 61), as well as substance use, which has risen in the United States (Lee et al., 2020, p. 5) and Canada (Dozois, 2020, p. 3). As grief and job loss are increasingly common during the pandemic, Kazlauskas and Quero (2020) caution mental health practitioners to screen their clients for Adjustment Disorder. Although clinicians are sometimes tempted to take it lightly, Adjustment Disorder carries a significant risk for suicide (p. 22). While data on suicides completed during the pandemic is scarce, suicidal ideation is common in individuals with dysfunctional coronavirus anxiety, at least in the United States (Lee et al., 2020, p. 5). An international case-control study identified fear of infection, fear of infecting others, economic conditions, domestic violence, grief, and solitude as factors in suicides completed in Italy, Germany, and the United States during pandemic (Aquila, et al, 2020, p. 121). These findings suggest an urgent need for social support, including psychoeducation about coping strategies, during the pandemic.

Isolation. As it is a risk factor for anxiety, panic attacks, suicidality, decreased cognitive functioning, and poor physical health (Tyrrell & Williams, 2020, p. 214), it is important to consider how loneliness factors into the COVID-19 experience. An American study found no

large increase in loneliness during the acute phase of the outbreak, attributing this resilience to increases in perceived support. However, its authors cautioned that younger and older adults had more significant increases in loneliness (Luchetti et al., 2020, p. 904). They also noted that those who did not participate in follow-up assessments tended to report higher loneliness, were younger, had less education, and were more likely to be female and living alone (Luchetti et al., p. 900). Saltzman and colleagues (2020) suggest that, based on research conducted during Hurricane Katrina and the SARS epidemic, those with pre-existing trauma and unresolved grief may also be especially vulnerable to loneliness (p. 56).

Social Impacts. Like others living under Stay-at-Home orders, these individuals may feel isolated from the groups that would usually provide them support. For many, friends, family, and work groups are the “primary means” by which they cope with traumatic events (Marmarosh et al., 2020, p. 125). For those who have experienced a rupture in those connections, Marmarosh and colleagues (2020) recommend support groups and group therapy, conducted via telehealth (p. 133). There is evidence that such groups can facilitate coping for the elderly as well as those experiencing complicated bereavement, job loss, and quarantine during a disease outbreak. Additionally, groups can provide a sense of belonging and support to marginalized populations (Marmarosh et al., 2020, p. 128-129).

In addition to being a prerequisite for sound mental health, group membership is inextricably linked to perceptions of contagion, safety behaviors, and social organization in the context of infectious disease. Research suggests that discriminatory behaviors increase in times of uncertainty as individuals are more likely to restore stability through adherence to generalized worldviews (Venuleo et al., 2020, p. 11). This trend is evident during the present pandemic, with

preliminary data showing a universal increase in racism, stigmatization, and xenophobia (Dubey, et al., 2020, p. 779). Additionally, belonging to a dominant group has been found to have a negative correlation to health-related behaviors and adherence to safety protocols (Chan et al., 2020, p. 7; Tomczyk et al., 2020, p. 6). It appears that in-group status is conflated with safety, while social diversity is conflated with danger (Golec de Zavala et al., 2020, p. 3). Thus, discrimination against outgroups is used by its proponents to “symbolically reduce the risk of infection” (Tomczyk et al, 2020, p. 7). In the United States, immigrants, Jews, and racial minorities have been targeted for such discrimination, with Asians being especially stigmatized (Roberto et al., 2020, p. 365).

The pandemic has also highlighted existing inequalities, putting even greater stress on marginalized communities. In Italy, insufficient childcare and education resources may have contributed to greater distress in women (Venuleo et al., 2020, p. 11). In the United States, there is evidence that low-income communities of color and indigenous, immigrant, and refugee populations have been disproportionately impacted (Roberto et al., 2020, p. 365). Internationally, the literature suggests that older people, their caregivers, and psychiatric patients may need special attention that they are not currently receiving (Dubey, et al, 2020, p. 779).

The literature tells us that marginalized groups must receive greater consideration when it comes to strategizing interventions for mental health and community care. Additionally, the authors would like to highlight the ways that COVID-19, by the nature of its global impact, offers unprecedented opportunities for unification. A global approach to collective meaning-making may serve to mitigate, both directly and indirectly, some socially-influenced barriers to health.

Coping Skills and Self-Care

As revealed above, COVID-19 has made significant impacts in psychological and social realms. Some of these impacts are positive but many are negative, and the negative impacts of COVID-19 can clearly be identified as causing stress (de Lima et al, 2020, p. 253). Stress may be defined as the response an organism has when presented with a challenge (Dimsdale, 2008). To address this stress, many humans attempt to cope by utilizing a vast spectrum of coping strategies and self-care; instances of this phenomenon were observed early on in the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kutana & Lau, 2020). Personal art-making, interestingly, has been found to be a uniquely powerful coping strategy (Hyatt, 2020). Thus, while a comprehensive exploration of both coping skills and self-care would be unnecessary and overreaching within the purposes of this paper, the authors do believe a general exploration of the two will be useful for contextualizing the research at-hand. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, to cope is to “deal with and attempt to overcome problems and difficulties” (n.d.). Similar, yet more nuanced, is the definition of self-care: “the products or practices used to comfort or soothe oneself” (Dictionary.com, (n.d.). According to Gupta and colleagues, strategies of coping are used by many in order to “manage stress by identifying resources to decrease stress and improve the overall quality of life” (2018, p. 21).

It is important to note that not all coping strategies are created equal. Some may be more effective or adaptive than others. Personal art-making, as mentioned above, is an example of adaptive coping (Hyatt, 2020). However, it is useful to examine generalized information about coping strategies in order to better understand the specialized power of art-making as a coping skill. In their cross-sectional study, Gupta and colleagues, examined three categories of coping

strategies, namely tertiary, secondary, and primary (2018). Tertiary coping strategies were delineated as being either engaged or disengaged (Gupta et al., 2018). From there, engaged and disengaged strategies were further divided into primary and secondary strategies and explored for adaptability or effectiveness (Gupta et al., 2018). Engaged coping strategies were characterized by healthy expression of one's emotions, reaching out for social support, restructuring cognitions, and problem-focused problem solving, and they were found to be negatively correlated with behavioral indicators of stress (Gupta et al., 2018). In opposition to the aforementioned adaptive coping strategies, disengaged coping strategies included social withdrawal, wishful thinking, problem-avoidance, and self-criticizing, and they were found to be positively correlated with both emotional and behavioral stress indicators (Gupta, et al., 2018). Individuals who use disengaged coping strategies may benefit from a temporary relief of stressful symptoms, but results suggested an ultimate increase in negative physiological and psychological symptoms due to disengaged avoidance (Gupta et al., 2018). There is a final suggestion in the findings of this study which proves noteworthy as the current section of this literature review transitions to the next: when faced with more severe stressful life events, Gupta and colleagues found that individuals have a higher likelihood of using unhealthy or maladaptive coping strategies (2018).

Maladaptive Coping During Pandemic. A spectrum of responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have been recorded across numerous countries. As explored previously in this literature review, there is a widespread agreement that COVID-19 breathed life into a swath of undesirable psychological and physiological symptoms. Emerging in tandem with these symptoms is an equally vibrant spectrum of coping behaviors. While the negative impacts

continue to affect a large segment of the general world populace at the time of this paper's conception, some studies gave voice to individuals whose COVID-related experiences were subjectively reported in a more positive light (Shanahan et al., 2020). These individuals reported diminished work and educational pressures, increased free time to spend with loved ones, and more time to invest in self-care activities such as sleeping (Shanahan et al., 2020). While many individuals experienced the COVID-19 pandemic through negative impacts, it is important to acknowledge the existence of positive experiences with the aim of providing comprehensive context for the research at hand.

One explanation for this variance in responses to the COVID-19 pandemic may be found by looking at individuals' lives before COVID-19. Those who entered the COVID-19 pandemic with a preexisting intolerance of uncertainty were found to be "significantly more likely to use maladaptive coping strategies" (Rettie & Daniels 2020, p. 6). Maladaptive coping behaviors may be defined as behaviors that include avoidance, self-blaming, and substance use (Kamaludin et al., 2020, p. 2). Because maladaptive coping strategies tend to perpetuate stress rather than dismantle it, these individuals were generally found to experience higher degrees of depression and anxiety (Rettie & Daniels, 2020). Thus, it may be concluded that certain factors can predispose individuals toward using maladaptive coping behaviors. Having the opposite effect, certain factors of individuals' lives before COVID-19 have been found to predispose them toward displaying a higher degree of resilience and preparedness (Scrivner et al., 2020). For example, compared to individuals who do not self-identify as horror fans, Scrivner and colleagues (2020) found that self-identified fans of the horror genre in entertainment displayed greater psychological resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may offer further

insight into subjective responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the spectrum of coping strategies, and the use of maladaptive coping behaviors.

It is important to keep in mind that these responses, experiences, and predispositions amid the COVID-19 pandemic fall on a spectrum. In response to this, scientists, researchers, psychologists, and many other individuals have come together to compile a widely applicable collection of adaptive behaviors that may be used to help individuals cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. These adaptive coping behaviors will be discussed in the following section.

Adaptive Coping During Pandemic. There are two main bodies of adaptive coping behaviors which emerge from this collection of literature. The first category covers coping behaviors that may best be described as additive, meaning they encourage the addition of a behavior into an individual's lifestyle or daily routine. Among these additive coping behaviors are prioritizing healthy eating habits and personal hobbies, following a routine, spending time looking or being outside, participating in group therapy, yoga and meditation, and pursuing multi-disciplinary arts, cooking, and writing (Fullana et al., 2020; Marmarosh et al., 2020). Again, in relation to this research in particular, it is crucial to note that personal art-making has been found to be a powerful form of this adaptive coping (Hyatt, 2020). Because of the importance of this topic, a complete section has been dedicated to it in the later portions of this literature review. According to these research teams, significant preliminary evidence suggests that these behaviors protect against anxiety and depression during pandemic times. For adolescents specifically, this same protection against anxiety and depression has been linked to spending time with peers and family and participating in physical activity (Ellis et al., 2020). On the opposite end of the age spectrum, certain activities have been found to help older adults cope

with their unique set of COVID-19 pandemic stressors (Nimrod, 2020). One such activity has been identified as increased internet use. This includes online shopping, chat software, financial management, and social networking among other pursuits (Nimrod, 2020). This collection of behaviors offers a summary of additive coping strategies suggested in relevant literature. It is critical to explore a shorter, but equally important list of prohibited activities.

The second category of adaptive coping strategies being offered during this time may be most effectively described as restrictive. These suggestions encourage the avoidance of certain behaviors in one's daily routine and lifestyle. For example, it has been suggested that limiting access to and consumption of news resources and limiting the amount one speaks with their relatives and friends about the pandemic may be helpful for adaptively coping with the COVID-19 pandemic (Fullana, 2020). Too much time spent being exposed to news outlets and information can have the opposite effect of adaptive coping behaviors and may be a predictor of higher levels of anxiety and depression (Fullana, 2020). Together, this collection of restrictive and additive coping behaviors offers a condensed look that relevant literature sources have deemed helpful for coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Art-Making

Although maladaptive coping strategies have been prevalent, a number of positive trends have also arisen. Successful strategies have included exercise, hobbies, and restricting exposure to COVID-19-related news coverage. Spontaneous art-making has emerged as an especially promising coping strategy. Although there are few current research studies on COVID-19 and art-making, this paper includes an examination of the existing literature on the impacts of pandemics on well-being, various coping skills employed by individuals during the COVID-19

pandemic, and spontaneous art-making as a coping strategy. The literature suggests that art-making provides a sense of emotional release and control, as well as an opportunity to express oneself and connect with others, possibly similar to the impact that art-making within a therapeutic setting such as art therapy may have for individuals. These benefits may be especially valuable during times of crisis (Braus & Morton, 2020). In addition to art-making, social activities have arisen as powerful means of coping. Various research methods related to this topic were reviewed, including emerging qualitative designs such as arts-based research and collaborative autoethnography.

Art Therapy versus Personal Art-Making

The authors of this literature review self-identify as emerging art therapists and will themselves be conducting research based on the exploration of personal art-making. Thus, for the purpose of clarity and soundness, it becomes necessary to provide a definition of personal art-making as distinct from art therapy. This delineation may best be established by first looking at the American Art Therapy Association's (AATA) definition of art therapy. AATA (2017) published the following statement in an attempt to clarify the nature, purpose, and process of art therapy:

Art Therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship. Art Therapy, facilitated by a professional art therapist, effectively supports personal and relational treatment goals as well as community concerns. Art Therapy is used to improve cognitive and sensory-motor functions, foster self-esteem and

self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change (Definition of Profession section).

AATA clearly establishes that art therapy is facilitated and experienced within specific parameters (2017). Personal art-making, within this paper and the research it contextualizes, exists and occurs outside of these clearly established perimeters. The authors of this paper collaboratively define personal art-making as “art that one feels internally compelled to make, as per report of the art maker”. Any personal art-making which exists within the spectrum of this definition will be eligible for exploration by the researchers.

Art-Making, Self-Care, and Coping

In certain professions, such as art therapy, personal art-making has been identified as a powerful form of self-care. Uncovered in Hyatt’s research is the potential for art-making to therapeutically relieve therapists’ often overloaded sympathetic nervous system (2020). During a pandemic marked by a significant increase in negative physiological and psychological impacts (Dozois, 2020), the ability of art-making to facilitate self-care is an important piece of contextual information. The work of Nash further buttresses this context by revealing that helping professionals’ art-making can facilitate a “clearing of bodily feelings” that, unattended, may cause negative psychological impacts (2020, p. 45).

It is critical to note that art-making can help many people cope with negative emotions; its gifts are not reserved for helping professionals only. Art-making has been shown to facilitate self-care and offer tangible coping abilities to a wide range of individuals. Braus and Morton highlight these general self-care and coping advantages in their work while drawing special

attention to the low-cost and high accessibility of this therapeutic pursuit (2020). They posit that not only is art-making a tool for caring for one's self, it can also be used for expressing oneself outwardly (2020). Through this outward self-expression, it is suggested that art-making can help individuals cope with negative emotions, of which there is no shortage during the COVID-19 pandemic (Braus & Morton, 2020).

In addition to helping individuals to cope with negative emotions, art-making has further been shown to provide actively positive outcomes as described by Titus and Sinacore (2013). In this research, art-making is described as facilitating emotional outcomes of a positive nature (Titus & Sinacore, 2013). Included in these outcomes are “feelings of happiness, satisfaction, accomplishment, optimism, and fulfillment” (Titus & Sinacore, 2013 p. 34). By relieving pent-up emotions, facilitating self-care, and encouraging adaptive characteristics, art-making is situated as a remarkable self-care and coping tool.

Art-Making During a Crisis. Past studies evaluating the use of art-making amid crisis have identified positive outcomes among participants. For example, a study in which Israeli social workers participated in art-making during a war crisis offers intriguing insight into the oftentimes ambiguous nature of crisis situations. This study found that the art-making helped participant-artmakers give a name and identity to the ambiguous stress of their wartime experiences (Huss, Sarid, & Cwikel, 2010). Once these stressors were identified in a concrete art creation, the participants then had the ability to alter their artwork (Huss, Sarid, & Cwikel, 2010). This transformability was found to not only offer a “sense of control over diffuse sources of anxiety,” but also to enhance participants’ resilience amid crisis (Huss, Sarid, & Cwikel, 2010;

see also Potash et al., 2020). A decade later, Gupta found strikingly similar benefits in the act of art-making during the world's current crisis of COVID-19 (2020).

In her article, Gupta observed that art-making during the COVID-19 crisis offered tangibility to an invisible virus (2020). Not only did Gupta identify this de-mystifying quality of art-making amid the crisis, she also pointed out the ability of art-making to create solidarity and togetherness despite physical distance and to provide a sense of containment and catharsis (p. 593, 2020). These benefits are proposed to help mitigate symptoms of isolation, anxiety, and depression. Although somewhat preliminary and anecdotal in nature, Gupta's insights provide intriguing context for our research (2020).

It is not Gupta's findings alone which must be categorized as preliminary. All resources in this literature review dated with the year 2020 must be categorized as such. Because the pandemic is ongoing even at the time of this paper's assembly, much of this information can best be described as setting the scene for further research. Even as such, this literature provides an important framework by which the authors' research is supported.

Research Approach

Arts-Based Research versus Response Art

Arts-based research (ABR) is a philosophical and methodological approach to inquiry which builds upon art-making as a way of knowing. It is grounded in the knowing and meaning-making that can occur when the researcher engages in an art-making process. It is important to note that in ABR, knowledge is not located in the artwork alone, but rather, it emerges from the dialogue between the researcher and the researched art object or art process (Gerber et al., 20). It is suggested that this form of engagement allows the researcher to behold knowledge or meaning which may exist outside of the scope of linguistic consciousness. Yet, if this knowledge exists outside of linguistic consciousness, where is it? Gerber and colleagues locate it in an “intangible” and “sensory-embodied unconscious” (2020, sec. 2).

Response art is artwork created in response to an event, experience, or sensation, and similar to ABR practices, it is created for the purpose of exploring material which may exist in the unconscious or linguistically unavailable realms. Within the realm of art therapy, response art is used often by art therapists to gain a greater understanding of themselves in the context of therapeutic relationships (Miller, 2007). On a simplified level, response art can be used to contain, express, and share one’s experiences (Fish, 2012). What this response art looks like or is comprised of is as varied as the imagination of its creator. Where ABR and response art differ is primarily in their goals. While the primary purpose of art-making in ABR is to increase knowledge that can be generalized and disseminated, the goal of response art is to provide the art maker with a therapeutic, insightful, containing, expressive, or affective/transformative experience as an end in and of itself (Miller, 2007; Havsteen-Franklin, 2014).

The researchers will collectively act as a team performing the role of both participant and researcher in a collaborative investigation into one's cultural interpretation of autobiographical experiences within a socio-cultural context to gain an understanding of how society has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic (Chang, et al., 2013). The methodology of collaborative autoethnography will allow for the inclusion of art-making in the collection of research data, an often overlooked alternative way of gathering information that is often overlooked in traditional research inquiry (Gerber et al., 2020).

A closer look at the processes of collaborative autoethnography reveals a spectrum of possible strategies by which to approach one's research. There may be full collaboration wherein the entirety of the research team partakes in all aspects of the process from start to finish. Conversely, in partial collaboration, researchers may contribute to different stages; here, researchers need not partake in all processes from start to finish. Within these stages, collaboration processes may occur in concurrent or sequential research activities. Additionally researchers may write individually before coming together for iterative, collective sharing (concurrent). Lastly the researchers also may have one person contribute to the research pool at a time (Chang et al., 2013). It is important to also note that these aforementioned methods may be deemed as fluid, as researchers move between individual processes and processes of collaboration (Anderson, Goodall, & Trahar, 2019). Overall, the participant-researchers utilized a full collaboration approach for this process of research, data collection, analysis, and writing.

Method

Definition of Terms

Art as a Tool is defined as a self-initiated mechanism through which an individual is able to utilize art-making or expression through creative means as an instrument for various purposes. In this study, the mechanism in which art-making has been utilized during this pandemic has been conceptualized as the utilization of art as a tool that may impact the individual.

Art Therapy is defined by the American Art Therapy Association (2017) as an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship. Art Therapy, facilitated by a professional art therapist, effectively supports personal and relational treatment goals as well as community concerns. Art Therapy is used to improve cognitive and sensory-motor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change (Definition of Profession section).

Artifact is defined as an object made by a human being typically of cultural or historical interest. In this study, personal artifacts were shared and used to guide discourse around the participant-researchers experiences, feelings, perspectives around each topic. Personal artifacts included art, objects, photographs, charts, and journal entries.

Arts-Based Research (ABR) is defined as the philosophical and methodological approach to inquiry which builds upon art-making as a way of knowing, understanding and even challenging

human experiences. In this study, ABR is utilized in the gathering of data, analysis and dissemination of the research.

Collaborative Autoethnography (CAE) is defined as a qualitative research method in which researchers work communally to collect autobiographical materials and forge both divergent and convergent ideas through group meaning-making, along the common denominators of their personal experiences. Data is extrapolated from the commonalities and conceptual junctures at which their lived experiences intersect and align. The collective autobiographical narrative that emerges can be examined to best understand the surrounding cultural, political, and social contexts through the unique and underexplored lens of the “collective self”. CAE is defined as an alternative entrypoint for research that permits the analysis of knowledge, and ways of knowing, that are most often bypassed when examining the nuances of any culture from a traditional research design perspective.

Flux is defined as continuous change, fluctuation and flow. In this study, flux refers to the continuous changes that occurred during the pandemic, including social, political, psychological, personal and environmental.

Identity is defined as an individual’s sense of self which includes physical, psychological and relational traits, social roles and affiliations. It encompasses memories, beliefs, relationships and values which guide the choices one makes. Identity involves a steady sense of who one is while continuing to evolve over the course of an individual’s lifetime. In this study, identity refers to the concept of self as relational experiences, roles, health and ability to move freely about were affected by the pandemic.

Isolation is defined as being in a place or situation that is separate from others and the condition of being alone. In the study, isolation is sometimes defined in terms of social isolation; a subjective, emotional state of loneliness or perceived absence of support that can be a risk factor for a decrease in physical and mental health.

Materials are defined as the matter and elements from which a thing is composed or can be made. For this study, materials are the media utilized and implemented to create a work of art.

Personal Art-Making is defined in this study as the process of creating or producing art that one feels internally compelled to make.

Social Justice is defined as the view that everyone deserves equal opportunity and access to the same economic, political, social, and human rights. Given the historical period and sociopolitical landscape in which the current body of research was conducted, social justice is most often utilized to denote the absence of such equity and opportunity.

Well-being is defined in this study to denote interindividual and intraindividual levels of positive functioning and/or baseline functioning.

Design of Study

Sampling

The participant-researcher team consisted of seven graduate students at Loyola Marymount University, obtaining their masters in Marital and Family Therapy with a Specialized Training in Art Therapy. They volunteered and consented to participating in a Collaborative Autoethnography (CAE) in order to examine their experiences under the temporal and sociocultural context of the COVID-19 pandemic, meeting through Zoom as quarantine measures were still actively in place. Participant-researchers spanned across the ages 24-49 and

consisted of six females and one male. One participant-researcher is also fluent in Mandarin, and another is also fluent in both Spanish and Farsi. Six participant-researchers were born in the United States and one participant-researcher was born in Taiwan. Participants identified as Ashkenazi Jewish-American, Irish-American/Italian-American, Korean-American, Latino, Persian-American, of Swedish heritage, and Taiwanese. Five participant-researchers identified as heterosexual and two participant-researchers identified as bisexual. Three participant-researchers are married and two participant-researchers have children. Five participant-researchers are Democrats, one participant-researcher is conservative Libertarian, and one participant-researcher has no party preference.

Gathering of Data

For the purposes of this study, the data was gathered during and after the six sessions centered around predetermined themes of exploration related to the art-making process during the pandemic. A scaffolding approach was taken for analyses wherein the video recordings of each topical meeting, written transcriptions of said recordings, in-session artwork, and the post-session summative statements were completed by participant-researchers. These visual, vocal, written, and artistic archives of each session became the cornerstone instruments through which we were able to initiate analyses and extrapolate the necessary material that would comprise this collaborative autoethnography.

Participant-researchers collectively developed a framework and protocol to the sessions in which the research question could be explored. Using Miro (2021), an online visual collaboration platform, participant-researchers identified key points of personal exploration that would eventually become refined enough to enlist as six topics. Discourse occurred around our

review of the literature on the impact of living through a pandemic, significant events from the prior year, and our own unique personal experiences in relation to well-being and art-making. This led to the identification of temporal phases across the plight of COVID-19, and the emergence of an inverse correlation wherein shifts in our own mental health declined as safer-at-home ordinances increased. What ensued was a group discussion identifying a continuum of creative practices that were employed, both individually and collectively, throughout each temporal phase. At this point, participant-researchers invited one another to think about what aspects of this continuum they wished to explore more deeply, as both contributor and observer. The following six topics were thus extrapolated from the dialogical process of collective and individual meaning-making that followed. The topics: (1) Isolation (2) Social Justice (3) Flux (4) Materials (5) Identity, and (6) Well-being (see Figure 1) were agreed upon. It was then decided that participant-researchers would pose reflective questions about the key concepts we were seeking to explore, inviting one another to investigate how these topics relate to our experiences during the pandemic.

Figure 1

Weekly Sessions: Topics and Questions



Note. The top row includes the topic name with the corresponding guiding questions to prompt art making, conversation, and exploration in the bottom row.

Participant-researchers were tasked with compiling personal artifacts to ensure each individual would be coming prepared to each session with digital and/or physical artifacts, including writings, pictures, videos, artwork, etc. collected throughout the pandemic in order to help guide discussion and create conceptual bridges, as they emerged. Each three-hour long session was designed to align with what we felt was necessary to induce fruitful discussion. This included intentionally arranging the topics, portioning time to reflect our needs, and assigning a rotating group facilitator to guide reflection and keep time (see Figure 2 for a typical session structure). Participant-researchers collaboratively created group ground rules, (see Appendix B2) with language on cultural humility for diverse perspectives, that would be read aloud at the start of each session to ensure transparency of the process. Unanimously, participant-researchers decided to initiate each session with a guided meditation to delineate the space from traditional academia or surrounding distractions and increase awareness of the present. Additionally,

participant-researchers decided that prior to discussion individuals would engage in an art-warm up activity reflective of the topic to prepare oneself for discussion and allow for a deeper reflection of the artifacts. After art-making, participant-researchers took turns to discuss motivations behind their art responses and moved into presenting their personal artifact(s) in relation to the topic being explored. Personal artifacts became vehicles for unearthing deeper layers of discursive texture. As they were snapshots into the autobiographical histories of each participant-researcher (e.g. photographs, journals, past artwork, multimedia materials, newspaper clippings, etc.) artifacts could thus access an intuitive and emotional knowledge, rooted in the past, while stimulating a sensorial experience of such knowledge in the here and now. Consequently, artifacts often served as the connective tissue across a space-time continuum of individual lived experiences that could fuse together under the collective meaning-making dialogue that would ensue. After all participant-researchers finished presenting their pieces, the seven group members would review what was discussed and vocalize any apparent links in overarching themes before closing the session with a final guided meditation. As a final data collection protocol for each session, participant-researchers would add photos of their in-session artwork (See Figures 3-8), the artifacts they presented, and a short summative statement to reflect on the session, and identify preliminary observations and thematic patterns to a designated folder in Google drive within one week of the session.

Figure 2*Typical Session Structure*

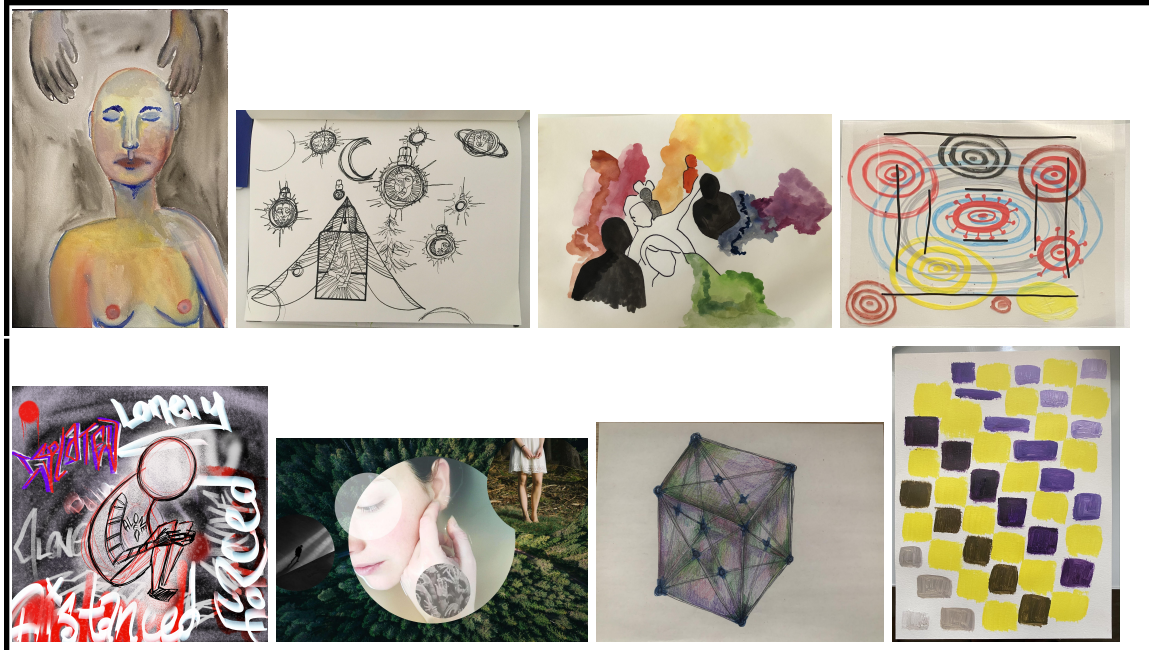
Time	Activity
3:00 - 3:15pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome; topic introduction by moderator - Reading of Group Agreements - Guided meditation
3:15 - 3:45pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art warm-up activity (art-making activity)
3:45 - 4:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Break
4:00 - 5:30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share warm-up art - Share artifacts - Discussion / Explore themes
5:30 - 5:45pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Closing guided meditation

In-Session Response Art

Session 1: Isolation. It was unanimously decided to examine isolation at the inception of our data collection, in order to best understand the foundation of solitude through which all response art would be made throughout this CAE. It became readily apparent through our collective imagery (e.g., arms reaching out; hands being held; fetal position; see Figure 3) and the following interpretive dialogue, that participant-researchers were seeking comfort and yearning for connection in ways that appeared to manipulate their artistic choices and/or means for creative expression.

Figure 3

Art from Session 1: Isolation

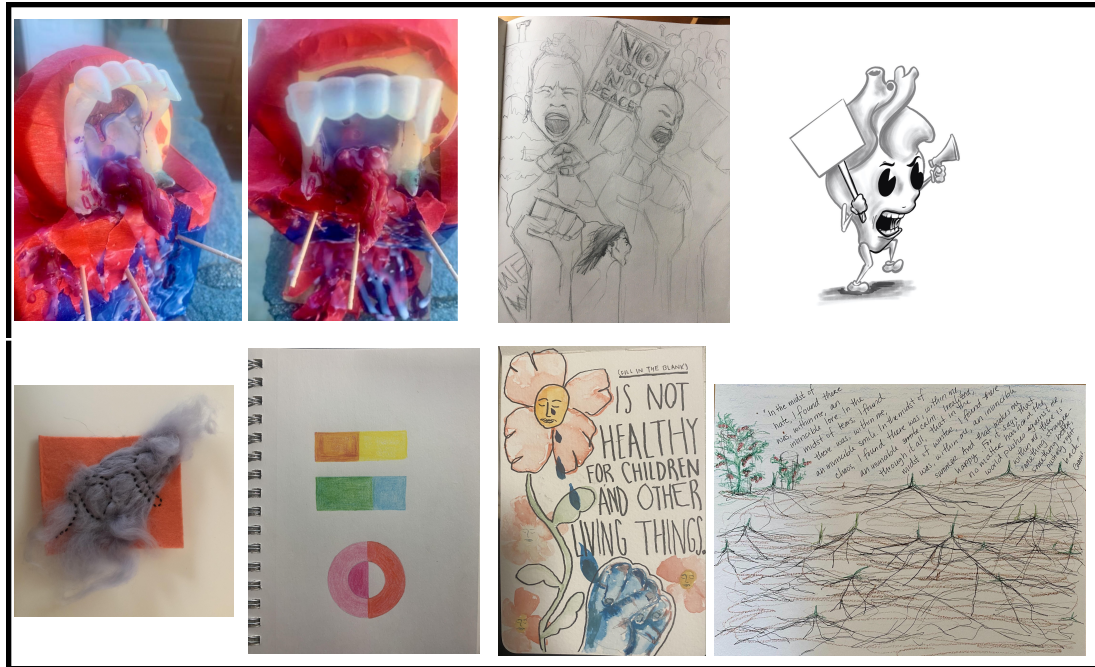


Note. The Isolation artwork was made by participant-researchers in response to the question(s): Has isolation or feelings of loneliness affected your art-making? Has your art been impacted?

Session 2: Social Justice. The second data collection session emerged rather readily as it was not possible to extrapolate the COVID-19 quarantine measures from the massive momentum and rapid mobilization of social justice demonstrations that spread through the nation like wildfire. As art therapists facilitating multiracial arts processing group therapy during this time, arts activists, allies, and human beings it was thus imperative to analyze how this was influencing our art-making. What emerged was a unique outlet for expression and representation; art-making became a way to safely protest, digest, reflect, express, and contribute to the collective upheaval of unjust systemic structures. The art-making (see Figure 4) reflected how we individually responded to a collective experience of sociopolitical unrest that was unlike any other, due to the pandemic.

Figure 4

Art from Session 2: Social Justice



Note. The Social Justice art was made by participant-researchers in response to the question(s):

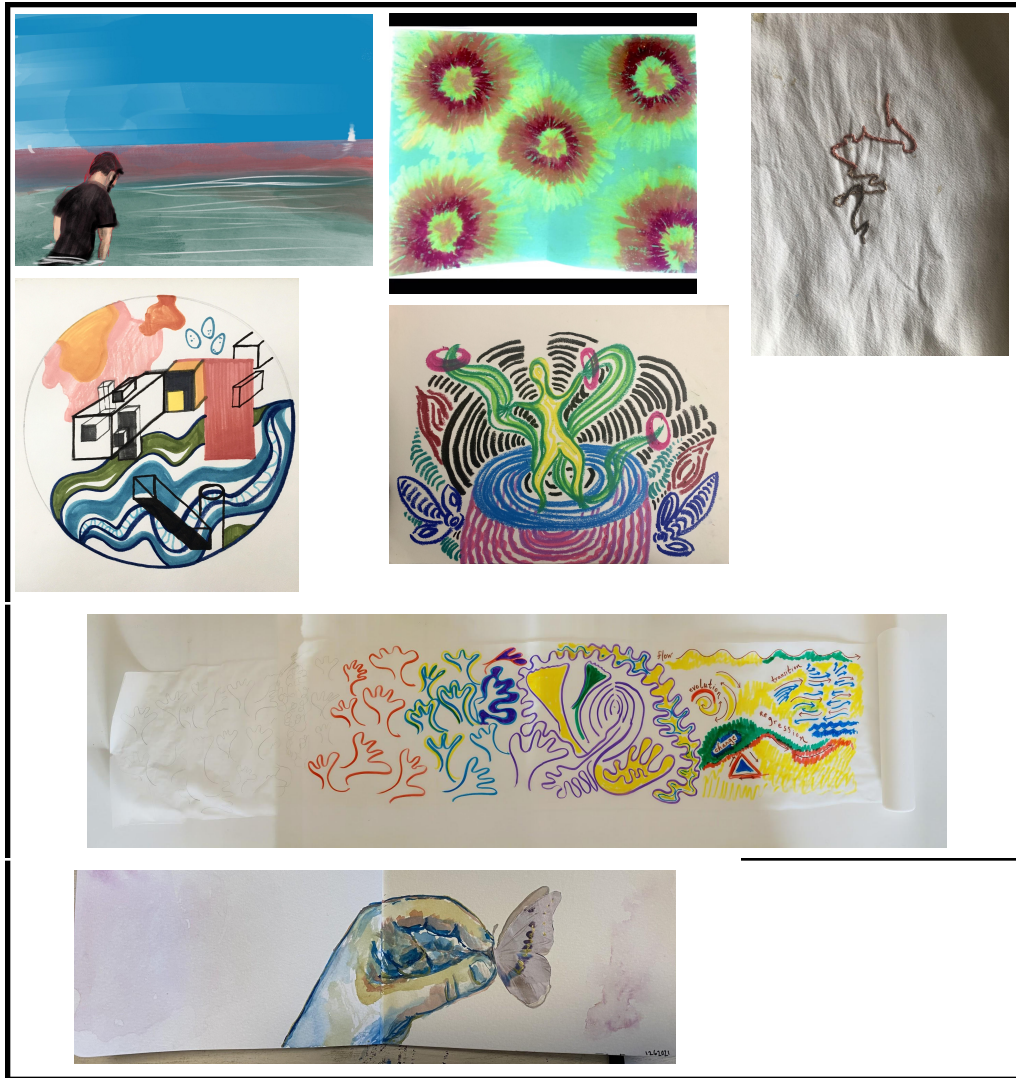
How has your art-making been impacted by the sociocultural context of your day-to-day life?

Has this increased your sense of well-being?

Session 3: Flux. There was a shared experience across participant-researchers of an unyielding anxious energy. This emerged due to the research design, the data gathering, the analysis processes, and the continuation of examining and processing the effects of a pandemic that we were/are still very much within. An obscure sensation of being in a constant state of motion yet going nowhere, month after month, staying in place, was consistently expressed. This paradoxical experience was communicated throughout each member, and thus contributed to the selection of flux as a topic, in addition to the layered vibrancy and pictorial similarities in the art-making procedures and aesthetic (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Art from Session 3: Flux



Note. The Flux artwork was made by participant-researchers in response to the question(s): Have you noticed an evolution in your art-making process? Have there been any regressions?

Session 4: Materials. This topical archway was identified with expedience as the participant-researchers were acutely aware of how the pandemic had shifted - at the very least - their access and availability of art materials. From a pragmatic, personal, professional, and even an academic vantage point as art therapy students, this was an easily understood topic that needed to be explored further (see Figure 6).

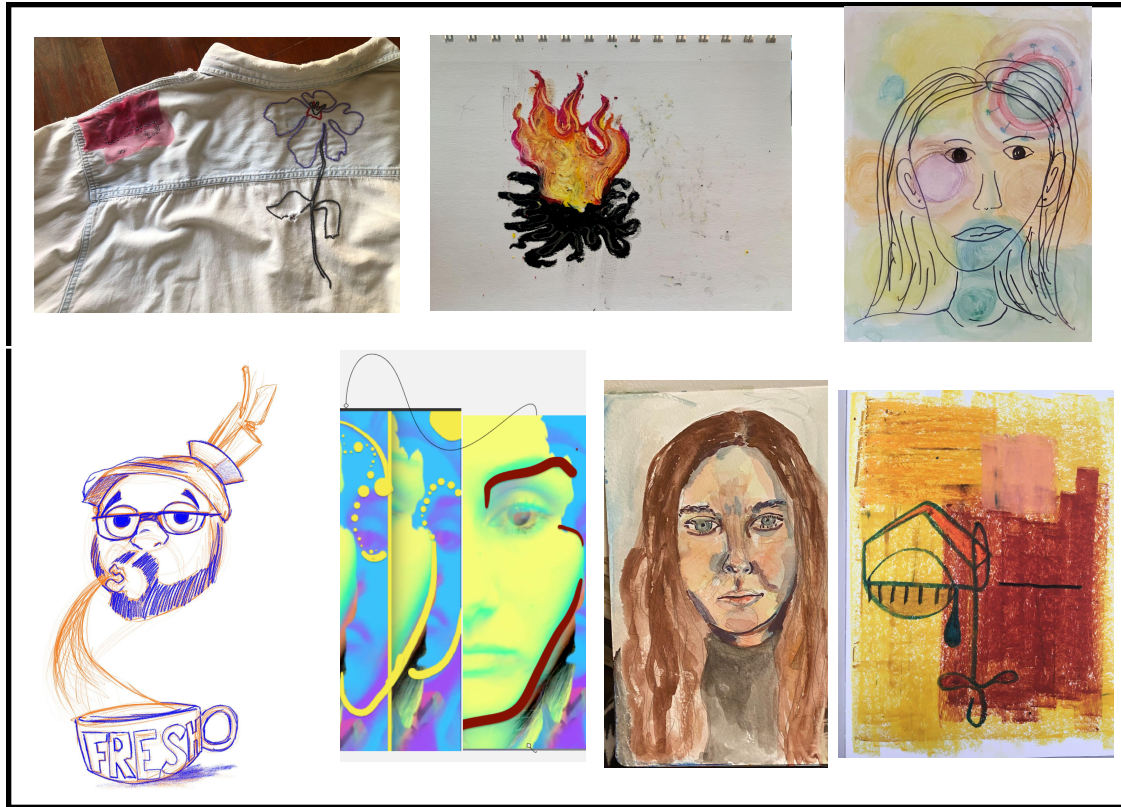
Figure 6

Art from Session 4: Materials

Note. The Materials artwork was made by participant-researchers in response to the question(s): How has your choice in materials affected your art-making and your well being? Have you seen changes or uniformity?

Session 5: Identity. This topic was initially set to be the first data collection meeting. However, participant-researchers came to understand that while identity is typically the fundamental filter through which our experiences are seen, perceived, and understood, living through a global pandemic and unprecedented levels of isolation were thus the fundamental filter through which our identities are also being seen, perceived, and understood. In this unique dual processing that is still actively transmuting, as the pandemic persists, it became clear that identity should therefore be explored at a later phase within the data collection protocol (see Figure 7).

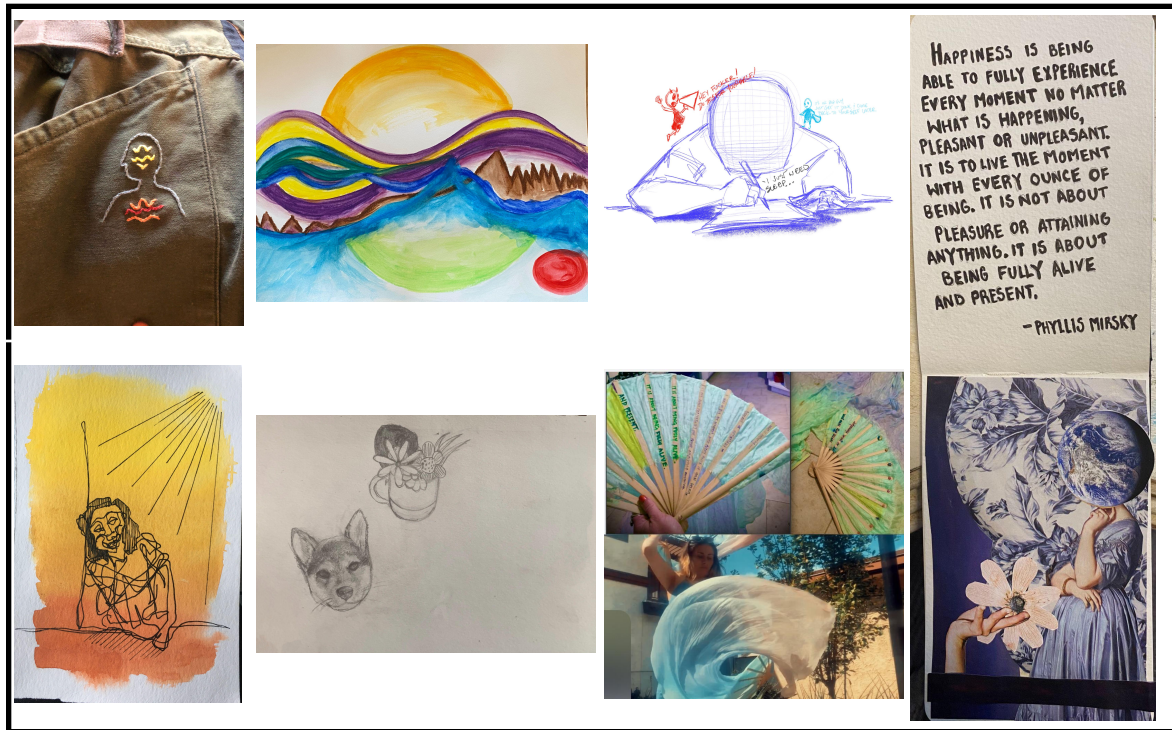
Figure 7*Art from Session 5: Identity*



Note. The Identity artwork was made by participant-researchers in response to the question(s): How has your identity impacted your art-making? Have you noticed changes in your process directly influenced by your experiences?

Session 6: Well-being. In gathering data around the relationship that exists between art-making and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was agreed by all participant-researchers that the most cogent placement for the topical exploration of well-being itself would be in the final, collaborative data gathering protocol. As we gained greater fluency in the methodology of collaborative autoethnographic means of accessing and documenting cultural data, it was decided that with this placement we would best assess changes within ourselves, our art-making practices, and our surrounding social, cultural, and political contexts (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Art from Session 6: Well-being

Note: The Well-Being artwork was made by participant-researchers in response to the question(s): How would you define well-being? How is this definition related to your art-making or the impact that your art-making has had on you during this time?

Analysis Process

Miro was also utilized by the participant-researchers to identify themes that existed within each of the sessions as well as overarching themes. Participant-researchers split up into two teams for the analysis process; one team had three members, one team had four. These teams went through three rounds of analysis to establish comprehensive inter-rater reliability. During the first phase, participant-researchers reviewed the transcripts, session recordings, artwork made in each session, and written statements that had been completed individually by the participant-researchers after each weekly session. In the second phase of analysis, the participant-researcher teams remained separate as they utilized Venn Diagrams on Miro to record

themes that seemed relevant for each of the six sessions (see Figure C3); these themes are illustrated in Figure 9. In the third phase, the participant-researcher teams came together to compare findings. In a collaborative effort, the sticky note feature on Miro was utilized to record three main themes that were agreed upon by all participant-researchers as being universally relevant to the team (see Figure C4). Disagreements between the participant-researchers were resolved through consensus via group discussion.

Figure 9

Discussion Themes Emerged from Sessions

Session Topic & Guiding Questions	Discussion Themes Emerged from Sessions
Session 1: Isolation Q1. Has isolation or feelings of loneliness affected your art-making? Q2. How has your art-making been impacted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fetal Position - Desire for community - Yearning/longing - Art as a tool for self-intervention and introspection - Imagery of hands - reaching out - Comfort - Boxed in / containment (forced and voluntary) - Layered - Understanding how art-making was impacted by isolation in different ways
Session 2: Social Justice Q1. Has your art-making been impacted by the socio-cultural context of your day-to-day life? Q2. Has this increased your sense of well-being?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art as a tool - Increase in media variation - Art-making as a vehicle for social cause - Art used for internal processing (including anger)
Session 3: Flux Q1. Have you noticed an evolution in your art-making process? Q2. Have there been any regressions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Layers - Movement; absence of stillness - Emphasis on the process - Art as a tool for self-intervention and introspection - Imagery of hands - reaching out - Comfort - Boxed in / containment (forced and voluntary)
MATERIALS: Q1. How has your choice in materials affected your art-making and your well being? Q2. Have you seen changes or uniformity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexibility/fluidity - Feeling compelled to create - Accessibility and convenience of materials - Familiarity, predictability, structured process - Using familiar materials in unfamiliar ways
IDENTITY: Q1. How has your identity impacted your	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art/identity being the filter through which we project our art/identity - Parts of self-multifaceted nature of identity - Faces/characters/selfies/curating persona

art-making? Q2. Have you noticed a change in your art-making process directly influenced by your experiences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Self-exploration; focus on internal vs the external- Art-making reflected shifts occurring on the outside world
WELL-BEING: Q1. How would you define well-being? Q2. How is this definition related to your art-making or the impact that your art-making has had on you during this time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Flow- Being/presence- Physical vs mental well-being- Homeostasis / maintaining- Tap into discomfort to be comfortable- Mood shift post-artmaking

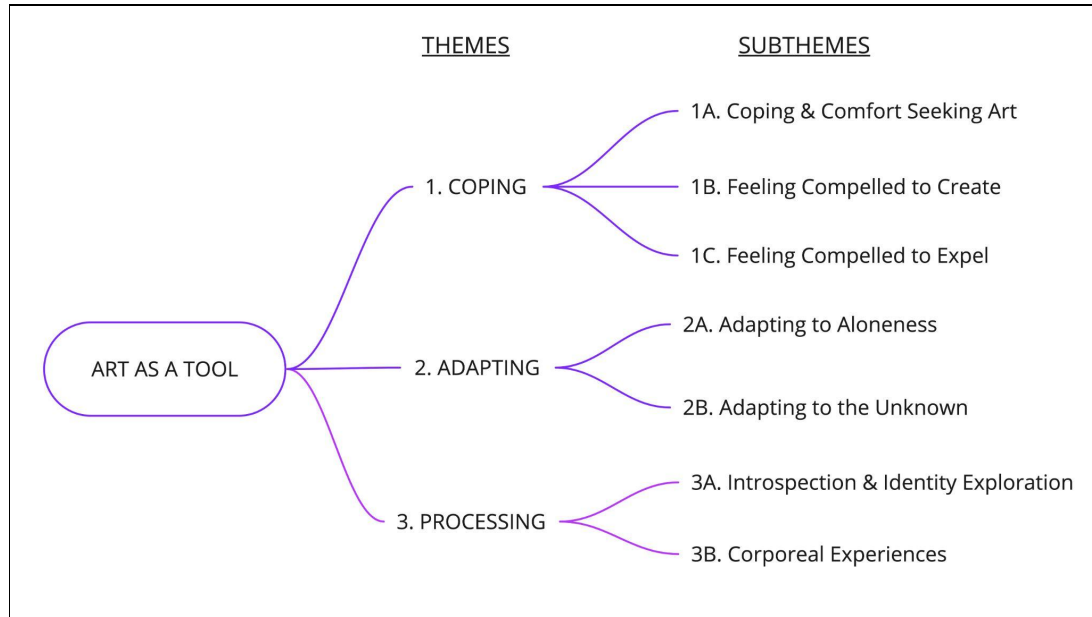
Results

As the six sessions came to a close, our attention began shifting toward the meaning-making process through an analysis of our data. As we disentangled central themes from the abundant material of each session, we naturally began dreaming about how we might tell this story of ours. It would be a story that responded to the research question that had trailed us for the past several months: What are the impacts of personal art-making on well-being during the pandemic? With time, patience, and a good deal of poetic synthesis, we discovered that the primary concept which surfaced time and again was the phenomenon we participant-researchers titled “art as a tool”.

“Art as a tool” was defined specifically during the data analysis portion of this study. As themes emerged from the data, it became clear that each of them was pointing to a greater, overarching concept. There was a bright, strong thread that was weaving all of our primary themes together; therein laid the birthplace of “art as a tool”. Each of our emerging themes highlighted the use of art-making as a tool, and each theme described this phenomenon in a unique and pointed way. For the purposes of this research, we have defined “art as a tool” as a self-initiated mechanism through which an individual is able to utilize art-making or expression through creative means as an instrument for various purposes. Within this overarching discovery that art-making could be used as a tool, we authors found art-making functioning as a tool in three specific ways: Art as a Tool for Coping, Art as a Tool for Adapting, and Art as a Tool for Processing. These three manifestations of “art as a tool” emerged as our primary descriptive themes, and we used our words and artwork to thread together our explanation of the meaning and importance behind them. Conveniently, each of these primary themes provides a unique,

descriptive window into the phenomenon of “art as a tool”. Art as a Tool for Coping, Art as a Tool for Adapting, and Art as a Tool for Processing have been placed in the aforementioned order to identify an overall process that we felt took place in our sessions and art-making process, as well as the effects of art-making on us individually and collectively during this time of a global pandemic. That is to say, the process of coping unfolded into adapting which led to processing. For the purposes of this paper, we interpreted this as a linear experience, yet we ultimately believe that this process is not necessarily linear nor asynchronous, but simultaneous, continuous, and ever-evolving. Nonetheless, we decided to form a construct for each of these three themes to help us tell our story, and to compose this paper as each building off the preceding. Coping was defined as a human response to stress – whether to minimize, abolish, or make tolerable that stress. Adapting was defined as the process in which art-making became a tool to mediate between the external happenings of COVID-19 pandemic times and the effects that they had on our internal selves. Finally, Processing was defined as self-introspection and the process of understanding, digesting and integrating emotional and corporeal experiences through art-making. Hereafter, we shall go through each theme to begin constructing the evidence that supports them and the meaning which emanates from them (see Figure 10).

Figure 10*Themes and Subthemes*



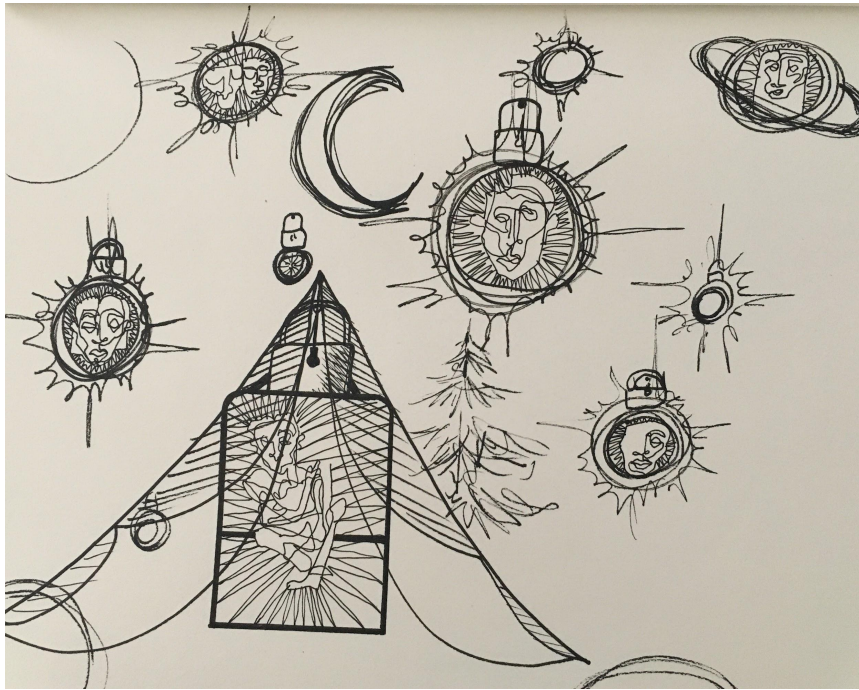
Theme 1: Art as a Tool for Coping

As outlined in the literature review for this study, Coping can be understood through multiple definitions and categories. Merriam-Webster Dictionary denotes that to cope is “to deal with and attempt to overcome problems and difficulties” (n.d.). According to Gupta and colleagues (2018), strategies of coping are used by many in order to “manage stress by identifying resources to decrease stress and improve the overall quality of life” (p. 21). In addition, it is widely agreed upon that coping can be either adaptive or maladaptive, and the ensuing strategies may be additive or restrictive in nature. Unsurprisingly in this autoethnographic study of our art-making during a pandemic, coping emerged as a significant, repetitive theme. But what does this mean? Does it mean that each of us repeatedly and directly identified art-making as a coping strategy? The reality is far richer in nuance. Evidence of us using art-making as a means to cope quietly and consistently surfaced its head above the swirling waters of data through two primary sub themes: a longing for comfort, and a felt sense of being

compelled to make art and expel through art. There is a story to be told of how we came to understand that throughout the pandemic of COVID-19, our art-making often served as a deeply versatile, accessible, and personal means of coping. This undeniably begs the question: with *what* were we coping?

We were coping with elusive stressors. During our time together we came to understand that we were processing the reality of a physical disease of a pandemic-level scale, but we were also standing toe to toe with countless accompanying forces of mental, physical, and emotional strain — many of them unfamiliar. During our sessions we often spent time exploring the internal and external stressors that we had dealt with personally and communally. One participant-researcher lost employment, others lost family members and dear friends. Many of us recounted the inner turmoil that accompanied isolation and the pain of being torn from the regular presence of community, connection, and purpose. When these circumstances surpassed the adequacy of story-telling and academic description, we expressed our experiences during the pandemic by simply identifying the accompanying emotions: resignation, anxiety, hopelessness, depression, fear, numbness, confusion, anger... the list goes on and likely reflects a somber, global reality. Often in-session artwork would be brought into existence as a riveting visual depiction of these core emotions and feelings experienced by the researchers during isolation and other pandemic-induced experiences (see Figure 11). Although our explorations often led us to bays of ambiguous internal and external turmoil, time and again we ended up exploring an oasis of coping found in our art-making practices. The mechanisms of this reality will be explored in the paragraphs to come.

Figure 11

Isolated

Note. This is an in-session artwork by CS from session one (Isolation) which illustrates some of the feelings, including loneliness and numbness, experienced by the participant-researchers.

Subtheme 1.A: Coping & Comfort-Seeking Art

Through a myriad of mediums, materials, and motivations for artistic engagement, there was an impetus for art production that rang true for each participant-researcher and reverberated throughout each session in two predominant ways: how to engage with our art-making practices to either (a) seek comfort or (b) alleviate discomfort. The notion of art-making that was fundamentally created to provide coping and comfort unfolded during our first session, Isolation, and remained consistent throughout each discourse that followed. During the topical discussion of Isolation, participants were stricken by the simultaneity of their imagery: arms reaching outwards/inwards, hands/being held/holding, and most impactfully was the fetal position (see Figure 12). Underlying thematic elements of seeking comfort, yearning or longing, and

containment were identified. Participant-researcher CC explored the conceptual bridge between “the fetal position and trying to find ways to seek comfort. I think that’s what we’re doing when we’re in the fetal position... we’re just trying to comfort ourselves”. Coping through comfort-seeking art-making was expressed in various ways including but not limited to; increased colors, increased brightness, meditative mark-making, abstract over representational art, and ultimately seeking connection to our artistic origins and that which feels familiar.

Participant-researcher SL stated that “when I think about isolation I think about the fetal position and... for me, I didn’t want to go there.... I’ve been tending to go more abstract because that feels better, it feels healing.” Thus participant-researchers adapted their stylistic, conceptual, technical, or compositional choices under the ubiquitous goal of ascertaining comfort in order to cope.

Our variant art-making practices permitted a certain shape-shifting quality that could bend at the will of our fleeting needs, and navigate our present reality with flexibility and creative cogency. The use of mediums, materials, layers, and colors allowed us to cope by virtue of seeking comfort, containing pain, and documenting the psychological whiplash of being ripped from our sense of safety and the prolonged social isolation that persists even today. We coped by using both familiar and foreign art procedures that gave shape to our inner worlds, and concretized the convergent lines of our lived experiences. As they pass through this colorful prism of collective pain, we tenderly examine the tattered textures of our interchangeable silhouettes as survivors of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the sociocultural phenomenon of it’s global eclipse.

Figure 12

Isolation

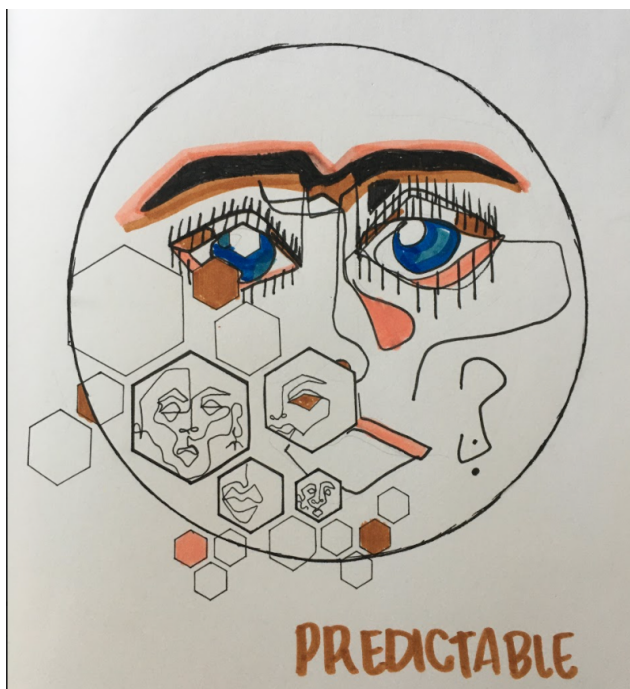
Note. This is in-session work by JH made during session one, illustrating the process of coping with the feelings associated with isolation, loneliness, and others feelings associated with the mandated COVID-19 lockdown.

Familiarity & Predictability of Art Procedures. In a world where our right to occupy interpersonal and societal space was abruptly revoked, forcing us to relinquish the literal parameters of our existence to an unknown pathogen overnight without a verifiable end in sight, the need for predictability, familiarity, and ultimately control became paramount to the artistic process. A beautiful contrast and convergence of our personal histories with art materials and how they informed our art-making as a coping mechanism transpired during pandemic. In sharing her artwork made during the session (See Figure 13) participant-researcher CS denoted that “the word predictable keeps coming to my mind when I think about the materials I

gravitated towards... the benefits of art-making through the path of least resistance.” Engaging with familiar art materials and mediums was thus indicated as a self-intervention wherein participants could exercise some semblance of certainty and predictability in their creative outcomes to cope with the auspicious ambiguity that characterized every other aspect of our lives. Participant-researcher SH eloquently stated in the summation “when talking about predictability and familiarity I feel like that can really connect to why we are deciding to move to a familiar art form....because it feels safe during a time when we may not feel safe otherwise”.

Figure 13

Predictable



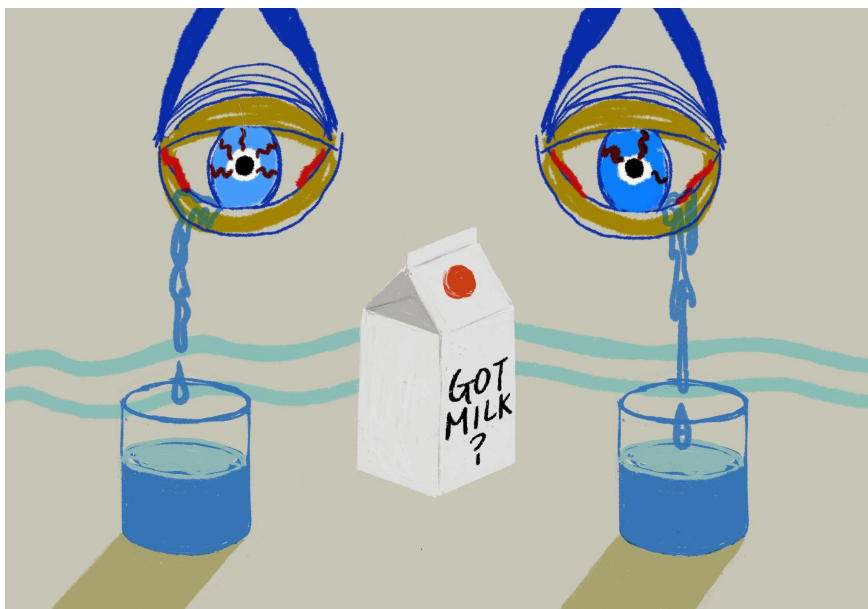
Note. This artwork was created by participant-researcher CS during session four (Materials) and illustrated the need for containment and predictability when choosing materials, such as, micron pens in order to achieve the path of least resistance.

Reverting to Artistic Origins From Childhood. The use of familiar mediums was also discussed as a source of coping by feeling competent, consistent, and thus *safer* in our artistic choices. EW disclosed a series of rapid changes that took shape, both internally and externally, in her personal life during the pandemic. She observed how these circumstances demanded an abrupt adultification, which may have inversely served as impetus for a regression in her artwork to be more childlike, brighter, and with increased use of primary colors. She identified this parallelism as “grieving, or rather, finally coming to terms with growing up... but through the art, I’m able to retain my childlike wonder.” (See Figure 14). One participant-researcher was similarly stricken as she recalled, in vivid detail, receiving her first pack of Crayola markers at age nine:

I would sit for hours, and just go through paper after paper after paper — drawing these like huge heads and a tiny little body...and I hadn't done that again until now. I don't know what that connection is but it seems I’ve made my way back to that.

Figure 14

Got Milk



Note. Artifact shared by EW in session four (Materials) to illustrate an emerging trend of artistically regressive qualities, resembling art from her younger self with bright primary colors and surreal imagery.

While the former anecdote illustrated how the art product was reverting to its artistic origins, a parallel process was emerging to uncover the powerful ways in which we sought connection through medium by virtue of the memories that remained inextricably linked to the materials, as they were encountered in childhood. This unveiled a beautiful contrast and convergence of personal histories with materials, which unanimously informed our coping mechanisms in a myriad of meaningful ways. For example, participant-researcher CC shared an incredibly inspiring account of how she was able to feel connected to her late mother, a master seamstress, through the act of sewing. She reflected:

Getting really sad, at times, about not being able to call her... but I was able to take out my sewing machine and make something I think she would've been proud of [which] brought me this feeling of inner peace and well-being.... A feeling of closeness...

This sparked a candid and curious assertion in SL about:

Going back to being a child... even though these flowers are new materials for me... It makes me think about my mom too, and how she loves flowers, so I wonder if there's something about that material... beyond it being something that we've used before... more like why it's familiar... (see Figure 15).

Figure 15

Flowers & Photographs



Note. Participant-researcher SL brought in these artifacts for session four (Materials) as she had been experimenting with pressing and framing flowers (right three images) as they made her think of her mother (photographed in left two images). Offered here to verify the validity of our results in that pandemic has a causal relationship in reverting to the artistic origins from our childhood through mediums and materiality.

Participant-researcher SH pondered if “this is absence of certainty — we are going back to this childhood state... a familiar, safe and nostalgic space.” The nearly unanimous experience of reverting to childhood origins of art-making provides a compelling catalyst for further consideration. Perhaps the need for artistic familiarity can be likened to an unspoken or intrinsic sense of safety, or at the very least a yearning for that safety. Familiar art procedures thus gave us some comfort, predictability, and perhaps some semblance of safety in an otherwise unpredictable, uncomfortable, and unsafe environmental context. In an almost primitive propulsion, we were foraging for comfort through familiarity and were using both conscious and

subconscious strategies to get there. The comfort of familiarity became a means of coping wherein our personal histories would guide us whilst adjusting, attuning, and regulating within the fiercely foreign world we found and find ourselves in. Certainty has long-since slipped from our periphery. Here we are - Here we stay. Stuck in the languid liminality of quarantine, as we patiently await a dawn that never came, making art in the dark in order to survive.

Here we are — Here we stay.

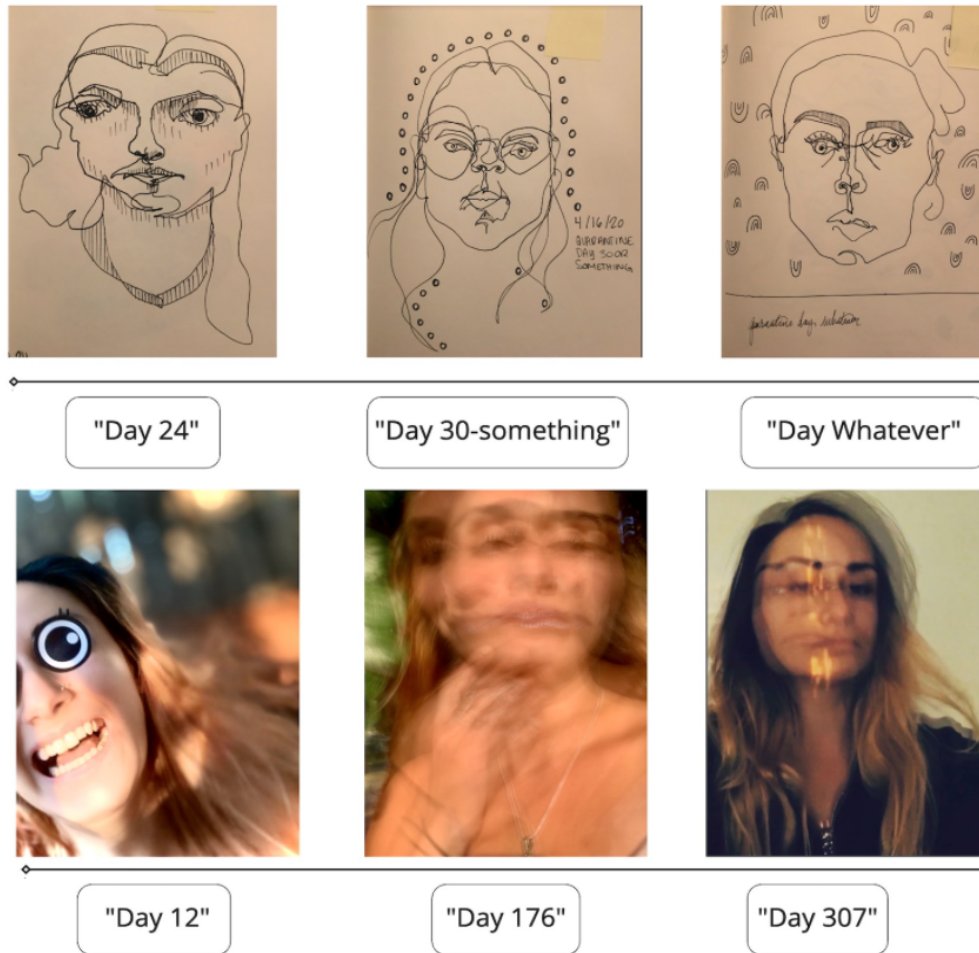
Using “Quick Art” & Accessible Coping Mechanisms. Across sessions participants identified the tendency to rely on “quick” art-making practices as a vehicle for routine coping. This naturally lent itself to familiar art materials and mediums, in order to achieve those ends. One participant-researcher identified the paralysis of perfectionism and the daunting tasks of the prep/breakdown/clean up as contributors to their sense of discouragement. CS offered instead that “I think that these [self-portrait contour drawings] gave me a doorway into very, very quick art — it's just very accessible. Easy to open, easy to close.” Another participant-researcher discussed the use of self-portraiture in digital snapshots as an accessible mechanism for coping through ‘quick art’. Participant-researcher PF went on to discuss the appeal of creating “content quickly, that is also aesthetically pleasing”. Another participant-researcher echoed this desire to create quick content without sacrificing its visual appeal by creating one-second videos every day. In addition to carrying a portable watercolor pad, SH discussed the availability of coping mechanisms as a need to “express outwards... and finding easier and quicker ways to do so.” She went on to explore how the “idea of being able to create art quickly” was reflective of her “need to vomit art out right now to help with intense sadness, anger, and existential crises I've been having during this time....” What became increasingly evident was the ubiquitous urge to create

quick art in order to cope, quickly. Participant-researcher EW likened this to a “type of crisis work as opposed to tending to our well being in the long run, because it is just trying to survive the moment.” Thus the production of “quick art” became a strategy for survival; it was a self-employed means for crisis intervention wherein the participants forged more palatable pathways for coping on-demand.

Documentation/Tracking Byproduct. The cumulative effect of “quick art” not only opened us to unforeseen avenues for coping, but also illustrated an analogous process of tracking both the passing of time, as well as the psychological transmutations that took place within it. Participant-researcher CC “noticed that art for us was a way to document”. This stands as an astute observation, with significance that rippled throughout this body of work in seismic waves. CS felt that it was “important to somehow track what was happening... and I couldn’t do it in words....” (see Figure 16). PF reverberated a similar sentiment “through photo-narrative... I found it helpful to cope by orienting myself in space and time”. In this way, PF created an unintentional timeline of psychological transience at different points during the pandemic (see Figure 16). Participant-researcher CS beautifully articulated how the art was “acting as a physical record of my transformation. The transforming faces reflected a changing interior”. A series of brisk snapshots into our psyche that, when strung together, curated a salient storyboard of survival. Thus, the creation of “quick art” gave birth to an unintentional tracking byproduct, or a way to traverse time and space, in an otherwise endless loop of moments.

Figure 16

Transforming Faces



Note. The upper three images were artifacts from participant-researcher CS during session five (Identity) and the bottom three images were artifacts from participant-researcher PF during session three (Flux). They are visually offered in tandem, as to demonstrate the scope of the documentation byproduct that spanned across multiple sessions , and participants, as they used quick mechanisms for art-making in order to cope during crises brought on by COVID-19.

Subtheme 1.B: Feeling Compelled to Create

Specifically in relation to this next finding, “quick art” as an accessible means of coping during the pandemic became indispensable. We discovered our artistic endeavors related to comfort and discomfort as being executed through increasingly specific means. Comfort

embodied itself differently for each of us, yet there was a common sensation which all of us shared: the feeling of being compelled to make artwork. Specifically across the topics of Materials and Flux, various forms of the word “compel” surfaced regularly in our conversations. For one researcher, this feeling of being compelled led to her to create a body of artwork far more vast in quantity than her cautiously, calculated, painstaking pre-pandemic artwork. Beyond just quantity, it was found that the compelling motivation for creating artwork seemed to shift amidst the pandemic as well. Aesthetic value was no longer the sole motivator; many of us discovered that our art-making had become fueled by increasingly utilitarian purposes. Participant-researcher CS shared that “in the moment [art-making] was what I naturally felt compelled toward...it wasn’t a conscious decision...it became a daily, available way of coping”. As revealed through the rich, personal stories in this paper, it is clear that we found art-making to serve a number of personally-tailored, utilitarian purposes. At the time, the utility of this “compelled” sensation seemed mysterious; we have now identified that feeling compelled to make artwork served the purpose of offering comfort through the expulsion of difficult emotions.

Subtheme 1.C: Feeling Compelled to Expel

Art-making during the pandemic served as a tool in a striking, kaleidoscope of facets. As identified, one such facet was art-making upon feeling compelled as a tool to *expel*. Within this theme, there was an unmistakable use of art-making to expel two things: primarily challenging emotions, and occasionally vulnerable parts of self. It is important to understand just what expelling is, however, within the context of this research. Additional key words that often surfaced in our data seemed at first to be similar to expel: express, convey, process. However, if one looks at the definitions of these three words as compared to expel, there is a profound divide

in their *modus operandi*. When using art-making to express, convey, or process emotions, the emotion remained internalized in us while simultaneously being manipulated, understood, or rendered externally in the form of physical art-making. Although it may seem similar at first, expelling is fundamentally different. Merriam-Webster defines expelling as forcing something out, or ejecting it (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In the same way, we came to understand our pandemic time art-making as a force of expulsion.

Compelled to Expel: Challenging Emotions. Participant-researcher JH additionally reflected that because of Stay-at-Home orders “you can’t go out, so what can you do...You can’t go out, so how can you change your mindset, how can you change your thought process on [it]”. JH found that using digital art-making to expel feelings of being trapped and isolated helped him to cope “I can feel this move a lot quicker and get those feelings out a lot more”. As stated above, our foremost use of art-making as an expelling force was to eject challenging emotions from within ourselves.

As experienced by the world and outlined in this study’s literature review, the pandemic ushered in a unique cocktail of emotional experiences for many individuals. Within our group, the experience was no different. Some of these emotions, such as anger, anxiety, and isolation, we found we could tolerate. These emotions would simply be processed and expressed visually through art while still remaining inside of us. However, we found that some emotions were intolerable, and thus needed to be expelled. Unsurprisingly, these emotions were far more ambiguous, and our tolerance for them less developed. On such occasions, we recounted feeling gripped by a desire to expel these “challenging emotions” from within ourselves. When reflecting on one such challenging emotion, uncertainty, participant-researcher SH described this

phenomenon of needing to expel: “I felt that in some of my art as well....that’s how I’ve been trying to go into my art right now....I just have this need to expel” (See Figure 17). Interestingly, this desire to expel challenging emotions from ourselves was often discussed in and around our conversations relating to comfort and familiarity, and a natural conclusion can likely be made here. Using familiar materials for stability, we acted on a feeling of being compelled throughout the pandemic to use art-making to expel (or eject) challenging emotions and thereby secure some semblance of comfort. Participant-researcher CS remarked that this process of expelling negative emotions became “a daily, available way of coping”. The group also found many of their best artwork to be art made to process challenging feelings. PF remarked:

It pains me to say this, but I think the greatest art I ever created is when I've been [in] really severe episodic depression, where it's literally like I have to make art to exist and get out of bed ... those have been my most proud [art] pieces...

By making conscious efforts to alleviate their feelings associated with isolation caused a heightened sense of pride in the artist’s work and feelings surrounding their current state. While we all shared this critical need to expel challenging emotions in our own nuanced ways, a less common theme surfaced as well.

Figure 17

Expel



Note. This is an artifact brought by SH for session four (Materials) which illustrates how SH used art-making and the process of creating paint from natural materials to expel the challenging emotion of uncertainty to cope.

Feeling Compelled to Expel: Vulnerable Parts of Self. A poignant but less universal experience within our group was the use of art-making to expel, and then explore, vulnerable parts of self which in turn provided a means to cope and find comfort. Specifically when discussing the topic of identity, some of us noted that it was difficult to explore certain parts of self during the pandemic when merely exploring them internally. Rather, these individuals stumbled upon a useful way of expelling them in order to explore the self. Participant-researcher CC described this experience: “it’s almost like a process of expelling almost... these parts of myself... or like I have to doubt myself for a minute and then like I’m more comfortable than ever afterwards.” By expelling parts of self and parts of identity through the act of art-making, these individuals found that they gained a level of safety, comfort, and removal from the process of exploring themselves which allowed them to be compassionate toward their vulnerable and

imperfect parts of self. This intricate phenomenon of art-making as coping will be further discussed in a later section of this paper (see Theme 3: Processing).

Theme 2: Art as a Tool for Adapting

British naturalist, Charles Darwin reminds us of an important sentiment: “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent; it is the one most adaptable to change.” Adapting is defined by Oxford University Press (2010) as follows: “become adjusted to new conditions” “make (something) suitable for a new use or purpose; modify.” The pandemic created many “new conditions,” sets of rules and stressors that we were continuously adjusting and modifying our behaviors and relationships around. With that in mind, participant-researchers noticed a similar sentiment being shared within the conversations that developed over the course of six questions. The act of adapting during the COVID-19 pandemic, was identified as a creative, problem-solving endeavor that was facilitated through the act of art-making. That is to say, art-making existed as the mediator between the external impact of the global pandemic and the internal influence of our individual experiences. Within this umbrella theme of adaptation through art-making, we found two subthemes: adapting to aloneness and adapting to the unknown.

Subtheme 2.A: Adapting to Aloneness

Mandated social distancing was the main strategy to reduce the spread of COVID-19 thereby restricting people from interacting with one another and leaving their homes. As a result, adaptation to aloneness was a necessary and universal phenomenon with the majority of people working and learning from home.

Response to Isolation. Art-making provided an outlet to combat isolation through introspection, self-expression, documentation and connection. In our sessions, art-making facilitated discussions around the impact of isolation and aloneness, how our perceptions changed over time and how we adapted physically and emotionally to our changing circumstances. Although participant-researchers had variable levels of discomfort in adapting to the Stay-at-Home order in the initial stages, with some viewing isolation as a choice and opportunity to connect to self, the consensus over time was that it became more challenging. Feelings of physical separation shifted to mental isolation. As one participant-researcher EW, described her artwork created in session one (see Figure 18) as “a time lapse of how isolation as a theme changed for me from beginning to now” starting as a bare structure with glass, to look out through, then abandoned. EW shared her experience as follows:

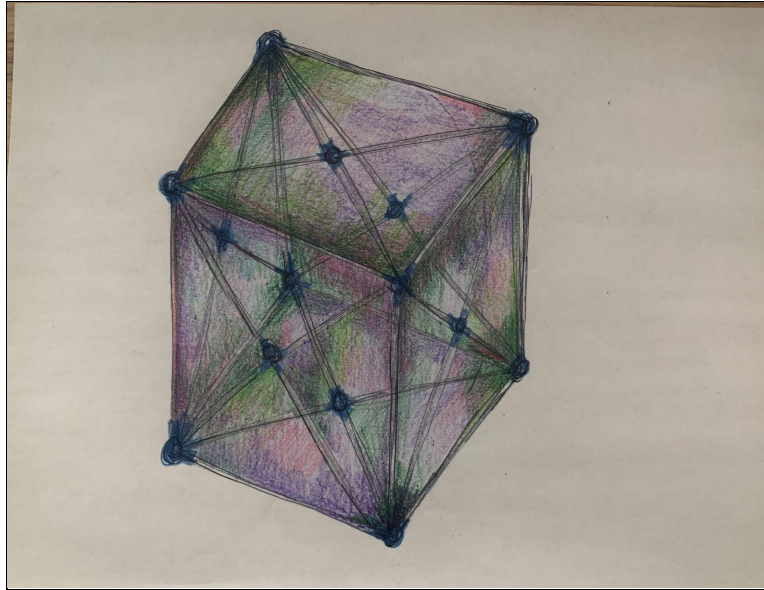
At the beginning of the pandemic, isolation was physical isolation. We were not allowed to go out... and the longer it is, the more it transitioned into a more of a mental isolation. I feel I'm in my head all the time and it feels like my space is closing up more and more and more... It started with, we can't go outside your neighborhood to, we can't go outside the house and then it's in my head and I'm growing more and more inwards, like I'm shrinking and there's no space and it feels like I'm suffocating, like an abandoned fish bowl.

Common sentiments were feelings of containment, trapped or feeling “boxed in” represented visually with rectangles, lines and boxes. Additionally, the word “longing” was used, in the context of longing for others. The presence of hands in the art created during session one of gesturing outward and towards oneself, expressed a desire to reach out, hold oneself and hold

it together. (See Appendix C, Figure C1). Making art together on the topic of isolation, provided an opportunity for adapting to varying degrees of depressive symptoms and loss through expression and connection in sharing difficult feelings.

Figure 18

Abandoned Fishbowl



Note. This artwork by EW was from session one (Isolation) which illustrates feelings of physical and mental isolation, experienced by the participant-researchers.

Art-making facilitated transitions to the changing impact of the global pandemic and our internal responses. As reflected by participant-researcher CC:

I also noticed that art for us was a way to document, calm, or almost ‘digest’ the emotional state we were/are experiencing in the moment... it plays an important role in all of our lives to combat the isolation we are collectively experiencing.

Adjusting to and modifying our internal perceptions were continuously occurring as we learned of the extension of the stay at home order from one month to a few months, to over a year as we write this paper. One participant-researcher shared “Isolation used to be like a

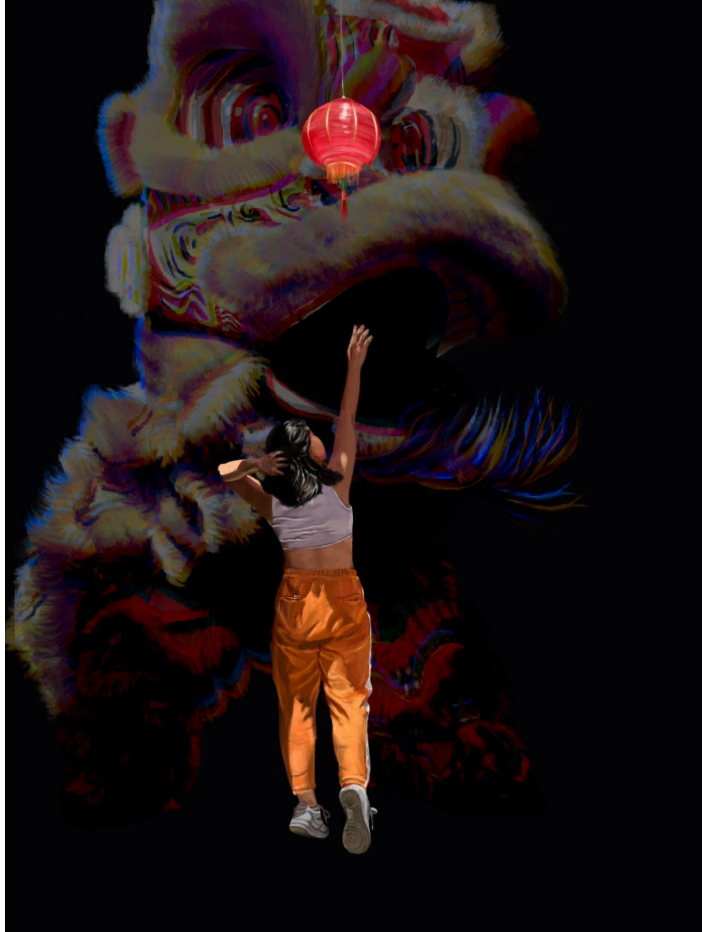
choice... a privilege... to be introspective, to restore and grow.” She continued, “but now it’s become the thing that’s impressed upon us, impressed upon me and I have to be isolated and I have to be isolated pretty much at home.” The participant-researcher described her art as “Figures in their own compartments” with a figure representing herself (see Figure 11):

It became an echo chamber because it became so prolonged....my own ideas, my own thoughts, my own experiences are just bouncing around in my little compartment without like the experiences of others to like sort of help interpret or work through them in a way.

Similar sentiments were felt by other participant-researchers. CS reflected the change that her artwork took when she began to think about choice. “It started out with ... no forest imagery but, as I sort of made that connection to choice and ... everyone became stars and galaxies are really my choice.” Through art-making, participant-researcher CS was able to exercise making and creating her own choices and gain some hope. Other participant-researchers expressed a sense of hopefulness through their art and discussions. At a time when it was difficult to make art, a feeling of hopefulness motivated EW to want to capture her feeling in the moment described as “a glimpse like we are almost reaching it.” (See Figure 19). Through documenting, EW increased her sense of optimism describing it as “overwhelming hopefulness” and created a physical representation that she could later reflect upon. Art-making provided the freedom to change, adjust, and make creative choices through the exploration and documentation of expanding feelings and changing perceptions during the pandemic and through discourse and making art together combat feelings of isolation.

Figure 19

Here's to Hoping



Note. This artifact shared by EW in session two is an example of how artmaking illustrated the changing perspectives and produced alternate feelings, in this case hope.

Art-making also acted as a medium to push through discomfort, find meaning and have self-compassion through the process and towards oneself. Participant-researcher CC, chose clay as an art material because she liked how it felt in her hands, its malleable nature, and its ability to adapt to meet her immediate needs. Participant-researcher, SL reflected on the symbiotic relationship of mark-making and self-exploration:

I was surprised and comforted by similar feelings of paralysis and movement, letting go of judgment, finding meaning and learning about ourselves through instinctual, mark

making. Our art-making and relationship to it has shifted in reaction to external events and internal changes adapting to our current needs and desires.

Our personal art-making adapted and tended conscientiously to our unique, individual needs during times of being alone and feelings of isolation. At the same time it acted both as a documentation and reflection of how we responded to our changing internal states during the pandemic.

Loss of Interpersonal Connection: Building Community. Isolation quickly transformed the quality of interpersonal connection, participants collectively described feelings of depression, anxiety, and helplessness due to a lack of social interaction found outside the home. With many dependent on the internet for community and connection, uncertain of how to engage, participants found themselves limited to video-call platforms and social media to maintain relationships and for a look into a world outside their own. After spending months being confined to small screens, participants identified a shared feeling of restless and exhaustion. In July, protests erupted across the country, hundreds of thousands demanded accountability after a poor response from the police department responsible for the death of George Floyd, yet another unarmed person of color. Oppressed communities and allies seeking justice organized in the masses despite the ongoing spread of the novel coronavirus, and activists not only risked arrest but risked bodily harm to themselves and unknown others. Without guaranteed safety, physically participating in protests was often not an option for participants, rather than be relegated to silence and inaction, art-making evolved past internal exploration and became a means of advocacy and sociopolitical uplift. Stay-at-Home orders isolated individuals limiting social interaction and shifting dialogue inward, prompting participants to confront their

beliefs and vulnerabilities. However, during this time apart from society, participants found increased opportunities for internal processing, self-discovery, and education which was then demonstrated through art. Participant-researcher PF highlighted this:

It was a realization that I've only recently had while being in isolation, and having the opportunity to engage in activism in a way that killed me at first because I was staying with my parents and having health problems....I wanted to feel that I was doing something....engaging in artwork..and that was only possible because of isolation. A lot of this [social justice] movement has only been possible because of Covid and for me that took my art-making to a whole different place, just engaging in art as a means of representation more than aesthetic. I think the conflation of this [social justice] movement and of the pandemic has been exposing some of the ugliest parts of humanity, but also giving birth to opportunities that would have otherwise never existed.

Participants varied in their materials and approaches to art-making, one constant was the ability to make actionable steps to engage in social justice endeavors while adapting to the limitations of the external environment. This intentional effort unexpectedly decreased feelings of isolation, by creating interpersonal connection motivated by a desire for change and building community through supportive outreach.

Adapting to the Unknown

Adaptation to the unknown or perhaps even the perceived unknown became an important and nearly inescapable act for the participant-researchers. Within this subtheme, we highlighted increasing tolerance to the unfamiliar and surrendering to the flow as two notable instances in which we addressed adapting to the unknown.

Increasing Tolerance for Unfamiliar: Known/Unknown. Through a prolonged absence of certainty, participants found art-making a valuable asset to increasing tolerance for the unfamiliar. Alleviating psychological discomfort through spontaneous art expression was found to be essential in our ability to move forward into the unknown. An unexpected result was how familiar art-making materials and processes were continuously modified to evolve with participants' growing desires for control and uncontrol. One participant-researcher explains the impact of this newly adapted art-making process:

During the pandemic I've really learned... we have nowhere to go, nobody to see, so like I'm always in the discomfort might as well, deal with it, so I think during the pandemic I've been more intangibly trying to like, encourage myself to tap into that discomfort.

Participants confronted discomfort by inventing solutions to creative paralysis, utilizing familiar materials in an unintentional manner to counteract the unknown and increase a sense of control over their internal experience, one participant-researcher explained here:

Going from intentional art to art that's more quick and maybe not so much premeditated was something that resonated with me as well... I wanted to make art during this time, but felt paralyzed in some way and wasn't able to, so I had to find ways to kind of trick myself to make the art.

One participant shared the experience of adjustment to fluctuating availability of materials in the surrounding environment by exercising compassion and acceptance:

I'm finding that for me the closest thing to well being and art-making during pandemic has been like picking up something completely new and unfamiliar for me and being like

okay with the clumsiness of it and like the less I give a f*ck about what my art looks like the more happiness it gives me.

By intentionally increasing occurrences of the unfamiliar, participants found they were able to decrease resistance to unpredictability, and therefore increase tolerance towards the uncertainty of the pandemic.

Surrendering to the Flow. Art-making also became a crucial way for participant-researchers to recognize the need for going with or surrendering to the flow. It was understood that the process of consciously surrendering to the art-making process may increase one's ability to find ways to accept unknowns that were present in everyday life. EW noted in the third session that their act of going with the flow in their art-making, was also a process that could allow for less focus on the end product (see Figure 20). EW stated this was a state of "...moving with what feels comfortable moving and what feels right and where things need to go and kind of trusting the process and trusting that you'll be where you need to be." Similarly, PF expressed the process in which they surrendered to the material that they were working with to process their well-being or lack thereof during this pandemic (see Figure 21). PF identified a quote that was shared in an earlier session from a participant-researcher's family member, that helped PF understand this practice:

Happiness is being able to fully experience every moment no matter what is happening, pleasant or unpleasant. It is to live the moment with every ounce of being. It is not about pleasure or attaining anything. It is about being fully alive and present.

The ability to be present with the process and product of the art-making then allowed for an increase in well-being.

As we all confronted this global pandemic, and all of the aloneness and unknowns that existed along with it, it became clear that art-making existed as a crucial tool to facilitate adaptation to the interdependence of our external circumstances and internal environments. Through the six sessions, it became clear that adaptation was able to be furthered by our ability to adapt to aloneness through the bolstering of community, allowing for introspection and identity shifts to take place, increasing endurance of the unfamiliar, and surrendering to the flow through our art.

Figure 20

Dance



Note. This is an in-session artwork by EW from session 3 (Flux) which illustrates the concept of trusting the process and going with the flow as a form of adaptation.

Figure 21

Surrender in Silk



Note. This is an in-session art piece by PF from session six (Well-being) which illustrates the surrender to material and surrender to exploration of the creative process as a form of adaptation.

Theme 3: Art as a Tool for Processing

Subtheme 3A: Processing Introspection and Identity Exploration

With forced social isolation during the ongoing global pandemic, participant-researchers described a sense of rupture, disconnection, and discomfort that surrounded them like stagnant, warm air. This suffocating feeling of being boxed in was highlighted by CS: "...everyone's in their own little boxes and everything's bouncing back and forth and just reverberating...". A compelling need for air flow and movement developed. Lending its support, art-making became a filtering, processing tool for participant-researchers—in comes the stagnant air, out goes something far more bearable. Perhaps both as a blessing and a curse, participant-researchers found themselves having more time and motivation during the pandemic, to pause, to look inward, and to process one's subjective and corporeal experiences. With the increased

opportunity and inspiration for introspection and an absence of certainty in our external realities, participant-researchers described a need to create more consistently and frequently. The act of introspection and reflecting on one's identity were common points of discussion with the increased time apart from others, at home, and with the self. For some participants there was a sense of gratitude towards having the time to explore inward. For others, it was a challenging push into discomfort. Sentiments like the following: "[I am] painfully grateful for this pandemic ... to pause and have these opportunities to explore myself in ways that I... didn't have time for before..." and "...isolation can be a time to connect to the self and nature and our origins" demonstrate the complexities and nuance around self exploration during the time of the pandemic. Further, participants noted that part of their identity was created based on connection to others and the "collaboration of environmental, familial, and internal ideas." With the pandemic, participant-researchers shared how internal shifts and changes in concepts of identity were reflected and processed in their art-making proceedings. One participant-researcher reflected "Art helped me in pandemic to order my internal experiences, record them, process them, and thus understand them. Because of this understanding, I had some semblance of internal peace or contentment that mildly increased my perceived well-being" (CS). In particular, art-making seemed to simulate and reflect an identity exploration and dynamic integration process similar to what one may have during adolescence. One outcome of our increased introspection and self-observation on Zoom during this time may be the prevalence of faces and self references in our artwork. Participant-researcher SH showed her art journal filled with "quick sketches of her face". She verbalized she found an increase in portraiture in her art during the pandemic, which aligns with her increased effort in self exploration. SH further noted that

while exploration can be “uncomfortable”, “tapping into the discomfort to be comfortable” is helpful for her long-term well-being.

Moreover, participant-researchers came to view identity as a flowing, shapeable concept. Shifts in identity may be impacted by one’s experiences, focal points in life, relations with others and changes to one’s external environment. This shift is then said to be projected through the art. Participant-researcher CC shared photographs of her fridge,

My fridge is the first thing I see when I walk into my house and I try to have pictures of everyone I feel is close to me ... I think being able to see people’s faces ... feels so good ... and [serve] as a nice reminder of those connections I have... a reminder of who I am.

Subtheme 3B: Processing Corporeal Experiences

Moreover, art-making supported participant-researchers in processing their corporeal experiences, which are often heavily interlaced with subjective feelings. Participant-researcher EW read entries from her journal titled “Things I want to talk to my therapist about”. She verbalized how journaling helped her “capture moments” for safe and contained processing in personal therapy. Similarly, CS shared a response art she made near termination with a client. CS stated the artwork, along with many of her other art created during the pandemic, served as a “mirror, a sounding board, and as a way of...ordering [her] internal experiences, emotions and thoughts in a way that is less overwhelming”. As the group reflected on issues of social justice, they found that adopting an active role within their communities was inspiring to both themselves and others. Through art-making, individual members found themselves defining their own understanding of social justice and how it related to their environment and the personal relationship that they have with it. Art-making was also named as a “private” and “safe” outlet to

process feelings of guilt and to understand one's privilege without burdening others. CS verbalized, "... my art provided me ... an outlet to try to process the guilt, so that it didn't start imposing on other people in places where it was really unhelpful..." . One participant-researcher highlighted how art created to process their feelings associated with movements such as Black Lives Matter and the death of George Floyd felt like they were "working on something ... bigger than [self]". Participant-researchers found art-making as a means to directly examine and process the feelings that surfaced when seeing acts of injustice, more directly looking towards how they could use those motivations within the artwork to help their communities.

Ultimately, the six-session virtual meetings highlighted the processing of participant-researcher' internal and external experiences during the pandemic. Participant-researchers verbalized how challenging it felt to reflect on experiences during the pandemic while "[they] still feel like [they] are within". This sentiment was expressed beautifully by SH, "We have gone through so much, and we will go through so much, and we are currently going through so much". There was a sense of collective grieving which was both profoundly challenging and validating, in equal parts, and art-making provided the needed space for processing it.

Conclusion

Processing Through Collaborative Writing (or Story-Telling)

The writing process served as the integral precipice upon which this collaborative autoethnography sits; an entrypoint for cogent sociocultural understanding that remains untouched by its empirical predecessors. With unbounded emotional candor, we communicate the most compelling findings that emerged in our research. The collaborative writing process thus secured the validity of our results wherein the verisimilitude becomes readily apparent in the shared vulnerabilities that bounded us, seven protagonists, together. Collaborative writing allowed for our seven stories to be woven together under one nuanced narration. Herein we made sense of these pluralistic points-of-view, that rippled through our shared reality of solitude, and resulted in tidal waves of sociocultural data. In constructing these lines of narrative we had to articulate aspects of the unspoken liminal space wherein emotional, artistic, and intuitive ways of accessing a shared preverbal body of knowledge gave shape to the richness and reliability of our data. By sole virtue of engaging with this content, we were processing it.

In the encapsulation of our phenomenological findings, we realized they were best understood and communicated within the rigorously raw, ethereal, and emotive means through which they were initially uncovered. As such, we continued to creatively understand ourselves through each other, and each other through ourselves — in a beautifully symbiotic holding space — wherein our images and ideas could sit safely in incubation until they were ready to hatch.

Thus the act of collective writing that birthed this manuscript became the deepest layer of our processing. The in-session artwork and artifacts gave each participant-researcher the liberty of expressing each theme and the personal impact it had upon them, through whatever

mechanism most readily forged a path of least resistance. Therefore, this writing process became the connective tissue that would fuse together a culmination of sensorial, preverbal, imaginative, embodied, and emotional ways of knowing. Through the dialogical process of both individual and interpersonal exchange, weekly reflections, artwork, artifacts, and the successive discourse that developed, we were able to shed light upon these alternative elements of the human experience that are often bypassed when implementing more traditional forms of research. As the collective writing began, we found ourselves becoming human-shaped metronomes in a shared rhythm that could reverberate into the deepest layers of our internal processing thus far. A fumbling orchestra at first, cacophonous and out of tune. We tried to find our own seats until, abruptly, we realized that we were all the conductors, the first chair, the instruments, and the music sheets. So we forged means of moving in, out, and through each other whilst finely tuning each string and each chord with a quickness and cogency that makes us swell with contentment and whistle the score of our symphonic masterpiece as if it were a tune we always knew; and each time it leaves our lips, we come to know it slightly better. This all became: *The process of processing this process*. Thus we offer you, our honored reader, this collective of melodies in an endless loop of meaning-making and internal processing, deeper and deeper we go. This meta-melody stays true to the pitch of each participant-researcher as seven shrill screams, of fury and fear, transmuted over time into a sweet soliloquy of survival. A hymnal to our creative camaraderie.

Processing through collaborative writing and meaning-making, under this methodology, is what it means to be both the tree and the lightning that strikes it. To be the mirror and the face

that gently peers within it. To be a researcher, participant, author, art-maker and ultimately survivor of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Discussion

This study found that art-making acted as a distinctive and customizable tool during the pandemic. Not only was it pliable enough to address the ramifications of different pandemic-induced experiences, it also adjusted to fit the varied, and even contradictory needs of each participant-researcher in the study. The data revealed that pandemic-time art-making impacted well-being through three primary avenues: by acting as a tool to cope, to adapt, and to process. First, our art-making impacted our well-being during the pandemic by serving as a tool to cope with the stressors of the pandemic by minimizing, banishing, or making them tolerable. Going one step further than coping, art-making also served as a tool for adapting. It acted as the mediating force between the pandemic's external impacts and our ensuing internal experiences. Specifically, art-making helped us adapt to aloneness and the unknown — two formidable forces championed by the pandemic which often laid siege to our individual and communal well-being. Finally, and with equal significance, is the finding that our art-making impacted our well-being throughout the pandemic by serving as a tool to process corporeal experiences, emotional experiences, and other personal realities.

The need to cope, to adapt, and to process are often needs which we participant-researchers observe in our art therapy clients; in fact, we propose that they may be remarkably common human needs. The innumerable struggles brought about by mental health challenges and the universal experience of being alive often lead an individual to a place where they are in great need of coping, adapting, and processing tools. Therefore, we cannot ignore that

we as art therapists and self-proclaimed art lovers are greatly intrigued, and elated, by our discovery of art-making as a mighty and useful tool. With hopefulness and courage, we look to the future where this information may inform rich, empowering, and comforting treatment for each honored individual we will have the gift of walking beside as they traverse their therapeutic journeys.

Personal and Collaborative Art Response to the Research Question

We summarized our shared experiences within this sociocultural phenomena of COVID-19 in a final, collaborative art piece. Following the completion of the analysis process and the identification of our three primary thematic cornerstones, each of us thoughtfully created personal response art to visually embody these findings. Collaboratively the participant-researchers conducting this study determined that there is, in fact, no simple way to simply *answer* the research question at hand. Rather, the following seven art responses act as our *response* to the research question that sparked our enquiry. In fidelity to the method of autoethnography, we felt that combining these pieces into a final, collaborative art response (see Figure 29) would be the most authentic way to present our findings. Below are presented seven individual artworks made by the participant-researchers in this study, and each is followed by a personal artist statement from the individual that created it (see Figures 22 through 28). After the seven individual art responses there is a final, collaborative artwork which visually and symbolically knits together these seven responses into one (see Figure 29). These seven artworks and one collaborative piece serve as our vulnerable, rigorous, and transparent response to the impacts of art-making on our well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than offer

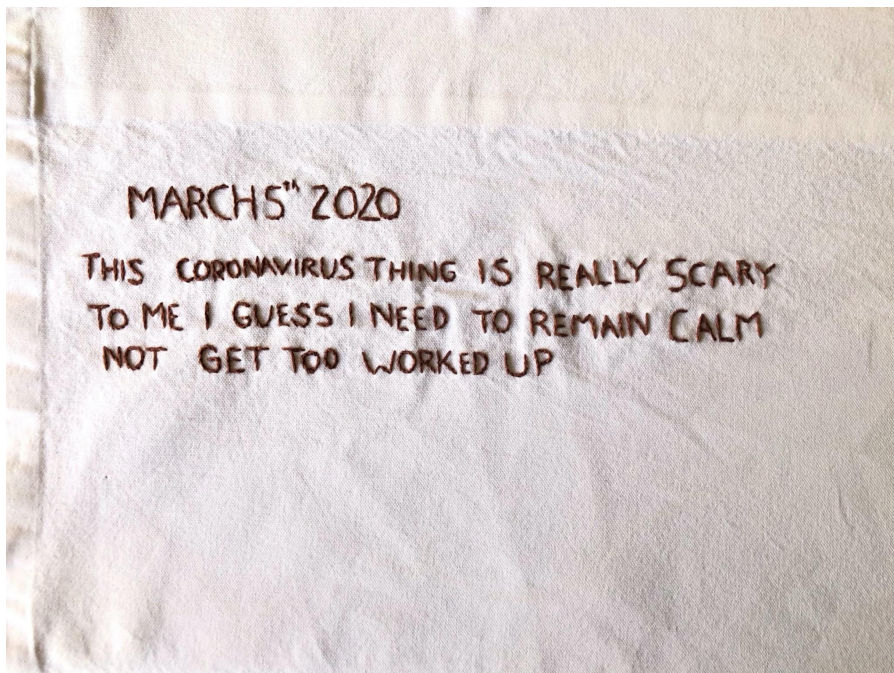
compulsory explanation of these pieces, it is our collective hope that they will speak for themselves, and speak to you.

Statement by Participant-Researcher CC :

I found myself revisiting journal entries from the very start of the pandemic, finding sentences that stood out to me and capturing the most vulnerable sentiments. I felt that this combines the ideas of coping, adapting, and processing because journaling is a coping mechanism I frequently use as a sort of brain dump. I revisited certain entries and chose to adapt the work by recreating it on a large piece of cloth, with more time I'll add more entries but unfortunately it isn't possible for me to finish with limited time. I believe the processing took place while embroidering, meditating on those thoughts in order to reflect on how my perspectives have been shifted and shaped throughout the pandemic. (See Figure 22).

Figure 22

Reset



Note: This response art was created by participant-researcher CC in response to the research question which guided this study, and the results which ultimately emerged.

Statement by Participant-Researcher CS:

I created this piece with the intention that it would encompass the full spectrum of my experience with this project. I wanted this work to honor not only the enrichment of well-being through ordering, processing, expelling, and adapting through making art, but also the unavoidable pain that was experienced during the pandemic. Without the pain, there can be no healing. Without chaos to adapt to, torment to process, challenges to cope with, the beauty of these art-making mechanisms cannot be experienced. Therefore my intention with this piece is to honor the interwoven and inseparable realities of pain and comfort, healing and hurt, suffering and “being” in the present...Experiencing wholeness. (See Figure 23).

Figure 23

Honoring All Parts



Note: This response art was created by participant-researcher CS in response to the research question which guided this study, and the results which ultimately emerged.

Statement by Participant-Researcher EW:

The title of my art is “Bird Sung/Song”. It serves as an accompanying piece to my first in-session artwork of an abandoned, mossy glass cube. Reflecting on the three identified themes as well as the research question, I thought a lot about “what has art done for me”. The initial glass cube, which served as a mental prison/container, is no longer. Instead, it is replaced by the imagery of a bird wondering if it should jump/fly through a hoop. The hoop serves to symbolize the never ending cycle of life. There is hope. I just have to believe there is. (See Figure 24).

Figure 24

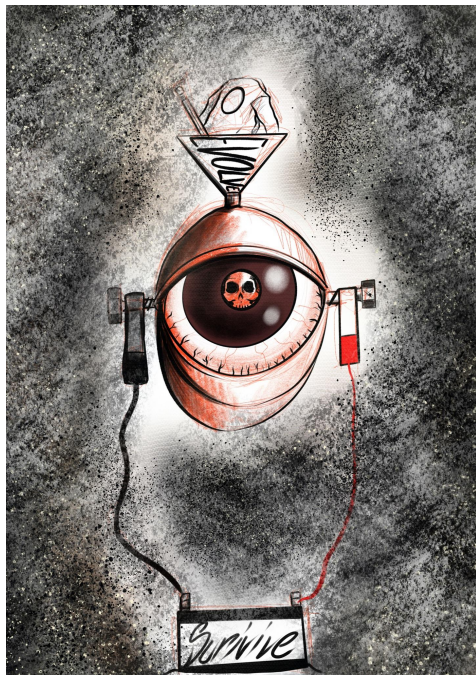
Bird Sung/Song



Note: This response art was created by participant-researcher EW in response to the research question which guided this study, and the results which ultimately emerged.

Statement by Participant-Researcher JH:

Trying to remain fueled and motivated to keep pushing through the remaining part of the school year, I find myself coping through exercise and adapting to my virtual environment. Processing the burnout and jolting myself back to work with the drive to survive through it all. Having the looming feeling of mental breakdown which would be the death of my academics, yet striving to push forward. (See Figure 25).

Figure 25*Adapt, Process, Cope*

Note: This response art was created by participant-researcher JH in response to the research question which guided this study, and the results which ultimately emerged.

Statement by Participant-Researcher PF:

I brought in a Tarot card [The Hanged Man] as my artifact for one of the more painful and powerful data collection sessions. In retrospect, this was my definition of how I was coping

during this time and of what it means to be in “flux”; to be permanently transfixed between Heaven and Hell — The Hanged Man is a delicate pendulum that swings between the two, neither here nor there, but beautifully in-between. As such, the creation of art became my divine act of surrender. Surrender to the flow that is human existence — during pandemic and beyond. (See Figure 26).

Figure 26

Beautifully in-Between



Note: This response art was created by participant-researcher PF in response to the research question which guided this study, and the results which ultimately emerged.

Statement by Participant-Researcher SH:

The title of my piece is “Fully Alive & Present” (see Figure 27). When I thought about our research question and the three themes that we eventually decided on to answer this inquiry, I thought a lot about the quote I brought to one of our sessions that my late grandma had originally

shared in an unfinished manuscript. This quote basically says that happiness does not necessarily mean that you are experiencing absolute bliss or 100% joy. Instead, happiness or well-being is something that comes when you are able to feel presence and be in the moment. I think my life-long goal is to learn how to “be here now” and that this is something that I am able to become closer to, through my art-making. I decided to explore the ideas of coping, adapting, and processing with and through the artmaking through a self-portrait where I am embodying this idea of being fully alive and present through a literal dress that I am wearing. This is something that I am able to wear more and more because of the active and important role that art-making, and thus coping, adapting, and processing, has become for me.

Figure 27

Fully Alive and Present



Note: This response art was created by participant-researcher SH in response to the research question which guided this study, and the results which ultimately emerged.

Statement by Participant-Researcher SL:

Nature has grounded me through the pandemic. It was my mentor and model in strength, fragility and adaptation. I learned to be flexible and present, yet rooted in the soil. It comforted me while processing loss as I preserved and pressed flowers. Flowers became my palette not only in form and color but a medium to respond to, a gateway to memories, myself and to others instilling within me comfort, hope and joy.

The title of my art is “Adaptation” (See Figure 28). My art is a joining of flowers collected and preserved during the pandemic and a vessel made over several months time before the pandemic. The vessel, a paper mâché sculpture of my hands, represented an exploration of my identity and was altered over time to reflect the cultural lenses in which I looked inward. The sculpture now holds the memories, meanings and artifacts of this past year, adapting as I do.

Figure 28*Adaptation*

Note: This response art was created by participant-researcher SL in response to the research question which guided this study, and the results which ultimately emerged.

Collaborative Art Reflection

Figure 29

Collaborative Art Response



Note: This response art is a collaborative piece which incorporates each of the seven participant-researchers' art responses into one; it acts as a final, culminating response to the research question which guided this study, and the results which ultimately emerged.

Limitations and Future Directions

This collaborative autoethnography has potential limitations. The first is related to time constraints. The analysis process succeeding the six sessions took longer than was initially anticipated. Therefore, it was in our best interest to split the analysis and writing process into subgroups so that information could be examined and written about in a quicker manner. If time

constraints were not an issue, writing may have occurred within the group, similar to the construction of the sessions, and thus more collaboration could have occurred. Second, is a general consideration of exploring a phenomenon in the midst of it. Because the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing and continues to affect millions of people worldwide, its effects, outlined in this paper, are preliminary and incomplete. We often discussed the remarkable nature of exploring the effects of art-making during a global pandemic which necessitated for us to look at past and current selves. It is possible that our analysis may have looked quite differently if we had: (1) begun our exploration at the start of the pandemic, and/or (2) examined the effects of art-making once the pandemic concluded. As continuing studies are released, and the pandemic eventually comes to a close, the importance and context of this research will continue to be refined. Drawing upon existing literature, this literature review specifically, described physiological, psychological, and social impacts of COVID-19 as a pandemic, as well as widely adopted methods used to cope with these effects. To clarify this conglomerate of information, generalized coping skills and self-care were outlined with additional literature, revealing two main categories of coping: adaptive and maladaptive. Because of its potential for coping and self-care, this collection of literature then turned to a review of art-making as distinct from art therapy. Finally, literature discussing autoethnography, arts-based research, and response art were explored for their relevance to the chosen methodology of this study. The authors believe that its contents establish the studying of personal art-making effects during a pandemic as a valuable undertaking.

Future research may replicate the research within a different socio-cultural context and/or may be another form of collaborative autoethnography reflecting on the impact of personal

art-making during the pandemic. In order to build upon our findings, we propose future research on the impacts of personal art-making on wellness through collaborative autoethnography by participant-researchers representing diverse cultures within their social and environmental contexts. Deeper analysis can take place on the impacts of personal art-making to provide comfort, to creatively adapt and a means of processing. Due to the positive, meaningful, restorative experiences and connections we made with one another, we are hopeful to continue exploring ourselves in association and collaboration with one another within the shared context that brought us together. Generally collaborative autoethnographies are completed in groups smaller than five, and this form of research is sparse in the mental health field (Chang, Wambura, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013) and non-existent in research of global pandemics. As such, more qualitative research is needed, particularly research that provides deeper reflection and examination into the phenomenon of the effects of art-making on well-being during a global pandemic.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

From: "Paterson, Julie" <Julianne.Paterson@lmu.edu>
Subject: IRB Approval/Smith/Heller/Frost/Wang/Harguinderguy/Carey/Lee
Date: December 17, 2020 at 12:13:49 PM PST
To: "Green, Joyce" <Joyce.Green@lmu.edu>
Cc: "Moffet, David" <David.Moffet@lmu.edu>, "Paterson, Julie" <Julianne.Paterson@lmu.edu>

Dear Ms. Smith, Ms. Heller, Ms. Frost, Ms. Wang, Mr. Harguinderguy, Ms. Carey and Ms. Lee,

Thank you for submitting your IRB application for your protocol titled ***Artmaking During a Global Pandemic; A Collaborative Autoethnography***. All documents have been received and reviewed, and I am pleased to inform you that your study has been approved.

The effective date of your approval is **December 17, 2020**. Please note that if there are any changes to your protocol, you are required to submit an addendum application to the IRB.

For any further communication regarding your approved study, please reference your **new IRB protocol number: LMU IRB 2020 FA 33- R**.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Julie Paterson

Julianne Paterson
Research Compliance Specialist
1 LMU Drive, University Hall, Suite #1878
Los Angeles, CA 90045
Telephone: (310) 258-5465
Email: Julianne.Paterson@lmu.edu



APPENDIX B

Student Research Consent Form and Group Agreements

Figure B1

Student Research Consent Form

College of Communication and
Fine Arts

1 LMU Drive, MS 8347
Los Angeles, California
90045-2659

T 1.800.LMU.INFO
310.338.2750
www.lmu.edu

Student Research Consent Form

I _____ (Participant) allow Christina Smith, Sarah Heller, Parisa Frost, Eva Wang, Jon Harguindeguy, Caitlin Carey, and Susan Lee (student researchers) to collect and share artifacts and use the voluntarily recorded materials described below for research towards the completion of their Masters research assignment for the Department of Marital and Family Therapy, Loyola Marymount University.

Recorded materials include: Video Recording and transcripts from interview sessions, artifacts, art work and writings.

As the participant, I understand that the users of this research may include images in data collection, art exhibition, presentations and published journals. I give the student researchers permission to use these materials for the purpose of completing their final thesis. I understand that participants and student researchers agree to the Group Agreements below. Participants have the option to use a different moniker instead of their legal names for transcripts.

Yes: _____ No: _____

As the participant, I understand that the student researchers will upload the materials in a secure digital folder agreed upon by all participants. All materials will be deleted upon one year after the presentation of the final thesis.

Consent:

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research
- You have been able to ask questions about the study
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

Figure B2*Group Agreements*

College of Communication and
Fine Arts

1 LMU Drive, MS 8347
Los Angeles, California
90045-2659

T 1.800.LMU.INFO
310.338.2750
www.lmu.edu

Group Agreements

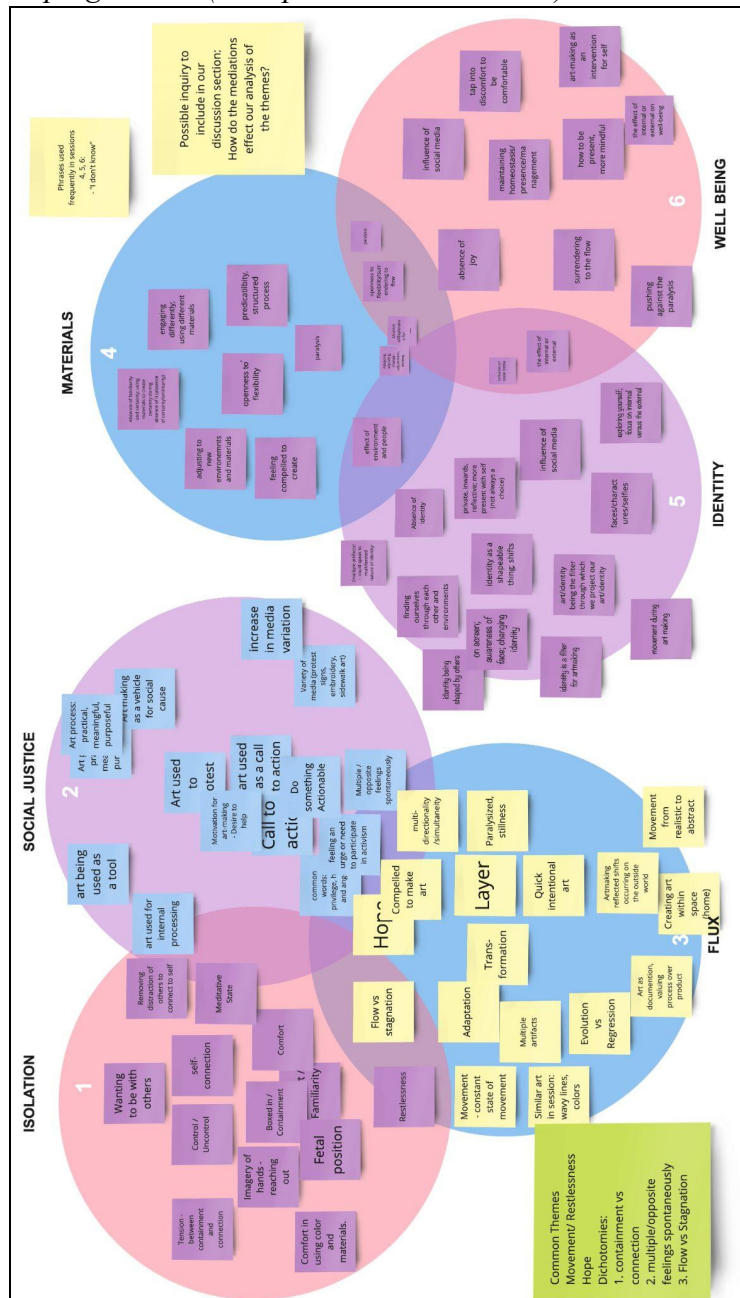
1. Everything discussed in the group is confidential. Individual identifying information is not shared outside the group.
2. All group members participate in the process of collaborative autoethnography and understand that group members will collect personal artifacts, explore experiences and create art that will be included in the data analysis.
3. Group members take responsibility for the success of this research group by maintaining their focus on the issues/themes/questions specific to the group and the topic being discussed.
4. Discussions and meetings are recorded and participants have the option to pause the recording at any time or remove personal information from the recordings.
5. Group members will be authentic and fully present during reflective experience and discussions.
6. Group members are encouraged to use 'I' statements and speak in the first person.
7. Group members are courteous to each other at all times. This includes not interrupting or talking while someone else is talking and listening attentively when another person is speaking.
8. Group members are respectful of each other's feelings, views and concerns at all times honoring and encouraging diversity and multiple perspectives.

APPENDIX C

Data Analysis

Figure C1

Data Analysis: Developing themes (Group 1 - CC, CS, EW, SL)



Note. Included for the purpose of illustrating the data analysis process using Venn diagrams in

Miro.

Data Analysis: Developing themes (Group 2 - PF, SH, JH)

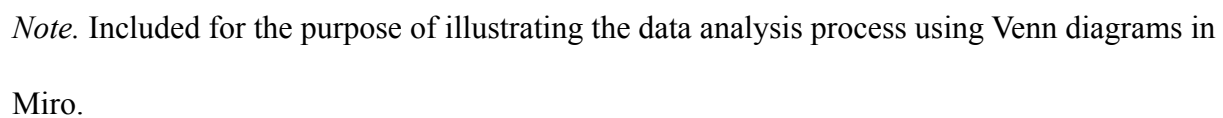
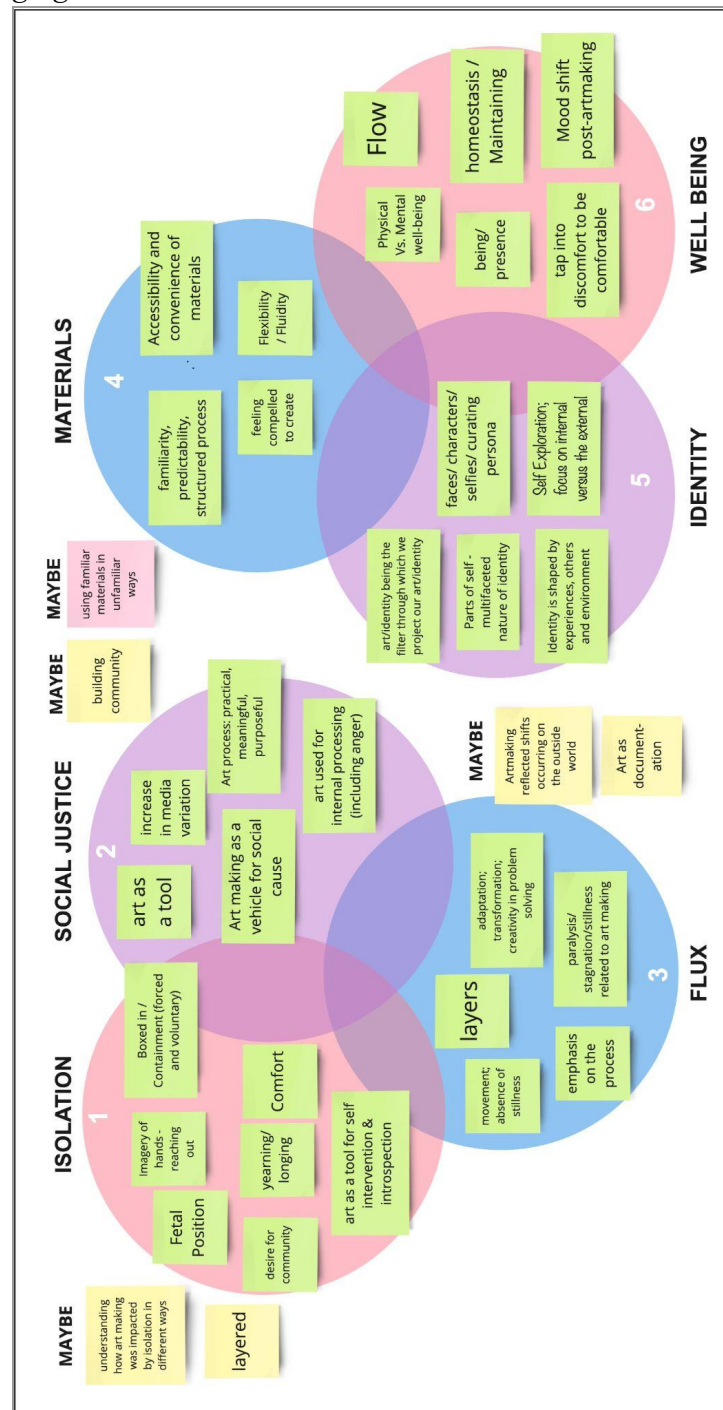
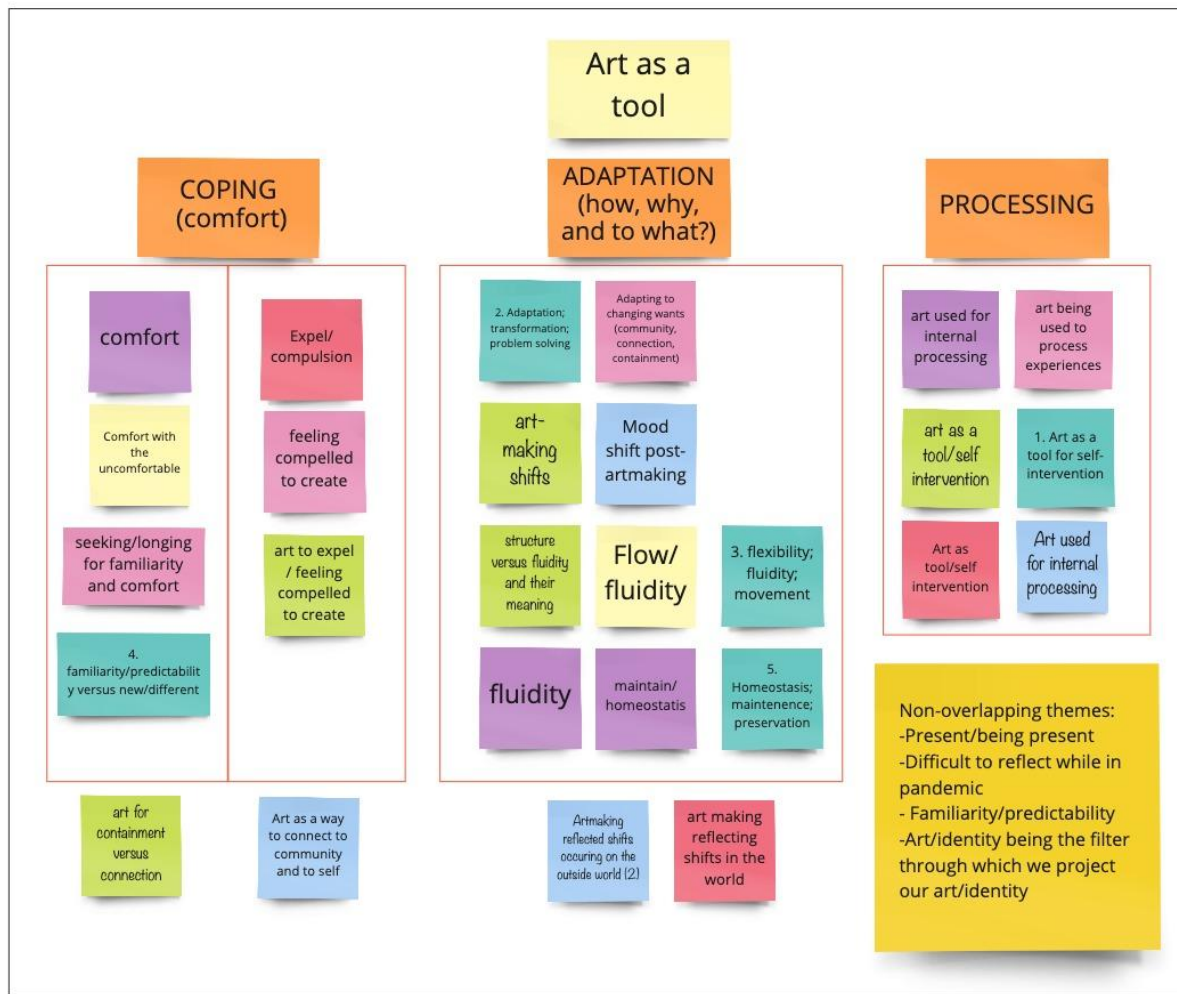


Figure C3

Data analysis: Emerging themes

Note. Included or the purpose of illustrating the data analysis process using Venn diagrams in Miro.

Figure C4*Data analysis: Themes*

Note. Included for the purpose of illustrating the data analysis process using the brainstorming template in Miro.