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Development of a Method: The Use of Flowers in Group Art Therapy

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Development of a Method: The Use of Flowers in Group Art Therapy

Capstone Thesis

Lesley University

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Specialization: Art Therapy

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Abstract

Working with natural materials and objects can provide calming benefits and promote a positive well-being. Nature objects can include wood, stones, shells, grasses, moss, flowers, and more. This thesis will focus on the development of a method for floral arrangement in art therapy. The thesis presents the development of a method that explores how the Western symbolism of flower types and personal memories of flowers impact the healing process while working with flowers in an art therapy group. Group participants included 20 women aged 27-65, who were part of an art program at the African Community Center. Fresh flowers were provided and each participant created their own floral arrangement. The flowers evoked an emotional response and encouraged participants to discuss details from their personal lives. Using flowers was found to promote a connection to emotions for participants. The symbolism associated and characteristics of flowers made the art making process inherently more emotionally evoking than when using other art materials.

Keywords: flowers, art therapy, floral arranging, natural materials, women's group

Development of a Method: The Use of Flowers in Group Art Therapy

Introduction

Flowers, across all cultures have been associated with ceremonies and occasions. Flower species have assigned symbolic meanings and messages. For example, in the United States, red roses are often associated with romance. While, in Hindu traditions, the Indian lotus is sacred because it is believed that the god Brahma was born in it (“Flower Symbolism”, 2018). Although flowers hold different meanings across cultures, there is a universal familiarity and connection to this sacred and delicate plant species. Gueguen, Meineri, and Stefan (2012) found that flowers had on a positive impact on drivers’ choice to pick up hitchhikers. Flowers elicit emotional responses in people because they are often associated with ceremonies and celebrations. Although the characteristics of flowers are understood by a wide variety of people, humans hold their own associations of flowers based on their past experiences and memories, which makes them an effective material in therapeutic setting

Working with natural materials has calming benefits (Lin, Lin, & Li, 2014) and using flowers as an art material in a therapeutic group can elicit a meaningful healing experience. Using the positive emotions that flowers can activate in individuals to create an art piece that is naturally filled with symbolic elements and the relaxing qualities that are present when working with natural materials, causes floral arranging as a medium in a therapeutic group to be a useful tool for participants. Perryman and Keller (2009) created open-ended activities where group members used flowers as symbols for various topics related to their lives. The flower activities often lead to discussion about the meaning of life. Previous research suggests that the

combination of flowers and other natural materials can have a positive impact on participants when used in a therapeutic setting.

This thesis offers the developed a method using flowers deepen the healing process in an art therapy group. Working with natural materials is innately healing and being immersed in nature promotes positive changes to people's well-being. McCaffrey, Liehr, Gregersen, and Nishioka (2011) found that walking through gardens reduced the symptoms of depression in older adults. Huss, Yosef, and Zaccai (2017) found that unique characteristics personify flowers that are commonly understood by a collection of people. When it comes to the use of flowers and floral arrangement as a method in art therapy, it has been indicated there may be possibility to create narratives and expand on the natural metaphors of flowers. The protocol includes the Western symbols associated with flowers and encourages participants to reflect on their own memories and associations with flowers to inform how they created their own floral arrangement. The method will examine participants' experience using the flowers and associations of the flowers in the therapeutic group.

Literature Review

Flowers

Flowers have been used as symbols in ceremonies and communication throughout in numerous cultures throughout history. In both Hindu and Buddhist artwork, deities are often sitting on a lotus throne. Ancient Egyptians associated the lotus with the life-giving power of the Nile River and lord of the dead, Osiris. Islamic tradition says that white roses came from Mohammed's sweat on his way to heaven. Certain types of flowers can hold a lot of different meaningful messages to people across cultures ("Flower Symbolism", 2018).

Flowers and Therapy

Perryman and Keller (2009) examined the benefits of using fresh flowers as an art material to encourage stress relief and creativity in a group counseling setting with a small collection of older female adults. Six women participated in the group, which focus was to create friendships and encourage communication among the women attending. Flora therapy was first developed in the early 1970s. Since then, researchers have studied the increased self-esteem and lower stress levels of the participants of flora therapy groups. Perryman and Keller (2009) created a five-session group with older female adults to create connection and inspire creativity among members. Each week, the members of the group would create floral arrangements and discussion prompts related to the project for that week. Through out the sessions, group members had freedom to put together floral arrangements however they chose and discuss the creative process within the group. Discussion questions were often brought to the group, which encouraged participants to open up and relate the flowers to their personal lives. For example, one week the group members were asked to choose a flower that represented each of their family members and create an arrangement with those flowers. The group participants discussed which flowers they each had chosen and how they represented their families. Symbolism was often used with the flowers for the participants to express themselves. All activities were open-ended and allowed the group participants to visually express themselves and encouraged conversation with other group members. Often during sessions, discussion of meaning of life, both past and present, occurred. At the end of the five weeks, the participants were asked how they felt after experiencing the five flora therapy groups. They reported being more focused on goals, felt free during session to express themselves, having fun, and feeling a sense of belonging in the group.

Mochizuki-Kawai, Yamakawa, Mochizuki, Anzai, and Arai (2010) assessed visuospatial memory and social functioning among people with schizophrenia. Visual aids were created so participants in the study could recreate a symmetrical floral arrangement with a step by step instruction sheet. Twenty participants with an average age of 32.4 years old who were diagnosed with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder, without intellectual disabilities or history of substance abuse, participated in the study. Half of the participants were part of the control group and did not participate in the structured floral arrangement activity. Participants in the floral arrangement group received flowers, small sticks, and a cube-like block of foam marked with shapes for guides. The activity went on for four weeks and each participant created two floral arrangements each week. The design guides for the participants became more complex each week, starting with the simplest design. Repeatedly following the systematic guide to create the arrangement helped improve the visuospatial ability of the participants. Both the control group and the group who participated in creating the floral arrangements took two assessments, Wechsler Memory Scale–Revised and Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figure Test, both before and after the four weeks of group. Those who participated in the floral arrangement activity showed significant positive change in their results of both assessments. Between the two groups, the research found an increase in the participants’ visuospatial process and spatial working memory.

Flowers and the Human Condition

Huss, Yosef, and Zaccai (2017) studied the embodied characteristics of flowers and their relationship to humans. The authors noted that, biologically, humans are drawn to flowers because they are a sign of fruit and a food source for humans. Although flowers provide minimal nutritional value, the bright colors of flowers against green leaves helped humans find the

sustenance in the fruit. Flowers' visual properties, smell, pattern, and movement are attractive as well. Positive associations are connected to memories of interactions with flowers, such as thoughts of romance and celebrations. Given the noted information on flowers, the researchers examined how people self-identify their experience with flowers. The study consisted of 60 men and 60 women, all undergraduate students at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. In order to carry out the research, first, black and white pictures of four different flowers were presented to participants and they were asked to choose between four different flowers and to explain their choice in a sentence. Two radially symmetrical shaped flowers, a gerber daisy with long and narrow petals, and a ranaculus with many curved petals were pictured, as well as two bi laterally symmetrical flowers, a calla lily and an anthurium. Each participant chose one flower from the four and described it with one sentence. Participants were randomly chose to create a concept map for the researchers to better understand the general concept of flowers for people. Among those chosen, ultimately 40 participants were asked to write for two minutes, any words that they think of when they hear the word "flower." Next, they were asked to fill half of a page with words related to emotions connected with a flower. Then they were asked to fill half of a page with words related to memories that included a flower. The group of 40 participants then had an open discussion about what they wrote on their concept map. The researchers compiled the concept maps, the themes in the one sentence about their flower choice, and themes from the open discussion and found that the most common words used were "pretty" and "make me happy." They found through the common writing themes, that certain characteristics were attributed to each flower. The specific physical characteristics create a personality for each flower. Participants often explained flowers similarly and used the same key words to describe

them. With the flowers physical characteristics, a personality is embodied and understood by a collection of people.

Gueguen, Meineri, and Stefan (2012) studied how hitchhikers holding flowers influenced female drivers. Environmental clues can impact an individual's behavior. Flowers can reflect emotions and are often associated with compassion, romance, and regret. Research shows that women drivers are hesitant to stop to pick up hitchhikers, especially if the hitchhiker is male. This study took place in Brittany, France and observed 2,000 drivers. The study involved three men and two women, all of whom were 20 years old, to one at a time stand in as a hitchhiker. The participating hitchhiker stood on a corner of a busy road that was very popular for hitchhikers in the area. The hitchhiker held the flowers for only half of the drivers that went by, switching after every 25 drivers had passed. Previous studies had shown that women are less likely to stop for hitchhikers than men, but the results for this study showed that when a man hitchhiker was holding flowers, women and men drivers stopped a similar amount. Drivers are more likely to assume that helping behavior was present when the hitchhiker was holding a bouquet of flowers. Men holding the flowers were seen as less suspicious and drivers feel more reassured to offer them a ride. In this study, women hitchhikers were seen as less dangerous and without bad intentions whether they were holding flowers or not as a result of them being picked up more often than men.

Horticulture Therapy

Over the last 20 years, there was a growth in the use of horticulture in mental health interventions. Harris (2017) created a project in England that included a community garden space where nature based activities took place and were available for people struggling with mental health issues and volunteers from the community. Activities included woodworking, gardening,

pottery, and sustaining wildlife habitats. Attendance to the activity sessions was self-monitored. The sessions occurred four days a week and each one included 12- 18 participants. Seven males and eight females who participated in the gardening activities were recruited to join a focus group. The participants had been attending the activity sessions for an average of 4.3 years. Researchers presented questions to the participants to encourage discussion about the gardening activities. The questions included, “What makes people want to volunteer?” and “Do you think an interest in gardening is important?” The discussion was recorded and transcribed by facilitators. The researchers coded the transcripts to find common themes and phrases used in the discussion. Researchers found four common themes from the transcript analysis; community, agency, mental health, and natural value. The results found that the flexibility of horticulture activities added to participants’ involvement level and that no previous interest in gardening was needed to be engaged in horticulture therapy. Researchers found that the themes from the discussion emphasized that there was a positive change to well-being that came from being in nature. Therapeutic horticulture activities promote psychological and social benefits for participants.

Swank and Shin (2015) studied how working with nature can positively impact children through studying effectiveness of gardening activities in an elementary school counseling group. The authors suggested that gardening could engage a multi-sensory experience. Being in nature has been found to lessen symptoms of ADHD, like difficulty focusing, completing tasks, and listening to directions. The researchers created a method to learn more about how gardening aspects in schools encourage social development, promote academic achievement, develop ownership and independence in a task. Counseling groups in nature provide emotional support outside of the traditional counseling setting. In order to investigation these themes, Swank and

Shin recruited 33 children aged 5-12 year olds. Among the group, 16% were female and 84% were male. The group met twice a week for 6 weeks for 30-45 minutes each session. The group goals were to foster healthy self-esteem, learn positive coping skills, develop social skills, and practice self-regulation skills. Within the sessions, the facilitators focused on helping children develop communication skills through sharing what they wanted to plant in the garden and listen to others ideas, processing their thoughts and feelings about the gardening process through drawings and art. The facilitators used the children's drawings and descriptions to understand the participant's perspective of the group. The authors found that there was an increase in self-esteem in the children from the beginning of the group to the end. The self-reported data collected through one on one interviews with researchers, the participants reported enthusiasm and enjoyment in the gardening program. In conclusion, the research found that gardening allowed the children to tangibly see the success of their actions. Children in this group were able to experience a full cycle of gardening while the activity encouraged social skills and positive self-perception. Most strikingly, the participants reported feeling calm and happy through drawings and discussion following the 6-week group.

In related research, Lee, Oh, Jang, and Lee (2018) performed a study at a school in Korea to learn more about horticultural-related activities affects emotions in students. In order to investigate this topic, twenty female children, aged 10 to 11 years old participated in the study. Before participants were selected, they completed a stress questionnaire determine existing behavioral or emotional problems. Half of the students participated in hands on horticulture activities for 40 minutes once a week for nine weeks. The hands on activities included flower arranging, planting, and flower pressing. Three weeks were dedicated to each kind of activity. A facilitator who had a horticulture therapist certificate, as well as an assistant counselor

accompanied the children during the activities. The control group did not participate in the horticulture activities, and instead were allowed to do indoor activities of their choice. Cortisol levels were tested in participant's saliva before participating in the horticulture activities, as well as after every group for nine consecutive weeks. The cortisol levels progressively decreased in the children who partook in the horticultural-related activities.

Spring, Viera, and Marsh (2014) studied the therapeutic impact gardening activities had on people with advanced Huntington's disease. People living with Huntington's disease (HD) often experience depression, loss of control over movements and balance, cognitive challenges, and dementia. The Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability enclosed garden was overseen by a horticulturist and was created to be accessible for patients with HD, including raised flowerbeds, tilted pots, and conveniently placed gardening tools. Participants were involved in an ongoing therapeutic gardening group and recruited to partake in this study to get feedback about the gardening. Twelve participants partook in the questionnaires, included seven HD patients, three staff and two visitors, ages unknown. The questionnaires assessed the therapeutic benefits of the gardening group, and assess ways that the activity could be improved for future participants. The questionnaires given to the staff and visitors included Likert scale and open ended questions. The questionnaires given to the clients with Huntington's disease included pictures. Through the questionnaires and interviews of participants, researchers found that the garden was connected with perceived happiness of the HD patients. Exposure to an outdoors activity and physical movement was beneficial for patients. Reports found that gardening encouraged social connection and self-expression.

Older Adults and Horticulture Therapy

Ng et al. (2018) examined the impact that horticulture therapy had on the health of older adults. Horticulture therapy allows participants to engage in social activity and be connected with others. This study collected biological as well as psychosocial data from the participants. The 15 session group took place weekly for three consecutive months, then monthly for the next 3 months at several parks and gardens in Singapore. Participants included 59 older adults between the ages of 61 and 77. Twenty-nine of those adults were randomly assigned to participate in horticulture therapy and the remaining 30 participants were part of the control group. Blood samples were taken from each participant and tested for different types of enzymes that effect health in older adults. Psychosocial results were collected through several self-rating assessments. Results for this study showed that horticulture therapy might prevent inflammatory disorders and increase red blood cell production to support the brain. Increased social connection was also reported as a result to the horticulture therapy group with older adults.

McCaffrey, Liehr, Gregersen, and Nishioka (2011) studied how garden walking compared to art therapy impacted older adults living with depression. Participants included 39 adults over 65 years old who were self diagnosed or diagnosed by a health professional with depression. The participants were divided into three equal groups and each group was involved in group walking, independent walking, or art therapy activity for 6 weeks. Both walking groups met in a garden once a week and spent one to two hours each time in various gardens. The art therapy group met twice a week and engaged in different drawing prompts each session. The Geriatric Depression Scale was used in the study to assess the presence of depression both before and after the 6-week activity. Focus groups took place at the end the 6-week study and researchers compiled the self reported experiences from participants. Researchers found that participants reported having a valuable experience and felt decreased feelings of loneliness and

fatigue. The research found that outdoor activity and can be helpful and reduce symptoms of depression similarly to a creative arts therapeutic group.

Horticulture Therapy and Grief

Lin, Lin, and Li (2014) explored using horticulture therapy with grief caregivers. Grief caregivers was defined as those who help people who are experiencing loss and make transitions in their lives. Through this career path, the careers are often exposed to mourning and loss. The researchers recruited grief counselors and funeral directors to participate in an interview, which allowed them to explain how flowers are a resource of comfort to a somber environment. Plants provoke feelings of happiness and peace as individuals interact with their visual beauty and fragrance. Horticulture therapy has grown in Taiwan in the last 17 years. The study was conducted to see the effects of horticulture therapy on the personal care of grief caregivers. A trained therapist facilitated the horticulture therapy workshops. There were 19 participants in the study, 15 women and four men. The program included hands on activities as well as lectures on horticulture therapy. Elements of grief-care professions, such as facing loss, caring individual needs, and planting hope, were included in the program. The participants were given a 4-point Likert scale to record the level of satisfaction of each session. The first session focused on the relationship between flowers and their own life. The activities were created to encourage storytelling and expressing grief. Participants also listened to music and shared stories about plants with each other. Participants shared their stories of grief and loss each week while also practicing meditation. Many of the participants shared their experience with loss with others for the first time. Workshop activities included natural materials in different ways each week. One week's activity involved floral pressing and another was planting flowers in a garden and

meditated in that environment. Lectures included discussion of horticulture therapy as a profession and how it has grown in Taiwan. Speakers presented how plants help people and can benefit self-esteem, physical health, and cognition. At the end of each workshop the participants took a survey. The survey results found that 95% of the participants were motivated to be surrounded by nature, 75% reported that their grief was expressed or relieved. The study found that prior to the workshop sessions, the caregivers avoided their grief and rarely shared their emotions related to loss with others. Horticulture therapy was found to be a beneficial way to practice self-care. The participants expressed interest in learning more about horticulture therapy and how it can be used to help them express themselves.

Packer (2017) explained how a woman who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder was in need of finding a job. Her trichotillomania symptoms were keeping her from doing so. She felt like she had the bipolar symptoms under control, but was really struggling with pulling her hair when under stress. She tried medication and behavioral techniques and both had little effect on the hair pulling. Her stress was intensified when she was surrounded by her family. The article discussed how weeding in a garden was similar action of pulling ones hair and suggested she try it as a replacement activity. Her age, location, and cultural background are unknown, which might have an impact on her response to the gardening activities. Her previous experience with nature and gardening may have had an impact on her response to the activity. The woman explained weeding a flowerbed during a weekend at a family member's house and reported that not only was the action of pulling weeds therapeutic, but going outside to surround herself with nature was very comforting and therapeutic for her. Removing herself from a stressful situation and instead experience tending for a flowerbed decelerated her trichotillomania symptoms.

Methods

The following methods describe a protocol that was used to investigate how flowers used as an art material can deepen the healing process in an art therapy group. The floral arranging activity incorporated Western symbolism of flower types and personal memories from the group participants to create a floral arrangement. The participants each created a unique floral arrangement using the natural materials provided.

Participants

Participants included 20 participants, aged 27-65 years old at the African Community Center. The participants were divided into two separate groups. The participants included center volunteers, and members of an ongoing a sewing skills training program through the center. The group participants had all attended an art as healing group once a week for 12 weeks, the floral arranging activity was implemented in the 12th session. The art as healing group took place Mondays and Tuesdays, and participants chose which day better fit their schedule to attend group each week. The floral arranging activity took place during both days of the art as healing sessions and both sessions included a new group of participants. All together during the floral arranging activity, there were Nine of the participants were self-identified as refugees, and English was not their primary language, and the remaining participants were American and spoke primarily English. In the first group, there were 12 participants and in the second group there were 8 participants.

Materials

Materials included 30 bunches of flowers and 10 bundles of floral greens for each group and they were equally divided among the two groups. The flowers included roses, daisies, irises, daffodils, baby's breath, and carnations (see Figure 1). Additional materials included clear vases

of various sizes, gardening shears, oil pastels and 7x10” white paper. Visual aids for each type of flower available for the activity, including a picture and a short description of the Western symbolism associated with each type of flower, were also used in each group.



Figure 1. *Flower Bunches*

Procedure

As the group members entered the room, they seated themselves around the conference room table. The facilitator first instructed the group members to silently reflect on a memory that they have with flowers. They were encouraged to close their eyes if they were comfortable, and focus on the colors, smell, and emotions associated with their memory. Then the participants were given oil pastels and a 7x10” piece of white paper, and one minute to sketch an image representing what came up for them during the reflection. The participants shared their sketches and memories with the group, one at a time. After everyone shared their images, the facilitator presented visual aids describing the Western symbolism for the 6 types of flowers that available for the activity. For example, the facilitator described that carnations represented women and

motherhood. The facilitator then asked the women to keep in mind their personal associations that they have with the flowers as well as the given symbols that were discussed while creating their floral arrangement. The facilitator encouraged the participants to think of the vase that they chose to represent their life, and to fill the vase up with what they need in their life, using the flowers as representation.

The group was allotted 45 minutes to complete their floral arrangements. The only instruction the facilitator gave about the visuals of the arrangement were that the flowers should not be taller than one and a half times the height of the vase so the arrangement didn't tip over. The participants were prompted to keep adjusting the flower placements in the vase until they liked how it looked. The group members then shared their process of picking flowers and creation of their bouquet with the rest of the group. All group members shared about their creative process and then the whole group participated in a gallery walk around the room to view everyone's arrangements up close.

Record Keeping

The facilitator took pictures of each participant's arrangements after the gallery walk. After the activity was cleaned up, the facilitator also took notes regarding the commentary from the participants about their explanation of their process of choosing flowers, memories associated with flowers, placement of the materials in the arrangement, and discussion of how they felt about the activity. These notes were useful in understanding the participants' experience with the materials and creative process.

Results

Participant Responses

From the very beginning of the group, the participants expressed clear enthusiasm from the presence of the flowers by asking questions about the flowers, walking towards the flower buckets, and commenting on the presence of the natural materials in the room. Many comments were made on not only the “pretty colors” of the flowers, but also the strong fragrance that filled the room. The discussion of memories and symbolism of flowers informed the creative process for the women to put together their floral arrangements. The associations with the different types of flowers appeared to bring up many emotions and memories for the participants. Several of the women who identified as refugees discussed how red roses grew wild in their home country. One of the women shared with the group how happy roses made her because it reminded her of home. Another participant talked about the yellow flowers reminding her of when she dropped her son off to college. Even though the flowers were not the same type, she chose mainly yellow flowers to represent her love for her son.

Not only did the visual aspects of flowers evoke emotion in the participants, but also the Western symbolism that was discussed before the arrangements were made inspired several women to make a deeper connection with the flowers and then share this connection with the group. Some participants included a flower with a specific symbol in their bouquet and then

Outcomes of Floral Arrangements

Each participant made a floral arrangement using a clear vase and the natural materials presented (see example in Figure 2). One participant commented how each of arrangement looked so different even though everyone had access to the same flowers. The facilitator noted

that each bouquet was made using floral greenery and at least three different types of flowers, although no minimum was stated in the instructions. After the arrangements were complete and the group participated in a gallery walk to view everyone's floral arrangements, the women were asked to share about their experience of putting their bouquet together or the process of choosing the flowers they used. One participant shared how she chose the carnation, which represented mothers and women, and the baby's breath, which represents childhood innocence, and put them together in her arrangement so "the mom and the baby could be together." This connection of symbols inspired the group member to share how important her mom was to her and that it was almost the anniversary of her mom's passing. She became emotional and shed several tears. Another participant shared that she chose flowers that were similar to her wedding bouquet. The same flowers that she carried on her wedding day were not available in the activity, but she created her arrangement with the memories from that day in mind. She explained that the shapes of the flowers she chose were similar to her wedding bouquet and the colors she chose represented different loved ones in her life. It was noted that many of them shared more personal experiences during this group than they did during any other discussion from the previous sessions in the art as healing group.



Figure 2. *Facilitator's floral arrangement*

Discussion

The developed method incorporated the use of flowers and the Western symbolism of the flowers in a therapeutic group. Each participant chose flowers and assembled a unique floral arrangement. Multiple species of flowers in a variety of colors were available to intentionally include many symbols and encourage a range of emotions during the art making process. Memories associated with flowers were discussed in a warm up activity and provoked an emotional connection to the artwork. The flexible instructions for the floral arrangement

assemblage allowed for a range of experience levels in participants working with flowers.

Participants were able to take their arrangements home and continue to enjoy the fresh flowers.

Flowers used in the developed therapeutic group were found to promote a connection to emotions for participants. The symbolism associated with flowers make the materials inherently more emotionally evoking than using other art materials such as markers or pencils. Using flowers in the developed group, the participants made their own connections to memories and ceremonies that helped inform their artwork. The familiarity of natural materials across many cultures while also having very specific meanings to an individual make flowers an impactful material in therapeutic groups.

Gueguen, Meineri, and Stefan (2012) reported that people often have an emotional response to flowers. Using flowers in art therapy is allowing memories or an emotional response to come up for the clients, even before the creation or processing takes place. The symbolism that flowers carry in society as well as the personal associations and memories each person, allows for the art making process to deepen. Research has shown that using natural materials lowers stress (Lee, Oh, Jang, and Lee, 2018) and using the nature-based practices in an expressive therapy group can encourage an emotional connection for participants.

Notably, the writer of this thesis grew up on a farm, surrounded by sunflowers that grew like weeds and lilac bushes taking over property line fences. Hours were spent choosing the perfect flowers to fit the theme of each arrangement to submit to the county fair, based on the colors and emotion certain flowers evoked. Through art therapy studies, her interest to work with flowers in therapeutic practices and how flowers and other natural materials can be used as an art medium grew.

Based on the thesis author's background, the protocol written in this document allowed for the creation of a piece that represents a culmination of the participants' floral arrangements (see Figure 3). This response was made using watercolor, oil pastels, and various types of paper. Each species of flower that was available during the group are represented in this bouquet. The flower and leaf imagery were first painted with watercolors, then cut out and pasted on a larger sheet of paper to create the collection of stories, symbols, and materials used during the group. Position of the flowers and the colors used were intentionally placed to reflect the arrangements that the group participants created. Through this artistic response, the writer was able to become closer to the emotional connection that the participants had during the session. The accumulation of many individual pieces coming together to create one image of a floral arrangement reflected the personal experience that each participant had in the group and the connection that was made with the group members when sharing their personal stories evoked by the natural materials. The stories that were shared as a result of the floral creation process were replicated in this artistic response.



Figure 3. *Facilitators Artistic Response*

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THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Lesley University
Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences
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Student's Name: Paige Johnson

Type of Project: Thesis

Title: Development of a Method: The Use of Flowers in Group Art Therapy

Date of Graduation: May 2019

In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

Thesis Advisor: Krystal Demaine, PhD, MT-BC, REAT