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## **Integrating Art Therapy and Emotionally Focused Therapy with Couples: A Conceptual Framework**

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INTEGRATING ART THERAPY  
AND EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY WITH COUPLES:  
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

by

Pauline A. Hall

A research paper presented to the

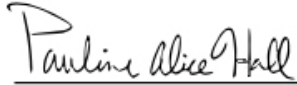
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MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY  
LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

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MASTER OF ARTS

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I feel that there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people.

-Vincent van Gogh, *Letter to Theo van Gogh. September 18, 1888.*

## Abstract

This qualitative study examines how art interventions are aligned and integrated with emotionally focused therapy (EFT; Johnson, 2020) in the treatment of relational distress with couples. EFT is a brief humanistic evidence-based treatment, grounded in attachment theory, with experiential and systemic approaches to intervention that engage underlying emotion to create more secure bonds. Notably scant literature exists blending art-based and verbal approaches in EFT, despite the importance of verbal imagery in EFT intervention and the experiential nature of expressive therapies. In this study, NVivo qualitative data analysis software facilitated thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with five clinicians who integrate the two approaches. Theory-driven analysis with skills of the Emotion-Focused Therapy-Therapist Fidelity Scale (EFT-TFS; Denton et al., 2009) examined alignment and divergence from the EFT model. Patterns in the data revealed a conceptual framework for integrating art interventions with EFT that prioritized fidelity to the EFT model. This framework provides structure and language to describe art interventions in a granular way at the session level, with considerations for the progression of treatment through the steps and stages of EFT in the context of considerations for the therapeutic alliance. This framework has wide applications in clinical practice, teaching, and empirical inquiry integrating art interventions with EFT.

*Keywords:* art therapy, couple therapy, emotionally focused therapy (EFT), evidence-based treatment (EBT), attachment

### **Disclaimer**

The findings and interpretations presented in this research study do not reflect the views of Loyola Marymount University or the faculty of the department of Marital and Family Therapy with Specialized Training in Art Therapy.

## **Dedication**

This research study is dedicated to anyone searching for hope in the midst of relational distress, and to all clinicians who found a theoretical home with the emotionally focused therapy model, the way I did. This research is also dedicated to my family whose love and support brought me to this project. Most of all, I dedicate this paper to my young son who teaches me so much about the bright spirit of creativity in love.

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## Table of Contents

Signature Page .....	ii
Epigraph .....	iii
Abstract .....	iv
Disclaimer .....	v
Dedication .....	vi
Acknowledgements .....	vii
Table of Contents .....	viii
List of Figures .....	xvi
List of Tables .....	xvii
Introduction .....	1
Study Topic .....	1
Significance of the Study .....	1
Background of the Study Topic .....	3
Literature Review .....	4
Couple Therapy .....	4
Evidence-Based Approaches to Couple Therapy .....	4
Research in EFT .....	5
Emotionally Focused Therapy .....	6
History and Origins .....	8
Theory .....	9
Attachment Theory .....	9
Systems Theory .....	10

Experiential Theory.....	10
Alignment with Feminist Approaches.....	11
Alignment with Research on Couple Distress.....	11
Role of the Therapist.....	11
Process of Change.....	12
Interventions .....	13
Cultural Considerations.....	14
Couple Art Therapy.....	15
Theoretical Alignments.....	16
Roles and Benefits of Art .....	18
Non-Verbal Ways of Knowing.....	18
Experiential Emotional Engagement.....	20
Illumination of Systemic Phenomena.....	21
Circumvention of Rigid Interactional Patterns.....	22
Shared Pleasure.....	24
Therapeutic Alliance.....	25
Clinical Practices.....	25
Family Art Assessment Origins.....	26
Multiple-Directive Assessment and Couple Intervention Models.....	26
Joint Non-Verbal Drawing.....	27
Perceptions of Joint Drawing and Attachment.....	29
Systematic Analysis of Joint Drawings.....	31
Free Picture.....	33

Client’s Verbal Metaphor.....	33
Partner, Self, and Relationship Metaphors.....	33
Self-Shapes.....	34
Draw-a-Person (DAP) Test.....	34
Self-Portrait Given to a Spouse.....	35
Draw the Problem.....	35
How Do You Feel.....	36
Reaching and Responding.....	36
Caring Gesture.....	37
Have/Need Collage.....	37
Problem Solving Collage.....	37
Picturing the Future.....	38
Family Portrait.....	38
Collage of Affection in Family of Origin.....	39
Lifeline.....	39
Genogram.....	39
Marital Landscape.....	40
Couples Drawing Together.....	40
Couples Compatibility Assessment with Mandalas.....	41
Circles of Sexuality.....	41
Bridge Drawing / Art Review .....	41
Couple Art Therapy Challenges.....	42
Art Therapy and EFT.....	42

Theory.....	43
Clinical Practices.....	44
Limitations of the Literature.....	46
Research Approach.....	48
Definition and Review of the Approach.....	48
Thematic Analysis.....	49
Pragmatism.....	50
Semi-Structured Interviews and Art-Based Inquiry.....	51
Formal EFT Training and Published Literature .....	51
Methods.....	52
Definition of Terms.....	52
Design of Study.....	52
Sampling.....	52
Gathering of Data.....	53
Analysis of Data.....	53
NVivo Software.....	55
Presentation of Data.....	56
Participants.....	57
Art Interventions.....	61
Analysis of Data.....	80
Participant Background and Experiences Integrating Art Therapy and EFT.....	81
Art Intervention Analysis with the EFT-TFS and EFT Manual.....	82
Alignment of Art Interventions with the EFT Tango.....	85

Art-Based Tango Moves.....	89
Art-Based Tango Move 1.....	92
Art-Based Tango Move 2.....	93
Art-Based Tango Move 3.....	93
Art-Based Tango Move 4.....	95
Art-Based Tango Move 5.....	96
Integration of Art-Based and Verbal Tango Moves.....	96
Art-Based Tango Moves and Fidelity to the EFT Model.....	98
Non-Tango Art Interventions.....	99
Lead-Ins to Tango Move 1.....	100
Emotional and Attachment Phenomena in the Art Process.....	101
Emotional and Attachment Phenomena in the Art Product.....	102
Lead-ins to the Tango and Fidelity to the EFT Model.....	104
Integration of EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills with Art Interventions.....	104
Introducing Art Interventions.....	106
Intervention During the Art Process.....	111
Verbal Processing After Artmaking.....	114
Referring Back to the Art in Future Sessions.....	118
Art Interventions Across the Steps and Stages of EFT.....	120
Art Media.....	122
Structure Versus Fluidity.....	123
Choice of Emotional Phenomena.....	124
Assessment.....	125

Stage 1 Considerations.....	127
Balance of Time with Each Partner.....	127
Session Focus and Alignment with EFT Tango.....	128
Draw the Cycle: A Common Stage 1 Art Intervention.....	128
Stage 2 Considerations.....	132
Working with Primary Emotion.....	132
Managing Defensive Reactions.....	133
Choice of Partner and Balance Between Partners.....	133
Stage 3 Considerations.....	136
Consolidation of Change and Choice of Emotion.....	136
Parallel Process Interventions.....	136
Challenging Art Media.....	137
The Integrated EFT Art Therapy Alliance.....	140
Trust, Safety and Risk.....	140
Attachment Fears, Needs, and Relevance of Tasks.....	143
Newness.....	144
Double Resistance.....	145
Defensive Reactivity and Creation of Safety in the Art.....	145
Balance.....	147
Acceptance.....	147
Bias Against Art Therapy.....	148
Therapist’s Dual Identity and Prevalence of Art with Caseload.....	149
Art as a Way to Be Seen, Understood, and Held.....	151

Artmaking as a Bid for Connection.....	151
Holding.....	152
Art as a Tool for Empathic Attunement.....	153
Art Makes it Real and Art Does Not Lie.....	153
Intuition and Spontaneity.....	154
Discussion of Findings.....	156
Conceptual Framework for Integrating Art Therapy with EFT.....	156
A New Paradigm in the Couple Art Therapy Literature.....	159
Benefits of Art in EFT Treatment.....	161
Application of the Framework to Existing Case Studies .....	162
Art Media.....	163
Assessment and Joint Drawings.....	163
Alignment of Art Interventions with the EFT Tango.....	165
Art Interventions Based on a Client’s Verbal Image.....	167
Uniqueness of Art Interventions Aligned with the EFT Model.....	169
Integrated EFT Art Therapy Alliance.....	169
Art as a Tool for Empathic Attunement.....	170
Art as a Bid for Connection.....	170
Safety, Acceptance, Balance, Genuineness, and Relevance.....	171
Conclusions.....	173
Implications for Clinical Practice.....	174
Eclectic Applications.....	175
Applications with Individual and Family Therapy.....	176

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research.....	176
Participant Sample.....	176
Semi-Structured Interviews.....	177
Reflexivity.....	178
Cultural Considerations.....	178
Personal Reflection on the Research Process.....	179
References.....	180
Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter.....	191
Appendix B: Advertisements.....	192
Appendix C: Informed Consent.....	195
Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Questions.....	198
Appendix E: EFT Training.....	199



## List of Figures

Figure 1: Conceptual Diagram of Research Method.....	49
Figure 2: Participant B Artwork: Draw the Cycle.....	75
Figure 3: Participant D Artwork: Body Map Joint Enactment.....	76
Figure 4: Participant C Artwork: Treatment Check-In.....	77
Figure 5: Participant E Artwork: Relationship Symbol.....	78
Figure 6: Participant A Artwork: Tight Rope.....	79
Figure 7: Map of Analysis with EFT-TFS Skills.....	84
Figure 8: Conceptual Framework Integrating Art Therapy with EFT.....	85
Figure 9: Two Pathways of Alignment of Art Interventions with the EFT Tango.....	87
Figure 10: Alignment of Art Interventions with the EFT Tango.....	88
Figure 11: Lead-in to the EFT Tango from Non-Tango Art Interventions.....	101
Figure 12: Conceptual Framework: Inner Ring.....	105
Figure 13: EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills in the Art Intervention Process.....	106
Figure 14: Thematic Map of Trust in the Integrated EFT Art Therapy Alliance.....	142
Figure 15: Explanation of the Conceptual Framework.....	158

## List of Tables

Table 1: Phases of Thematic Analysis.....	55
Table 2: Background of Participants.....	58
Table 3: Art Intervention Themes.....	62
Table 4: Art-Based Tango Moves.....	90
Table 5: Introduction of Art Interventions with EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills.....	108
Table 6: Intervention During the Art Process with EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills.....	112
Table 7: Verbal Processing After Artmaking with EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills.....	115
Table 8: Referring Back to the Art in Future Sessions with EFT Micro-Interventions.....	119
Table 9: Analysis of Steps: Interventions that Explicitly Focus on the Cycle, Emotion and Attachment Issues.....	121
Table 10: Analysis of Steps: Interventions that Did Not Explicitly Focus on the Cycle, Emotion and Attachment Issues.....	122
Table 11: Alignment of EFT Assessment with Art Intervention Themes.....	127
Table 12: Stage 1: Steps 2, 3, and 4.....	130
Table 13: Stage 2: Steps 5, 6 and 7.....	134
Table 14: Stage 3: Steps 8 and 9.....	138

## **Introduction**

### **Study Topic**

This study explores how art therapy can be aligned and integrated with the emotionally focused couple therapy model (EFT; Johnson, 2020). EFT is a manualized, brief, evidence-based approach for the treatment of couple distress, grounded in attachment theory, experiential and systemic ideas. It is a humanistic approach that harnesses the power of emotion to organize inner experience and relational interaction to create more secure bonds. Similarly, the field of art therapy has a rich history of providing experiential access to emotional and relational phenomena. Given the scarcity of literature integrating art therapy with EFT, this study is intended as an exploratory investigation into current clinical practices and theoretical ideas to inform future inquiry. The primary research question is, how can art therapy be aligned and integrated with the EFT model?

### **Significance of the Study**

Copious research indicates EFT is one of the most efficacious models in the treatment of couple distress (Carr, 2018; Lebow et al., 2012; Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). EFT may be the only model categorized as an evidence-based couple therapy according to the most recent criteria of the American Psychological Association (APA; Sexton et al., 2011; Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). EFT is unique as it disrupted the dominant paradigm of couple and family therapy by de-pathologizing basic human attachment needs and centering emotion as a primary mechanism for human bonding (Johnson, 2020). Consonantly, the connections between relational distress and many diagnoses are well established and studies reveal couple therapy is important in the treatment of many disorders (Lebow et al., 2012). Research shows the efficacy of EFT with couples where one partner has a history of childhood abuse (Dalton et al., 2013; MacIntosh &

Johnson, 2008), with couples facing serious illness (Cloutier et al., 2002; Mclean et al., 2013; Walker et al., 1992), and to reduce symptoms of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Denton et al., 2012; Dessaulles, 2003; MacIntosh & Johnson, 2008), among other positive outcomes. However, despite the success of EFT, there is a gap in the art therapy literature about integrating the two approaches. EFT and art therapy align well in theory, as both approaches constitute a synthesis of experiential and systemic ideas. Exploration of ways to integrate art therapy with EFT may improve the way art therapists work with couples by providing an evidence-based approach. Furthermore, integrating creative interventions with EFT, within the scope of practice for non-art therapists, may provide a way to work with couples when verbal approaches alone are ineffective, or to speed up treatment, as both of these ideas have been explored in the literature (Hinkle et al., 2015; Metz, 2017). Therefore, this study has the potential to benefit both the art therapy and couple therapy fields, as well as couples seeking treatment for relational distress.

A conceptual framework for integrating art-based couple therapy practices with EFT may also lead to a protocol that could be tested for efficacy, contributing to the evidence base for art therapy. Establishing an evidence base for art therapy through efficacy studies is high priority for the field (Kaiser & Deaver, 2013). Combining art therapy with evidence-based approaches is a common strategy for efficacy research. For example, there are randomized controlled trials integrating art therapy with evidence-based talk therapy approaches, such as cognitive processing therapy (Campbell et al., 2016), and mindfulness-based stress reduction (Monti et al., 2006). A framework integrating EFT with art therapy provides a potentially valuable way to examine the efficacy of art therapy in the future, particularly from a family systems perspective, given the well-established efficacy of EFT.

## **Background of the Study Topic**

Art therapy has been integrated with systemic approaches to couple therapy beginning with several art therapy pioneers—Harriet Wadeson (1972), Helen Landgarten (1975, 1981) and Shirley Riley (2003). The benefits of including art in couple therapy have been elucidated— notable themes were the circumvention of unhelpful communication patterns, the illumination of systemic phenomena in the art process, the concrete nature of the art product as an aid to communication, and the ability of art to deepen emotion as well as heighten key moments (Hinkle et al., 2015; Landgarten, 1975, 1981; Metzl, 2017; Ricco, 2007, 2016; Riley, 2003; Riley & Malchiodi, 1994; Rober, 2009; Wadeson, 1972). EFT was initially developed by Johnson and Greenberg (1985) through the observation of relationship repair in therapy sessions. It represented a paradigm shift in couple therapy, as prevailing approaches eschewed emotion (Johnson, 2015). EFT, by contrast, harnessed the power of emotion to create a more secure bond between partners. EFT blends experiential and systemic models and is grounded in a plethora of research on attachment theory. It has a considerable evidence base of efficacy and process of change research (Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). There is very little mention of EFT in the art therapy literature; however, all of the authors who integrated arts-based interventions with the EFT framework believed the two modalities naturally worked well together due to the focus on the here-and-now as well as opportunities to explore emotion and relational patterns (Dermer & Foraker-Koons, 2007; Hinkle et al., 2015; Metzl, 2017, 2020). Furthermore, several studies explored the relationship between the joint drawing process, art products, and attachment styles, providing a beginning theoretical ground to align art interventions with EFT through attachment theory in working with adults (Snir & Hazut, 2012; Snir & Wiseman, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2016).

## Literature Review

### Couple Therapy

Couple therapy has been defined as any therapeutic intervention specifically designed to improve the relationship between two adults (Snyder, 2000), including conjoint sessions, individual treatment from a systemic perspective, or a combination of conjoint and individual sessions (Gurman, 2015). The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy described couple therapy as brief, solution-focused, goal-oriented, and designed with an end point (AAMFT, n.d.). Evidence-based couples therapy treatments averaged about 20 sessions over 6 months (Carr, 2018). Contemporary models of couple therapy have been categorized into behavioral, emotion-centered, psychodynamic, multigenerational, social constructionist and systemic approaches (Gurman et al., 2015).

### *Evidence-Based Approaches to Couple Therapy*

Several couples therapy approaches demonstrated efficacy for relationship distress as well as individual disorders. In general, about 40% of couples benefitted substantially, and 30% benefitted moderately (Carr, 2018). Behavioral couple therapy (BCT) and emotionally focused therapy (EFT) for couples had the longest history of efficacy research compared to other methods (Carr, 2018; Rathgeber et al., 2019). Although there was a distinction between traditional BCT and cognitive behavioral couple therapy (CBCT), in current practice they were often discussed together as CBCT (Baucom et al., 2015). BCT, CBCT, and EFT were described as theory-based, manualized, and focused on conflict patterns between partners (Rathgeber et al., 2019). In a recent systematic review, both BCT and EFT had similar effects—about 73% of participants showed greater relationship satisfaction immediately after treatment, whereas 66% of participants benefitted 6 months later (Rathgeber et al., 2019). Both approaches were superior

to individual psychotherapy as well as no treatment in improving relationship satisfaction (Rathgeber et al., 2019). Relationship distress prior to treatment may impact which approach was more successful—a meta-analysis of twenty-three studies found that EFT was more effective than BCT with moderately distressed couples, while equally effective with mildly stressed couples (Wood et al., 2005).

Methods for examining evidence impacted efficacy labels for treatments. One method to describe evidence, espoused by Chambless and Hollon (1998), was based on the American Psychological Association Division 12 Task Force and applied to all types of psychological treatments. A review of couple therapies highlighted five couple therapies and categorized them according to these guidelines (Benson & Christensen, 2016). BCT and CBCT were both deemed “well-established” according to the criteria. Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy (IBCT), Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy (IOCT), and EFT were classified as “probably efficacious” (Benson & Christensen, 2016). Another approach based on the APA Division 12 Task Force provided a different set of hierarchical labels specifically tailored to couple and family therapy—pre-evidence-based, evidence-informed, promising, and evidence-based (Sexton et al., 2011). According to this approach, EFT had the highest level of empirical validation and was the only couple therapy model that qualified as evidence-based (Wiebe & Johnson, 2016).

**Research in EFT.** More than twenty studies of EFT over the past 30 years demonstrated promising outcomes which distinguished the model from other approaches (Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). EFT meets or exceeds the guidelines for classification as an evidence-based couple therapy (Wiebe & Johnson, 2016), with many improvements maintained after treatment (Cloutier et al., 2002; Dandeneau & Johnson, 1994; Johnson & Talitman, 1997; Wiebe et al., 2014). Early EFT research examined the efficacy of EFT relative to behavioral approaches that dominated the

field of couple therapy at the time (Dandeneau & Johnson, 1994; James, 1991; Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). The first meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials reported a large effect size of 1.3 and a 70 to 73% recovery rate (Johnson et al., 1999). EFT researchers then focused on efficacy for couples with specific concerns such as depression (Denton et al., 2012; Dessaulles, 2003), trauma (Dalton et al., 2013; MacIntosh & Johnson, 2008), medical illness (Cloutier et al., 2002; Mclean et al., 2013; Walker et al., 1992), attachment injuries such as infidelity (Halchuk et al., 2010; Makinen & Johnson, 2006), and sexual satisfaction (McPhee et al., 1995), with many positive outcomes. Studies showed EFT may reduce symptoms of individual disorders as well as couple distress, for example symptoms of depression (Denton et al., 2012; Dessaulles, 2003) and PTSD (MacIntosh & Johnson, 2008). The process of change in EFT was also researched extensively with nine studies demonstrating factors predicting relationship repair (Greenman & Johnson, 2013; Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). Predictors of outcome were studied including elements of the therapeutic alliance (Johnson & Talitman, 1997; Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). One study also provided empirical support that couple attachment interactions increased towards security with a decrease in attachment avoidance as well as attachment anxiety (Moser et al., 2016).

Neurophysiological markers also reflected greater soothing in the face of threat with couples after EFT (Johnson et al., 2013). Denton et al. (2009) developed the Emotion-Focused Therapy-Therapist Fidelity Scale (EFT-TFS) as a way to assess fidelity to the EFT model by therapists in session. The EFT-TFS included 13 essential skills for implementing the EFT model. All of these studies and many others set the EFT model apart from other approaches.

### **Emotionally Focused Therapy**

EFT is a brief evidence-based treatment for adult relational distress. It is a humanistic, experiential, systemic approach that places emotion front and center as the primary means of



transformation in attachment bonds (Johnson, 2020). The goal of EFT is to create a more secure attachment between partners, characterized by emotional accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement. When successful, partners become a source of security, protection, and comfort for one another, allowing them to assist each other in regulating negative emotion and to construct a positive sense of self (Johnson, 2020). It is manualized and designed to be implemented in 8 to 20 sessions, although in the case of trauma may extend to 30 or 35 sessions (Johnson et al., 2005). The process of change in EFT is delineated into nine steps that fall into three overarching stages (Johnson, 2020). A sequence five of interventions are used repeatedly throughout all the stages and steps, called the EFT Tango, and a collection of micro-interventions and skills are also used throughout treatment. It is most successful with couples who wish to have a more secure bond and become disconnected with negative interaction cycles, many times of a blame-withdraw nature. It has been used clinically to treat disorders and non-clinically with couples experiencing a lack of intimacy due to a stressor such as medical illness (Johnson, 2020).

In EFT, emotion is seen as central to relational distress as it primes attachment behaviors (Johnson, 2020). Emotion moves partners to respond and communicates needs and longings. The treatment focus in EFT is integrative, weaving together both the intrapsychic emotional experience within individuals and how that emotion shapes patterns and cycles of behavior between them. A key aspect of EFT is its present focus, using gestalt techniques and enactments between partners to restructure interactions. By reprocessing emotion in the here-and-now, EFT changes emotional regulation, expanding experiences beyond rigid, well-worn negative cycles into new patterns of behavior. These new patterns pull partners towards one another with emotional responsiveness in moments of disconnection, potentially creating a more secure attachment bond (Johnson, 2020).

### *History and Origins*

EFT was created in the 1980s due to a lack of manualized evidence-based couple therapy treatments, particularly of a humanistic and less behavioral paradigm (Johnson, 2020; Johnson & Greenberg, 1985). Although primarily a blend of experiential and systemic approaches, the naming of the treatment as emotionally focused was an act of resistance and a statement of belief, because the prevailing attitude in couple therapy at the time was distrustful of emotion (Johnson, 2015). According to Johnson (2020), the field of couple therapy at that time, and today, could be deemed, “almost affect phobic” (p. 6), with emotion a part of the problem or simply an adjunct to cognition and behavior. Naming the model as emotionally focused was a deliberate attempt to differentiate the approach and to stress the importance of the emotional element that was missing in other approaches (Johnson, 2015, 2020).

EFT was developed through systematic observation of the relationship repair process in therapy sessions (Johnson, 2020). Early development of the EFT model explored the process of change and interventions (Johnson, 2020). The first EFT manual was written for the first outcome study, which was a doctoral dissertation (Johnson & Greenberg, 1985). A subsequent manual was first published in 1996, with Johnson as the sole author, and subsequent editions in 2004 and 2020. Johnson (2005) also published an exploration of EFT for couples impacted by trauma, a workbook to help clinicians learn EFT (Johnson et al., 2005), and a book tying together applications of attachment theory practice with multiple treatment units including couples, families and individuals (Johnson, 2019). Johnson (2020) noted that EFT evolved and changed as a result of three decades of EFT practice, numerous research studies, the application of EFT in different contexts and with different clients, and with the focus on attachment science as a guide (Johnson, 2020).

## *Theory*

EFT theory is integrative, conceptually built on the foundation of attachment theory with a blend of humanistic, experiential, and systemic approaches to intervention. Johnson (2020) poetically described EFT as the product of an imaginary meeting on the topic of romantic love between three key figures—Carl Rogers, a founder of the humanistic approach, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, the father of systems theory, and John Bowlby, the attachment theorist.

**Attachment Theory.** In EFT, attachment theory provides a highly researched way to understand love and a foundation for conceptualizing how to intervene in relational distress, especially with emotional issues such as depression or trauma (Johnson, 2020). The greatest changes in EFT stemmed from research applying attachment theory to adult love (Johnson, 2020; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Johnson (2020) highlighted several key features of attachment theory as relevant to EFT, which represented a synthesis of the research of John Bowlby (1969, 1988), Mikulincer and Shaver (2007), Costello (2013), Magnavita and Anchin (2014) and others. Through the lens of attachment theory, human beings are wired to need love and belonging, as a matter of survival across the lifespan. Adult love is therefore an innately human, primary motivating force. Connection with loved ones creates a safe haven and secure base with greater autonomy, while disconnection predictably leads to distress and insecurity. Isolation and loss are inherently traumatizing. Human beings are instinctively wired to activate attachment needs when facing fear and uncertainty. Secure attachment is characterized by emotional accessibility, responsiveness and engagement, while patterns of insecurity in relationships are well-defined. Working from an attachment frame involves models of self and other—in the words of Sue Johnson, “Belonging leads to becoming” (Johnson, 2020, p. 27). Attachment theory therefore provides a scientific and de-pathologized view of dependence as a natural part of being human,

which distinguishes the approach from other theories of couple therapy (Johnson, 2020). In EFT, a key premise is that once the bond is secure, the couple is able to work through the content of conflicts on their own (Johnson, 2020).

**Systems Theory.** Johnson (2020) outlined the main ideas of systems theory, as originally posed by Bertalanffy (1968), and highlighted the structural approach of Minuchin and Fishman (1981) as the specific branch of systems theory most relevant to EFT. Systems theory emphasizes context and how elements interact, rather than focusing on elements in isolation. The interaction of elements in a system is organized and predictable with behaviors feeding back into each other, as a loop. How things are communicated is emphasized rather than the surface content of communication. The therapist has to change the negative interactional cycle, often a pursue-withdraw pattern, for distress to improve. From this view, in EFT the goal is to restructure interactions in a way that fosters both autonomy and belonging, to support flexibility and individual growth (Johnson, 2020).

**Experiential Theory.** In EFT, humanistic experiential theory provides a foundation to reprocess and expand emotional experience—humanistic approaches recognize emotion as integral to the change process relative to other models (Johnson, 2020). The main principles of experiential theory relevant to EFT include a focus on process, a collaborative and safe therapeutic alliance, a natural orientation for humans to grow and develop, and the corrective emotional experience. In EFT, experiential and systems theories share important ideas—both view individuals as a fluid system as opposed to possessing fixed traits. Both focus on the present process of experience unfolding in the moment as opposed to the past as the cause for behavior. With both theories, partners are viewed as stuck as opposed to broken—the therapist joins with couples to create flexibility in their patterns and to process their inner worlds

(Johnson, 2020). In the EFT literature, the metaphor of the “dance” represents the couple’s negative interaction cycle—emotion is the “music” used to evoke new “moves” in the dance towards greater connection (Johnson et al., 2005).

**Alignment with Feminist Approaches.** According to Johnson (2015), EFT aligns with feminist approaches as it de-pathologizes dependency as a natural part of the attachment bond, which challenges Western cultural narratives. EFT was particularly effective with clients who identified as male who were inexpressive with their partners (Johnson & Talitman, 1997). This reflects the EFT emphasis on equality, with both partners exploring their underlying feelings, particularly their fears and attachment needs, which aligns with feminist-informed therapies (Johnson, 2015).

**Alignment with Research on Couple Distress.** EFT aligns with the research of Gottman and others on the role of negative affect in relationship distress (Gottman et al., 1998; Johnson, 2015). The Gottman model and attachment theory were both grounded in research based on the coding of specific observable interactions, which may explain this alignment (Johnson, 2020). The research of Gottman et al. (1998) paralleled EFT by recommending soothing interactions to help solve conflicts, as this helped to create safe emotional engagement (Johnson, 2020).

### ***Role of the Therapist***

A safe positive therapeutic alliance is an essential component of EFT theory and practice (Johnson, 2020). The therapist is a process consultant by helping partners reprocess their experience, and a choreographer by creating bonding interactions in session which redefine the relationship. The therapist is also a collaborator who may lead or follow in the session. The alliance in EFT is distinguishable from the alliance found in other models of couple therapy. The therapist is not an expert who imposes how the relationship should be or a coach teaching

communication skills and negotiation techniques. The therapist is not a strategist or a creator of insight into the past. A key defining feature of EFT is how it de-pathologizes partners in distress—they are not seen as deficient or lacking skill. There is emphasis on accepting people as they are; needs, desires, and primary emotional responses are viewed as healthy and adaptive. The focus is on how needs and desires are enacted in the context of vulnerability and perceived danger that creates unhelpful interactional patterns. In EFT, it is the way vulnerable feelings such as fear are inhibited, disowned, and distorted that leads to relationship distress. The therapist therefore validates the emotional experience of partners rather than teaching them to be different, and creates experimentation with new ways of being together to create a more secure bond (Johnson, 2020).

### *Process of Change*

In EFT, change happens in three stages and nine steps which guide a couple's progress over time (Johnson, 2020). The goal of Stage 1 is de-escalation of the couple's negative interaction cycle, which consists of four steps. Step 1 is to build a therapeutic alliance and name conflicts in terms of attachment. Step 2 is to identify the negative interaction cycle that emerges in conflict. Step 3 is to access unacknowledged emotions underlying interactions. Step 4 is to reframe conflicts in terms of the negative cycle, underlying emotions and attachment needs. In Stage 2, interactional positions are changed to restructure the bond, which consists of three steps, first with the withdrawing partner and then with the pursuing partner. Step 5 is the deepest intrapsychic step, promoting identification with disowned attachment emotions, needs and aspects of the self, and integrating these into interactions. Step 6 is to promote acceptance of the partner's experience and new interactions. Step 7 is to create bonding events and emotional engagement that redefine the attachment between partners by facilitating the expression of needs

and wants. After that, Stage 3 is focused on consolidation and integration, with two final steps—Step 8 facilitates new solutions to old relationship problems; Step 9 consolidates new positive interaction cycles (Johnson, 2020).

Three change events provide key markers of progress (Johnson, 2020). First, at the end of Stage 1, the negative cycle is de-escalated. Withdrawn partners risk engaging more and hostile partners are less reactive. This is not a change in the structure of the relationship, but a modification of elements in the system. By contrast, the Stage 2 change events—withdrawer reengagement and blamer softening—represent structural systemic change. These events transform the relational connection towards attachment security as partners reach for each other and respond with greater emotional accessibility and flexibility (Johnson, 2020).

### ***Interventions***

In general, there are three basic tasks of EFT (Johnson, 2020). First is to establish a safe therapeutic alliance through empathic attunement, nonjudgmental acceptance, genuineness, active monitoring, and joining the system by accepting and reflecting relational patterns. The perceived relevance of the tasks of therapy is also important for the alliance. The second task is to access, assemble and expand emotional responses in the context of attachment. This is achieved through reflection, validation, evocative responding, heightening, empathic conjecture or interpretation, and limited self-disclosure—these techniques are classified as EFT micro-interventions and skills in the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020). The acronym RISSSC identifies key elements for increasing engagement with emotion—repeat, imagery, simple words, slow pace, soft voice, and client's words (Johnson, 2020). According to Allan et al. (2021):

...repetition is used to ensure that clients hear, orient to, and ultimately integrate new, foreign information. Using the client's words help clients feel seen and heard. Use of

imagery can often tighten and block exits from the “container” as clients become engulfed and captivated by the scenes that are created through careful listening, tracking, evocative questioning, and reflecting (p. 6).

The third task in EFT is to restructure interactions towards positive connection and constructive dependency (Johnson, 2020). This involves tracking and reflecting the couple’s negative cycle and reframing interactions in terms of the cycle and attachment—also classified as key micro-interventions in EFT. Restructuring and shaping interactions also involves choreographing enactments, change events, new responses, and heightening change (Johnson, 2020).

A key way of conceptualizing the basic tasks of EFT is through the metaphor of the EFT Tango—a sequence of five interventions used in all the stages of EFT (Johnson, 2020). The Tango is defined in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020). Tango Move 1 is to mirror and reflect present process. This is followed by the Move 2, affect assembly and deepening. After that, Move 3 is to choreograph enactments, followed by Move 4, processing the enactment, and Move 5, integrating and validating the experience (Johnson, 2020). The process of the EFT Tango is considered central to EFT practice (Allan et al., 2021).

### ***Cultural Considerations***

EFT originated in a Western cultural context. Sevier et al. (2016) illuminated several cultural considerations. There is a Western cultural assumption that the purpose of marriage is to have needs met for love and intimacy, which parallels the goals of EFT. In other cultures, the purpose of marriage is to enhance a family’s status, to establish alliances or to produce offspring (Inman et al., 2007). Practical concerns and running the business of marriage may be more important than intimacy, as found in some Mexican American couples (Contreras et al., 1996). For these couples, EFT does not necessarily align with cultural assumptions about the purpose of



marriage (Sevier et al., 2016). Another consideration involves gender roles—feminism in Western culture emphasizes role flexibility and gender equality in relationships, which aligns with EFT. However, couples from ethnic minority cultures may have strict gender roles due to racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds (Sevier et al., 2016). EFT assumes, based on Western norms, that couples want to solve their problems and change, however individuals from many collectivist cultures prefer to avoid conflict. For example, Buddhism espouses accepting what is, so accepting one's relationship may be preferable (Sevier et al., 2016). There are also many cultural differences regarding emotional expression, which may be related to gender, race or ethnicity (Bradley & Furrow, 2007; Sevier et al., 2016). The role of the therapist may also come with cultural expectations—in EFT the therapist is egalitarian, a collaborator, but some clients may prefer their therapist to be more like an instructor or coach (Sevier et al., 2016). EFT is also used with homosexual couples but lacks research in sexual diversity and many other elements of social location and intersectionality—most EFT research was conducted on heterosexual, white, middle-class, couples (Greenman & Johnson, 2013). However, Wiebe and Johnson (2016) cite attachment needs and fears, the foundation of EFT, as universal across cultures.

### **Couple Art Therapy**

According to Riley (2003), many art therapists have worked with couples but this work was rarely documented in the literature. Peer-reviewed articles, books, and dissertations were included in this review, specifically related to art therapy with adult couples. Adjacent literature was also included, from authors who described art interventions in couple therapy but did not specifically label their work as art therapy. In terms of quantitative research on the use of art with couples, four published studies were found (Frame, 2006; Snir & Wiseman, 2010, 2016; Wadeson & Fitzgerald, 1971), as well as one unpublished dissertation (Ricco, 2007). Only one

study examined efficacy of couple art therapy using quantitative methods—this study revealed a significant increase in marital satisfaction (Ricco, 2007). Statistics from the art therapy field may provide a context for this gap in the literature—according to the most recent membership survey of the American Art Therapy Association (AATA), many art therapists hold a marriage and family therapy (MFT) license, but much less had the job title of marriage and family therapist (Elkins & Deaver, 2018). Couple or family work was not listed as a specialization on the AATA membership survey (Elkins & Deaver, 2018). Therefore, the literature revealed that although many art therapists practiced couple therapy, it has not necessarily been a noteworthy specialization in the art therapy field, even though many art therapists hold an MFT license.

Beginning in the 1970s, case studies on the use of art in couple therapy emerged, along with clinical and theoretical insights. As evidenced by the literature, couple art therapy has been a primary treatment for marital distress (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973; Ricco, 2007; Riley, 2003; Wadeson, 1972), an offshoot from family therapy work (Riley & Malchiodi, 1994), an adjunctive treatment to talk-based approaches (Wadeson, 1972), or as a means for relationship growth in groups for couples (Landgarten, 1975; Wadeson, 1972). Art therapy was synthesized with many theoretical approaches to couple therapy, elucidating several ideas about the theoretical underpinnings as well as the role of art products and processes in couple treatment.

### ***Theoretical Alignments***

According to Hoshino (2008), the pioneers of family art therapy did not find it necessary to claim a particular theory for their work because the art provided a theoretical lens to view family dynamics. However, the couple art therapy literature reflected diverse alignments with theories dating back to the earliest art therapists, which evolved and changed in parallel with the couple therapy field—from psychoanalytic ideas in the 1970s (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973) to

empirical research aligning with attachment theory in more recent studies (Snir & Wiseman, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2016), and postmodern family therapy (Kerr, 2015).

Harriss and Landgarten described defense mechanisms and how insight gained through the art process enabled partners to examine roles and patterns of behavior (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973; Wadeson, 1972), reflecting psychoanalytic theory and systems theory. Psychoanalytic techniques such as free association were also used with couples (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973). The earliest literature about art therapy with couples also aligned with experiential theory, citing the expressive emotional nature of art in the here-and-now (Wadeson, 1972). In response to previous ideas, Wadeson (1975) argued against using art in a projective and psychoanalytically driven way, discouraging therapists from searching for hidden unconscious meanings in imagery, as these were guesses or a projection of the therapist's own conflicts and needs. Experiential theoretical alignments were also found in recent literature, with integrations of art interventions with EFT as a way to increase experiential engagement (Dermer & Foraker-Koons, 2007; Hinkle et al., 2015; Metzl, 2017, 2020). Dermer and Foraker-Koons (2007) presented an assessment where couples drew answers to questions about each other, like a game, which they designed to be grounded in EFT and the research of Gottman. Metzl (2017, 2020) presented case studies that aligned art therapy with sex therapy, Imago, Gottman, EFT and third-wave CBT approaches, while Hinkle et al. (2015) was the only study showing an integration of art interventions solely with EFT theory and practice. Ricco (2007, 2016) presented a model for couple therapy combining art therapy techniques with Gottman's Sound Relationship house theory.

Several other theoretical alignments were found in the literature. Riley and Malchiodi (1994) espoused an integrative approach to family art therapy, which combined art therapy with systems theory, strategic family therapy, Bowenian theory, postmodernism, social constructivism

and family of origin work. They conceptualized art as the foundation upon which the theory rested, as a window into the world of the couple, revealing opportunities to create new meanings for old patterns, while accounting for social systems (Riley & Malchiodi, 1994). Kerr (2015) illuminated a postmodern narrative approach with couples using art interventions based on verbal metaphors to reveal unexpressed emotion, decrease defenses, shift ways of thinking and facilitate open communication. Lantz and Alford (1995) used art to work with meaning systems of partners in existential couple therapy. Rober (2009) used relational drawings in a dialogical approach to reveal systemic patterns and create opportunities for less blaming stories about a couple's problem. Reflecting systemic approaches, Hoshino (2008) noted how relational phenomena such as boundaries, alliances, roles, closeness, and disengagement were made visible in a concrete way through art, allowing partners to see the other's perspective for the first time. The research of Snir and Wiseman (2010, 2013, 2015, 2016) explored joint drawing through the lens of attachment theory, further demonstrating diverse theoretical alignments in the couple art therapy literature.

### ***The Roles and Benefits of Art***

The potential role of art interventions in couple therapy was a recurring theme throughout the literature. Several benefits of including art in treatment were discussed, which spanned across alignments with specific couple therapy theories. Key interrelated themes included non-verbal ways of knowing, art as an aid to communication and emotional experiencing, illumination of systemic phenomena, circumvention of rigid interactional patterns, and art as a way to attune and strengthen the therapeutic alliance.

**Non-Verbal Ways of Knowing.** Throughout the literature, the benefit of art was connected to the importance of non-verbal ways of knowing. Riley (2003) believed the art

product was a logical addition to the therapeutic process because it provided illustration to go with verbal communication, meeting the need of clients to be seen by each other and the therapist. Art communicated abstract concepts and feelings by converting them into a concrete and tangible art form (Kerr, 2015; Metzl, 2017; Ricco, 2016; Riley, 2003; Wadeson, 1972). According to Wadeson (1972), the art product described the complexity of relationships by depicting many facets at the same time—simultaneously giving a sense of closeness, distance, similarities, differences as well as complex feelings. According to Ricco (2016), “Verbal expression is sequential and not necessarily the clearest way to describe complex relationships...visual expression illuminates many facets of the relationship at the same time and with more clarity” (p. 223). The permanent record of the art product also clarified models of self and other and showed progress over time, transcending limitations of memory (Wadeson, 1972).

Riley and Malchiodi (1994) espoused the therapist may never fully understand the deep levels of meaning inherent in the creative process of a couple and that this meaning may transcend the art product itself, representing how the art itself may become a mysterious and wise third entity. Sometimes art products did not need to be discussed verbally because the art product itself, through visual metaphor, allowed a resolution to a conflict to become concretized (Riley & Malchiodi, 1994). Visual metaphor in the art bridged thoughts and feelings in couple therapy (Kerr, 2015). Wadeson (1975) noted that art in couple therapy was not a projective technique as no interpretation of the image was necessary. Riley (2003) described how nonverbal acts in the art created change, “...action takes the place of words...change is literally made through the cutting and shaping of the dual drawing and the message can be absorbed without interpretation” (p. 390). Neuroscience also provided understanding of how couples communicate nonverbally through art. Metzl (2017) described non-verbal expression as a primary form of

communication “...using a right-brain-to-right-brain experience, in which partners emotionally communicated through witnessing the art, transferring essential felt sensations they have, and thus increasing empathy and connection” (p. 128). Therefore, the literature revealed many aspects about the non-verbal quality of art as a metaphorical space for knowing and relating with between partners.

**Experiential Emotional Engagement.** Several authors discussed how artmaking increased emotional engagement. Hinkle et al. (2015) found that creative interventions revealed, deepened and heightened emotion in sessions by engaging partners more fully in the here-and-now than talk therapy alone. Wadeson (1972) used the word, “immediacy” (p. 89) to describe how artmaking highlighted the ways partners relate in the moment while their feelings were evoked. Both Metzl (2017) and Hinkle et al. (2015) described how withdrawn partners could re-engage emotionally through the process of speaking about their art, touching on deep fears and attachment-related longings. Metzl (2017) described how a client could articulate emotion in session by referring to the art, integrating emotion with thoughts and behaviors in the here-and-now— “...the art is an undeniable, felt truth of the partner...” (p. 123). Similarly, Riley (2003) espoused, “The value of the language of art is that it allows the person to speak of painful issues through the safe protection of a drawing or lump of clay” (p. 390). Kerr (2015) demonstrated how metaphor linked emotion to an image, which allowed the emotion to discharge, focused the tasks of therapy, and created an emotionally empathic bridge with greater compassion between partners. Art interventions integrated with the client’s verbal metaphors were used to connect to feeling states, which could stimulate and unfreeze couples who came in to treatment emotionally frozen (Kerr, 2015). In a case study, Landgarten (1975) noted how a partner’s collage revealed anger that had not be acknowledged until it was seen visually on the page, which allowed for

more authentic communication between partners. Wadeson (1972) also believed the art facilitated more genuine expression than verbal discourse. Therefore, increased experiential emotional engagement through artmaking was a key theme in the literature.

**Illumination of Systemic Phenomena.** Art products and processes illuminated systemic phenomena, as evidenced by the earliest couple art therapy literature (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973; Landgarten, 1975; Wadeson, 1972) to postmodern and constructivist explorations (Riley, 2003; Riley & Malchiodi, 1994) and recent studies on joint drawings and attachment styles (Snir & Hazut, 2012; Snir & Wiseman, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2016). Wadeson (1972) believed the paper itself in a couple's joint drawing represented the couple's life space. Ricco (2016) and Wadeson (1972) noted the experience of working together, as when a couple collaboratively makes an art piece, was not often a part of conventional talk-based therapy. Working together on the art provided an opportunity for a couple and the therapist to see how the partners related and collaborated in the here-and-now. The art product itself was also cited throughout the literature as a concretized visual record of relational phenomena (Metzl, 2017; Riley & Malchiodi, 1994; Snir & Hazut, 2012; Snir & Wiseman, 2013, 2015, 2016; Wadeson, 1972). Harriss and Landgarten (1973) espoused how art could speed up the process of couple therapy through illuminating systemic characteristics, "Art therapy can reveal the subtleties of interplay between a couple, such as the balance of power, more clearly and rapidly than is common with verbal techniques...it equalizes matters, each subject exercising autonomy over his own selection and drawings" (p. 228). Hoshino (2008) similarly noted how systemic phenomena such as boundaries, alliances, roles, closeness, and disengagement were often made visible in a concrete way through art. Riley and Malchiodi (1994) also used the art to reveal the way partners were taking on roles from their family-of-origin,

In terms of attachment theory, Wadeson (1972) believed artmaking illuminated models of self and other in the context of the relationship. Landgarten (1975) and Riley (2003) similarly found that art provided an opportunity to see the way partners perceive each other. Observable characteristics of the art process and product reflected individual attachment styles of partners as well as their unique attachment style combination (Snir & Wiseman, 2013, 2015, 2016). Snir and Wiseman (2010) found that attachment phenomena were also apparent in perceptions of a joint drawing exercise “...although for some couples, drawing together on a shared page can be experienced as a playful task that is enjoyable for both partners, for others, it may elicit tensions between the wish to become intimate and the fear of being lost in the joint space” (p. 116). Snir and Wiseman (2010) suggested clinicians could discuss these differences in perception of the joint drawing, in the context of how differing reactions impacted each partner—they proposed this may facilitate new awareness that could increase the security of a couple’s bond.

**Circumvention of Rigid Interactional Patterns.** A common theme throughout the literature was the use of art therapy as a way to circumvent well-worn destructive patterns and to open up new ways of communicating. Landgarten (1981) provided an explanation of this idea using psychoanalytic language, describing how defense mechanisms of denial and intellectualization were disarmed through artmaking. Wadeson (1972) believed that because art was a less familiar mode of communication, it was a way to circumvent rigid assumptions, and was therefore more genuine and could open up new subject matter. Ricco (2016) similarly noted that the art product was “...less guarded and is done with less inhibition or guilt arousal than spoken words” (p. 223). Hoshino (2008) concluded that art therapy with couples was cost effective and time efficient because it could transcend repetitive dialogue that maintained the problem, providing a fresh view of the system. Metzl (2017) illuminated how the art could



circumvent unhelpful communication patterns by helping a partner to anchor their response to their partner in the art, rather than getting defensive, by focusing on their subjective creative response to the visual expression. Riley and Malchiodi (1994) similarly noted that a collage opened up new dialogue where partners could be critical of the ideas represented in the collage as opposed to being critical of loved ones. Harriss and Landgarten (1973) presented a case where the art opened up previously forbidden topics, which led to deeper communication. Wadeson (1972) also noted that a couple colluded to hide their suffering, as evidenced by one partner removing the emotion from their partner's drawing, which led to more authentic communication and a softening of the couple's interaction. Riley (2003) asked partners to exchange their artwork and attempt to explain the meaning to challenge the assumption that they know what each other thinks and feels, "...to destabilize the cycle of misinformation that has interrupted their ability to understand one another" (p. 389). Rober (2009) similarly used drawings to illuminate patterns of blame and create a new dialogue about a couple's problems. Wadeson (1972) noted that relational dynamics in joint drawing tasks were helpful in creating change because they were removed from the context of the couple's intellectually-based verbal exchanges in their typical disagreements—partners would see how their interaction patterns in the relationship existed beyond their typical arguments about finances or the children. Art was also cited as a way for couples to communicate if they were reluctant to speak about their issues. (Ricco, 2016). Multiple case studies demonstrated how art provided a common language for partners with vocal impairment (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973; Wadeson, 1972). Riley and Malchiodi (1994) believed creativity through the art process provided an action-oriented method for problem solving that encouraged clients to shift away from rigidity and hopelessness towards resolution, with new meanings for old patterns. Therefore, the ability of art interventions to circumvent rigid

interactional patterns of disconnection and open up new avenues of communication was a key theme in the literature.

*Shared Pleasure.* An important theme related to the circumvention of rigid interactional patterns was the value of artmaking in therapy as an opportunity for shared pleasure. Wadeson (1972) highlighted how art provided shared pleasure for couples when their relationship may otherwise have little enjoyment, particularly in joint artmaking exercises. Barth and Kinder (1985) expanded upon Wadeson's idea when noting that shared pleasure may be very important clinically in helping estranged partners come back together. Riley and Malchiodi (1994) described playful interactions between clients during a joint collage who otherwise felt hopeless about their relationship: "The couple touched hands chuckled a lot, encouraged each other's participation in the collage process, and smiled at their completed project" (p. 124). Based in EFT theory, a game designed to add fun to couples counseling helped a couple laugh together at their answers to questions about their partner as well as at their drawing skills, even though they were stuck in a pattern of distance and avoidance (Dermer & Foraker-Koons, 2007). Snir and Hazut (2012) espoused that processing joint drawings could highlight strengths unnoticed in distressed couples: "...the vast similarity of color and shape between their two work styles, provides a window for intervention and strengthening of the couple relationship in the therapeutic process" (p. 17). Wadeson and Fitzgerald (1971) also noted similarities in the drawings of couples. In combining art with EFT, Metzl (2017) and Hinkle et al. (2015) both described bonding moments that happened in the art through the creation of shared metaphors. Kerr (2015) noted that metaphoric togetherness brought renewed energy, and visual metaphor in the art later in treatment contained humor and playfulness. However, the findings of Snir and

Wiseman (2010) indicated that joint drawing was not enjoyable for everyone, depending on attachment style differences between partners.

**Therapeutic Alliance.** The impact of the concrete nature of the art product in the dynamic between the couple and the therapist was another theme in the literature. The art product was a means for the therapist to attune and join with clients, providing a way to see into their world and appreciate their viewpoint (Riley, 2003; Riley & Malchiodi, 1994). Kerr (2015) described how visual metaphor in the art was an affective bridge with the therapist, facilitating empathy. Art expression made the issues of couples visible to collaboratively identify goals and create a treatment plan (Riley, 2003). Wadeson (1972) noted how the permanence and concrete nature of the art product was clarifying for all those involved, both by studying the art and each partner's reaction to the art. Art products were used as a record of change, providing a way for the couple and therapist to review progress and identify trends (Wadeson, 1972). The art product was also described as third entity—as opposed to the therapist being triangulated with the couple, the art could be the mediator between them (Riley & Malchiodi, 1994). Creative interventions on the part of counselors were also used; for example, Lantz and Alford (1995) “prescribed” (p. 334) famous artworks to couples to discover personal meaning.

### ***Clinical Practices***

A wide variety of assessments and interventions were identified in the couple art therapy literature. The line between assessment and intervention was not necessarily distinctly delineated (Hoshino, 2008; Wadeson, 1972). Some interventions were described by multiple authors--the following thematic synthesis highlighted commonalities and variations to give an overview of the types of interventions found in couple art therapy and how these were executed in session.

Overall, collage and drawing media were the most common materials used, with both partners engaged in artmaking at the same time.

**Family Art Assessment Origins.** Assessment was a major focus of many early family art therapists. Hanna Kwiatkowska (1978) developed an important family art assessment at the NIMH for the families of hospitalized patients with severe mental illness and could be considered the mother of family art therapy (Hoshino, 2008). Her protocol included six directives: a free picture, a family portrait, an abstract family portrait, an individual scribble, a joint family scribble, and a final free picture (Kwiatkowska, 1978). Hoshino (2008) noted that although many of these directives were helpful, the long sequence of directives was not realistic to complete in one session with time for the family to discuss the art, which was important in assessment.

Wadeson (1972), who studied under Kwiatkowska (Hoshino, 2008), was one of the first art therapists to publish literature about art therapy assessment with couples. Wadeson (1972) noted that a psychiatrist she worked with at the National Institute of Mental Health said he learned more about a couple in one art evaluation than he had in 10 previous conjoint sessions. She described several techniques: free pictures, the joint picture, the abstract of the marital relationship, the self-portrait given to a spouse, family scribble, and family portrait (Wadeson, 1972). Many of these directives appear throughout the couple art therapy literature.

**Multiple-Directive Assessment and Intervention Models.** Wadeson (1972) described a protocol of four tasks that was used in a two hour art evaluation session using four directives, with 10 minutes for each task followed by 10-15 minutes of discussion. The directives included a family portrait, an abstract of the marital relationship, a joint scribble, and a self-portrait given to spouse. These were used to study couples where one partner was hospitalized with bipolar

illness, and the sessions were videotaped for research purposes. Many of the directives were adapted from Kwiatkowska (1978).

Ricco (2007, 2016) adapted techniques from prominent art therapists to create a model to align with the goals of Gottman's Sound Relationship House theory. The directives included a genogram, a marital landscape, a life timeline, a have/need collage, a joint picture, a solvable problems collage, a house of the future, and a bridge drawing used to review the artwork (Ricco 2007, 2016). These interventions were explored in the context of others who used similar interventions in the following sections.

**Joint Non-Verbal Drawing.** Non-verbal joint drawing was the most widely researched couples therapy assessment found in the literature. Wadeson (1972) provided the first account of the directive, "...develop one well-integrated picture together without verbal communication" (p. 91). Despite the non-verbal component, Wadeson (1972) noted that most couples agreed early on about the subject matter of their drawing. Behavior such as eye contact, cooperation, who controls the drawing, the degree to which each partner responds to the other, and the emotions evoked through the process between the partners revealed interaction patterns (Wadeson, 1972). As opposed to collaborating, partners sometimes divided the page and each created their own picture. The joint picture revealed relational patterns couples were not aware of, which could lead to change in the relationship.

In one case, the joint picture was used in a group setting where one couple drew while the others observed and discussed the task afterwards (Wadeson, 1972). After the couple completed a drawing, the group pointed out how one partner neglected the non-verbal cues of the other including eye contact and initial mark making in an attempt to collaborate. During artmaking,

this angered the other partner, who acted out frustration in the art in protest. The couple noted how this pattern of interaction was similar to their conflicts outside of therapy (Wadeson, 1972).

Wadeson (1972) described another variation of the joint drawing, where the directive was changed slightly to make a picture about a specific topic. She noted it was preferable to avoid assigning a topic, as the way one was chosen by the couple non-verbally gave helpful information. She asked the clients to remark about the mood of the drawing rather than content, which was a technique to discover the emotional climate of the relationship (Wadeson, 1972). Wadeson (1972) also described the joint scribble task, which was similar but added a verbal component—each partner made a scribble with their eyes closed. Partners decided together what they saw in the scribbles, turned one into a drawing, and told a story about the picture (Wadeson, 1972).

Ricco (2016) adapted the joint picture in treatment to align with the theory of Gottman to accept influence and to create insight about relational patterns. Questions after artmaking guided verbal processing:

During discussion, the therapist explores (1) how each partner felt during the creation of the image; (2) how nonverbal communication was or was not recognized; (3) how space was allocated between the couple; and (4) how the couple negotiated leading, following, ignoring, accepting influence, domination, retaliation, isolation, or integration. Some discussion questions might be: (1) How effective do you think you were at influencing each other?; (2) Did either of you try to dominate the other, or were you competitive with each other?; (3) Did either of you sulk or withdraw?; (4) Did you have fun?; (5) Did you work as a team?; (6) How much irritability or anger did either of you feel?; and (7) Did you both feel included? (p. 227)

Research settings provided variations of the joint drawing directive. In the study of Snir and Wiseman (2010) as well as Snir and Hazut (2012), the joint drawing directive was broadened from that of Wadeson (1972): “Here is one sheet of paper for both of you. Draw on it whatever you like, but do not talk to each other” (Snir & Wiseman, 2010, p. 119). The directive did not explicitly ask couples to collaborate in the subject matter of the drawing. Later research by Snir and Hazut (2012), as well as Snir and Wiseman (2013), sought to identify visual themes in the joint drawings, several of which pertained to the degree of cooperation between the partners.

*Perceptions of Joint Drawing and Attachment.* Snir and Wiseman (2010) systematically evaluated participant experiences of the joint drawing task and explored relationships between these perceptions and the participants’ respective attachment styles, as well as the combined attachment styles for each couple. A total of 60 heterosexual couples participated. The Session Evaluation Questionnaire (SEQ), a verbal psychotherapy measure, was used to evaluate participant experiences about depth, smoothness, positivity and arousal for each partner. These findings were correlated between partners, as well as with each partner’s attachment styles, and each couple’s combination of attachment style, as determined with the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECRS). After completing the drawing task and questionnaires, an interview was conducted where each partner was asked to describe what they drew, how they perceived the partner’s drawing, and their experience of the task. The researchers found that attachment style often correlated with how participants reported their experience in a joint drawing session. Insecurely attached participants reported a less-positive and less-smooth experience of joint drawing, which aligned with attachment theory that secure attachments were correlated with more positive couple dynamics and relational perceptions. In terms of gender and attachment style, male partners generally rated the joint drawing task more positive if their partner was less

anxious. Differences in the perception of depth reflected differences in the attachment styles between partners, particularly anxious and avoidant. Females found the task to have more depth than males, but the divide in depth between partners was greatest in couples with the combination of anxious and avoidant attachments. This finding demonstrated a cycle of disconnection as a result of the anxious-avoidant romantic combination:

The highly avoidant behavior of one partner, in this case the male, contributes to his partner's efforts to be intensely involved in the interactions between them and in trying to feel her partner's presence. She attributes greater meaning to the joint drawing session than he does. In turn, her hyper-activation of the attachment system enhances the anxiety of her avoidant mate, who appears to be trying his best to keep himself out of any intimate interaction. His attempts are reflected in his perception of the situation as meaningless and shallow (p. 123).

Snir and Wiseman (2010) provided an example of this phenomena—a male drew an ocean while the female drew a house; then, the male drew a dock in between. The female perceived the dock as his attempt to connecting the two pictures, while the male said it didn't have any meaning and the dock was just a dock. By contrast, the depth rating was similar for couples where one partner was anxious and the other was secure, consistent with the idea that a securely attached partner was able to interact with their anxiously attached partner in a way that was warm and supportive. Snir and Wiseman (2010) presented an example:

The woman told the interviewer she felt uncomfortable and had been worried she was spoiling his drawing. The man in turn reported he had tried to make her feel more comfortable. He wanted to engage her in the drawing by building on what she drew and



by supporting her nonverbally and encouraging her to join in and add to his drawing. (p. 123).

Thus, the systemic cycle of interaction among partners, as aligned with attachment theory, was apparent in the joint drawing task. Snir and Wiseman (2010) suggested clinical implications for their findings:

It might be important for couple's therapists to use the post-joint drawing discussion, as an opportunity to enhance couples awareness to the mutual effect of their reactions, as a way to increase the secure base that each partner can provide for the other (p. 124).

This suggestion aligned with Wadeson (1972) who wrote that insight into relational patterns as found in the joint drawing were particularly helpful because they were removed from the context and narratives of the couple's usual conflicts.

In a later study, Snir and Wiseman (2015) used the grounded theory method to analyze the joint drawing process of heterosexual couples (n=16), where the female was anxiously attached and the male was avoidantly attached. Five themes emerged in the data. Two themes applied to all the couples—the wish for togetherness and the wish for separation. Additional themes involved a preoccupation with control, disparities between the partner's responses and disconnection during the recall process.

***Systematic Analysis of Joint Drawings.*** Snir and Hazut (2012) analyzed the joint drawing process and products of 39 couples in the early stages of their relationship to identify the communicative language of the drawings, referred to as pictorial phenomena. The drawing sessions were videotaped and then coded, noting the physical location of each partner, the colors they used, the images and marks made, the direction of the drawing, unusual gestures, remarks, eye contact and laughter. A total of 13 categories of pictorial phenomena were identified as

possibly significant in understanding a couple's relationship. The categories include suggestions for cooperation or non-cooperation, reactions to suggested cooperation or non-cooperation, relating to images made by the partner, distance between the partners in the drawing, contact between the marks of the two partners, occupation of areas, similarity or difference between the drawing styles, connection or separation between images, coherence of the resulting product, symbolism of style, images in the drawing that are significant to understanding the relationship, behavior in the course of the drawing process, and transitions between the drawings (Snir & Hazut, 2012).

Published the following year, the research of Snir and Wiseman (2013) expanded on that of Snir and Hazut (2012) by looking for patterns in these 13 categories of pictorial phenomena, to develop a method to examine the joint drawing process and product and systematically assess for themes of connectedness and individuality. They discovered three patterns in the drawings: balanced, complicated, and disconnected. In the balanced pattern, the subject matter of the drawing was integrated into a coherent whole, reflecting cooperation, reciprocity, and attunement among the partners to the extent that it almost appeared as if the drawing were made by one individual. The complicated pattern typically looked busy and disorganized, without a unifying theme, although it was characterized by failed attempts for connection throughout the process. The disconnected pattern was identified by significant physical distance between each partner's drawing on the page, with a lack of contact between marks (Snir & Wiseman, 2013).

Snir and Wiseman (2016) examined the relationship between the three patterns found in the drawings of their 2013 study and the interpersonal patterns and attachment styles of participants using questionnaires. A total of 60 heterosexual couples participated. Couples whose drawings were identified as balanced were more likely to be securely attached and showed

higher love and care scores. They felt their partner provided a secure base, knows them well, and experienced greater personal growth and development than couples whose drawings were classified as complicated or disconnected. Those whose drawings were classified as complicated or disconnected were more likely to exhibit insecure attachment. The results showed partial support for the idea that joint drawing styles could indicate distinctions in terms of interpersonal patterns. The authors cautioned that intent of the study was not to indicate joint drawings were a validated diagnostic tool, as "...the association between the drawings and the validated self-report questionnaires is only statistical, and cannot provide a definitive response to the question of what a specific pictorial phenomenon, or even a specific drawing pattern, expresses" (p. 36).

**Free Picture.** Wadeson (1972) wrote that the free picture, where clients drew whatever "occurs to them at the time" (p. 97), was the directive she used most frequently in couple therapy, as it provided opportunity for exploration and understanding of therapeutic issues.

**Client's Verbal Metaphor.** Kerr (2015) used art interventions to explore a partner's emotional verbal metaphor in the context of a narrative approach. Both partners were asked to draw the metaphor, such as, "circling the drain," and "if you could only walk in my shoes" (p. 16). Deep emotion emerged, as well as empathy and compassion between partners. When integrating art therapy with EFT and other models, Metzl (2017) asked both partners to separately draw emotionally important verbal images—a wall, and a shared voyage as sea. Emotions and the differences in the images were discussed, which revealed attachment themes.

**Partner, Self, and Relationship Metaphors.** Each partner was asked to draw the other as a metaphorical image to express how they experience their partner, as homework (Rober, 2009). Examples were given such as an animal, a house, a landscape or a person. Each partner was also asked to draw themselves on the same page as a metaphorical image to express how as

they experience themselves in relation to their partner. Verbal processing of the art included specific steps in session, exploring hesitation, meaning and surprises for each partner, followed by discussion of the relevance of the drawings to create new less-blaming stories about problems (Rober, 2009). In a directive called the abstract of the marital relationship, Wadeson (1972) similarly asked each partner to separately draw an abstract picture of their marital relationship, to evaluate how mental illness of one partner impacted the relationship. Lantz and Alford (1995) asked clients to draw their relationship as a metaphor, such as a car, a couple in the rain, or two pine trees in the forest. In existential couple therapy, the drawings facilitated dialogue. Questions about parts of images helped couples reflect on problems, issues, strengths and meanings, "...comment on the intensity of the rain, whether or not the couple has the 'support' of an umbrella or two umbrellas, whether or not there is any lightning in the relationship's environment that might be dangerous..." (Lantz & Alford 1995, p. 338).

**Self-Shapes.** Riley (2003) asked partners to each make a self-shape using multi-colored plasticine, a type of clay. After each partner talked about their shape, a paper tray was suggested to represent their marriage and each partner placed their shape on the tray. Discussion ensued about each partner's anxiety related to closeness and distance, with gestalt dialogue from the perspective of the self-shapes to highlight these patterns (Riley, 2003).

**Draw-a-Person (DAP) Test.** Sarrel et al. (1981) used the DAP, one of the more standardized interventions, to assess progress made by clients in sex therapy as evidenced by changes in attitudes and relational issues:

Draw a whole person. When you are finished, draw a whole person of the other sex on the second piece of paper. That is, if you draw a female first, draw a male second. If you draw a male first, draw a female second. Try to draw as spontaneously as you can. When

you are finished, look at the pictures individually and as compared with each other. Write down any observations or feelings that occur to you as you look at the pictures (p. 165).

**Self-Portrait Given to a Spouse.** Wadeson's third and final technique in a couple art assessment began with each partner to drawing a full-length self-portrait. Partners gave the picture to their spouse; they were told "You now have your spouse, and you can do anything you want to him or her" (Wadeson, 1972, p. 94). Extreme responses occurred—one partner ended therapy, another was angry and acted out on the self-portrait of her partner, tearing it. The other partner became sad, which had not been expressed previously, which elicited warmth and less blaming from the angry partner (Wadeson, 1972). Similarly, in a group setting, partners were asked to make a collage, "...depicting the facts in the way they perceive their mates, and the fantasy of changes" (Landgarten, 1975, p. 71). Similar to Wadeson (1972), Landgarten (1975) reported a strong emotional response to the directive.

**Draw the Problem.** Riley (2003) described an early intervention in treatment of handing each person a paper along with oil pastels and deliberately using vague non-artistic language: "Why have you chosen this time to come into therapy? Please help me understand your view by making some marks or symbols on the paper that reflect your goals (p. 389). Verbal processing afterwards involved partners exchanging drawings, considering their partner's image, and then explaining the image as they understand it. The idea was to safely challenge the disconnecting assumption that partners know what the other is thinking and feeling, because in describing their partner's art they were often incorrect in their interpretations and explanations (Riley, 2003). A variation on this intervention by Riley (2003) also happened at the beginning of sessions later in treatment: "Let's start by showing (drawing) what we shall focus on today" (p. 389). This intervention was followed by the same exchange of artwork and discussion, which created a

ritual that increased the level of comfort with the activity. Another variation on this directive was to specifically draw the problem, together as a joint drawing – this intervention was designed to illuminate blaming dynamics because it required partners to collaborate on their definition of the problem. The couple was asked to select part of the art as a starting point for change, to cut it out and examine this smaller piece of the problem on a separate page (Riley, 2003).

**How Do You Feel.** Partners selected collage images to show how they feel in the moment and how they wish to be, after which the partners were asked to free associate by writing a phrase or sentence to go with each picture (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973). Partners came to terms with their feelings, expressed more emotion than with verbal techniques alone, and validated their partner's feelings. Metzl (2017, 2020) asked clients to draw their emotion in the context of EFT and other models; for example, the anger, fear, and sadness of an attachment injury such as infidelity, or feelings of being unable to reach for one's partner.

**Reaching and Responding.** Hinkle et al. (2015) described integrating an art intervention with EFT: "John, I want you to show Philip what you just described. Take these colored pencils and draw a visual representation of what it has been like to be without him" (p. 242). The intervention was preceded by tracking the couple's cycle, and followed with guided imagery to track the cycle and deepen emotion. Then, the other partner was asked to add to the art:

'Try to reach him now. Show him you want to remove the obstacles and reach out to him.' At this point, the counselor invites Philip to take the colored pencils and add to the art by drawing a representation of how he can bring the boat, or rather John, back to him (p. 243).

**Caring Gesture.** Riley and Malchiodi (1994) asked a man to make a bouquet of paper roses to give to his wife, which he followed up with bringing home a real rose every night. In the next session, the wife had a positive and caring attitude towards her husband.

**Have/Need Collage.** Ricco (2007, 2016) based the have / need collage on the principles of turning towards and avoiding the four horsemen of relational disconnection in the Gottman Model (Gottman, 1999). Partners were asked to make a collage of magazine images and words ...to express the things that your spouse provides for you that you need and enjoy; on the other side of the paper, create a collage in the same way, expressing the things that you need more of, but which your spouse is not providing for you (p. 226).

Verbal processing began with positive aspects of the relationship based on the collage. Before discussing unmet needs, principles of the Gottman model were discussed about how to avoid the four horsemen of relational disconnection using techniques such as self-soothing, avoiding flooding, softened start-up, regulating conflict and accepting influence. When the unmet needs in the collages were processed couples practiced these skills, sometimes over several sessions, with an emphasis on turning towards rather than away to get needs met (Ricco, 2016).

**Problem Solving Collage.** Riley and Malchiodi (1994) described how a couple whose main issue was their large age difference were asked to make a collage from their birth certificates and frame it in a prominent place at home. They never mentioned their age difference again. This intervention was not verbally processed as the solution to the problem became visual and concrete in the art product itself (Riley & Malchiodi, 1994). Ricco (2007, 2016) similarly described a solvable problems collage to foster the compromise and accepting influence principles from the Gottman method (Gottman, 1999). The intervention was designed to allow each partner to visually and verbally express feelings, needs, and wants regarding a problem, to

create compromise together to address each person's needs, practice a soft start-up, relational repair, self-soothing, and tolerance of faults. The directive was to choose a problem to focus on together, choose stencils of people in poses that express emotion about the issue, trace the stencil, and then tear and cut the paper to further express emotion. After discussing the artwork, the couple would make a new image together to represent how they will each compromise to solve the issue, using parts of the original image (Ricco, 2007, 2016).

**Picturing the Future.** Designed to reflect on goals, clients were asked to draw their hopes, dreams and related meanings in a box of buried treasure and to reflect on the art verbally in existential couple therapy (Lantz & Alford, 1995). Similar interventions were to draw the end of the rainbow and a house of the future with each member's goals, hopes and dreams. These future-oriented directives were particularly helpful with couples in transition, such as pre-marital couples or those anticipating retirement (Lantz & Alford, 1995). Ricco (2007, 2016) also asked couples to create an image of their ideal house of the future, to explore shared meaning based on the Gottman model (Gottman, 1999), to communicate goals and associated meanings, and to mobilize a couple for change with acceptance rather than needing partners to change their dreams. Artwork was discussed for each person separately, with the therapist encouraging listening, observation, discussion, acceptance and support of the goals and shared hopes, with attention to symbols that represent shared meaning (Ricco, 2007, 2016).

**Family Portrait.** Wadeson (1972) described the family art portrait--each partner drew a family portrait including themselves, with full body figures. The technique was used to show who each partner considered to be in the family system, such as parents left out or included. Alliances were evidenced by drawing people in a similar way, in physical proximity, or similar in size. Spatial relationships could depict feelings of isolation (Barth & Kinder, 1985). Wadeson



(1972) noted that comparing drawings between partners demonstrated how assessment and therapy often overlap in clinical work. Riley (2003) described a variation on the family portrait called the 4-poster bed—couples were given a template drawing of a bed and drew who was in bed with them, symbolizing how multiple generational systems of beliefs impact the relationship. Verbal processing involved describing how each person got into the bed and to giving each person a voice using Gestalt techniques (Riley, 2003).

**Collage of Affection in Family of Origin.** Riley (2003) suggested the use of collage to explore how members in each partner's family of origin felt about showing affection. Collage imagery was thought to tap into preverbal memory and to convey complexity that would be hard to draw, which was described in the context of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Riley, 2003).

**Lifeline.** The lifeline was designed by Ricco (2007, 2016) to align with Gottman's Meta-Emotional Interview (Gottman, 1999). It was conducted separately with each partner as a way to build rapport as well as identify and work through unresolved past issues that impacted the current relationship. Each partner would draw a line to represent their life from birth to the present, add imagery for their birth and other life events such as walking for the first time, divorce, or deaths. Once discussed separately with each partner, the couple came together to share their lifelines, which provided a rare view of past events, a cathartic release, and promoted empathy (Ricco, 2007, 2016). Lantz and Alford (1995) had a similar directive integrated with existential couple therapy—each member was asked to draw a family history in chronological order from their family of origin to the spousal family, which was discussed afterwards.

**Genogram.** Related to the family portrait, Riley and Malchiodi (1994) described how the introduction of color into the typical genogram illuminated intergenerational personality traits, beyond the usual indicators of gender, age, marriages, children and deaths. After the genogram,

they asked clients to make a collage of their parents, which was helpful in gaining perspectives on their family of origin and that they both didn't want to become like their parents (Riley & Malchiodi, 1994). Riley (2003) did not attempt to follow traditional genogram diagram formats at all, and espoused color and imagery to expand the content of genogram symbols. Protective family members in green and violent ones in black, for example. Riley (2003) also asked couples to express the emotional climate of their families with a background color of the genogram; for example, to show a hot highly emotional family or cool distance. Personalities, relational patterns and socio-economic cultural backgrounds were all addressed in the genogram (Riley, 2003). Ricco (2007, 2016) also used a genogram with an emotional climate.

**Marital Landscape.** Designed to align with Gottman's Oral History Assessment (Gottman, 1999), Ricco (2007, 2016) used this directive in conjunction with or instead of a genogram. The directive "Create an emotional landscape of your marriage; it may be abstract, using color, line, and form, or may be representational using manmade or natural structures to symbolically represent how you experience the progression of the relationship" (Ricco, 2016, p. 224). A series of questions followed, examining the history of the couple—details of getting married, the wedding, how they navigated life transitions, the happy times, difficult times, how the couple coped, why they stayed together, their philosophy for getting through tough times, and how the marriage has changed (Ricco, 2007, 2016).

**Couples Drawing Together.** Designed to align with the Gottman method (Gottman, 1999) as well as EFT, a series of 20 prompts for drawing responses were intended to be like a game to add fun to couples counseling (Dermer & Foraker-Koons, 2007). Prompts assessed basic knowledge about their partner and how they think and feel about their partner. After drawing, they talked about the art, and partners could comment and ask questions, although the therapist

was not supposed to let the discussion go on for too long or become negative. For each question, they were given one minute to draw and two minutes for discussion. When aligned with the EFT perspective, the authors asserted that it was meant to be an assessment that was playful, fun and spontaneous, but also honest. The intention was to encourage vulnerability, sharing of emotion, openness, connection and being in the here-and-now. Examples of questions included drawing your partner's favorite piece of clothing, favorite holiday, least favorite holiday, biggest fear, dream car, family, view of the world, things they do well, best quality, best features and favorite activity to do together, among others (Dermer & Foraker-Koons, 2007).

**Couples Compatibility Assessment with Mandalas and Transpersonal Cards.** Frame (2006) presented a transpersonal assessment for couple compatibility using two black-and-white mandalas, one with the dominant hand and with the non-dominant hand, as well as pre-made cards with archetypal images and color. Mandala drawings were split into four quadrants with transpersonal meanings, interpreted with cards in categories—early trauma, treatment issues, communication, conflict or tension, sexual issues, commonality and strengths (Frame, 2006).

**Circles of Sexuality.** Metzl (2017, 2020) used a psychoeducation chart as a template for couples to each explore their literal or symbolic response to 5 areas of sexuality – sensuality, intimacy, sexual identity, sexual health and sexualization.

**Bridge Drawing / Art Review.** Ricco (2007, 2016) reviewed artwork from treatment with clients and then invited individuals to draw a picture of the couple crossing a bridge from where they are now to where they want to be, placing themselves and their partner on the bridge with the direction they are traveling. Discussion highlighted strengths and support of the bridge, or the lack of these things, as well as the imagery representing where they were coming from and going. Other topics included what is below and above the bridge, placement on the bridge and

the affect of figures. The therapist encouraged discussion about whether treatment should continue, to assess progress and move towards termination if appropriate (Ricco, 2007, 2016).

### ***Couple Art Therapy Challenges***

Several challenges were revealed in the couple art therapy literature. Many authors cited uncertainty among partners that they would want or need art in couple therapy (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973; Metzl, 2017). Harriss and Landgarten (1973) noted:

She could not understand why we squandered our time on pictures and drawings when so many problems with Tom had to be dealt with...she was suspicious of the method itself, asking such questions as, “Do you use this instead of a Rorschach test?” (p. 224).

Another challenge was clients’ concern about their creative abilities or skill with art materials (Metzl, 2017; Landgarten, 1987). Metzl (2017) believed this discomfort allowed clients to work through performance issues impacting other areas of the relationship, such as sex. According to Metzl (2017), it was helpful to reassure clients that art therapy “...means there are methods for us to explore their partnership in ways that are not just verbal and conscious / linear” (p. 131). To take the pressure off creatively, Metzl (2017) introduced the art with a structured assessment using a pre-determined diagram. Barth and Kinder (1985) noted that collage may be helpful when one or both partners was concerned about their creative ability or felt creatively blocked. Interpretation of artwork on the part of art therapists may also present challenges and Wadeson (1975) argued that such interpretations were inappropriate.

### **Art Therapy and EFT**

The integration of art therapy with EFT for couples was sparsely documented in the literature. One peer-reviewed article presented a case study of three creative arts therapies (music, art, and role play) integrated into the EFT model (Hinkle et al., 2015). Metzl (2017)

presented an integrative approach with case studies blending art therapy, sex therapy, EFT, Imago, Gottman, and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT). Metzl (2020) anecdotally described blending art therapy practices with sex therapy and EFT using art interventions found in the literature such as a body map, joint drawing, and the circles of sexuality. Dermer and Foraker-Koons (2007) described an intervention called Couples Drawing Together, an assessment designed to be like a game to add fun to couples counseling, which the authors described as grounded in EFT and the research of Gottman. All of the authors believed EFT and art interventions naturally worked well together due to a focus on the here-and-now as well as opportunities to explore emotion and relational patterns. Hinkle et al. (2015) and Metzl (2017) used creative interventions to illuminate the couple's cycle, deepen and express emotion, re-engage a withdrawn partner, soften the blaming partner, and create bonding moments.

### *Theory*

Hinkle et al. (2015) and Metzl (2017) presented rationales for synthesizing creative therapies with EFT based on the idea that creative interventions had similar outcomes to the goals of EFT interventions and may aid the EFT process. Creative interventions increased engagement, revealed underlying emotions and communication patterns. According to Hinkle et al. (2015) creative interventions could increase connection with self and others, increase authenticity, empathy, expression and growth. Metzl (2017) similarly described, "...art facilitates communication, empathy, insight, and a shift in motivation related to a set relational dynamic" (p. 131). According to Metzl (2017), EFT principles were easily adapted to the art process and product. Hinkle et al. (2015) postulated that creative approaches may aid the therapeutic alliance, helping the counselor to be fully present in the flow of the here-and-now, and therefore more attuned—a key component of EFT.

A common theme in the literature was the use of creative interventions to work through blocks in treatment. According to Hinkle et al. (2015):

When processing an in-the-moment experience through words alone is not creating an impact to the couple, a counselor can implement a creative activity to further draw the couple into the moment...to intensify the emotional and interactional processes of the couple and lead the couple to achieve their goals (p. 240).

The authors believed creative interventions may enhance the experiential component of EFT by adding more emotional depth than talk therapy (Hinkle et al., 2015). Creative interventions were also used to increase awareness of an experience or interaction (Hinkle et al., 2015). Metzl (2017) similarly shared, "...the art is an undeniable, felt truth of the partner, subjective and immediate, contextualized and reactive in nature, yet lasting and allowing for an exploration of external, internal, and reflexive narratives..." (p. 123). Working on separate sheets of paper gave each partner their own space to have a separate yet comparable experience to the other (Metzl, 2017). Creative approaches seemed to benefit enactments by promoting spontaneity, divergent thinking, flexibility, and openness (Hinkle et al., 2015). The art anchored conversations by focusing on speaking about the image and the symbolism it held rather than the couple's usual blaming dialogue: "...stepping out of what he later identified as his 'stuck in place' space" (Metzl, 2017, p. 137). Metzl (2017) noted how the power of bonding moments expressed in the art extended beyond the session as a tangible lasting art product. Therefore, the literature revealed several ideas about how art interventions may support EFT treatment.

### ***Clinical Practices***

Hinkle et al. (2015) and Metzl (2017) differed in how the EFT approach was synthesized with art. Hinkle et al. (2015) integrated creative interventions into the EFT model as an

enhancement or a supplement, while Metzl (2017, 2020) described an integrative art therapy approach using EFT along with other models including sex therapy, Gottman, Imago, and DBT. EFT interventions such as RISSSC, evocative responding, reframing, tracking and reflecting, and enactments were used in relation to creative processes and products (Hinkle et al., 2015; Metzl, 2017). Hinkle et al. (2005) described the EFT Tango synthesized with creative interventions. Hinkle et al. (2015) also demonstrated a variety of creative modalities including music, art and roleplay, while Metzl (2017, 2020) focused solely on art. Both authors cited drawing as an art medium (Hinkle et al., 2015; Metzl, 2017, 2020).

Hinkle et al. (2015) used the sound of muffled maracas to bring awareness to the flat affect of a withdrawn partner, which tracked and reflected the emotional undercurrent of couple's cycle in the here-and-now. An art directive was then used to deepen the emotion of the disengaged partner: "John, I want you to show Philip what you just described. Take these colored pencils and draw a visual representation of what it has been like to be without him" (p. 242). The counselor used guided imagery to illuminate the couple's cycle and deepen emotion connected to the art through heightening. The blaming partner was invited to create art on top of the withdrawn partner's art, pulling the withdrawn partner's lost boat from sea to shore, to create a bonding moment. This sequence of interventions reflected the EFT Tango. Hinkle et al. (2015) also used role play as an intervention—a couple role played the last time they got caught in their negative cycle, to practice a new interaction. When a partner started blaming the counselor asked him to go stand behind a bookshelf, as a metaphorical representation of how he hid behind blaming words instead of communicating what he was feeling in the moment. Hinkle et al. (2015) emphasized that the counselor must help clients connect creative interventions to underlying emotions, attachment needs, and patterns.

Metzl (2017, 2020) used art interventions to explore emotion, relational dynamics, infidelity, and sexual needs in the context of blending multiple couple therapy approaches. According to Metzl (2017), EFT was especially useful to reframe the problem in terms of primal attachment needs, which helped clients feel understood and fostered compassion for self and other. Assessment involved a circles of sexuality diagram (Metzl, 2017) or joint drawing followed by verbal discussion of what it was like to engage in the art task as well as symbols and meanings that emerged (Metzl, 2020). Art interventions were used to explore attachment injury such as infidelity, which allowed for expression and of intense emotions such as anger, sadness and fear. Art helped to re-engage a withdrawn partner through deepening and verbally sharing emotion: “They were both able to see how trapped he felt, unsure of what to do, craving care, feeling unwanted and unable to reach out to his beloved, as he was now able to articulate verbally while looking at the artwork” (Metzl, 2017, p. 137-138). Art was also used to explore a client’s verbal image, such as a voyage at sea, with each partner drawing their own version. Verbal processing afterwards of the differences in the images highlighted attachment themes, their shared goal to stay together and to increase the strength of their bond. In another case, the art was used separately by both partners to explore a client’s emotionally laden verbal image of hitting a wall metaphorically, “I simply asked Ron and Linn if they could show me what Ron’s hitting the wall looked like” (Metzl, 2017, p. 141). Discussion about differences in the images followed, with attention to emotion, which opened up a new conversation about the couple’s negative cycle in the context of attachment needs.

### **Limitations of the Literature**

The couple art therapy literature had many methodological limitations. Barth and Kinder noted in 1985 how the literature was predominantly case studies written by a few prominent

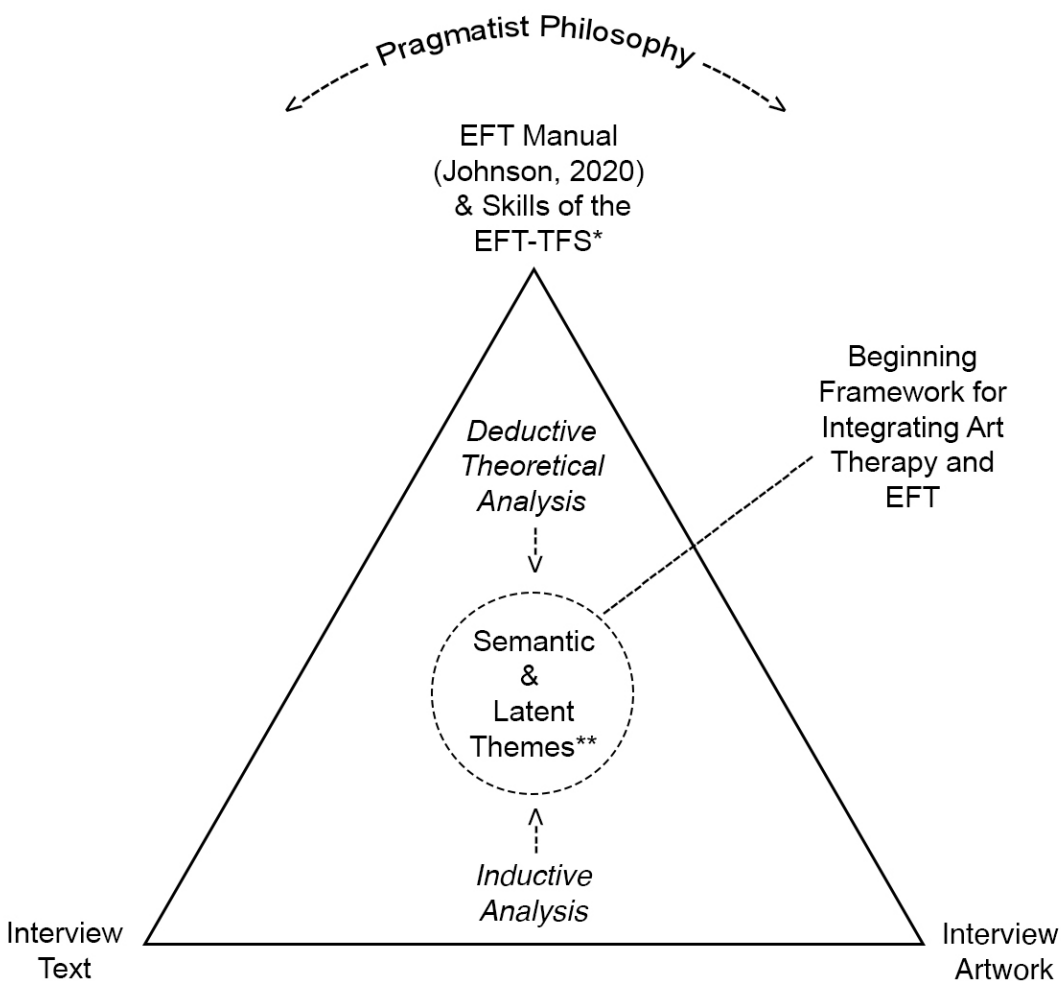


figures who cited similar interventions redundantly. The lack of reliability and validity of studies to demonstrate efficacy and relative efficacy of art interventions was also cited as a major limitation (Barth & Kinder, 1985). These limitations still exist today. There was only one study that quantitatively examined the outcome of couple art therapy treatment (Ricco, 2007). In addition to methodological considerations, divisions between branches of mental health seem to fragment the literature. There was a tendency for art therapists to refer only to literature by other art therapists, and to disregard the literature about the use of creative interventions in counseling that incorporate art. Conversely, much of the literature espousing creative interventions in counseling did not reference the art therapy literature. In terms of literature integrating art interventions and EFT, there was only one peer-reviewed article that focused solely on this topic and did not branch out into other couple therapy models (Hinkle et al, 2015). This article only used one art intervention however, with additional focus on music and roleplay. Therefore, this review demonstrated several limitations in the literature that may be addressed by research integrating art interventions with the EFT model.

## Research Approach

### Definition and Review of the Approach

To explore the alignment of art interventions with the EFT model, thematic analysis within a pragmatist philosophy was applied to semi-structured interviews with clinician participants who integrated art therapy with EFT, as shown in Figure 1. Two types of data were gathered in the interviews—verbal sharing by participants, and artwork created by participants to illustrate a key intervention from their work with couples. The research was designed to generate two types of themes. Semantic themes, on an explicit level, represented surface meanings in the data with little interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Latent themes, by contrast, were interpretive in nature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The intersection of these two types of themes was examined to identify a beginning framework for integrating art therapy with EFT. Throughout the analysis, both theoretical thematic analysis and inductive thematic analysis methods were used in a recursive manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Theoretical thematic analysis was guided by the identification and interpretation of themes through the lens of the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) and principles of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), which provided guidelines for fidelity to the EFT model. Recursive, iterative shifts between inductive and theoretical analysis methods were used to continually align the inquiry with the research question and the EFT model. In this way, the study was anchored by rigorous inquiry not only into the data, but into the data through the lens of the EFT model to answer the research question.

**Figure 1***Conceptual Diagram of the Research Method*

*Note.* \*Emotion Focused Therapy-Therapist Fidelity Scale (Denton et al., 2009). \*\* Thematic analysis research method (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### ***Thematic Analysis***

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis was a foundational method in qualitative analysis for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns, or themes in data.

Consisting of six phases, it was often applied recursively, moving back and forth through the phases as necessary (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method was chosen for its flexibility to work

both inductively and deductively, as it was not tied to any pre-existing theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes could therefore be theoretically driven by the researcher's interest in maintaining fidelity to the EFT model, while also incorporating inductive data-driven analysis to provide a rich description of clinical experience (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### ***Pragmatism***

Pragmatist philosophy was defined by the idea that both single and multiple realities exist (Betts & Deaver, 2019)—it provided an integral foundation for this study because EFT was a well-defined manualized treatment and therefore could be considered a single reality, and at the same time, was also a treatment socially constructed in various contexts, such as that of art therapy. “Pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 11). Using a pragmatic worldview, the emphasis was on the research question, using all approaches available to explore the research problem, with a focus on what worked (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Espousing a single reality, the goal of this research was to maintain fidelity to the EFT model, so the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) was incorporated as a theoretical lens to analyze themes, along with the latest version of the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020). While prioritizing the single-reality of EFT as a manualized evidence-based treatment, this research also highlighted multiple realities. Using interviews with clinicians, emphasis was placed on gaining multiple views of the research question. This constructive worldview, espousing multiple realities, was also appropriate to account for the subjective experience of the researcher during formal EFT training, as well as the researcher's time, place, and context of inquiry during clinical interviews and data analysis. Thematic analysis for this study was therefore aligned with pragmatism by mixing analytical approaches that were both inductive, exploring the social

construction of reality, as well as deductive and theoretically driven, due to the researcher's interest in maintaining fidelity to the EFT model (Johnson, 2020).

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews and Art-Based Inquiry***

A key aspect of qualitative research, as applied to this study, was the concept of emergent design. "The initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and some or all phases of the process may change or shift after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect data" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 182). In this way, semi-structured interviews allowed for new ideas to emerge through discussion with clinicians who integrate art therapy and EFT. According to Kapitan (2017) art can be useful for investigating research problems - in this case, artwork created by participants was used to exemplify key ideas in clinical vignettes.

### ***Formal EFT Training***

In designing the inquiry, literature about integrating EFT and art therapy, and adjacent literature from the field of art therapy was examined in the context of the researcher's formal EFT training. Initial ideas about ways clinicians may integrate art therapy and EFT emerged through this early exploration, some of which became the focus of the semi-structured interview questions. Interviews and the data analysis process were also informed by the researcher's EFT training and clinical experience integrating art therapy with EFT. The researcher's formal and informal EFT trainings were listed in Appendix E.

## Methods

### Definition of Terms

- Art therapy – (n.) Psychotherapy that incorporates visual art.
- Code – (n.) A feature of interest in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- Coding – (v.) Naming a feature of the data with a label, which may be theory driven (deductive) or data-driven (inductive). Data-driven coding depends on the data, while theory-driven coding views the data with specific questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- Couple Art Therapy - (n.) Psychotherapy that incorporates visual art to treat relationship distress among two romantically-involved adults.
- Latent Theme (n.) – A theme that is interpretive, involving underlying conceptualizations that inform or shape the explicit content in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- Semantic Theme – (n.) A theme identified at the explicit surface level of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- Theme – (n.) A pattern in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### Design of Study

#### *Sampling*

Five licensed mental health professionals were recruited from a combination of three sources for the study, representing both the art therapy and EFT communities. Subjects for clinical interviews were recruited through an email advertisement, as shown in Appendix B, sent to: 1) the Alumni of the Loyola Marymount University Marital and Family Therapy with Specialized Training in Art Therapy program, 2) the American Art Therapy Association online member's forum, and 3) the International Centre for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy (ICEEFT) email list for professionals trained in EFT. Subjects were selected based on their willingness to participate and their training in both art

therapy and EFT, with a preference for participants who were registered art therapists who worked with couples using the EFT model. The first five willing clinicians were selected, and each participant was assigned a letter identifier (example: “Participant A”) to protect confidentiality. Demographic information was not collected for participants to protect confidentiality.

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

Interviews were conducted using Zoom video conferencing software. Prior to the interviews, informed consent detailed the background and purpose of the study, shown in Appendix C. Prior to the interview, each participant was provided a copy of semi-structured interview questions, as shown in Appendix D. Participants were asked to consider a recent case for the interview as a vignette for discussion, and to be prepared to recreate client artwork. The researcher requested for each participant to have art materials of their choice available to illustrate how art therapy was integrated with emotionally focused therapy in their clinical practice. Participants were also asked to have a way to photograph the artwork to email a copy of it to the researcher.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Audio of each interview was recorded using an external recording device. Artworks made during the interview were digitally captured using screenshot functionality. Participants were also asked to capture an image of the art themselves and email it to the researcher. After data collection, interviews were transcribed, and all participants were contacted to optionally approve the transcription and make changes.

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

Thematic analysis of participant interviews and artwork was conducted using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The thematic analysis process took place in six phases, adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006), as shown in Table 1. The phases of thematic analysis

were used in a recursive fashion, alternating between inductive analysis and theoretically-driven deductive analysis, as shown in Figure 1. Inductive methods were intentionally used in all phases of the analysis to continually tie deductive themes back to the data. Reflexivity was particularly important to allow for clinical experiences to come through in the coding process that may differ from the researcher's experiences integrating EFT and art therapy. Deductive analysis in phases 1, 2, and 3 involved initial coding of alignments with the EFT model by cross-referencing the data with key features of the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020), and searching for themes from these initial codes. In phases 4, 5, and 6 themes were reviewed and defined through the lens of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) and the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) to answer the research question in a way that prioritized fidelity to the EFT model.



**Table 1**

*Phases of Thematic Analysis, Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).*

Phase	Description of the Process
1 Familiarizing	Transcribing, reading and re-reading, noting initial ideas
2 Initial coding	Coding interesting features in a systematic fashion across the entire data set
3 Searching for themes	Combining codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4 Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the extracts coded as well as the entire data set, creating a map of the analysis
5 Defining themes	Refining the specifics of each theme with attention to the overall story the analysis tells, creating clear definitions and names for each theme
6 Reporting	Final analysis, selecting vivid and compelling extract examples, relating analysis to the research question and literature through a scholarly report

**NVivo Software.** NVivo qualitative data analysis software facilitated the analysis. Interview text and artwork imagery was entered into an NVivo database. Coding happened systematically, going through the data line-by-line. Coding stripes aided in this process. Text query functions were later used add coding in a systematic fashion across the data set. Thematic structures were organized and reviewed using nodes. Framework matrices were used to organize the data for presentation. Later on, analysis moved between NVivo, to reference coded extracts, and matrices, for tracking the analysis with the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). NVivo functionality also supported the creation of many thematic maps and concept maps to support the iterative development of the conceptual framework to answer the research question.

## Presentation of Data

The following data was collected from semi-structured interviews with five participants using Zoom teleconferencing software. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour, using the interview guide in Appendix D. The audio of each interview was recorded. Artwork created during the interviews was digitally captured by the participants, and in one case was recreated by the researcher based on interview screen shots. In this section, interview and artwork data was organized into table form based on the first three phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). In phase 1, interviews were transcribed by the researcher (Braun & Clark, 2006). During phase 2, interviews were coded using NVivo qualitative data analysis software, identifying initial codes, or interesting features, in a thorough and methodical way (Braun & Clark, 2006). This coding in phase 2 represented both inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive coding was open-ended, coding interesting features in the interviews. Deductive coding noted potential alignments with the EFT model as identified in the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020). Alignments between art interventions and the EFT model were coded according to the process and techniques of EFT. EFT techniques were coded primarily through identification of EFT micro-interventions, skills and macro-interventions of the EFT Tango (Johnson, 2020). Alignments with the EFT process over time included the steps and stages as well as key change events (Johnson, 2020). This focus on coding areas of alignment with EFT reflected how the thematic analysis was theory-driven, to align with the EFT model and the research question. After initial coding, in phase 3 of the analysis, the researcher searched for potential themes to organize the data for presentation. A beginning thematic map was created in NVivo, which was refined and expanded iteratively throughout the analysis. Framework matrices were created in NVivo based on two units of

analysis—participants and art interventions—to distill and convert the data into table form based on early semantic, or explicit, themes, with relevant coded extracts.

### ***Participants***

Participants were recruited from three referral sources representing the fields of both art therapy and EFT, as shown in Table 2. The sampling of participants was purposive, specifically targeting clinicians with any amount of experience integrating art therapy with EFT. A call for participants outlining the criteria was shared through the ICEEFT member listserv, the AATA member forum, and the LMU art therapy and marital and family therapy alumni email list, as shown in Appendix B. All who responded and were willing to participate were interviewed.

The presentation of data for participants focused on a subset of coding related to the background of participants, as shown in Table 4. Demographic information was not collected to present confidentiality. Participant background information included the referral source, relevant training, additional approaches or theories mentioned, overall experience integrating art therapy and EFT with couples, as well as the frequency of how often art was used with couples in their practice. Art therapy training was indicated by the participant's license in the field of art therapy and their registration as an art therapist with the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB). EFT training included any description of how participants learned EFT, including both formal and non-formal training. Each participant's overall experience integrating art therapy and EFT was distilled into quotes to capture the participant's relationship to EFT, art therapy, and integrating the two with couples. The frequency of art use was gathered from two interview questions. First, participants were asked the rough percentage of couples who were doing art therapy, out of their entire practice. Second, participants were asked out of those couples, roughly what percentage of sessions that had some type of artmaking over the course of treatment.

**Table 2***Background of Participants*

Participant	Referral Source	Relevant Training	Other Approaches	Experience Integrating Art Therapy and EFT	Frequency of Art Therapy with Couples	
					% of Couples	% of Sessions with Artmaking
A	AATA Member Forum	LMFT, LCAT, No Formal EFT Training, College Class with EFT	Structural Person Centered Attachment Phenomenology Humanistic	"Non-strict EFT person." "The art therapy is really very beneficial. They always say, 'Wow. This is great. I'd love to do it again.' So, I make sure it happens."	"Let's say 85%."	25% - "They prefer me to be a couple's therapist that does art therapy, as opposed to an art therapist working with a couple. Unless they want to see me as an art therapist... for the art." "I don't do art therapy all the time."
B	AATA Member Forum	LPC, ATR-BC, EFT PESI Course, Hold Me Tight, Workbook	Gottman Daring Greatly (Brené Brown)	"I'm not really an EFT therapist. I'm really a Gottman therapist who has taken some EFT stuff and occasionally I use EFT. I have adapted from both of those, and primarily Gottman stuff, to art therapy with couples." "I use the cycle and the dance, the protest polka, a lot."	"Probably two thirds."	"Varies, 20% to rarely. " "It's not like they're doing art therapy as couple's therapy. They're doing couple's therapy with art interventions, that's processed through the eyes of an art therapist and a trained couple's therapist." "Some couples seek art and ask for it, so then art happens more often."

Participant	Referral Source	Relevant Training	Other Approaches	Experience Integrating Art Therapy and EFT	Frequency of Art Therapy with Couples	
					% of Couples	% of Sessions with Artmaking
C	LMU Alumni Email	LMFT, ATR, Externship and Core Skills	Sex Therapy, DBT, CBT, Mindfulness	<p>“EFT, that' my backbone. I'm more eclectic in a way. I bring those in too (CBT and DBT). I believe in EFT. I love EFT. I think it really does wonders.”</p> <p>“I never thought about it as this is EFT and I specifically designed these directives, you know as EFT.” “These (art directives) were things I was already using before I was trained in EFT. I think they do have the EFT aspects.” “If I were to sit down and think about it I think you could apply it to EFT but I haven't really thought it through.”</p>	"Half or less."	"Half or so."
D	AATA Member Forum	LCSW, LCAT, ATR-BC, ATCS, EFT Day Workshop, Externship, Core Skills, EFT Supervision	Interpersonal Therapy, Psychodynamic	<p>“I really wanted to connect with something and I was having a really hard time. I started investigating (EFT) and I found myself a hope. It was my relational process.” “I do use artmaking with my couples. Selectively, selectively.”</p>	"Between five to ten percent."	"Rarely, really, very rarely. It's rarely but judiciously."

Participant	Referral Source	Relevant Training	Other Approaches	Experience Integrating Art Therapy and EFT	Frequency of Art Therapy with Couples	
					% of Couples	% of Sessions with Artmaking
E	LMU Alumni Email	LPCC, ATR, 6-Week EFT Certificate Course	Expressive Therapies Continuum, Gestalt Art Therapy, Solution Focused Art Therapy	“I'm kind of new to couple therapy. I'm an art therapist first and then stumbled into this couple's therapy world and EFT world. I love that (EFT) format. Art therapy has a lot of attachment based or object relations foundations. I really like using the attachment-based framework. That EFT lens provides a great road map.” “I'm still kind of playing.”	“Probably 75%”	“Probably like 25%”

### *Art Interventions*

In phase 3 of the analysis, initial codes were reviewed to identify 23 art intervention themes with two sources of data—the interview text and artwork created by participants. Art intervention themes were converted to cases in NVivo as units of analysis. This decision was made by the researcher based on the assumption that art interventions were key to understanding how art therapy can be integrated with EFT. Each art intervention theme was presented in Table 3 with initial semantic themes and coded extracts to organize the data for further analysis. These semantic themes included the description of the intervention, description of the art process and product as it unfolded, verbal processing during or after artmaking with the therapist, and clinical notes. Due to time limitations, many art interventions were named in the interviews, but not discussed in depth, and therefore do not have coding, as shown in Table 3. Out of the 23 art intervention themes, five of them were illustrated by participants, as shown in Figures 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Contextual information about each image was cross-referenced in Table 3.

**Table 3***Art Intervention Themes*

Theme	Participant Descriptions	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Draw the Cycle	Participant A: "I can see what you're saying to me. It sounds like when you have an argument you go into separate rooms. You go out drinking. What does that look like?" "Draw what you do when you are feeling (angry, hurt)."	Her crying on the bed. Him rushing out, doors slamming.		May be followed by verbal enactment.
	Participant B: "Today we want to look at the repetitive pattern of this protest polka." After talking about the cycle, they each draw the cycle separately as a diagram with arrows, using a clipboard and pencil or pen.	See Figure 2. Quick, stick figures. "I'm upset, I turn away, I drink to numb."	Describe behavior and emotions. "Where would you say the cycle starts?"	"Every time if they were to talk about it, it would go the same way." "They are much better about talking about it, and not getting into the cycle, if they've drawn it out."
	Participant E: "Draw your relationship dance, what does it look like? What are the dance moves? Create that using line, shapes, movement, and color."		Slow down, talk about what's happening, where the roadblocks hit.	
Communicate Needs	Participant D: "Create an image of how you communicate your needs to your partner."			Stage 1. "Reflecting the cycle."



Theme	Participant Descriptions	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Partner Responds	Participant D: Create an image of how your partner responds to you when you try to express your needs?			Stage 1. "Reflecting the cycle."
Based on Client's Verbal Image	Participant A: When a client uses verbal imagery: "I can see what you're saying...I feel an art therapy directive coming on."  Participant E: To "latch onto" verbal imagery: "Can we slow down here and could you show me this?"	"A really dark place."	Describe metaphor and image. Gestalt: "If that dark place could talk, what would it say?" "Could you talk as if you were it?"	May be followed by verbal enactment. Good for trauma or "an experience the other partner doesn't understand." Emotional handle used throughout treatment. Image might be pulled out later to work with blocks. May serve to contain escalating emotion or deepen emotion.
Draw Your Emotion	Participant B: "Draw your emotion, what does it look like?" I might give them a quarter-sized piece of a paper and ask them to either scribble draw or just trying to have them be more abstract versus trying to be a figure drawing of some kind. "What lines, what shapes, what does this emotion feel like?"		Talk about the art with each other.	Track cycle prior to art intervention: "When this is going on in the cycle what do you feel?"

Theme	Participant Descriptions	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Body Map Joint Enactment	<p>Participant D: Part 1 – "We are going to see your pain together, and we're going to understand it. We're going to witness it. We're going to validate it. And we're going to hold it in a way that we have never understood. Even you yourself have never understood because it's just this all-consuming abstract feeling that's just big everywhere, and you haven't been able to really see it, or have it be seen." Therapist drew loose shape of a person, non-gender specific. "Draw your pain. I want you to show us where your pain is. I want you to show it to us. I want us to understand it. If you had a mass in your stomach, you would be going for an x-ray and we would see that mass. I want you to show us your pain."</p> <p>Part 2 – To spouse: "What's that like for you when you see your partner in so much pain? Can you share with us what that's like to feel your partner's pain, and to feel responsible for all that pain? I want you to show us your own pain of living with all of this." "How can you show your partner your commitment to the relationship and that you're present and holding all those injuries? In that way, that you can both heal together?"</p>	<p>See Figure 3. Discomfort - "You're asking me to do this, you're asking me to draw." In response to therapist, "No. That's not it. It's everywhere." Added brown and red, and encapsulated the image.</p> <p>Partner added green to the body, encapsulated the image in green, "I'm holding you tight. I'm feeling you. I'm not letting you go."</p>	<p>During artmaking: "Trust me. I won't let you go." Directed drawing towards primary emotion from secondary: "Is that it? Is that the only place where your pain is? Show me where else is it? Go deeper, go deeper. Do more. Show me more. We want to know. X-ray show us, I want to know, we need to understand you. What does that feel like? What does the pain feel like? What does the hurt feel like? I want to understand more. Show us more."</p>	<p>Verbal Tango Moves 1 and 2 prior to the art. Attachment injury, infidelity. 5 months into treatment. "I was attuned. My presence was directive but empathic. Curious, supportive, but firm." After artmaking with both partners on the same image, the injured partner wept for the first time in treatment until the end of the session. A pivotal moment. The art "made it real." "Both parties were seen and heard through the art about their respective pain and there was a holding that took place that can be seen literally in the in the encapsulation in the art product. They both encapsulated it." Verbal Moves 4, 5 in next session—"Would it be alright if we look at this together? What's that like to be seen? What's that like to be held? What is that like to be known and to have a deeper understanding? When your pain is so hidden?" Art referred to in many sessions.</p>

Theme	Participant Descriptions	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Catch the Bullet	Participant E: After an enactment, a partner can't hear or believe what their partner said, and processing doesn't help. Create art around the experience of struggling with it and show each other. "This is so hard for you to hear right now. Could you show us?" If there is a visual "bullet" in the art: "Is there anything you need to add or change to make this true to your experience underneath, so your partner can see and understand?"		Slow down, look for unmet need, deeper meaning, primary emotion rather than secondary.	They're struggling to say something to their partner, like an unmet need. Slow it down and create what's actually coming up for them in the art. Be mindful of a "visual bullet" which is harder to "catch" once out. That is why this is better in Stage 2.
New Connection	Participant D: "Create an image of what it feels like when you can connect with what moved your partner."  Participant E: What did that connection feeling look like? Could you show your partner using line, shapes, and colors?		Slow it down. What was that like for you? Look at this new connection you're creating.	May follow with art review. Compare to past artwork to highlight change.
New Dance	Participant E: "What did that feel like when you were dancing really well together?" "What did that connection feeling like look like and how did you get there?" Use line, shape, movement, color.			Consolidate and integrate positive cycles, look at progress. May compare to past artwork to highlight change. "Look how far you've come."

Theme	Participant Descriptions	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Art Review	<p>Participant A: “Do you remember what you drew, the two of you drew?” And then I show it to them.</p> <p>Participant C: "Do you remember that piece?" "Do you remember you said that? Is it like that? Or is it different?"</p> <p>Participant E: “Sometimes if they're really stuck, I'll get out their portfolio and we'll get out the image.”</p>	<p>The hole got smaller, can't walk on it, but you can jump.</p> <p>Nest</p>	<p>Look how far you've come. Highlight progress, positive cycle. Validate. Describe how the art would be updated now, a new feeling about the art now, or compare current art to past art.</p>	<p>Could be like a portfolio review. “It's a good visual reminder because you have the emotions right there too. You remember the space in which you made it.” Opportunity to own previously disowned emotions. May be followed by verbal enactment. May indicate hopefulness.</p>
Treatment Check-In	<p>Participant C: Therapist gives each partner a template with a circle in the middle and asks, "Where do you think we are in terms of our therapy process?" Colored pens and pencils.</p>	<p>See Figure 4. A carpet you think you can walk on but underneath there is a big hole. Their partner drew both of them on a swing, sunny day, blue sky.</p>	<p>Explore differences in image meaning, attachment fears. “He felt somewhat hopeful but still very doubtful they were going to make it.” She thought, “We fixed everything.” Talk about what they were actually seeing.</p>	<p>“A really big moment.” Very emotional. Cycle was illuminated in verbal processing: “He saw that and thought, ‘Yeah typical. She just thinks everything's fine.’” Therapist used metaphor of the hole under carpet later in treatment to check on attachment security. "Do you remember that piece?" Is it like that? Or is it different?" The hole was smaller, you could jump over it, which sounded more hopeful. EFT Tango was used, including an enactment, after this intervention with another couple, when participant had more EFT training.</p>

Theme	Participant Description	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Strengths	<p>Participant B: “Together, put down pictures of things you have enjoyed in your relationship.”</p> <p>Participant B: “Each of you, fold a sheet in half. Think about your partner and make a collage about things you admire in them. On the other half make a collage of things you're proud of, of yourself.”</p>	<p>She was peeking at his pictures and he was getting uncomfortable. He put a picture of a very beautiful lady, insecurity flushed over her. He said, “You're this beautiful to me.”</p>		<p>Collage very accessible to people. Thousands of pictures cut up in baskets. Illuminated relational patterns with peeking and discomfort. Building friendship, intimacy, trust. Increase ability to go within and talk about self because people come in pointing finger at partner. (Gottman)</p>

Theme	Participant Description	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Relationship Symbol	Participant E: "Draw your relationship as a symbol. Where you hope it to go by the end of therapy. What do you hope to come out of this experience and what would that look like as a symbol?" Some people collaborate on one image, some work separately. "I encourage you to ask each other what would be better for both of you."	See Figure 5. Working separately on same page, each with own symbol. A "penis plant" and nest. Laughter. Importance of her nest--wedding, feeling safe in relationship. He said, "I ruined it with my penis plant." He tore his symbol off the page and worked with her on the nest. She asked for his help drawing the birds, he did. They added a heart, plants.	Reflect use of materials. "Jack is working fast, Olivia chose pastels." "It looks like you're working on some type of...help me?" "Can you tell me more about..." "Tell me about what is happening with the nest. What's happening here? What does this mean for you?" Attachment meaning. "Are you in the image?" Assess if there was ever emotional safety: "What did that feel like? When was the last time you felt safe in this nest?" Couple's history, strengths.	Early assessment. Working separately as opposed to collaboratively showed loneliness in the cycle. Plant was phallic, solid, showed he didn't feel useful in relationship and bedroom; unnamed attachment fear that he cannot please her and she will leave. Nest referenced later in treatment, when stuck, to remind how both want to create emotional safety.
Holidays	Participant A: "Together, on the same page, draw what a typical holiday looks like in your home."	Laughter due to working on the same space. Separate images or integrated. One draws over the other. Who is in charge, or not. Who pushes the other one away. "Why did you do that?"		Illuminated cycle and culture. "When they work together the process is much more important, much more valuable." May be followed by verbal enactment.

Theme	Participant Description	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Tight Rope	Participant A: When attachment differences, and the impact of these differences on the couple's cycle, emerged. "Maybe a visual will help." Each partner individually, "Draw yourself crossing a tight rope."	See Figure 6. Stick figures. Very simple. He drew a net and stairs to get on and off the tightrope, while she did not. Other people have drawn spikes, a hole in the net, people ready to catch them, walker holding bar for support. Usually people do not draw a net.	Describe image in detail. "What would happen if you fell off?" "If he lost his balance, he would be able to land in the net." "What does the net represent to you?" "Family." Stairs represent how you got to where you are, with or without family support. "What do you think of your husband's drawing as opposed to yours? What do you think of her drawing as opposed to yours?" "How do you feel seeing yourself with what looks like a lack of support? And how do you feel with your husband with all this support? Have you been aware of it?" She cried.	Directive was used because they were getting stuck understanding their cycle, attachment needs, and differences in relational support. "The art showed it clearly, but I don't think she was willing to want that yet." Could ask: "Would you want to put the net down? Add the stairs?" May be followed by verbal enactment.
Theme of Home	Participant A: "Draw or paint a typical theme of what goes on in your home." Joint drawing.	Working on separate corners of same page. One takes up more room, envelops the other, overlap. Similar themes depicted very differently, or very different themes.	Ask them to come up with a title together.	Pay attention to relational dynamics in art process. May be followed by verbal enactment.

Theme	Participant Description	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Why Are You Here	Participant C: Give each partner a template with a circle in the middle and ask them to create a piece about why they are seeking therapy at this time. "What do you think your issues are? What are you dealing with? What are you struggling with right now?"			Indicated in early sessions if couple specifically seeks out therapist for art therapy. Otherwise, build rapport first before doing art, or do not use this directive.
Growth and Change	Participant B: "Where are areas in this relationship that you wish you could grow and change? Each of you, do a collage of that." Must be about themselves only, not the other.	Laugh more, be more relaxed, move towards but not in a pursuer way	Talk about the images, highlight vulnerabilities.	Teaching them to go within and talk about self. (Gottman)
Before During After	Participant A: Regarding a tragedy or crisis. Each partner, fold paper in thirds. Draw how you felt before, during and after. While pregnant, during pregnancy loss, and after loss.	Triptych. Each one may perceive and feel differently at different points in the triptych. Her body. Hope. Try again.	Focus on emotion. How did you feel during each stage? They may argue. Emotional conflict may happen at different points of the triptych. "He's not feeling enough for her." "How did you just say we'll try again?" "How could you just be so dismissive because I have hope."	Indicated for attachment injury, infertility, miscarriage, trauma, grief, loss. A verbal enactment of the emotion may come after the artmaking.



Theme	Participant Description	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Doing Something Together	Participant B: Partners sitting at art table around corner from each other. Huge newsprint paper, glue stick, no scissors. They each choose two unique colors of construction paper. "I want you to create a picture together of you doing something together. There is no right or wrong way, except that you can't talk, unless I interrupt to process what's happening. Tear the paper to make shapes. You can talk ahead of time, to plan. Are you ready to start? Do you want to talk about it?"	"I'm ready let's just go." "Whoa, I'm not." "We need...I don't know what..." Some couples plan carefully, some engage non-verbally, eye contact, some don't. Some give looks to each other like, "You're crazy." Separate images or integrated. 3D for one partner, 2D for the other.	Process cycle in art product and process. Art process reflects how they see the world from different perspectives. "What did it feel like to look at their image flat on the page and yours is standing up? What did it feel like to see her image? How did you want to interact?"	Early in treatment to process cycle. Joint collage is helpful if it's hard to discern cycle. For example, withdraw-withdraw pattern, both shut down. Watch process carefully. "They've seen themselves interact in it, in a way that isn't their typical. So they can actually be more of a better witness to the cycle, than if they were just trying to talk it out." Clients cite communication as their problem, this illuminates it. May repeat later, they feel the difference when they have more connection.

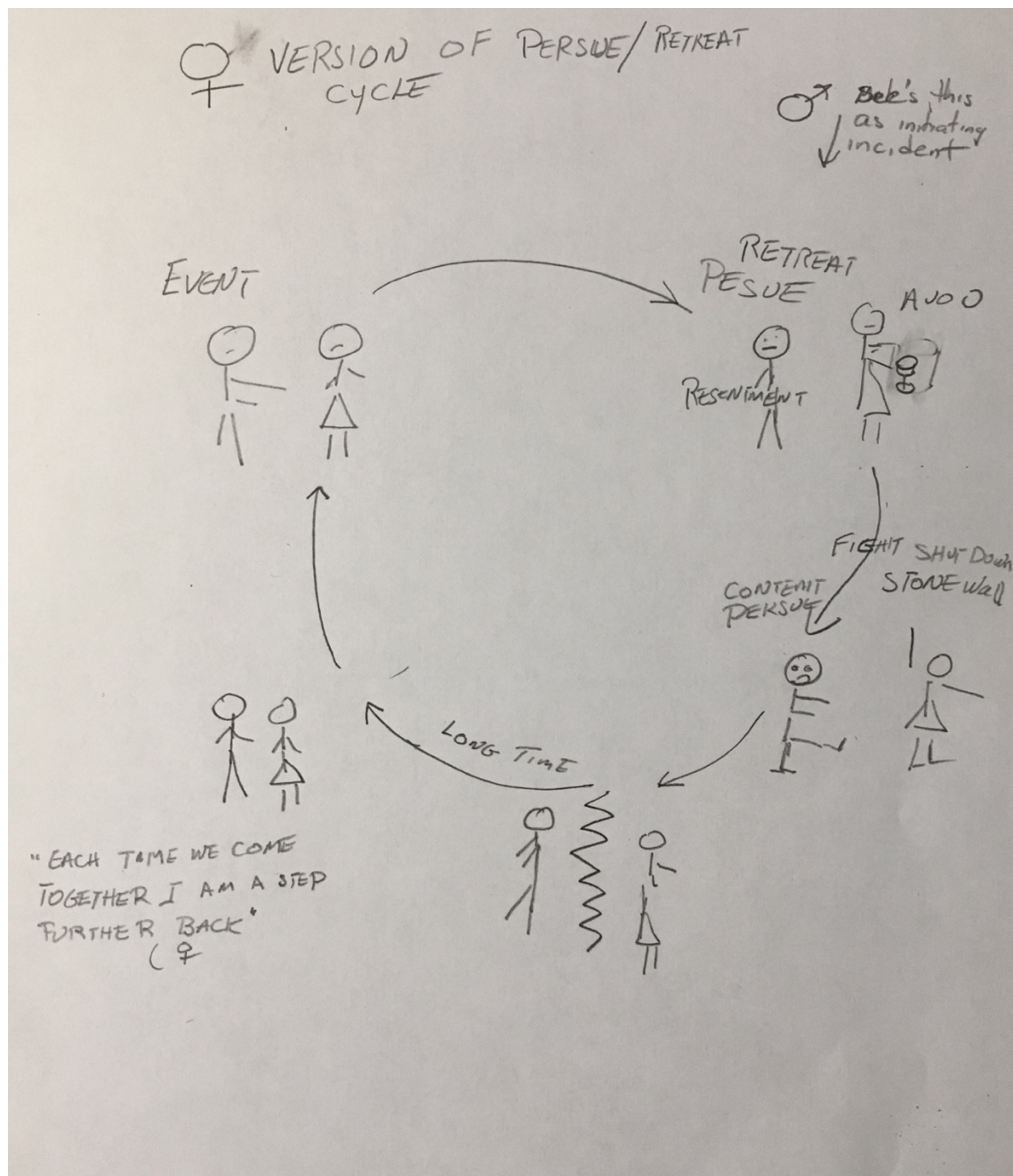
Theme	Participant Description	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Painted Landscape	Participant C: Text one partner a picture of a landscape. They are asked to describe to their partner what that picture looks like, and their partner paints it. Repeat with roles reversed.	"I see a blue house in the middle. This kind of shape. There's a cloud." One talks over the other. Impatient, non-descriptive. One has more control, squeezing the paint for the other: "That's not the blue I'm seeing. Use this blue." Many questions: "Is this the right blue? Do I need more white?"	After artmaking, reflect cycle in art process, asking questions. "This is what I observed. Did I get that right? What do you think? What do you see?" They laugh. "I didn't even know. I see that too. How did I not see that? I was just doing it. Ok I'm going to back off."	Used rarely. Middle to end stage, after couple very familiar with cycle. They see how the cycle is the same at home and in the art process. They shift behavior in art process as cycle is reflected. Directive repeated in future session, practice doing it differently: "I'm going to just describe, I'm not going to get frustrated."

Theme	Participant Description	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Scribble Chase	<p>Participant B: Part I: 16x20 paper on lap desk between partners, sharpie markers in two colors. "It's silly, fun, just laugh." Minimize seriousness, no pressure to do it right. "This is like your recess lot and you're going to play tag. Decide who's the chaser and who's the who's the runner. When your marker tags the other marker, reverse. Markers cannot leave the paper. Go!" Part II: "Turn the page around together and look for images. Ask if they see what you see, like looking at a cloud. You can add colors." Part III: "Write a short twitter story together with a beginning, a middle, and end using the images you found. It's silly, but trust me, work together."</p>	<p>Scribble in two different colors. Most people laugh and giggle. Then dialogue, "Look, I have a whale and you have an angel." One person writes the story down. Art happens on a table between them on the couch, so they had to remove the "chastity wall" they built when they came into session— a pile of pillows and jackets between them for separation.</p>	<p>"Okay what have you got?" The male intellectualizes the exercise, "I can see why you're trying to do this. You want us..." Encourage to engage in process.</p>	<p>Used when both partners were shut down and not communicating, to get them interacting. Done with a fair number of couples, to get them to be creative, turn towards each other, author their own endings, take a positive perspective, work together, communicate and compromise. (Gottman)</p>

Theme	Participant Description	Art Process & Product	Verbal Processing	Clinical Notes
Kintsugi	Participant C: Therapist gives the couple a bowl that is primed for painting. Partners are asked to break it but to try not to break it into pieces that are too small. Partners are asked to collaborate on putting it back together with glue, and then paint it.	Putting pieces together with dialogue. Leader, follower. Talking over partner, telling them what to do. Pursuer concerned about missing piece, wants to display art at home. Withdrawn partner acted differently than previously in treatment, was engaged, "It's okay. We've got this. I have a piece right here, we can use this." Pursuer wasn't happy but did not criticize, liked the end product. They painted it together, decorated it.	During artmaking name relational patterns, commenting often: "Did you notice that you did that?" "Yeah, this is just like what we do."	Used with a few couples. Middle to end stage. Couple see how their cycle in the art process is the same as it is at home. May take home to display. The process creates a dialogue verbally and in the art. Highlights EFT change events: withdrawer re-engagement and pursuer softening.

Figure 2

Participant B Artwork: Draw the Cycle



Note. Description of art intervention in Table 5.

**Figure 3***Participant D Artwork: Body Map Joint Enactment*

*Note.* Description of art intervention in Table 5. First, the body outline was drawn by the therapist in brown. Then, the injured partner drew brown on body, then red, and then encapsulated body in brown. After that, other partner then added green to the body and encapsulated the body in green. The image was recreated by researcher based on screen shots from the interview.

**Figure 4***Participant C Artwork: Treatment Check-In*

*Note.* Description of art intervention in Table 5.

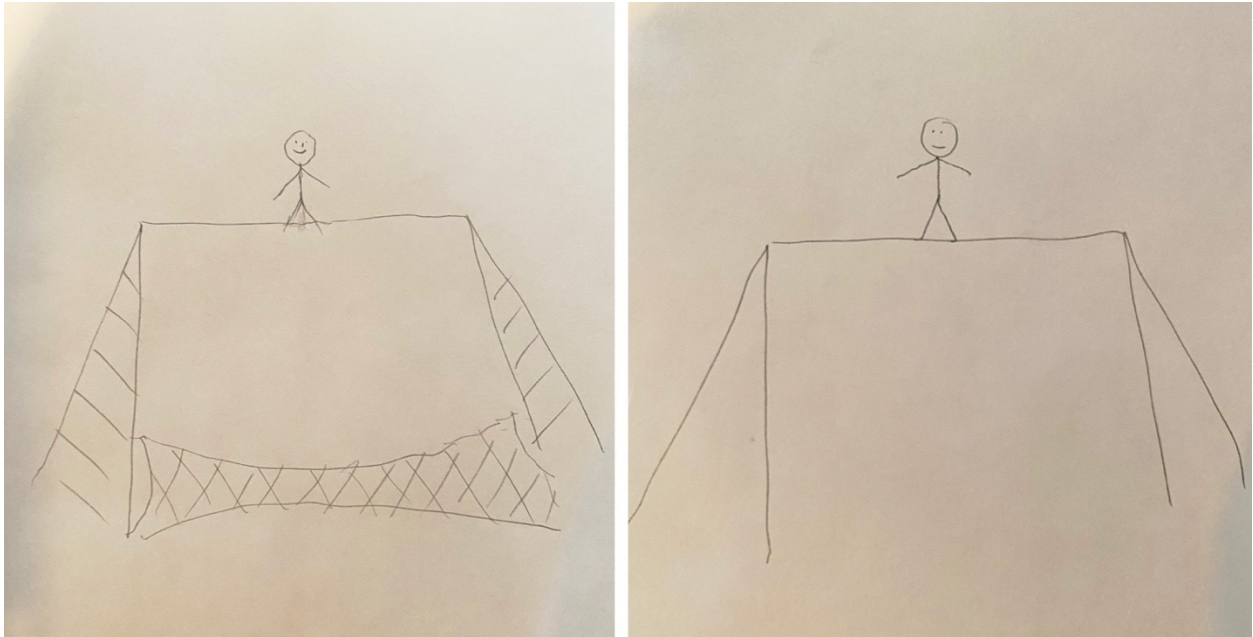
**Figure 5**

*Participant E Artwork: Relationship Symbol*



*Note.* Description of art intervention in Table 5.



**Figure 6***Participant A Artwork: Tight Rope*

*Note.* Description of art intervention in Table 5.

### **Analysis of Data**

The following analysis of data represented phases 4, 5 and 6 of the thematic analysis process (Braun & Clark, 2006). In phase 4, themes were reviewed and refined in the context of coded extracts and the overall data set, through the lens of the original research question—how can art therapy be aligned and integrated with the EFT model? This phase of analysis took place in two parts. First participant background data was examined to provide a contextual lens for the data set as a whole. One clear theme emerged that impacted the rest of the analysis, regarding the varying level of adherence to the EFT model among participants. For this reason, in the second part of phase 4, art intervention themes were reviewed and reformulated deductively, in areas of alignment and divergence with the EFT model using principles of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) and the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020). In this way, the analysis in phase 4 was deductive and theory-driven to align with the research question. Throughout phase 4, several maps of themes were iteratively refined to relate the data back to the research question through alignment with the EFT-TFS and the EFT manual. In phase 5, themes were defined and named. Diagrams were created to illustrate key themes and relationships between themes, to tell the story of the data. A collection of diagrams illustrated a conceptual framework for integrating art therapy with EFT. In phase 6, the report was written—key quotations from participants were chosen and additional diagrams and tables were created to connect themes back to the data.

## **Participant Background and Experiences Integrating Art Therapy and EFT**

The background of participants was reviewed and connected to the rest of the data set, looking for key themes as a way to contextualize the data as a whole. The primary theme that emerged was the varying level of experience integrating EFT and art therapy. All participants were either licensed to practice art therapy or were registered as art therapists with the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB). Participants represented a wide variety of EFT training and self-disclosed adherence to the EFT model. None of the participants were certified EFT therapists. The range of EFT training spanned from no formal training to completion of all the training necessary for certification. It was noteworthy that the level of training in EFT did not coincide with greater self-disclosed adherence to the EFT model. Reasons for this varied: two participants shared a lack of familiarity with how to integrate art therapy with EFT. Four participants shared how other models were incorporated into their practice, such as structural therapy, solution-focused art therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and the Gottman method. Further contextualizing this theme, it was clear throughout the data that although some participants were not familiar with the names of EFT interventions or the steps and stages of EFT, they were still using them. For example, Participant A, who disclosed a lack of familiarity with the EFT Tango, was clearly using the Tango in their sessions when they described how they worked from an EFT perspective. In addition, all the participants described identifying a couple's negative interaction cycle and underlying emotions—steps 2 and 3 of EFT, but none of them cited these specifically in describing their work.

A potential theme in this phase of analysis illuminated the necessity for a conceptual framework aligning the two models. One participant with extensive formal EFT training had not thought through how their couple art therapy interventions specifically aligned with EFT, as their

EFT training came after their training in art therapy and marital and family therapy. Another participant cited this reason as well—integrating art interventions with EFT was not covered in their original degree program, so it was challenging to combine the two approaches.

### **Art Intervention Analysis with the EFT-TFS and EFT Manual**

Given the variety of formal EFT training and self-disclosed adherence to the EFT model by participants, principles of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) were applied to art intervention themes in phase 4 of the analysis. Existing themes in other areas of the data were also mapped to relevant skills of the EFT-TFS. In this way, the principles of the EFT-TFS were used to focus the analysis in a deductive theoretical way to answer the research question.

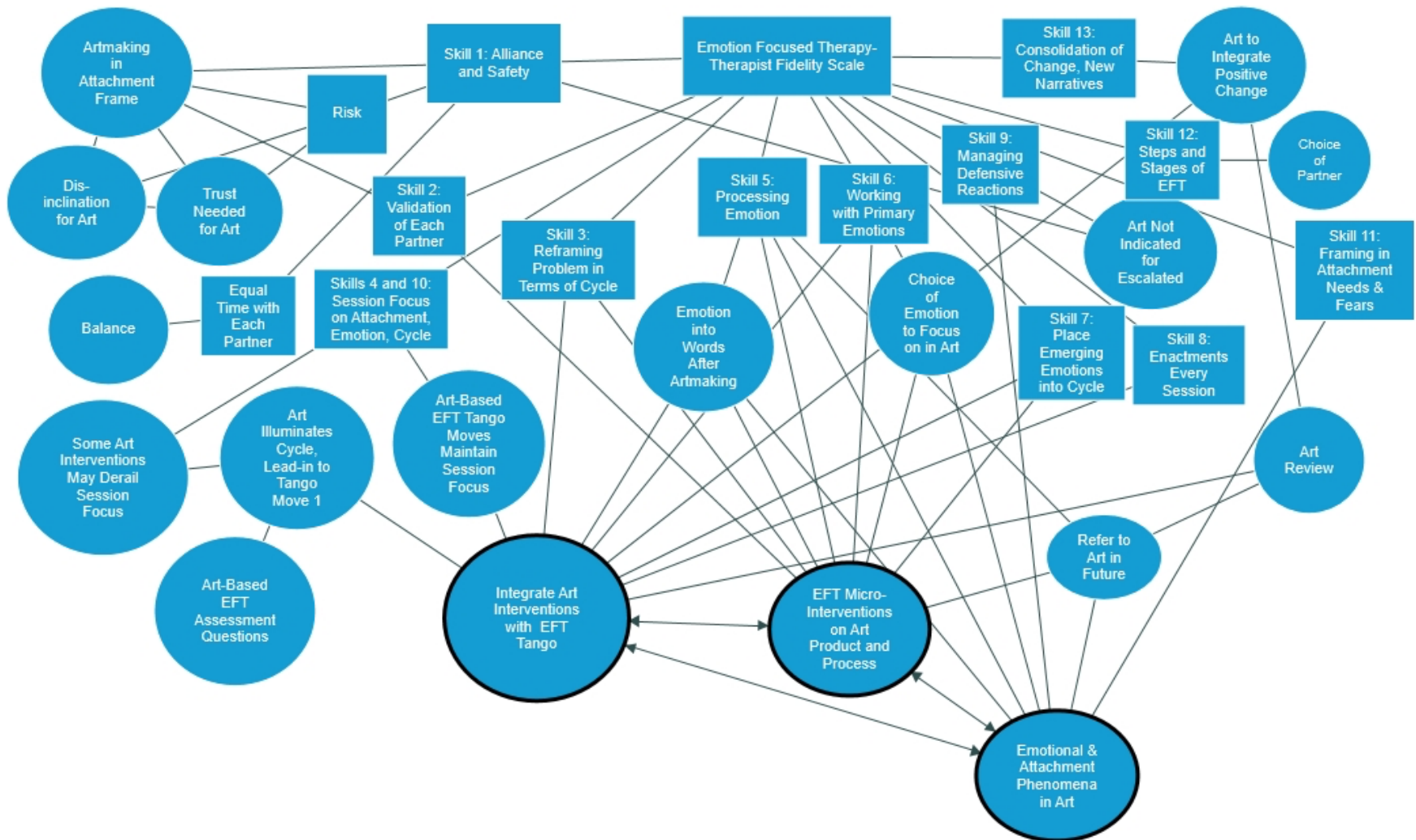
The EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) listed 13 skills which represent essential therapist behaviors for adherence to the EFT model. Each skill had a description, as well as a Likert-type scale rating from 0-5, with anchor points to guide raters. For the purposes of this research, descriptions of each skill and anchor points were used to review and refine themes deductively to answer the research question, while the Likert-type scale was disregarded. Charts were created to look for patterns in the data between art directive themes and the skills of the EFT-TFS. In these charts, coded extracts of each art intervention theme were considered in the context of the EFT-TFS skills, and potential areas of alignment and divergence from the EFT model were noted. In areas where divergence was indicated, the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) was reviewed to clarify meaning. Throughout phase 4 of the analysis process, a map of themes was used to examine relationships between the skills of the EFT-TFS and potential themes in the data to identify overarching themes about how art therapy and EFT can be aligned with the EFT model, as shown in Figure 7. This map was iteratively refined throughout phases 4 and 5 of the analysis and resulted in the main diagram that represented a framework for integrating art therapy and

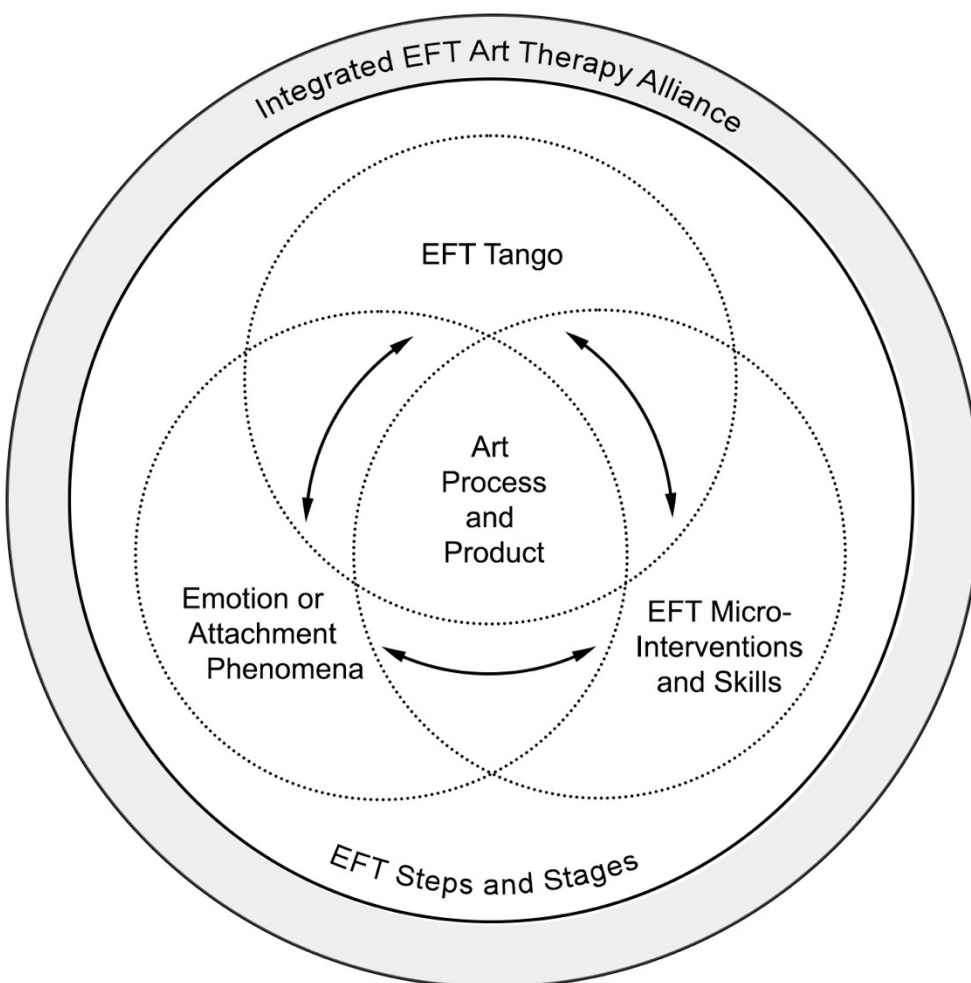
EFT, as shown in Figure 8. In phase 5 of the analysis, an overall story was identified to represent the data in relation to the research question. As a visual representation of this story, several diagrams were created to represent how the data supported several core themes and the relationships between them, as shown in Figures 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14.

The diagram in Figure 8 was conceptually anchored on the outside by the integrated EFT art therapy alliance, defined by unique qualities necessary for therapeutic artmaking in EFT treatment. On the inside of the diagram, several interrelated themes conceptually demonstrated how art therapy was aligned and integrated with EFT from the perspective of techniques and interventions at the session level. Guiding the progression of techniques and interventions over time were the EFT steps and stages. As shown in Figure 8, the art process and product were bound by three interrelated themes that created alignment with the EFT model. These three themes, found throughout the data, were the alignment of art interventions with the EFT Tango, the use of EFT micro-interventions and skills in relation to the art process and product, and attention to emotional and attachment phenomena in the context of the art process and product. All of these themes influenced each other, which was represented in Figure 8 by the arrows in the diagram and the style of the components as a Venn diagram. The following sections of the analysis described core themes and the relationships between them. In each section, tables and diagrams were generated to connect themes back to the data.

**Figure 7**

*Map of Analysis with EFT-TFS Skills (Denton et al., 2009)*



**Figure 8***Conceptual Framework Integrating Art Therapy with EFT***Alignment of Art Interventions with the EFT Tango**

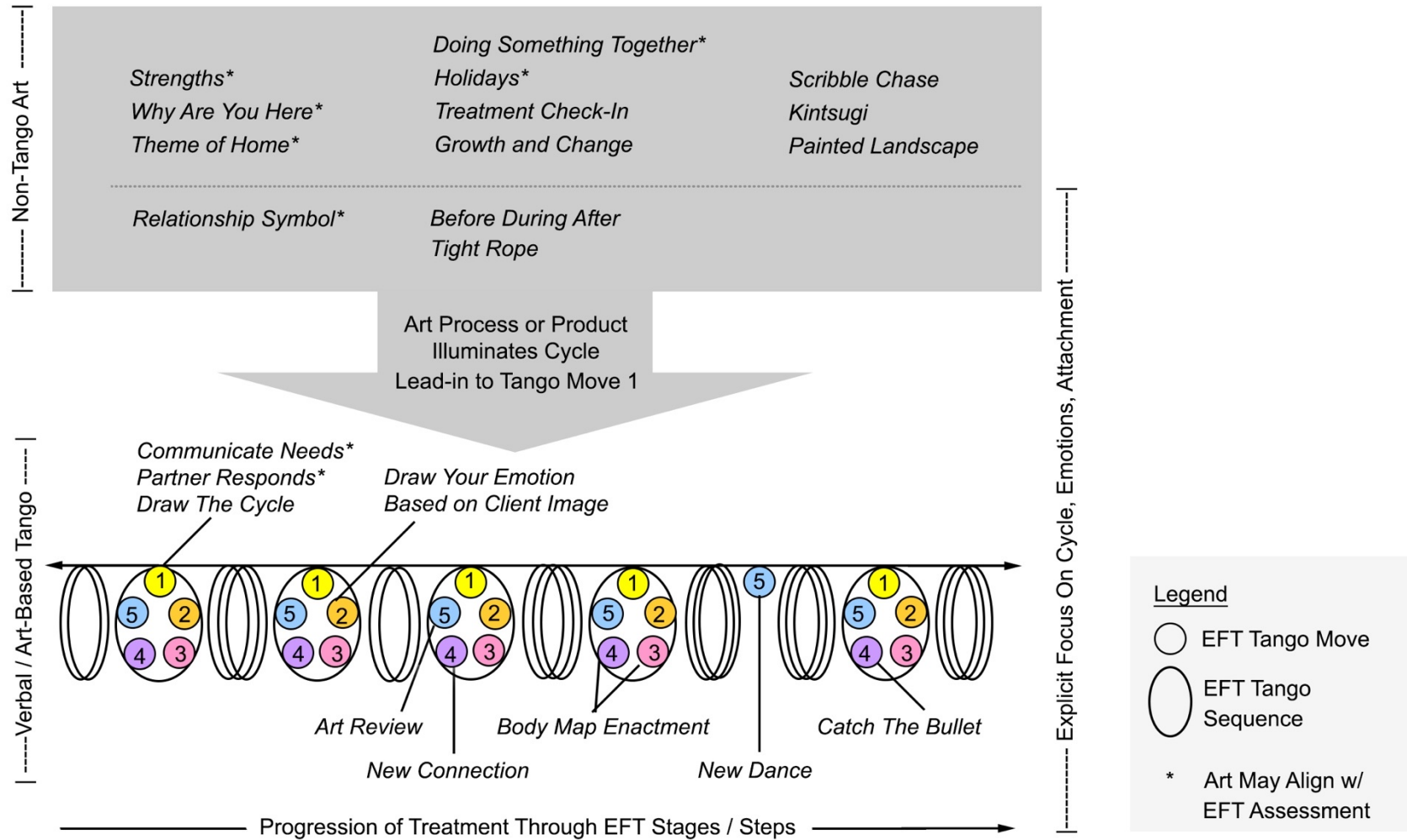
The alignment of art interventions with the intervention sequence of the EFT Tango was a key conceptual theme to describe how art therapy was integrated with EFT. This alignment provided greater fidelity to the EFT model, as identified through deductive theoretical analysis of art intervention themes using the EFT-TFS skills (Denton et al., 2009), as shown in Figure 7. The conceptual diagram of themes in Figure 8 highlighted the importance of this alignment and its relationship to other components of integrating art therapy and EFT.

The alignment of art interventions with the EFT Tango was identified as a pattern in the data early on in the study, during data collection. One semi-structured interview question specifically asked how participants integrate art with the five moves of the EFT Tango, as shown in Appendix D. Analysis revealed that art interventions aligned with the Tango in one of two ways: they either constituted part of a specific Tango move, or they potentially illuminated aspects of a couple's negative interaction cycle, which could then lead into Move 1 of the Tango. Art intervention themes were categorized as either non-Tango art interventions or art-based Tango moves, based on these two pathways. A diagram was created (Figure 9) to tell the story of how art interventions were integrated with the Tango by mapping these pathways and illustrating key ideas from analysis with the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). An additional diagram was adapted from the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) to convey the conceptual framework of these two pathways of alignment with the EFT Tango, as shown in Figure 10.



**Figure 9**

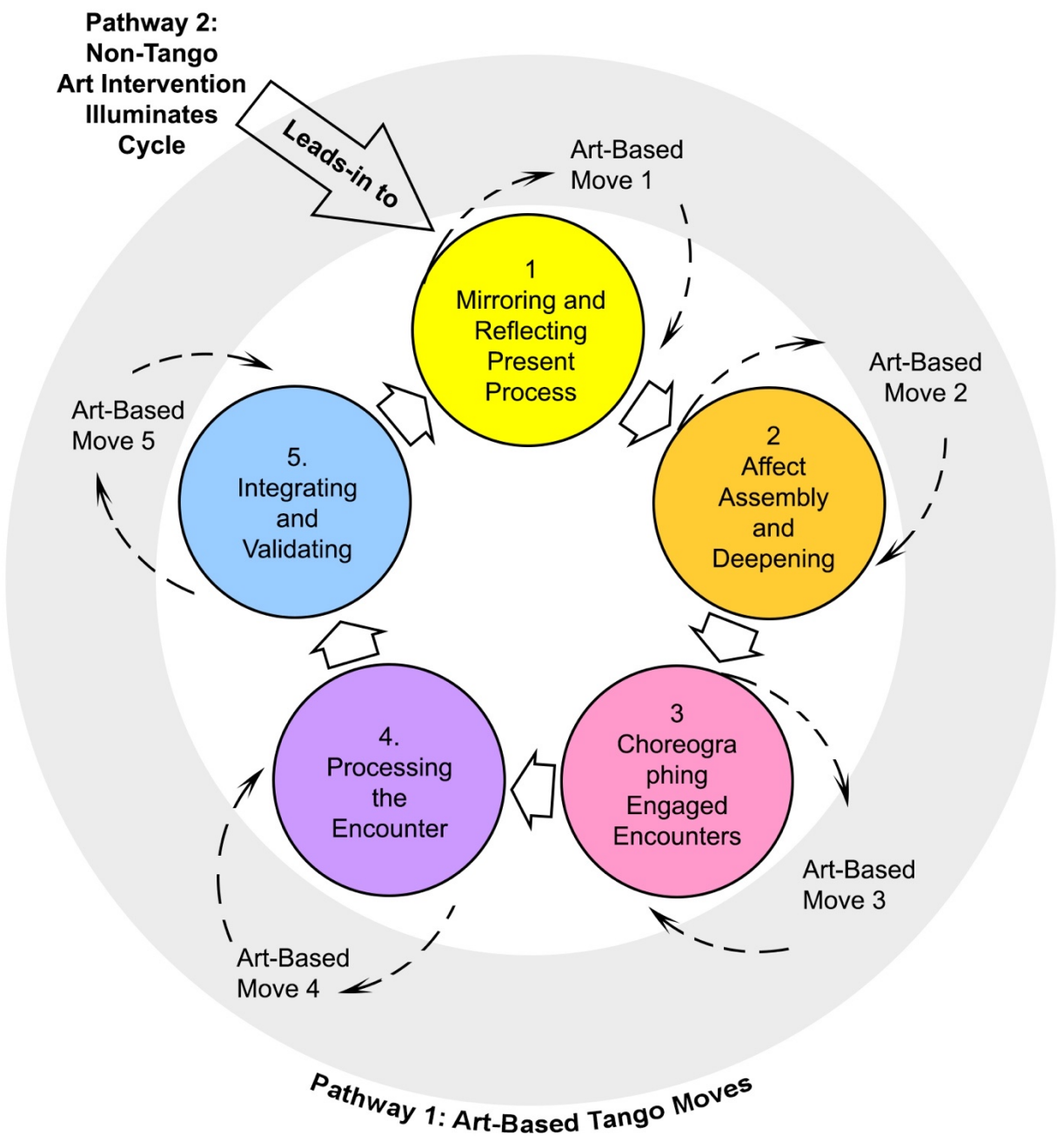
*Two Pathways of Alignment of Art Interventions with the EFT Tango*



Note. Frequency of artmaking ranged from very rarely to half of sessions. Multiple participants used art in around 20-25% of sessions. This theme was represented in the diagram above with the Tango sequences without art interventions, in between those with art-based Tango moves.

**Figure 10**

*Alignment of Art Interventions with the EFT Tango*



### *Art-Based Tango Moves*

One prominent pattern in the data was the alignment of some art interventions with the moves of the EFT Tango, as shown in Figure 9 and Table 4. Out of the 23 total art intervention themes, 10 of them fell into this category. This alignment was coded whenever an art intervention prompt constituted a significant part of an EFT Tango move. Among the participants, all five moves of the Tango were described in ways that were integrated with art interventions, and each participant shared at least one Tango move. Out of these art intervention themes, two of them were illustrated by the participant in an image, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. Art-based Tango moves represented a key alignment of art interventions with the EFT model, as the use of these interventions aligned with many skills of EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), as shown in Figure 7. In addition, many of the interventions were useful across the steps and stages of EFT, as shown in Tables 9, 11, 12, 13, and 14.

As shown in Table 4, some art-based Tango moves were described by multiple participants in slightly different ways, which indicated these interventions were a key pattern of alignment of art therapy with EFT, as many participants worked in a similar way. The participant with the most EFT formal training, Participant D, only shared art interventions that aligned with Tango moves, which may further indicate how working this way was a key component of aligning art therapy with EFT. Participant A, who had the least formal EFT training, did not know about the EFT Tango, but still shared three interventions that were categorized as art-based Tango moves—all of these interventions were also cited by other participants. The prevalence of this pattern of alignment between art interventions and the EFT Tango therefore spanned across the levels of experience with EFT in terms of formal training.

**Table 4***Art-Based Tango Moves*

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	Prompt Based on Coded Extracts
A, B, E	Draw the Cycle	Move 1	<p>Version 1: What does it look like when you have an argument? Draw what you do when you are feeling (angry, hurt).</p> <p>Version 2: Each of you, draw the cycle as a diagram. Where do you think the cycle starts?</p> <p>Version 3: Draw your relationship dance, what does it look like? What are the dance moves? Create it using lines, shapes, movement or color.</p>
D	Communicate Needs	Move 1	Create an image of how you communicate your needs to your partner.
D	Partner Responds	Move 1	Create an image of how your partner responds to you when you try to express your needs.
B	Draw Your Emotion	Move 2	Draw your emotion, what does it look like? What lines, shapes? What does this emotion feel like? You could draw a scribble, be abstract.
A, E	Based on Client's Verbal Image	Move 2	I can see what you're saying. Can we slow down here and could you show me this?

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	Prompt Based on Coded Extracts
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Moves 3, 4	<p>Part 1: Therapist draws body map outline. We are going to see your pain together, and we are going to understand it. We are going to witness it. We are going to validate it. And we are going to hold it in a way that we have never understood. Even you yourself have never understood because it's just this all-consuming abstract feeling that's big everywhere, and you haven't been able to really see it, or have it be seen. Draw your pain. I want you to show us where your pain is. I want us to understand it. If you had a mass in your stomach, you would be going for an x-ray and we would see that mass. I want you to show us your pain.</p> <p>Part 2: The other partner is invited to add to the art. What is that like for you when you see your partner in so much pain? Can you share with us what that is like to feel your partner's pain, and to feel responsible for all that pain? I want you to show us your own pain of living with all of this, by adding to the art. After the partner adds to the image: How can you show your partner in the art your commitment to the relationship and that you are present and holding all those injuries? In that way, that you can both heal together?</p>
D, E	New Connection	Move 4	Create an image of what it feels like when you can connect with what moved your partner. What did that connection feeling look like? Could you show your partner using line, shapes and colors?
E	Catch the Bullet	Move 4	<p>Part 1: To the defensive partner who received the enactment: This is so hard for you to hear right now, could you show us? To both: Each of you, can you create an image around the experience of struggling with this?</p> <p>Part 2: Optional, after processing with a defensive partner: Is there anything you need to add or change to make this image reflect your deeper experience, so your partner can understand?</p>

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	Prompt Based on Coded Extracts
E	New Dance	Move 5	What did that feel like when you were dancing really well together? What did that connection feeling look like and how did you get there? Use line, shape, movement or color.
A, C, E	Art Review	Move 5	Do you remember that art piece you made, or the two of you made? How are things different now? May compare to a newer image.

**Art-based Tango Move 1.** “Draw the Cycle” was described by Participants A, B, and E, as shown in Tables 3 and 4. The prevalence of this art intervention theme highlighted the commonality of integrating the art with Tango Move 1, tracking and reflecting the cycle, by drawing the cycle. Participant B noted the benefit of this directive in treatment:

They are much better about talking about it, and not getting into the cycle, if they've drawn it out. Even if there are just stick figures, because I think they're observing the cycle, they're not in the cycle. When you're sitting in the room, at a sofa talking about it, it gets very quick to get in it. I think it's very confusing to some people when it's just talked about. If they can draw it out, it means they can see it better in their own lives.

Participant B asked partners where they each think the cycle begins. Other art interventions that aligned with Move 1 of the Tango were “Communicate Needs” and “Partner Responds.”

Participant D, who had the most formal EFT training out of all the participants, noted these directives were intended to reflect the cycle: “Create an image of how you communicate your needs to your partner,” and “Create an image of how your partner responds to you when you try to express your needs.” Analysis of the steps and stages of EFT revealed that all the art-based Tango Move 1 directives aligned with Stage 1, as shown in Tables 9, 11, and 12. EFT micro-interventions and skills for these directives were shown in Tables 5 and 7.

**Art-Based Tango Move 2.** Participants A, B and E described assembling or deepening into emotion, Tango Move 2, either by drawing the emotion or by asking a partner to create art about an image they shared verbally, as shown in Table 4. Participant E described working with a client's verbal image, "Can we slow down here and could you show me this?" Participant E gave an example of a client's verbal image that might be used for this directive, "A really dark place." Participant A used self-disclosure to set the stage for the directive with clients who were already familiar with the use of art therapy, "I can see what you're saying... I feel an art directive coming on." Participant E described how creating art around a client's verbal image was used for trauma or "An experience the other partner doesn't understand." They cited how the art was a way to slow the process down in session, and help the client engage emotionally or "latch onto" their verbal image. According to Participant E, the image could be used throughout treatment; for example, through empathic conjecture, "Is this the dark place? Is this a fuel source from the dark place?" Participant B described the "Draw Your Emotion" art intervention theme, using a quarter sheet of paper: "Draw your emotion, what does it look like?" Participant B suggested how to use materials for this directive, moving towards abstraction or using a scribble, by incorporating lines and shapes rather than a figure drawing. As shown in Tables 9, 12, 13, and 14 in the analysis section for the EFT stages and steps, all of the art-based Tango Move 2 interventions were potentially useful across the steps and stages of EFT. EFT micro-interventions and skills for these interventions were shown in Tables 5 and 7.

**Art-Based Tango Move 3.** "Joint Body Map Enactment," reflected the use of art in Tango Move 4, choreographing engaged encounters, as shown in Table 4 and the artwork in Figure 3. This directive moved through two Tango Moves in the art process, Moves 3 and 4, in

working through an attachment injury related to infidelity. A dialogue happened verbally and non-verbally during artmaking, with both partners working on the same body map sequentially.

After completing Moves 1 and 2 of the Tango verbally, Participant D set up the enactment using EFT micro-interventions and skills of validation, empathic conjecture and seeding attachment, to frame the art as a way to share the depth of pain with the other:

We're going to the art table and we are going to see your pain together, and we're going to understand it. We're going to witness it. We're going to validate it. And we're going to hold it in a way that we have never understood. Even you yourself have never understood because it's just been this all-consuming abstract feeling that's just big everywhere, and you haven't been able to really see it, or have it be seen.

First the therapist drew the shape of a non-gender specific body. The use of repetition of the phrase “show us your pain” when introducing the directive evidenced the use of the EFT micro-intervention of heightening through RISSSC (repetition). During the artmaking process Participant D shared how they guided the partner to move through secondary emotion into primary, visually, in the art. After the first marks were made, the therapist encouraged the partner to show more of their pain and to go deeper, using evocative questions and heightening. This culminated with many red marks over the body map and encapsulation of the body to show the pain was everywhere, as shown in Figure 3. After that, Participant D described an art-based Move 4 using the same image, as described in Table 4, which resulted in the partner encapsulating the image as well, creating a sense of holding of the other partner’s pain, as shown in Figure 3. EFT micro-interventions and skills for this directive were listed in Tables 5, 6, and 8. Analysis through the steps and stages of EFT revealed how this intervention may align with both Stage 1 or Stage 2 of EFT, as shown in Tables 9, 12 and 13.



**Art-Based Tango Move 4.** Three art intervention themes, described by participants D and E, aligned with EFT Tango Move 4, processing the encounter, as shown in Table 4. “New Connection” was described by Participants D and E, which may indicate the relevance of using art for Tango Move 4 to highlight a positive connection made through an enactment. This art intervention aligned with all of the stages of EFT, as shown in Tables 9, 12, 13, and 14. “Catch the Bullet” was described by Participant E as a way to work with defensive reactivity in Stage 2 in response to an enactment was hard for the receiving partner to believe or hear: “This is so hard for you to hear right now. Could you show us?” Participant E indicated this intervention for Stage 2 due to the potential for a “visual bullet,” which was an image that could hurt their partner stemming from reactivity. The art was used to slow the process down and go deeper into primary emotion underneath secondary emotion: “They’re struggling to say something to their partner, like an unmet need.” Participant E described having both partners create art around the experience of struggling with the enactment. During verbal processing of the art, the partners were asked to share the art with each other, which restructured the interaction. Participant E prompted a defensive partner to alter the art after verbal processing to reflect deeper primary emotion: “Is there anything you need to add or change to make this true to your experience underneath, so your partner can see and understand?” Therefore, the data revealed three types of art-based Tango Move 4 interventions: “New Connection” reflected a positive connection as a result of an enactment, “Catch the Bullet” reflected the negative cycle arising through an enactment, and the “Body Map Joint Enactment” held the pain of a partner in the case of attachment injury repair. EFT micro-interventions and skills for these directives were shown in Tables 5, 6, and 8.

**Art-Based Tango Move 5.** Two art intervention themes aligned with Tango Move 5, integrating and validating progress made in therapy, as shown in Table 4. “New Dance” was used both in the Tango sequence and outside of the Tango sequence by Participant E to integrate change. Couples were prompted to express their felt sense of change and also how this change happened, providing a new narrative for the couple’s work in therapy, “What did it feel like when you were dancing really well together? What did that connection feeling look like and how did you get there?” “Art Review” was described by Participants A, C, and E. This intervention demonstrated how reviewing past artwork could highlight change; it was used both in the Tango sequence and spontaneously when a couple was speaking about change. Validation was a key EFT micro-intervention used with this art-based Tango move—Participant E would highlight progress: “Look how far you’ve come.” Participant C used a verbal art review to highlight change with attachment and emotional phenomena in the art—a hole under the carpet got smaller for one partner, which symbolized diminished less attachment fear, a feeling of greater security in the relationship and optimism for the future. As shown in Tables 9, 12, 13, and 14, all of the art interventions that aligned with Tango Move 5 were applicable across the stages of EFT. EFT micro-interventions and skills for this move were shown in Tables 5 and 8.

**Integration of Art-Based and Verbal Tango Moves.** The map of art interventions in Figure 9 illuminated themes about art-based Tango moves in terms of sequencing and executing the moves in session. Art-based Tango moves were blended with verbal Tango moves in the sequence described in the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020), which represented alignment with the EFT model. For example, Participant B described tracking the cycle verbally, Move 1 of the Tango, and then deepening into one partner’s emotion through the “Draw Your Emotion” art directive, which represented an art-based Move 2 of the Tango. After that, the partner was then

asked to share this emotion identified in the art with their partner verbally, which constituted Move 3 of the Tango. This sequence highlighted another theme, shown in Figure 9, that many times the art happened as one Tango move in a sequence, while the rest of the moves were verbal. In this way, EFT micro-interventions connected the art process and product to the rest of the Tango moves in the sequence—examples of this in the data were shown in Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 in the analysis section for EFT micro-interventions and skills.

In two cases, participants described how two Tango moves happened with art interventions in one sequence, either combined into one art intervention in several parts or through the use of two separate art interventions. For example, one art intervention with several parts was used for Tango moves 3 and 4 in “Body Map Joint Enactment” described by Participant D. The session started with the therapist doing Move 1, verbally tracking and reflecting how an attachment injury impacted a couple’s negative cycle. Then in Move 2, the therapist verbally deepened into the pain of the attachment injury and then prompted the couple to move to the art table where a joint drawing was used for Moves 3 and 4. In the next session, the art product was reintroduced and a verbal Move 4 happened in the context of attachment phenomena in the art, in this case the encapsulation and holding shown in Figure 3. After that, a verbal Move 5 happened, which was described as “tying a bow.” Another example of a Tango sequence with multiple art-based Tango moves was shared by Participant E. In this case, an art-based Move 4, called “New Connection” in Table 4, was followed by reviewing previous artwork in Move 5. This was described by multiple participants as the “Art Review” intervention theme, an art-based Tango Move 5. The idea was to highlight how far the couple had come by comparing the art they just made with art from an earlier session. Several

considerations about art-based Tango moves also emerged about the progression of treatment and the use of materials, which were highlighted in the analysis of the steps and stages of EFT.

**Art-Based Tango Moves and Fidelity to the EFT Model.** Deductive theoretical analysis of art intervention themes through the lens of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) revealed that art-based Tango moves clearly maintained fidelity to the EFT model in multiple ways, as shown in Figure 7. Through the lens of skills 4 and 10 of the EFT-TFS regarding maintaining session focus on the cycle, attachment issues, and emotion, all of the interventions showed clear alignment. As shown in Figure 9, this alignment contrasted with non-Tango art interventions, many of which did not explicitly focus on the cycle, attachment issues or emotion. Skill 3 highlighted the importance of reframing the problem in terms of the cycle and skill 7 was about placing emerging emotions into the cycle (Denton et al., 2009). These skills were demonstrated through the use of art-based Tango moves in the Tango sequence, as part of the sequence was tracking and reflecting the cycle. Participants A, B, D, and E all described the use of art-based Tango moves in the Tango sequence to reframe the problem in terms of the cycle and place emerging emotions into the context of the cycle. Skill 5 of the EFT-TFS involved key ideas about processing emotion, while skill 6 emphasized working with primary emotion. Art-based Tango moves that aligned with Move 2 indicated alignment with these skills: “Draw Your Emotion” and “Based on Client Verbal Image.” In addition, in “Body Map Joint Enactment,” Participant D explicitly described moving into primary emotion from secondary emotion in the art process, indicating strong alignment with skills 5 and 6. “Catch the Bullet,” a Stage 2 art-based Tango Move 4, also explicitly focused on getting to primary emotion from secondary, as described by Participant E. Skill 8 of the EFT-TFS described the importance of enactments in every session, which also demonstrated how art-based Tango moves created alignment with the

EFT model, as enactments were built in to the Tango sequence. Participants B, D, and E all described enactments happening in the context of art-based Tango moves. Skill 9 of the EFT-TFS, managing defensive reactions, aligned with an art-based Tango Move 4, “Catch the Bullet,” which was described by Participant E. This intervention was used specifically in Stage 2 to process an enactment when a partner was struggling to accept what their partner had just shared. Lastly, skill 13 of the EFT-TFS, regarding consolidation of change, was reflected in art-based Tango moves that aligned with Move 5 and therefore focused on consolidation of change: “Art Review” and “New Dance.” Furthermore, by aligning other art-based Tango moves with the Tango sequence, the session would naturally come to a place of consolidation and integration by doing a verbal Move 5 after using art at another point in the Tango sequence. Participant E also described an art-based Move 5 to highlight change outside of the Tango sequence, which aligned with the importance of consolidating change as identified in Skill 13 of the EFT-TFS. Therefore, deductive theoretical analysis of art intervention themes through the lens of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) revealed how art-based Tango moves, through their direct alignment with the EFT Tango sequence, indicated clear fidelity to the EFT model across multiple EFT-TFS skills.

### ***Non-Tango Art Interventions***

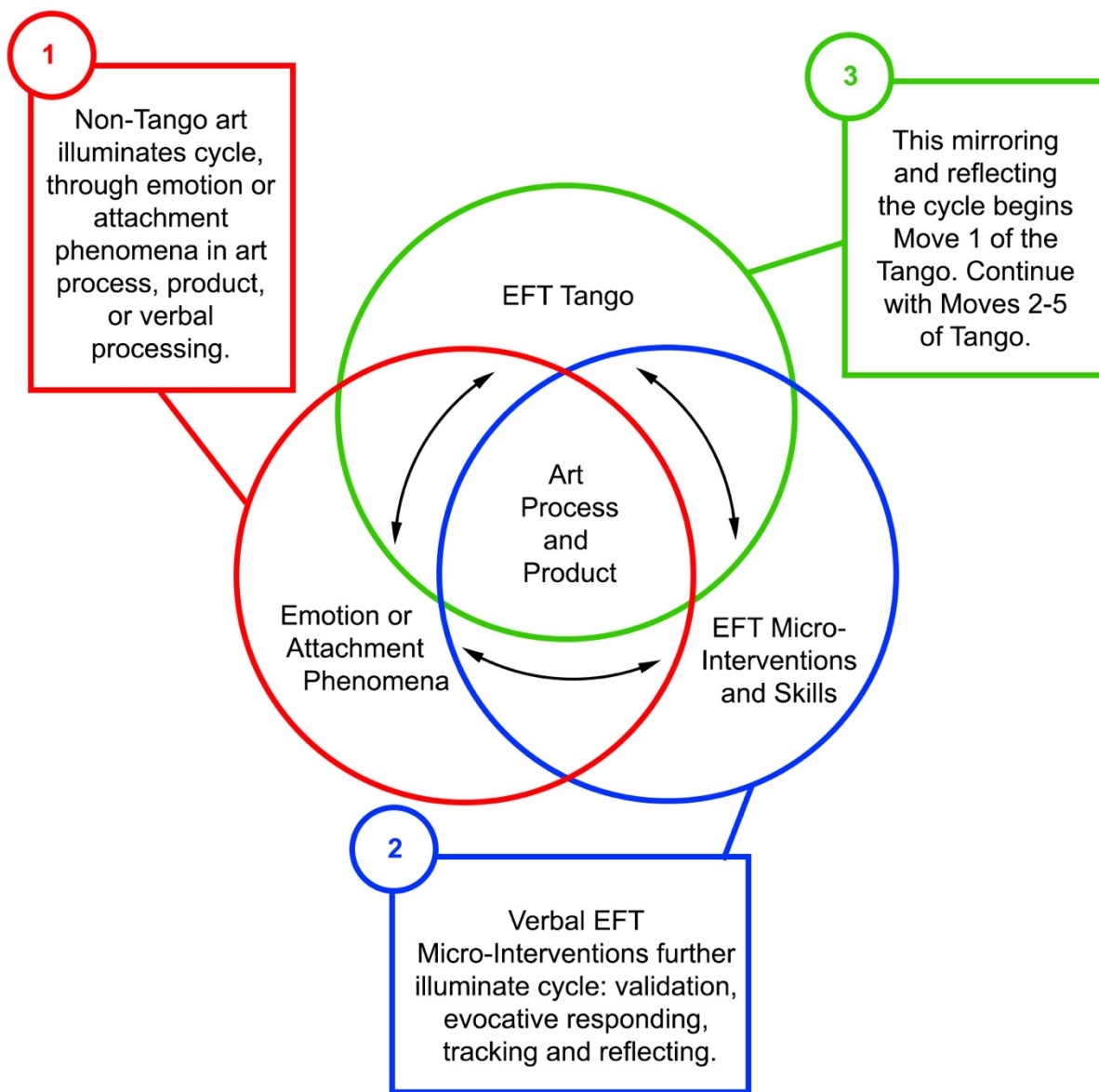
Non-Tango art interventions constituted 13 of the 23 total art intervention themes shared by participants. In Figure 9, non-Tango art interventions were depicted on the top of the diagram in the grey box. A key theme from deductive theoretical analysis with the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) revealed that non-Tango art interventions indicated the most potential for divergence from the EFT model. This idea was contextualized in the data as some of these interventions intentionally aligned with other models, such as the Gottman method and solution-focused

therapy. For example, all of the interventions shared by Participant C fell into the non-Tango category, and this participant noted, “These were things that I was already I guess using before I was trained in EFT. When I was just thinking about assessment and communication.” Some non-Tango art interventions addressed areas of interest for EFT assessment—these directives were indicated in Figure 9, with charting of alignments in Table 9. However, most participants did not use art in assessment.

**Lead-Ins to Tango Move 1.** The most important area of alignment of non-Tango art interventions with the EFT model was that some were identified by participants as potentially likely to illuminate a couple’s negative cycle of interaction, which could then lead-in to Move 1 of the EFT Tango. The importance of this transition into the Tango was illuminated through deductive theoretical analysis of art interventions with the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), as transitioning into the Tango created greater fidelity to the EFT model through alignment with several EFT-TFS skills. This idea was illustrated in the map of the analysis with the EFT-TFS in Figure 7. There was an important pattern in the data, where emotional handles and attachment phenomena in the art process and product, integrated with EFT micro-interventions, created the pathway into the Tango through the illumination of the couple’s negative cycle. This was a key component of the overall conceptual framework for integrating art therapy and EFT, as shown in Figure 11. In the analysis, this process was broken down into three steps showing the pathway into the EFT Tango sequence from non-Tango art interventions. Coded extracts in the data to support this pattern were shown in Tables 5 and 7 in the EFT micro-intervention analysis section.

**Figure 11**

*Lead-In to the EFT Tango from Non-Tango Art Interventions*



*Emotional and Attachment Phenomena in the Art Process.* As illustrated in Figure 11, the first part of leading into the EFT Tango from a non-Tango art intervention was the illumination of the couple's negative cycle. One way this could happen was through emotional handles or attachment phenomena in the art process. The art process was described by participants as illuminating relational dynamics in the majority of non-Tango art interventions:

“Strengths,” “Relationship Symbol,” “Holidays,” “Theme of Home,” “Doing Something Together,” “Painted Landscape,” “Scribble Chase” and “Kintsugi.” Analysis of interview transcripts, as well as participant imagery, identified several categories of attachment phenomena in the art process that may illuminate the couple’s negative cycle. Multiple participants highlighted how when given the option to work jointly, some couples worked separately on the same page, which provided information about their bond. For example, in the “Relationship Symbol” directive, Participant E noted how a couple’s choice to work separately on one sheet of paper highlighted their loneliness in the cycle. Participant B noted how a couple worked separately, creating two collages when the directive was to create one together, in “Doing Something Together.” This Participant used tracking and reflecting and evocative responding, two EFT micro-interventions, to begin to illuminate this cycle. Other attachment and emotional phenomena in the art process described by participants included drawing over a partner’s artwork, peeking at a partner’s work due to anxiety over the partner’s perception of them, controlling a partner’s use of materials, and the expression of frustration during the artmaking process. Many of these attachment and emotional phenomena in the artmaking process highlighted aspects of a couple’s negative cycle, according to the participants. To lead-in to the Tango, EFT micro-interventions were used in reference to the emotional or attachment phenomena, as indicated in Figure 11 and described in detail in Table 7 in the data analysis section about EFT micro-interventions and skills. The therapist then tracked and reflected the cycle which constituted Move 1 of the Tango, which was sometimes followed by Moves 2 through 5 of the Tango sequence.

***Emotional and Attachment Phenomena in the Art Product.*** In other cases, emotional and attachment phenomena in the art product illuminated the couple’s negative cycle, which then



provided a lead-in to Move 1 of the Tango. Examples were shown in Tables 5 and 7 in the data analysis section for EFT micro-interventions. One key theme about phenomena in the art product was attachment fear, often represented by danger. For example, in the “Tight Rope” directive, one partner drew a net under the tight rope—he identified this safety, associated with the net, with his close family connections. By contrast, the other partner did not draw a net, which the therapist identified with the partner’s lack of close relationships with family. This artwork was shown in Figure 5. This difference in closeness was related to their negative cycle, a pursue-withdraw pattern in the couple that would lead to conflict. Another example of danger representing attachment fear in the art product was found in the “Treatment Check-In” directive shared by Participant C, shown in Figure 3. When asked to draw where they were in the therapy process, one partner drew a carpet with a big hole underneath that a person could fall through, “When you look at this carpet, it looks beautiful. And you feel like okay yeah, I can walk on that because the ground is solid, but if you lift the carpet, there's a big hole.” During verbal discussion after artmaking, the partner identified this hole as his fear that the couple will break up. By contrast, the other partner drew the couple together on swings, with a sunny day and blue sky, and shared how they did not know of their partner’s fears. The partner with the attachment fear then shared frustration and criticism of their partner’s lack of awareness of emotions. Therefore, the hole under the carpet represented emotion that was clearly tied to the couple’s negative cycle, providing a lead-in to Move 1 of the Tango. Participant C also shared how the image was an emotional handle for deepening in Move 2 of the Tango sequence.

**Lead-ins to the Tango and Fidelity to the EFT Model.** The importance of leading in to the EFT Tango from non-Tango art interventions was highlighted in theoretical analysis with the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). The map of the analysis revealed that using the EFT Tango

created greater fidelity to the EFT model across many skills, as shown in Figure 7. This was important because analysis also revealed that some non-Tango art interventions had the potential to diverge from the EFT model, specifically through skills 4 and 10 of the EFT-TFS, related to session focus. As shown in Figure 9, many non-Tango art directives did not explicitly focus on the couple's cycle, attachment and emotion and may therefore potentially divert the focus of the session, indicating less alignment with EFT. For example, "Scribble Chase" was described by the participant as a way to engage a couple where each partner presented as withdrawn. The directive allowed the partners to collaborate and problem-solve, according to Participant B, but the focus of the art task was not explicitly on emotion, the negative cycle, and attachment needs. Similarly, "Painted Landscape" and "Kintsugi" also provided an art experience for partners where a couple's negative cycle could arise while jointly creating artwork, but the focus of the art process and product was not directly on emotion, the negative cycle, and attachment issues. In this way, the art process and product of these interventions may potentially divert the focus of the session. As described in skill 10 of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), EFT is a brief therapy and therefore sessions must stay focused on emotion, the negative interactional cycle, and attachment issues to maintain fidelity to the EFT model. In addition, managing couple interactions, skill 4 of the EFT-TFS, highlighted how some non-Tango art interventions had potential to guide the focus of the session to the content of the couple's problems rather than the underlying process of the couple's cycle, emotions, and attachment issues. Examples included "Theme of Home," "Why Are You Here," and "Holidays."

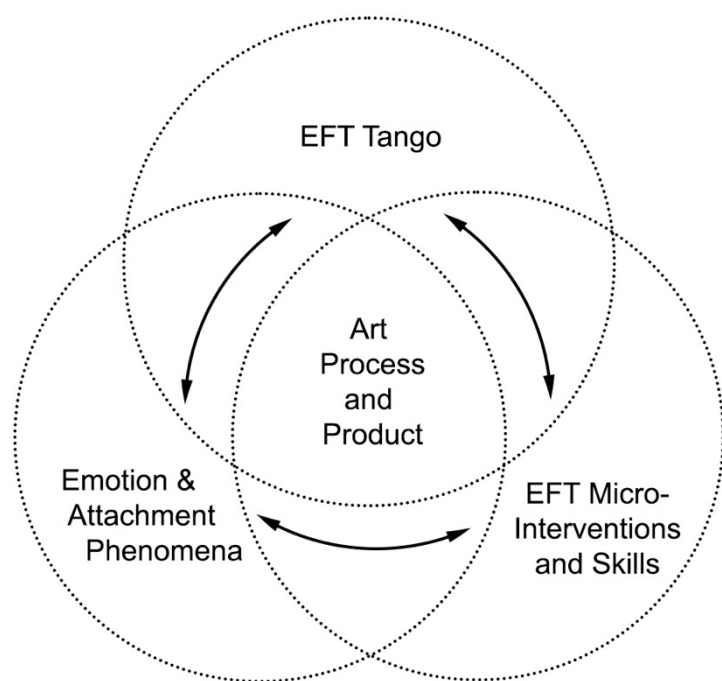
### **Integration of EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills with Art Interventions**

The use of EFT micro-interventions and skills in relation to the art process and product was another key conceptual theme. The types of micro-interventions and skills used by

participants were associated with specific Tango moves in relation to attachment and emotional phenomena that emerged in the context of the art process and product. The repeating pattern of these relationships between themes was revealed in the data as shown in Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8. Coding for these tables was accomplished by triangulating data extracts—interview text and participant imagery—with interventions described in the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020), which was then viewed through the lens of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). The interrelated nature of these themes was diagrammed in the conceptual framework for integrating EFT and art therapy in Figures 8, 11, and 12.

### Figure 12

#### *Conceptual Framework for Integrating Art Therapy and EFT: Inner Ring*

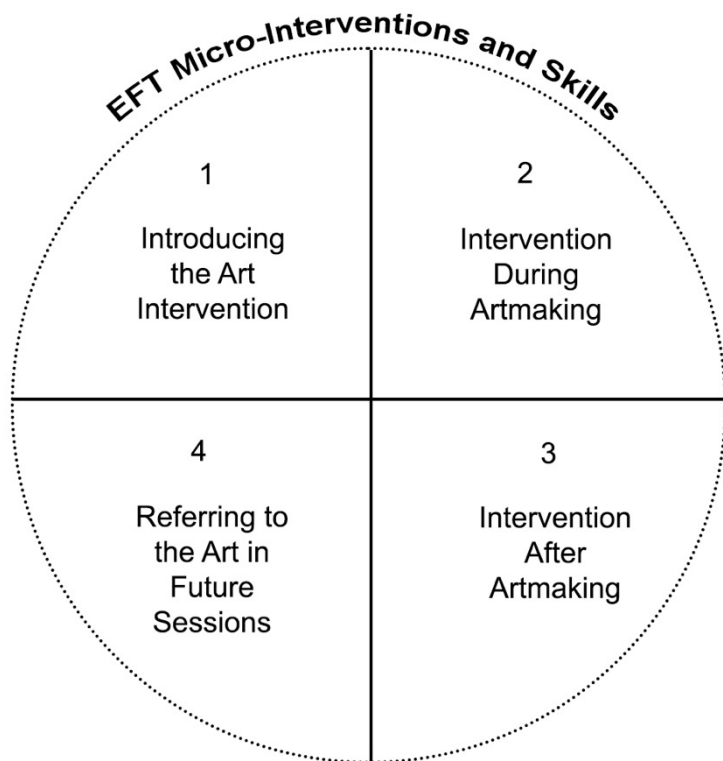


EFT micro-interventions were used at four points in the art intervention process: introducing the art intervention, during the artmaking process, after artmaking during verbal processing, and sometimes referring back to the art in future sessions, as shown in Figure 13 and

Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8. The following analysis explored how the use of EFT micro-interventions and skills provided greater fidelity to the EFT model, as well as themes about how EFT micro-interventions and skills were used differently at these four points.

### Figure 13

*EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills in the Art intervention Process*



#### *Introducing Art Interventions*

EFT micro-interventions and skills were used to introduce art interventions in the context of emotional and attachment phenomena, as shown in Table 5. Interventions that did not explicitly focus on the cycle, emotion, and attachment issues, as shown in Figure 9 in the Tango analysis section, also did not use EFT micro-interventions or skills to introduce the directive. These interventions did not appear in Table 5 because EFT micro-interventions and skills were not used to introduce these directives. This revealed a clear pattern of divergence from the EFT

model, using the principles of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), skills 4 and 10. Examination of Table 5 also revealed how the use of EFT micro-interventions and skills created fidelity to the EFT model through alignment with skills 2, 5, 8, 11, and 13 of the EFT-TFS, as shown in Figure 7. In examining Table 5, skill 2 of the EFT-TFS was demonstrated through the use of validation. Skill 5 of the EFT-TFS was demonstrated by accessing and engaging emotion using evocative responding, empathic conjecture, heightening and elements of RISSSC. Skill 8 of the EFT-TFS, the use of enactments in every session, was reflected through the use of several micro-interventions that restructured and shaped interactions. Skill 11 of the EFT-TFS, reframing in terms of attachment needs and fears, was demonstrated through the use of seeding attachment. Skill 13 of the EFT-TFS, consolidation of change, was demonstrated through the use of tracking, reflecting, and evocative questions in the context of a new, emerging positive cycle. Therefore, the analysis of Table 5, through the lens of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), revealed that fidelity to the EFT model was supported by the use of EFT micro-interventions and skills when introducing art interventions. Table 5 also revealed how micro-interventions happened in relation to emotional and attachment phenomena in the art product and process, in the context of EFT Tango moves, which supported the overall conceptual framework in Figures 8, 11, and 12.

**Table 5***Introduction of Art Interventions with EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills*

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	EFT Micro-Intervention or Skill	Emotional or Attachment Phenomena	Coded Extract
D	N/A	N/A	Self-Disclosure	Therapist's attachment fear	"Sometimes I say that it's my fear of sharing it with them that maybe they'll reject me if I suggest this."
A	Draw the Cycle	Move 1	Tracking and Reflecting	Behavior in negative cycle	"I can see what you're saying to me. It sounds like when you have an argument you go into separate rooms. You go out drinking. What does that look like?"
D	Partner Responds	Move 1	Tracking and Reflecting	Behavior in negative cycle	"Create an image of how your partner responds to you when you try to express your needs."
B	Draw Your Emotion	Move 1, 2	Tracking and Reflecting, Evocative Question	Behavior in negative cycle	"When this is going on in the cycle what do you feel? Draw your emotion, what does it look like?"
E	Based on Client's Verbal Image	Move 2	Evocative Question	Client's verbal image: dark place	"Can we slow down here and could you show me this?"

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	EFT Micro-Intervention or Skill	Emotional or Attachment Phenomena	Coded Extract
A	Based on Client's Verbal Image	Move 2	Self-disclosure	Client's verbal image	"I can see what you're saying...I feel an art directive coming on."
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Move 3	Heightening (RISSSC – Repeat, Image)	Metaphor for pain of infidelity: mass in the body	"Draw your pain. I want you to show us where your pain is. I want you to show it to us. I want us to understand it. If you had a mass in your stomach, you would be going for an x-ray and we would see that mass. I want you to show us your pain. X-ray show us."
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Move 3	Empathic Conjecture, Seeding Attachment, Validation	Pain of infidelity	"Even you yourself have never understood because it's this all-consuming abstract feeling that's just big everywhere, and you haven't been able to really see it, or have it be seen."
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Move 3	Evocative Response	Body map: metaphor for pain of infidelity in the body	"I quickly grabbed a piece of paper and some materials. I put it down in front of the injured party and I drew a shape of a person, just a very loose non-gender specific figure. I said, "Show us where your pain is. Show us where your pain is.""

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	EFT Micro-Intervention or Skill	Emotional or Attachment Phenomena	Coded Extract
E	Catch the Bullet	Move 4	Reflection, Validation, Evocative Question	Defensive reactivity to partner's enactment	"This is so hard for you to hear right now, could you show us?"
E	New Dance	Move 5	Evocative Question, Tracking and Reflecting	Positive cycle: dance metaphor	"What did that feel like when you were dancing really well together? What did that connection feeling look like and how did you get there? Use line, shape, movement, color."
A	Before, During, After	Lead-In	Reflection, Evocative Question	Attachment injury related to infertility	"I would have them fold the paper in thirds. Before, as in when the person was pregnant. Feelings, feelings. You were pregnant, and then the pregnancy loss. "How did you feel during each of these three stages?""



### *Intervention During the Art Process*

EFT micro-interventions and skills were used during the artmaking process in the context of emotional and attachment phenomena in the art process and product, as shown in Table 6. Two art-based Tango moves across two interventions were included in this table. Both interventions revealed the use of evocative questions and restructuring interactions, and one participant also used heightening, elements of RISSSC, and empathic conjecture. Both participants described these interventions as a way to move from secondary into primary emotion through the use of alterations in the art product. Demonstrating heightening and RISSSC through the use of repetition, Participant D prompted in “Body Map Joint Enactment” to “Do more. Show me more.” As shown in Figure 2, this resulted in the partner adding a different color on a different part of the body, a key emotional phenomenon in the art product. After that, the other partner was prompted to join in the art on the same image, restructuring and shaping the interaction, “How can you show your partner your commitment to the relationship and that you're present and holding all those injuries? In that way, that you can both heal together?” This resulted in that partner encapsulating the image, which Participant D described as, “I’m holding you tight. I’m feeling you. I’m not letting you go.” This encapsulation represented attachment phenomena, holding and comforting, that was referenced with the image in future sessions. Participant E also asked a partner to alter the art, through an evocative question that restructured and shaped the interaction, to reflect a move from reactive secondary emotion into primary emotion, “Is there anything you need to add or change to make this true to your experience underneath, so your partner can see and understand?” All of these cases in Table 6 showed alignment with the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), skills 6, 8, 9, and 11—working with primary emotion, enactments, managing defensive reactivity, and framing in terms of attachment needs.

**Table 6***Intervention During the Art Process with EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills*

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	EFT Micro-Intervention or Skill	Emotional or Attachment Phenomena in Art Process or Product	Coded Extract
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Move 3	Evocative Question, Heightening	Marks on body map representing pain of infidelity	"Is that it? Is that the only place where your pain is? Show me where else is it? Go deeper, go deeper."
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Move 3	Evocative Question	Marks on body map representing pain of infidelity	"I said, "Is this it?" They said, "No." I said, "Well, where is it?" They said, "It's everywhere." I said, "That's it?" I said "Alright. So now I want you to even show me more. What does that feel like? What does the pain feel like? What does hurt feel like?""
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Move 3	Heightening, RISSSC (repetition)	Marks on body map representing pain of infidelity	"Do more. Show me more. We want to know."
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Move 3	Evocative Question, Heightening	Marks on body map representing pain of infidelity	"That's what it feels like? Is that it?" "No, that's not it." I said, "Okay. I want you to, I want to understand more. Show us more."

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	EFT Micro-Intervention or Skill	Emotional or Attachment Phenomena in Art Process or Product	Coded Extract
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Move 4	Evocative Question, Empathic Conjecture, Restructuring and Shaping Interactions	Marks on body map representing pain of both partners	Now I had a partner come into it and be part of the pain. "What's that like for you when you see your partner in so much pain?" And the partner said, "It's just overwhelming." I said, "Can you share with us (in the art) what that's like for you to feel your partner's pain, and to feel responsible for all that pain? And not only that, I want you to share your own pain of living with all of this."
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Move 4	Empathic Conjecture, Restructuring and Shaping Interactions	Marks on body map representing pain of infidelity	"How can you show your partner (in the art) your commitment to the relationship and that you're present and holding all those injuries? In that way, that you can both heal together?"
E	Catch the Bullet	Move 4	Evocative Question, Restructuring and Shaping Interactions	"Visual bullet" in the art: defensive reactivity in response to partner's enactment	"Is there anything you need to add or change (in the art) to make this true to your experience underneath, so your partner can see and understand?"

### *Verbal Processing After Artmaking*

Verbal processing immediately after artmaking demonstrated the broadest range of EFT micro-interventions and skills out of the four points in the art intervention process, as shown in Table 7. The coded extracts were not exhaustive in that they did not represent the entire data set: this was done for brevity. A key theme was the use of EFT micro-interventions to lead-in to Move 1 of the EFT Tango, verbally. Validation, tracking, reflecting, and evocative questions supported this process, which was visually demonstrated in Figure 11. These interventions happened in relation to emotional and attachment phenomena in the art process and product. For example, Participant C validated the power of an image one partner drew—a hole under the carpet they could fall through, which was a symbol for attachment fear of losing their partner, as shown in Figure 4. Participant E tracked and reflected attachment phenomena in the art process, loneliness in the cycle, as evidenced by a couple working separately on the same page in a joint drawing. Participant A moved into the Tango from a non-Tango intervention, and went deeper into a partner's attachment fear with an empathic conjecture related to symbolism of the safety net as relational support—"Would you want to put the net down?" Further demonstrating fidelity with the EFT model through the use of EFT micro-interventions and skills in relation to the art process and product, Table 6 revealed alignment with EFT-TFS skills 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, and 11 – validation of each partner, processing emotion, working with primary emotion, framing in terms of attachment needs and fears, and maintaining session focus on the cycle, emotion and attachment (Denton et al., 2009).

**Table 7***Verbal Processing After Artmaking with EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills*

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	EFT Micro-Intervention or Skill	Emotional or Attachment Phenomena in Art Process or Product	Coded Extract
	N/A	N/A	Validation, Self-Disclosure	Stick figures: self and other	"It's not really about being good. You can do stick figures. I did stick figures, that's fine. Whatever you want to do is fine."
B	Draw the Cycle	Move 1	Tracking and Reflecting	Each partner's diagram of pursue/withdraw cycle	"Where would you say the cycle starts? Describe the image...I get into what they think and talk about. You think this happens, and I think this happens."
A	Tight Rope	Move 1	Evocative Reflection	Safety net: metaphor for relational support	"If he lost his balance he would be able to land in the net."
D	Based on Client's Verbal Image	Move 2	Evocative Question	Dark place: metaphor for trauma response	"If that dark place could talk, what would it say?"
A	Tight Rope	Move 2	Evocative Question	Falling off tight rope: metaphor for attachment fear	"What would happen if you fell off?"
A	Tight Rope	Move 2	Empathic Conjecture	Safety net: metaphor for relational support	"Would you want to put the net down?"

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	EFT Micro-Intervention or Skill	Emotional or Attachment Phenomena in Art Process or Product	Coded Extract
E	Based on Client's Verbal Image	Move 2	Reflection	Dark place: metaphor for trauma response	Describe metaphor or image
A	N/A	N/A	Non-verbal RISSC (Repeat, Image)	Not specified	"I usually leave the art with them. I don't put it away. If I introduce it into the room, I want them to see it constantly. I want them to have a constant reminder. I don't turn it over. I don't put it away. If they did it on a table it's still out. They're still looking at it, they're looking down when they're answering my question."
C	Treatment Check-In	Lead-in to Move 1	Validation	Hole under the carpet: metaphor for attachment fear	"Oh my God, that's a great image. How powerful."
B	Doing Something Together	Lead-in to Move 1	Tracking and Reflecting, Evocative Question	Partners created separate images, 2D and the other 3D, when asked to collaborate on a joint collage of them doing something together	"What did it feel like to look at their, at their image that was lying flat 2D on the page, and yours is standing up? What did it feel like to see hers like that? How did you want to interact?" "And then we're processing what's happening between them as much as the art...their cycle starts to come out...and then I help them try to process their cycle."

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	EFT Micro-Intervention or Skill	Emotional or Attachment Phenomena in Art Process or Product	Coded Extract
E	Relationship Symbol	Lead-in to Move 1	Evocative Question	Birds in a nest, lightly drawn at first	“What was happening with the nest? Are you on this image? What's happening here? What does this mean for you? When was the last time you felt safe in this nest? What did that feel like? You said that you felt this way even when you first met, can you tell me more about that?”
E	Relationship Symbol	Lead-in to Move 1	Tracking and Reflecting	Working separately on same page	“Really highlighted how lonely they were feeling in the dance.”
A	Tight Rope	Lead-in to Move 1	Evocative Question	Self, walking tight rope w/ safety net	"What does the net represent to you?" “Family.” (Differences in family support were part of the couple’s cycle.)

### ***Referring Back to the Art in Future Sessions***

Table 8 revealed how EFT micro-interventions and skills were used in relation to emotional and attachment phenomena in the art product when referring back to the art in future sessions. For example, the “dark place,” the “hole under the carpet,” and encapsulation of the body map all represented key emotional and attachment phenomena. Participants C, D, and E all described referring back to this imagery, either to attune to their client through the use of empathic conjecture, to reframe the problem in terms of attachment needs in Move 5 or to validate progress in Move 5: “Look how far you’ve come.” In analysis with the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) the use of these micro-interventions represented alignment with skills 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, and 13—validation of partners, maintaining session focus, processing emotion, working with primary emotion, framing in terms of attachment needs, and consolidation of change. Therefore Table 8 further demonstrated fidelity with the EFT model through the use of EFT micro-interventions and skills in relation to the art process and product.



**Table 8**

*Referring Back to the Art in Future Sessions with EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills*

Participant	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	EFT Micro-Intervention or Skill	Emotional or Attachment Phenomena in Art Process and Product	Coded Extract
E	Based on Client's Verbal Image	Not enough information	Tracking and Reflecting, Empathic Conjecture	Dark place: metaphor for trauma response	"Is this the dark place? Is this a fuel source from the dark place? Where do you think this is coming from right now?"
C	Art Review	Move 5	Empathic Conjecture	Hole under the carpet: metaphor for attachment fear	"Do you remember that piece? Do you remember you said that? Is it like that? Or is it different?"
D	Joint Body Map Enactment	Move 4	Evocative Question	Marks on body map: metaphor for pain of infidelity. Encapsulation of body map by partner: metaphor for holding and validation of pain.	Would it be alright if we look at this together? What's that like to be seen? What's that like to be held? What is it like to be known and to have a deeper understanding? When your pain is so hidden?
E	Art Review	Move 5	Reframing	Nest: metaphor for attachment security	When stuck, we can point to the art as a way of remembering. "You both want to do this you both want to be here. You're not alone."
E	Art Review	Move 5	Validation	Nest: metaphor for attachment security	Look how far you've come.

### **Art Interventions Across the Steps and Stages of EFT**

Initial coding using NVivo qualitative data analysis software revealed that overall, participants did not specifically indicate whether their interventions constituted a specific step in EFT, and in some cases the stages were also unclear. Interventions were charted and coded extracts were reviewed to determine overt alignments with steps and stages as identified by the researcher in conjunction with the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020). Art intervention themes were also analyzed through the lens of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) for alignment and divergence from the EFT model in the context of how art therapy considerations may change across the steps and stages. One pattern in the data revealed how art interventions that aligned with skills 10 and 4 in the EFT-TFS, with an explicit focus on the cycle, emotions, and attachment issues, had clearer alignment with the steps in EFT, as shown by comparing Table 9 and Table 10. Art-based Tango moves clearly supported multiple steps in EFT, as shown in Table 9. This indicated alignment with the EFT model because the EFT Tango is used across the steps and stages in EFT (Johnson, 2020). A key theme was how emotional and attachment phenomena addressed in the art impacted whether interventions would serve a particular step. This theme was based on the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) and coded extracts in the data. These considerations represented a key area of alignment with the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), skill 12, following the steps and stages of EFT. Additional themes emerged— balance in artmaking with one or both partners and the choice of partner to focus on with specific art interventions. Analysis of art media revealed a prevalence of drawing media throughout treatment, as well as potentially more fluid media in Stages 2 and 3. All of these themes were visually reflected in conceptual framework in Figure 8, as the step and stage of treatment contained and guided interventions at the session level in the inner ring.

**Table 9***Analysis of Steps: Interventions that Explicitly Focus on the Cycle, Emotion and Attachment*

Medium	Art Intervention	Tango Alignment	Stage 1			Stage 2			Stage 3	
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Drawing	Tight Rope	Lead-In				X	X			
Client's Choice	Relationship Symbol	Lead-in	X							
Drawing	Before During After	Lead-In			X	X	X	X		X
Drawing	Draw the Cycle	Move 1		<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>				
Drawing	Communicate Needs	Move 1	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>				
Drawing	Partner Responds	Move 1	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>				
Drawing	Draw Your Emotion	Move 2		<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>
ETC*	Based on Verbal Image	Move 2		<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>
Drawing or ETC*	New Connection	Move 4		<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>
ETC*	New Dance	Move 5		<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>
N/A	Art Review	Move 5		<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>
Drawing	Body Map Joint Enactment	Moves 3, 4			<u>X</u>		<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>		
ETC*	Catch the Bullet	Move 4					<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>

*Note.* “X” indicated the art intervention may support the EFT step, while “X” indicated the art intervention clearly supported the EFT step. \*Media chosen with the Expressive Therapies Continuum (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978), from colored pencils, fine point pens, sharpies, oil pastels, charcoal, fine art drawing media, paint markers, watercolors or tempera paints.

**Table 10**

*Analysis of Steps: Interventions that Did Not Explicitly Focus on the Cycle, Emotion and Attachment Issues*

Medium	Art Intervention	Tango	Stage 1				Stage 2			Stage 3	
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Drawing	Why Are You Here	Lead-In	X	X							
Collage	Strengths	Lead-in	X								
Drawing	Theme of Home	Lead-In	X	X							
Drawing	Holidays	Lead-In	X	X							
Collage	Doing Something Together	Lead-In	X	X							X
Drawing	Treatment Check-In	Lead-In	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Collage	Growth and Change	Lead-In									X
Marker	Scribble Chase	Lead-In									
Paint	Painted Landscape	Lead-In								X	
Sculpture, Paint	Kintsugi	Lead-In								X	X

*Note.* “X” indicated the art intervention may support the EFT step, while “X” indicated the art intervention clearly supported the EFT step.

### ***Art Media***

As shown in Tables 9 and 10, most interventions across the steps and stages incorporated structured materials, as evidenced by the prevalence of drawing media and collage. Drawing media included pencil, colored pencils, pens, sharpies, fine point pens, markers, pastels, charcoal and paint pens. All of the participants described the use of drawing materials. Participant D, who had the most formal EFT training and who used artmaking the least in treatment, shared that only

drawing materials were appropriate: “Typically, it's either a pencil or pastel or marker. It's not like I would take watercolors or anything.” Participant A also shared about offering pencil or marker, rather than paint, to avoid a mess. Participant E highlighted the popularity of paint pens with clients. As shown in Tables 9 and 10, drawing materials were cited in the majority of interventions that aligned with EFT through the lens of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) in terms of their explicit focus on the cycle, emotion and attachment.

**Structure Versus Fluidity.** The theme of structure versus fluidity in materials, and how this may shift over time in treatment, was highlighted by several participants. Participant E used the Expressive Therapies Continuum (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978) to consider art media:

Usually for the first couple sessions, it's free choice. Unless it's a really escalated couple.

Then I'll default to the Expressive Therapies Continuum. More fluid is probably not a great thing, so offering more structure and control, maybe a collage.

Participant B, who primarily followed the Gottman model but used EFT in working with a couple's cycle, also shared that collage was helpful in the beginning of treatment, “An intervention I use very regularly early on is collage work. I think it's very accessible to people and they're not terrified, and if they were shamed by their art teachers...” Participant A shared about this theme in terms of more or less resistance in a material:

The more resistant the material I introduced early on, the more comfortable they are with art therapy. As I get to know them, I know they want to try different things. People are fascinated by collage. Paint, they feel they have to be more skilled. They know it moves and they have to control it. I might use it for that reason. Their need to control. Collage, when they see an image and they use it, there's a reason for that and we can discuss it.”

Participant C highlighted how more “difficult” media were used later in treatment, “The later phase of the treatment, I think I got more involved with difficult material maybe, like the kintsugi was later than the painting. The painting was later than this little sketch.” Participant E also highlighted how the Expressive Therapies Continuum (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978) indicated potentially more fluid materials later in treatment:

It’s a really helpful framework because it covers emotional processing. Stage 2 is the symbolic affectual, that middle zone. Stage 1 is probably more about affect regulation, so fluidity versus more rigid, or resistance. The materials are really going to be helpful in terms of containing the session. Or maybe you have a really Vulcan couple who are very logical and intellectual. I think Sue uses that term. Then we would get out the paints and watercolors or the paint tip markers.

Therefore, the data revealed how materials sometimes became more fluid as treatment progressed through the stages of EFT. However, the majority of interventions, particularly those aligned with art-based Tango moves and the steps of EFT, used drawing materials.

### ***Choice of Emotional Phenomena***

Analysis of art intervention themes using the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), specifically through skill 6, highlighted the choice of emotion to focus on in the art process and product. According to the EFT-TFS, emotions of interest should be primary, attachment-oriented, and related to the couple’s negative cycle (Denton et al., 2009). Further analysis using the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) indicated how the choice of emotion to focus on may change during treatment:

The stage of therapy generally shapes the emotion and the level of emotion that the therapist will focus on, follow, and work with. The process in beginning sessions will

move from making surface but mostly bypassed emotions explicit—for example, having a partner directly acknowledge his or her own anger rather than continually listing the partner’s faults and recounting incidents of injury—to placing both partners’ surface emotional reactions, such as rage or overwhelmed freeze responses in context, the context of the negative cycle, and validating them. The therapist will then begin to focus on deeper more core attachment emotions that seep through the couple’s interactions. In the middle phase of therapy, the therapist will focus more on and deepen each client’s engagement with primary underlying emotion, such as the helplessness that fuels the angry response. These underlying emotions are often implicit but not yet clearly formulated and/or articulated (p. 67).

Therefore, art interventions may diverge from the EFT model based on the emotional phenomena addressed in the art, for example, by deepening into a partner’s verbal image through art with an underlying emotion that was not attachment-based or was not appropriate for the stage.

Representing alignment with the model, Participants D and E both described moving deeper into primary emotion in the art through verbal intervention during the art process further on in Stage 1 and in Stage 2. One art-based Tango Move, “Catch The Bullet,” was specifically indicated for later on in treatment after de-escalation to avoid the potential for visual artwork that could hurt their partner, as it was harder to metaphorically “catch” a visual bullet in the therapeutic space.

### ***Assessment***

The data presented conflicting perspectives about whether art was indicated in Step 1 for assessment. Participants A, B, C, and D generally did not use art in assessment. Participant A and C described that if a couple specifically sought art therapy then the art was used in assessment, otherwise it was not used due to the need to build trust in the therapeutic alliance

first, a key aspect of Step 1. “Why Are You Here” was used by Participant C in the first session, but only if a couple specifically sought art therapy treatment. This theme highlighted the relationship between the alliance and the decision to use art in treatment, which was represented visually in the conceptual framework diagram in Figure 7, with the alliance as a container for the entirety of the work in EFT.

Although most participants did not use art in assessment, several art intervention themes aligned with areas of interest in EFT assessment, as shown in Table 9. Analysis with the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) revealed some of these directives may potentially divert the focus of the session, as they did not explicitly focus on the cycle, emotions, or attachment issues. Some of these interventions may potentially lead session focus into content versus the process underlying relational conflict. This indicated potential divergence from the brief nature of the EFT model. The EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) also indicated that because EFT is a short-term therapy, it was essential to focus the initial sessions on understanding key personal and interactional landmarks, which were typically characterized by deeper affect (Johnson, 2020). Therefore, if art was used in assessment, the choice of emotion and attachment phenomena to focus on in the art process and product became of importance for the intervention to support Step 1. For example, with “Relationship Symbol,” used in the second session, Participant E used verbal intervention to explore the nest as a metaphor for safety in the attachment bond, and how that sense of safety changed over time. This focus on attachment phenomena in the art aligned with EFT in terms of session focus.



**Table 11***Alignment of EFT Assessment with Art Intervention Themes*

Areas of Interest in Assessment (Johnson, 2020, p. 116)	Art Intervention Theme
“Who are these people? What does the general fabric of their life look like? The therapist gathers basic information.”	Strengths, Holidays*, Doing Something Together*
“How does each person deal with their emotions? Can they acknowledge them, accept them, formulate them, share them?”	Communicate Needs, Partner Responds
“How did they decide to come for therapy at this particular time?”	Why are You Here*
“How does each of them see the problem in the relationship? Can they sustain a dialogue about their views, or are they radically different and/or rigidly held?”	Why are You Here*, Theme of Home*
“Does each of them see strengths in the relationship? What keeps them together? How do they describe each other? As they tell their stories, what kinds of problematic interactions are described, and how did they attempt to deal with them?”	Strengths, Relationship Symbol
“How do they view the history of the relationship and understand how they originally connected?”	Relationship Symbol
“How does each of them present him- or herself and his or her own history to the therapist? Does each person’s story suggest any particular attachment issues and/or problems?”	None
“How does the couple generally interact in the session? If asked to interact around a particular topic, how does the dialogue evolve? What messages are conveyed by each partner’s nonverbal responses?”	Why Are You Here*, Relationship Symbol, Holidays*, Doing Something Together*, Scribble Chase*

Note: \* Intervention did not explicitly focus on negative cycle, emotion and attachment.

***Stage 1 Considerations***

**Balance of Time with Each Partner.** The majority of art interventions, as shown in Table 10, included both partners making art, either together or working separately at the same

time. Otherwise, balance was an issue in terms of having equal time spent with each partner, a consideration in skills 1 and 5 of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). This balance was deemed especially important in Stage 1, for the alliance (Johnson, 2020).

**Session Focus and Alignment with EFT Tango.** As shown in Table 10, many art-based Tango moves clearly aligned with Stage 1, with attention to the choice of emotion to focus on in the art, as aligned with the corresponding step. Alignment with the Tango improved fidelity to skill 5 of the EFT-TFS, processing emotion, and skill 8, setting up enactments in each session. It also supported the steps. For example, “Draw the Cycle” could be used to track the cycle, Move 1 of the Tango, but to work towards step 3, an emotion in the art needed to be assembled or deepened in Move 2 after the art directive. One example of this in the data, cited by Participant B, was a verbal Move 1, followed by the art-based Tango Move 2, “Draw Your Emotion,” after which the partner shared the emotion in the art with their partner, Move 3.

For non-Tango art interventions, leading into the Tango after the artmaking process was a concern, to bring the session focus into alignment with the cycle, emotions and attachment issues. This was an important consideration as EFT is a brief treatment—leading in to the Tango provided greater fidelity to skills 3, 4, 7, and 10 of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). Several of these were joint interventions, where relational dynamics during collaboration and perceptions of the artmaking experience may illuminate the negative cycle.

**Draw the Cycle: A Common Stage 1 Art Intervention.** Of particular significance in Stage 1 was the directive, “Draw the Cycle”, as it was reported by 3 of the 5 participants, as shown in Table 10. Although none of the participants indicated this directive was specifically designed for alignment with any step of EFT, analysis with the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) indicated this directive may be useful for steps 2, 3, or 4 depending on how it was executed,

which was supported in the data. Participant B introduced this directive as a diagram, as shown in Figure 1, and indicated that each partner would draw their version of the cycle. As shown in the artwork in Figure 1, Participant B used this directive in a way that aligned more with Step 2 of EFT because it identified the cycle but did not identify underlying emotions. Participant B highlighted the efficacy of this directive in working through a block the couple had in recognizing their cycle when it was happening, “Every time if they were to talk about it, it would go the same way. They are much better about talking about it and not getting into the cycle, if they’ve drawn it out.” By contrast, Participant A described drawing the cycle in a way that focused on linking emotions to behavior, aligning with Step 2 or 3 depending on whether the emotion was secondary emotion or underlying primary emotion: “I can see what you’re saying to me. It sounds like when you have an argument you go into separate rooms. You go out drinking. What does that look like? Draw what you do when you are feeling angry or hurt.” Lastly, Participant E left the directive more open using the EFT metaphor of the dance to represent the cycle and attachment phenomena, “Draw your relationship dance, what does it look like? What are the dance moves? Create that using line, shapes, movement, and color.” Although not specifically described in detail by the participant, the open-ended nature of this directive and the attachment metaphor of the dance, may indicate this version of “Draw the Cycle” was intended for those further along in Stage 1, and may align with steps 3 or 4.

**Table 12***Stage 1: Steps 2, 3, and 4*

Participant	Art Intervention	Medium	Joint or Separate	One or Both Partners	Tango Alignment	Step			EFT-TFS Considerations
						2	3	4	
A, B, E	Draw the Cycle	Drawing	Either	Both	Move 1	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Emotion
D	Communicate Needs	Drawing	Separate	Both	Move 1	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Balance of Time w/ Partners
D	Partner Responds	Drawing	Separate	Both	Move 1	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Balance of Time w/ Partners
B	Draw Your Emotion	Drawing	Separate	One	Move 2	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Emotion, Balance of Time w/ Partners
E	Based on Client's Verbal Image	ETC*	Separate	One	Move 2	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Image / Emotion / Attachment Phenomena, Balance of Time w/ Partners
D, E	New Connection	Drawing or ETC*	Separate	One	Move 4	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Emotion
E	New Dance	ETC*	Either	Both	Move 5	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	
A, C, E	Art Review	N/A	Either	Either	Move 5	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Art—Focus on Cycle, Emotions, Attachment
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Drawing	Joint, Sequential	Both	Moves 3, 4	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>		Choice of Emotion

Participant	Art Intervention	Medium	Joint or Separate	One or Both Partners	Tango Alignment	Step			EFT-TFS Considerations
						2	3	4	
A	Tight Rope	Drawing	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X	X		Alliance / Safety, Reframe Problem in Terms of Cycle
A	Before During After	Drawing	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X	X		Reframe Problem in Terms of Cycle
C	Why Are You Here	Drawing	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X			Session Focus: Cycle, Emotion and Attachment
C	Treatment Check-In	Drawing	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X	X	X	Session Focus: Cycle, Emotion and Attachment
A	Theme of Home; Holidays	Drawing	Joint	Both	Lead-In	X	X	X	Session Focus: Cycle, Emotion and Attachment
B	Doing Something Together	Collage	Joint	Both	Lead-In	X	X	X	Session Focus: Cycle, Emotion and Attachment

*Note.* “X” indicated the art intervention may support the EFT Step, while “X” indicated the art intervention clearly supported the EFT Step. \*Media chosen with the Expressive Therapies Continuum (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978), from colored pencils, fine point pens, sharpies, oil pastels, charcoal, fine art drawing media, paint markers, watercolors or tempera paints.

## *Stage 2 Considerations*

**Working with Primary Emotion.** As shown in Table 13, in Stage 2 the choice of emotion to address in the art process and product was an important consideration in several interventions, aiming to deepen primary emotion and attachment needs, EFT-TFS skill 6. According to the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020), attachment emotions are the focus in Stage 2, such as the sense of helplessness that leads to anger, or fear of rejection or abandonment—these underlying emotions are often implicit and have not been stated clearly by partners. A key theme was the use of EFT micro-interventions during the artmaking process to deepen into primary emotion, described by Participants D and E. “Body Map Joint Enactment” was an example, as described by Participant D: “I drew this shape and then the person started a little bit. I said go deeper, go deeper. And I’m pushing deeper into primary, deeper.” With the use of many EFT micro-interventions and skills as shown in Table 6, the person added to the art more as they went deeper into primary until they encapsulated the body map and said the pain is “everywhere.” Another consideration, shown in Table 13, was the use of RISSSC. Participant D used repetition in the prompt to show pain in the art with a metaphor of seeing pain on an x-ray, “Draw your pain... if you had a mass in your stomach, you would be going for an x-ray and we would see that mass.” At the end of the directive, the partner wept for the first time in therapy about the pain of infidelity, which indicated Step 5 of EFT, identifying disowned vulnerability. Step 6 also happened in the art, promoting acceptance of this pain by the partner, “I had the partner come into it and be part of the pain, and then it was this conjoined drawing.” The second part of the directive spoke directly to Step 6 of EFT, as described by Participant D:

How can you show your partner your commitment to the relationship and that you're present and holding all those injuries? In that way, that you can both heal together? The

partner took another color, went over that, encapsulated the image, and held the image.

I'm holding you. I'm feeling you. I'm not letting you go. I'm holding you tight.

In this case, the encapsulation in the art represented attachment phenomena, a symbol for holding and validating the pain, that was heightened verbally in Move 4 of the Tango in the next session. Although not Step 7, this exemplified the type of bonding event characteristic of Stage 2 in EFT.

***Managing Defensive Reactions.*** In Stage 2, the art was also used to deepen into primary emotion during defensive reactivity in the intervention, “Catch the Bullet,” as shown in Table 13. This was counter-indicated for Stage 1 and only indicated for Stage 2 as a matter of the alliance and creating safety in session by mitigating risk of a visual “bullet,” or attacking image. The art was used to slow down and work with a partner struggling to accept a new view of their partner presented in an enactment. Reflecting Stage 2, the choice of emotion to focus on in the art was a significant consideration, expanding into primary emotion underneath the reactive secondary emotion, which aligned with skills 5 and 9 of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009).

**Choice of Partner and Balance Between Partners.** Another consideration, the choice of partner to focus on in the art, related to the sequence of bonding events in Stage 2, associated with skill 12 of the EFT-TFS. Steps 5, 6, and 7 happen with the withdrawer first—withdrawer re-engagement, followed by the same steps with the pursuer—blamer softening (Johnson, 2020). This consideration applied to many directives for Stage 2 as shown in Table 13. This related to session balance, skills 1 and 5 of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). In Stage 2, the balance between partners shifts from Stage 1, with more time spent with one partner at a time, deepening into implicit attachment emotions and needs. This was a key consideration for art-based Tango Move 2 in the context of Step 5—“Draw Your Emotion” and “Based on Client’s Verbal Image.”

**Table 13***Stage 2: Steps 5, 6, and 7*

Participant	Art Intervention	Medium	Joint or Separate	One or Both Partners	Tango Alignment	Step			EFT-TFS Considerations
						5	6	7	
A	Tight Rope	Drawing	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X			Alliance: Safety
A	Before During After	Drawing	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X	X		Choice of Emotion
C	Treatment Check-In	Drawing	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X	X	X	Session Focus: Cycle, Emotion and Attachment
B	Draw Your Emotion	Drawing	Separate	One	Move 2	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Emotion, Choice of Partner, Balance of Time w/ Partners, RISSSC
E	Based on Client's Verbal Image	ETC*	Separate	One	Move 2	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Image / Emotion, Choice of Partner Balance of Time w/ Partners, RISSSC
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Drawing	Joint, Sequential	Both	Moves 3, 4	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>		Choice of Emotion, RISSSC
D, E	New Connection	Drawing or ETC*	Separate	One	Move 4	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Emotion
E	Catch the Bullet	ETC*	Separate	Both	Move 4	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Emotion, Managing Defensive Reactions, Balance of Time w/ Partners, RISSSC



Participant	Art Intervention	Medium	Joint or Separate	One or Both Partners	Tango Alignment	Step			EFT-TFS Considerations
						5	6	7	
E	New Dance	ETC*	Either	Both	Move 5	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	
A, C, E	Art Review	-----	Either	Either	Move 5	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Art – Focus on Cycle, Emotions, Attachment

*Note.* “X” indicated the art intervention may support the EFT step, while “X” indicated the art intervention clearly supported the EFT step. \*Media chosen with the Expressive Therapies Continuum (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978), from colored pencils, fine point pens, sharpies, oil pastels, charcoal, fine art drawing media, paint markers, watercolors or tempera paints.

### *Stage 3 Considerations*

**Consolidation of Change and Choice of Emotion.** As shown in Table 14, in Stage 3, consolidation of change was a key consideration aligning with EFT-TFS skill 13, highlighting new behaviors, or impasses, key change events and the couple's new bond (Denton et al., 2009). This consideration also impacted the choice of emotional and attachment phenomena to highlight when working with art products and processes. As identified in the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020), positive cycles of connection are highlighted by the therapist in this stage, as well as fears that cause the negative cycle and fears about terminating therapy. "New Dance" had explicit focus on consolidation of change in the context of the couple's cycle, which indicated strong alignment with Stage 3. Although "New Dance" constituted an art-based Tango Move 5, this directive also happened outside of the Tango sequence in response to spontaneous sharing of positive change, which further aligned with skill 13 in the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009).

**Parallel Process Interventions.** Some potential Stage 3 art interventions revealed the utility of artmaking as a parallel process, as an opportunity for collaboration. Three interventions, "Doing Something Together", "Painted Landscape" and "Kintsugi" represented this idea. These interventions potentially aligned with Step 8 of EFT, working through pragmatic issues in collaboration, provided this type of collaboration represented a long-standing issue for the couple. However, these parallel process interventions, with their focus primarily on artmaking, may not explicitly focus on the couple's cycle, attachment, and emotion, indicating potential to divert session focus. For this reason, verbal interventions to consolidate the changes of therapy provided re-alignment of the art process and product with the EFT model in Stage 3.

Participant B described "Doing Something Together", a non-verbal joint collage with torn multi-colored construction paper, creating a picture of the couple doing something together.

This was used in the beginning of treatment and later on, to experience the positive difference in relating non-verbally. “Kintsugi” involved breaking a primed ceramic vessel into pieces and gluing it back together, followed by painting it. Participant C said this illuminated key change events in EFT, withdrawer re-engagement and blamer softening. A previously withdrawn partner suggested how to fit pieces together rather than shutting down when the more blaming partner became frustrated. In return, the blaming partner continued in spite of skepticism and refrained from criticism. The art product was intended for the couple to keep in their home, which intensified decisions in the process, highlighting change events and problem solving around pragmatic issues. The art tied into Step 9, based on the Japanese tradition of kintsugi—the intricacy of the imperfections, repaired cracks, made the piece more beautiful, showing the journey of the vessel, which may be a symbol for the couple’s narrative of the therapy process and new understanding of the relationship. Showing alignment with Stage 3, Participant C reflected present process during artmaking, highlighting impasses and positive cycles.

***Challenging Art Media.*** As shown in Table 14, Stage 3 had the most diverse art media. Participants A, B, C, and E noted materials may become more fluid as treatment progressed, although structured materials, such as drawing and collage, were predominant. The use of paint in Stage 3 parallel process interventions revealed how issues of collaboration were heightened with materials, as paint offered less control and might be more challenging. Participant A highlighted this idea, reporting that paint was not often used in their couple work, but when it was, it addressed issues of control. Participant B also used collage, a structured material, in a way that offered less control, specifically requesting partners tear the paper and not cut it to create shapes. Participant B noted this revealed frustration tolerance in the negative cycle.

**Table 14***Stage 3: Steps 8 and 9*

Participant	Art Intervention	Medium	Joint or Separate	One or Both Partners	Tango Alignment	Steps		EFT-TFS Considerations
						8	9	
B	Doing Something Together	Collage	Joint	Both	Lead-In		X	Session Focus, Consolidation of Change
C	Painted Landscape	Paint	Joint, Sequential	Both	Lead-in	X		Session Focus, Consolidation of Change
C	Kintsugi	Sculpture Paint	Joint	Both	Lead-in	X	X	Session Focus, Consolidation of Change
B	Areas of Growth and Change	Collage	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X	X	Session Focus, Consolidation of Change
A	Before During After	Drawing	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X		Consolidation of Change
C	Treatment Check-In	Drawing	Separate	Both	Lead-In	X	X	Session Focus, Consolidation of Change
B	Draw Your Emotion	Drawing	Separate	One	Move 2	X	X	Choice of Emotion, Consolidation of Change
E	Based on Client's Verbal Image	ETC*	Separate	One	Move 2	X	X	Choice of Image / Emotion, Consolidation of Change

Participant	Art Intervention	Medium	Joint or Separate	One or Both Partners	Tango Alignment	Steps		EFT-TFS Considerations
						8	9	
D, E	New Connection	Drawing or ETC*	Separate	One	Move 4	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Emotion, Consolidation of Change
E	Catch the Bullet	ETC*	Separate	Both	Move 4	X		Choice of Emotion, Managing Defensive Reactions
E	New Dance	ETC*	Either	Both	Move 5	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	
A, C, E	Art Review	-----	Either	Either	Move 5	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	Choice of Art, Consolidation of Change
D	Body Map Joint Enactment	Drawing	Joint, Sequential	Both	Moves 3, 4	X		Choice of Emotion, Consolidation of Change

*Note.* “X” indicated the art intervention may support the EFT step, while “X” indicated the art intervention clearly supported the EFT step. \*Media chosen with the Expressive Therapies Continuum (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978), from colored pencils, fine point pens, sharpies, oil pastels, charcoal, fine art drawing media, paint markers, watercolors or tempera paints.

## **The Integrated EFT Art Therapy Alliance**

A common theme in each of the interviews was the uniqueness of the therapeutic alliance. Several considerations created conditions conducive to therapeutic artmaking, many of which were understood in the attachment frame. These factors were identified by triangulating coded extracts in the interviews with deductive theoretical analysis of the EFT alliance as identified in the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) and the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). Unique alliance issues related to artmaking included trust, safety, management of defensive reactivity in the art, perceived relevance of artmaking tasks, awareness of the balance between partners in the context of artmaking, art as a way to meet attachment needs, empathic attunement through the use of art, acceptance of the art product, acceptance of a client's willingness to make art, intuition of how to use the art in treatment, and spontaneity. Though the lens of the EFT-TFS these aspects of the alliance related to skill 1, creating safety in session for therapeutic artmaking, skill 2, validation of each partner, and skill 9, managing defensive reactions. As identified in the EFT manual, the perceived relevance of artmaking tasks was also highlighted as a key factor in the alliance. As shown in Figure 8, conceptually, these considerations provided a therapeutic container for artmaking in which the rest of the themes operated. This connection was particularly evident through the use of the attachment frame and EFT micro-interventions in relation to art products and processes, which illustrated the importance of these ideas when aligning art therapy with the EFT model.

### ***Trust, Safety and Risk***

Participants A, B, and D identified the need for additional trust in the therapeutic alliance for artmaking; each described asking for trust when inviting couples to make art. As shown in the thematic map in Figure 14, several themes related to trust were identified, connected to two

ideas in skill 1 of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009)—safety and risk. As identified in the EFT-TFS, the importance of safety in the therapeutic alliance connected to the emotional risks EFT requires partners take with each other as well as the therapist. This risk illuminated a latent theme of potential emotional risk in artmaking, which may connect to a disinclination for artmaking described by Participants A, B, C, and D. This disinclination was described in several ways—in the attachment frame, in the context of perceived bias against art therapy, in the sense that art therapy might be new or unfamiliar, and in the challenge of working with differences in desire for artmaking between partners. The thematic map in Figure 14 revealed multiple therapeutic solutions to build additional trust and safety, particularly through the lens of the attachment frame, with the use of several EFT micro-interventions. This represented a key alignment and integration between the EFT and art therapy alliance, conceptually. Emphasis on the relevance of the art task, acceptance, special considerations for defensive reactivity, and management of the therapist’s dual identity were additional solutions to build trust and create safety when establishing and maintaining the therapeutic alliance for artmaking.

Figure 14

*Thematic Map of Trust in the Integrated EFT Art Therapy Alliance*



*Note.* Red shapes indicated themes potentially related to risk, while blue shapes indicated solutions for building trust and safety in the therapeutic alliance.



**Attachment Fears, Needs, and Relevance of Tasks.** Analysis revealed that attachment fears and needs may impact the integrated EFT art therapy alliance. Through the lens of the attachment, resistance to artmaking touched on key attachment fears of rejection and abandonment, as well as the attachment need to be heard and understood. According to participant D, “The resistance is really the fear of revealing oneself. It is sadness in the expression of fear of rejection or abandonment. Of having oneself revealed in that way is frightening.” This attachment fear may represent an emotional risk in artmaking. In relation to attachment needs, Participant C shared how sometimes a partner had a disinclination for artmaking because they really wanted to be heard and therefore thought it was a waste of time to make art—this was cited in the beginning of treatment, and with highly escalated or high-conflict couples. Participant C shared candidly about how this manifested in building rapport before introducing art in treatment:

In the beginning I think usually what they want to do is just <say> what's going on. You need to hear me...A lot of times they come in thinking it's all my partner's fault. Let me tell you how things are. So they don't have time for anything else. They just want to talk. After a little bit, after we've been talking, we build some rapport, and that's when I usually do art.

Aligning with this idea, according to Participants A, B, C, and D, art was not typically used in the initial assessment for a new couple. However, Participants A and C both shared that if a couple specifically sought art therapy then art may be used more often in treatment, including assessment. Participant D also shared about the attachment need to be heard and the decision not to use art in the case of high-conflict couples:

The challenge of the artmaking. One may feel, this is a waste of my time because I need the other person to really hear me and I don't feel that I will be heard the way that I need to. I need to be heard. Having somebody come to the table and do art would further exacerbate and trigger their feelings of pain and invalidation. That would not be helpful from my understanding.

Therefore, Participants C and D both referred to the idea that couples may feel like artmaking is not relevant because they have a strong attachment need to be heard. Theoretical analysis revealed how this idea aligned with the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) in description of the important aspects of the therapeutic alliance, the perceived relevance of tasks, and working in the attachment frame:

It is one in which the client has a bond with the therapist and sees the therapist as appropriately warm and supportive, views the tasks presented by the therapist as relevant and helpful, and shares the same therapeutic goals as the therapist...The task element was found to be the most important element of the alliance in terms of predicting outcome in EFT (Johnson & Talitman, 1997)... We assume that the perceived relevance of focusing on emotions and on attachment needs and fears is the reason why there are so strikingly few dropouts in EFT treatment studies. Clients know they are dealing with the heart of the matter and feel heard and supported (p. 55-56).

In this way, the data revealed how attachment fears and needs related to artmaking connected to the perceived relevance of the artmaking tasks, which may impact the alliance.

**Newness.** Participants A and C both cited how art therapy in the context of couple therapy might be new or unfamiliar. According to Participant A:

Art therapy is an additional trust. People understand marriage and family therapy, for the most part. They don't know what they're getting into if they haven't been in therapy before, they do somewhat if they have. However, when you mention art therapy, what is that? It scares them. I have to rebuild their trust all over again.

Newness or unfamiliarity connected to a disinclination for artmaking. According to Participant A,

They're afraid of it, like anything new. I mean, with adults and couples you have to build trust with them initially and then you introduce something new. You can't introduce something that's very new for people to really understand in a therapy session with adults and couples. That's my estimation.

**Double Resistance.** Another potential factor in the EFT art therapy alliance related to the idea of double resistance. According to Participant D, “Even more impactful or even deeper is when you have two clients, two partners and there's a double resistance to using artmaking. Or one does, and the other one feels uncomfortable.” Participant C also described the case where one partner may feel more comfortable with the art than the other.

**Defensive Reactivity and Creation of Safety in the Art.** Participant D did not use art with defensive reactivity. Participant E only used art with defensive reactivity in Stage 2, once the couple was de-escalated, to process a defensive reaction. This may also reflect a potential risk in artmaking, which was described by Participant E in the context of being mindful to avoid overt visual “bullets” in the art, or the creation of an image that could be an attack against their partner. According to Participant E:

I'm not saying don't do art for the negative affect. I think it can be really helpful for negative affect. But you have to be mindful that it is a situation where you would need to

catch a bullet but couldn't, because it's visually out. I would be very mindful about that, and cautious.

According to the EFT-TFS, the therapist should process defensive reactivity when it arises "...to help the defensive partner become aware of unacknowledged emotions and further elucidate the negative interactional cycle and attachment concerns" (Denton et al., 2009, p. 11.) Participant E's description of handling reactivity in the art process and product very clearly aligned with the EFT-TFS, as they asked the defensive partner to alter the art if a visual "bullet" should arise, to represent unacknowledged emotions:

After emotional processing around it, then ask, is there anything you need to add or change to make this image true to what you experience underneath it? Is there anything you might want to change so your partner can better see it, better understand it? Maybe they could soften. That's may be something we can play around with but it's harder to catch a visual bullet for sure.

Participant E also used reframing in reference to potential harmful reactivity in the art, another key area of alignment with the EFT model, as found in the EFT-TFS, skill 3, reframing the problem in terms of the cycle (Denton et al., 2009). When a client's anger came through in the art, Participant E provided a reframe in reference to the art product during verbal processing – "It seems like your anger is protecting the relationship. It seems like this relationship so important to you that you want to fight about it." Participant A highlighted how the mitigation of harm in the art process and product may connect to a need for additional trust in the integrated EFT art therapy alliance: "They have to build trust with you. They have to like you. They have to feel that you're not going to do anything to make this worse." In this way, the data illuminated how a

potential risk in artmaking could be mitigated through creation and maintenance of trust and safety in the therapeutic alliance when integrating art therapy and EFT.

### ***Balance***

Another unique consideration in the EFT art therapy alliance, as identified through art intervention analysis using the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009), was the idea of balance in time spent with each partner in session. For the most part, art interventions described by participants involved both partners creating art, either individually or jointly, collaborating on the same art piece, which showed alignment with this skill. Out of the 23 total art intervention themes, 18 involved both partners. However, four art intervention themes, which all constituted art-based Tango moves, involved the use of artmaking with one partner. Through the lens of skill 1 of the EFT-TFS, the importance of balance was emphasized:

In general, therapists should spend approximately equal amounts of time with each partner and challenge each partner approximately an equal amount. In a given session, however, it may be that the therapist works more with one partner than the other. In this case, the therapist (a) should make clear to the partner receiving less attention that the therapist is aware more time has been spent with the other partner, (b) should make clear that s/he will want to hear more in a future session from the partner who has received less attention, (c) may offer some explanation for the imbalance, (d) should check with the partner receiving less attention to see if the partner is accepting of the therapist's comments.

### ***Acceptance***

Acceptance by the therapist was also a key consideration in the integrated EFT art therapy alliance, with an emphasis on not pressuring clients to do art and also accepting the art

product. This aligned with the importance of accepting partners as they are as described in the manual (Johnson, 2020). Participant D used art with clients who were “amenable.” Participant C shared, “I don't really push it.” Participant E used verbal therapy alone if clients preferred. One exception was notable, in “Body Map Enactment,” to work through a block in treatment, “My presence was directive but empathic, curious, supportive, but firm.”

The idea of acceptance also applied to the art product. Multiple participants shared with couples that art therapy was not about being good at art. Participant C said, “It's not really about being good. You can do stick figures. I did stick figures, that's fine. Whatever you want to do is fine. You can just do lines.” Participant A similarly shared about stick figures and normalizing that art therapy wasn't about art skill:

People apologize for their stick figures. They think that's the worst thing you could be doing, is draw a stick figure. To me, it's what you do, so it doesn't matter to me. I don't care how they draw, I really don't. It's one of those things where you have to say, because it's, it's a non-issue. And after they do the art therapy, they can see that that's the least of my concerns.

### ***Bias Against Art Therapy***

An additional theme contextualizing the alliance was potential bias against art therapy, cited by Participants A, B, and D. According to Participant D, “In some way there's this implicit and explicit bias, right? You say, art therapist. There's a different level of collective biases. That's a reality. That's something that I believe. Something that we have to navigate.” According to Participant A, a way to overcome this bias was to choose an impactful directive, to ensure a positive experience using the art, thereby increasing trust with the therapist for future artmaking: “I have to choose a directive that I think will impact them on a greater level, because otherwise it

minimizes art therapy. Then they do the art and they say wow, this is so cool. I would love to do this again.” The idea of being selective in the use of art was also shared by Participant D. The importance of the relevance of tasks to the therapeutic alliance, as described in the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020), tied to this idea of being selective and choosing an impactful directive. As identified in the manual, a focus on the cycle, attachment, and emotion makes tasks relevant to couples (Johnson, 2020).

### ***Therapist’s Dual Identity and Prevalence of Art with Caseload***

Another potential theme in the data related to the therapist’s dual identity as an art therapist and couple’s therapist in the eyes of clients, which connected to the frequency of artmaking in sessions. However, there were divergent perspectives in the data. Some participants preferred to be perceived as a couple therapist who used art therapy, rather than an art therapist. According to Participant A, this related to using art therapy about once a month with couples: “Never in every session because then I become an art therapist in their eyes. I think they prefer me to be a couple's therapist that does art therapy, as opposed to an art therapist working with a couple.” Participant B, who used art with about two-thirds of their couple’s caseload, also emphasized identity: “It's not like they're doing art therapy as couple's therapy. They're doing couple's therapy with art interventions, that's processed through the eyes of an art therapist and a trained couple’s therapist.” Participant B highlighted how their identity as an art therapist was connected to the importance of aligning with a couple therapy theory:

The truth is as art therapists, we better understand whatever theoretical outlook or perspective we take, backwards and forwards, because we have the most incredible tool, and if you have an incredible tool you have more responsibility to use it right.

Participant D, who used art rarely and selectively with couples who were amenable, shared about the frequency of art in treatment in the context of their training with the founder of EFT:

I will say I spoke to Sue Johnson. She trained me. I did my externship with her, and I spoke to her about art therapy and EFT. She said yeah, you can use it with it. It's not a replacement for it. Right? So, I believe that the art can be judiciously used as a representation of the different parts of EFT. To hold, to reflect, to mirror.

Furthermore, Participant D sometimes disclosed their fear of including art in treatment to clients, "I do use art selectively with clients who are amenable. Sometimes I say that it's my fear of sharing it with them that maybe they'll reject me if I suggest this." However, the dual identity of therapists represented diverse perspectives, as others were more forthcoming about their art therapy identity. Participant E, who used art the most, with 75% of their couple's caseload, shared a different view that highlighted art therapy as a clinical identity in the context of EFT:

I'm an art therapist first and then stumbled into this couple's therapy world and EFT world. At the start of a session I'll explain my background and I'll incorporate the art therapy education there. I'll say, "I'm also a registered art therapist and here's what this means. Some couples like to incorporate the art process as a way to help slow down the dance together, or to help create a vision of a healthier dance. Sometimes it can be a way to slow things down when it's not feeling not safe enough or too heated to talk." I'll frame it in that way and some couples find that really helpful. Some couples don't even want to go there and that's fine too. Some couples say, "Oh that's great. We're both in the creative field. We're artists." Or, "She's an artist." Some couples prefer the talk therapy.

Participant C, who used art therapy with about half of their couple's caseload, similarly described sharing about their identity as an art therapist when introducing the idea of artmaking:



Sometimes they don't even know I'm an art therapist until we start working together. I'll say, "I'm an art therapist. I thought it might be interesting for us to try this. This is what I was thinking, and you can say no. There's no obligation. Do you want to try?" Some people say yes, and people say no.

Therefore, the data reflected multiple views on the therapist's dual identity and how this may relate to self-disclosure and the therapeutic alliance.

### *Art as a Way to Be Seen, Understood, and Held*

A key theme in the integrated art therapy alliance was the idea of art as a way to meet attachment needs—to be seen, understood, and metaphorically held. This theme was found between partners and also in the therapeutic alliance. One aspect of this theme was introducing artmaking in the attachment frame as a bid for connection. Additionally, art was also described as a tool for empathic attunement in the therapeutic alliance, which connected to two key ideas cited by multiple participants—art makes things real and art does not lie.

**Artmaking as a Bid for Connection.** One solution to address the attachment need of partners to feel heard and understood involved how art interventions were introduced, by emphasizing the art as a way for the therapist and their partner to understand their inner world. The invitation to create art could be conceptualized as a bid for connection. Participants D and E used phrases that referenced the art as a way to be seen, such as “show me” or “show us” or “can you help me” when introducing an art directive. For example, Participant D shared, “We're going to the art table and we are going to see your pain together... if you had a mass in your stomach, you would be going for an x-ray and we would see that mass. I want you to show us your pain. X-ray show us. I want to know. We need to understand you.” In this way, Participant D emphasized the role of art in the attachment frame, of being understood and seen. Table 5

highlighted similar examples in the data. The idea of art as a bid for connection was also emphasized by Participant B, “If you're making art with someone you're building connection.” Seeding attachment, a type of empathic conjecture and validation was also used to introduce the art. This intervention was described in the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) as a way to paint a picture of what secure attachment could look like, by highlighting how fear was getting in the way of a bid for connection. An example was provided by Participant D:

We're going to the art table and we are going to see your pain together, and we're going to understand it. We're going to witness it. We're going to validate it. And we're going to hold it in a way that we have never understood. Even you yourself have never understood because it's just this all-consuming abstract feeling that's just big everywhere, and you haven't been able to really see it, or have it be seen.

Also representing a bid for connection, two participants cited the use of self-disclosure when introducing an art directive, as shown in Table 5. Lastly, three participants asked for trust when introducing the art, “Trust me.” Therefore, introducing art as a bid for connection was a key theme in the alliance.

**Holding.** One potential theme was the idea of metaphorical holding while introducing the art, with the therapist drawing a shape to initiate the art as a container for the art. This was described by two different participants. In the body map enactment, as shown in Figure 2, the therapist made the first mark on the page, creating the outline of the body for emotions to be drawn upon. Participant D described:

That person, the injured party, just first, it was a very interesting like, just, from a defense mechanism perspective, there was this resistance hitting me. You're asking me to do this, you're asking me to draw, and, and, and, and. I'm saying trust me. I'm just sort of being

that good enough mother that's so present... I won't let you go. I'm going to hold you so tight that it's going to happen. So that person, first there was that discomfort, and then I drew this shape and the person started a little bit, and then I said go deeper, go deeper. Similarly, Participant A drew a circle for each partner as a container for art about where they thought they were in the treatment process. In this way, the therapist drawing an initial shape on a blank page may help build trust for artmaking, like a metaphorical safe holding space.

**Art as a Tool for Empathic Attunement.** The unique capacity for art to deepen empathic attunement was reported by participants. According to the EFT-TFS, skill 1, empathic understanding of experience through inquiry and validation was a key aspect of creating safety in the therapeutic alliance (Denton et al., 2009). According to Participant D, “I use the art making as a reflective medium to further deepen attunement.” Participant B also highlighted the relationship between artistic expression and empathy, “I believe that expressive therapies teach us to feel. And what are you supposed to do in couple’s therapy, teach someone to feel and to feel empathetically.” Participant D described the use of art in empathic attunement, “To hold, to reflect, to mirror.”

**Art Makes it Real and Art Does Not Lie.** Art as a tool for empathic attunement related to two commonly cited benefits of art in EFT treatment—art makes things real, and art does not lie. When asked about the benefit of including the art, Participant D said, “It made it real. Isn't that why we're art therapists?” Participant C shared similarly, “You know how honest art is. They'll create something and then they'll see it. There's the proof.” Participant E shared how art deepens emotional experience: “It's a great way to incorporate that visual, or the metaphor. So they have something to latch onto.” Participant E shared how this impacts clients when artwork was reviewed, “It's a good visual reminder because you have the emotions right there too. You

remember the space in which you made it.” Participant A shared in a similar way about the impact of visible artwork: “Artwork that it is exposed is talking. It's moving. It's doing all sorts of stuff.” When asked about the benefit of the art, Participant E tied several themes together, of how empathic attunement through concreteness and honesty of art guided treatment:

Sue talks about that roadmap a lot. I think it gives me a home plate. It gives me a grounding sense of look at this, the dark place. Or look at the feelings that are coming up in the dance. It's a really good grounding thing for me. It helps me latch onto where we're going. It helps me connect to the road map, because I think couple's therapy can be kind of complex and they throw a lot at you and it helps you remember all the emotional moves and not get distracted, not get on the content train. The art does that. The art doesn't lie. The art never lies.

Art as a tool for empathic attunement was also reflected by referring back to the art in future sessions, as emotional handles. According to Participant E:

That nest symbol was huge right because that was a roadmap of where we wanted to go and how we wanted to create that emotional safety. So when feeling stuck, we can point to the art. It can be a really great way of remembering. You guys both want to do this you both want to be here. You're not alone.

Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 give examples of art integrated with EFT micro-interventions to deepen attunement, showing the interrelated nature of this theme with the overall conceptual framework.

### ***Intuition and Spontaneity***

According to Participant D, with the most EFT training and whose interventions aligned very clearly with the EFT model, intuition and spontaneity were key elements in the alliance:

My advice would be to intuit it. To intuit it. To intuit it. To know the stages but to have the confidence to know when and what to do with the art and just be spontaneous in it with your clients' distress, because distress is spontaneous. You have to mirror that, their spontaneity with it.

Additional context for the relevance of spontaneity and intuition was provided by Participant E:

For me, because EFT wasn't a part of my school training, couples work wasn't a huge part of it either, and I learned EFT as more of a verbal intervention, I question myself. Is this a good time to jump in with the art? If I have a gut feeling I should just go with it, but I think sometimes that's a bit of a challenge because it wasn't something I was trained in as an integrated theory or way of practicing. I don't trust my gut enough as an art therapist. Like maybe I lean too heavily on just the EFT part of it. Which I think is great. I love it. I want to keep seeking training in it. Obviously, I believe in it. But then I feel like part of me is missing with the art therapy voice, because I think that's really helpful in terms of what EFT is trying to do too. I think sometimes because I don't fully trust myself or trust my art therapist gut in those moments I will be less likely to suggest an art therapy intervention where maybe it would be more effective or just as effective.

Participant A, who had many years of experience using art with couples also shared about spontaneity and intuition, through the lens of immediacy:

I use art therapy in an immediacy kind of way. I just see it happening. It evolves in my sessions. I don't know I'm going to be doing art therapy. You don't go in with a plan.

Things have to align. I've been doing this a long time. I don't have strict organization. It has to do with the couple. It has to do with their mood. It has to do with a lot of things.

In this way, multiple participants cited intuition and spontaneity as key elements of the alliance.

## Discussion of Findings

### A Conceptual Framework for Integrating Art Therapy with EFT

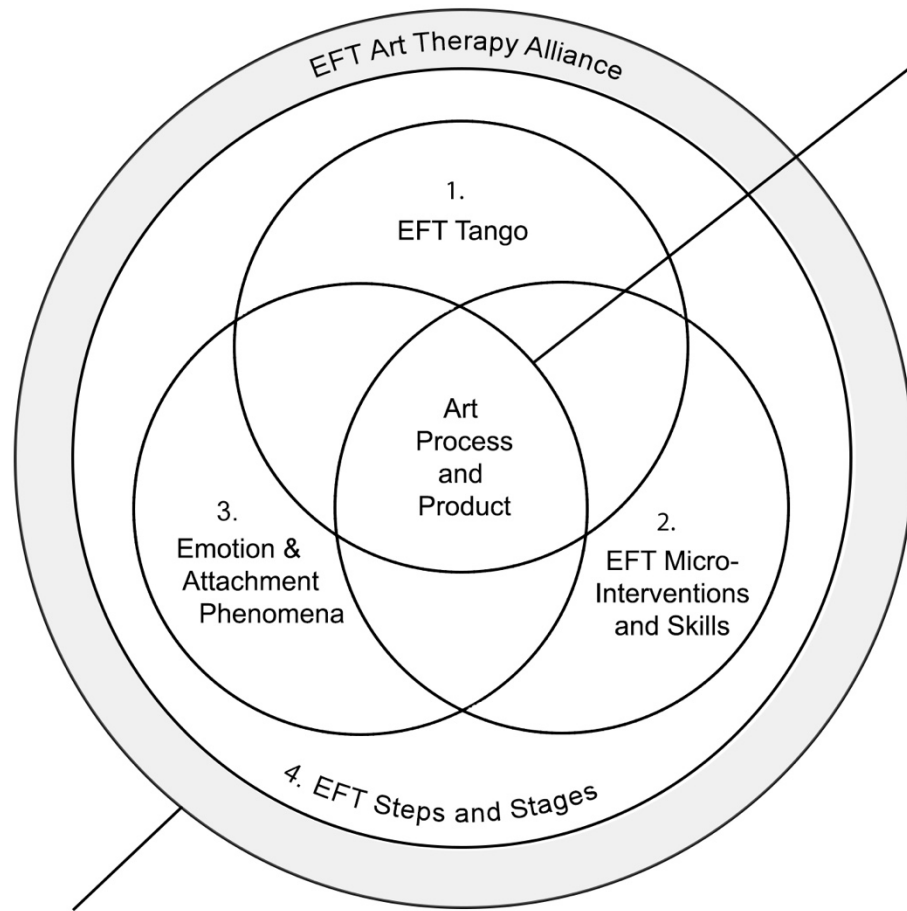
This study explored clinical practices integrating art therapy and EFT in the treatment of relational distress in couples. Participants varied in EFT training and adherence to the EFT model. Deductive theoretical analysis of patterns in clinical practices with principles of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) and the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) revealed a conceptual framework for integrating and aligning art interventions with EFT that prioritizes fidelity to the EFT model, as shown in Figure 8. This framework comprised both semantic and latent themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). A summary of these findings was diagrammed in Figure 15. As a secondary finding, the usefulness of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) as a tool to examine alignment or divergence of art interventions from the EFT model was demonstrated.

The conceptual framework is made parts of a whole that interrelate, as shown in Figures 8 and 15, with an explicit focus on what the therapist does in session in the context of a couple's progression through EFT treatment. The inner ring of the framework reveals how art-based and verbal EFT interventions blend on a granular level through three interrelated themes in the context of the art process and product. First, there are two pathways of alignment of art interventions with the EFT Tango, as shown in Figures 9 and 10. Based on these pathways, interventions are categorized as either art-based Tango moves, or non-Tango art interventions. Art-based Tango moves are art interventions that directly align with the objectives of one or several moves of the EFT Tango: tracking and reflecting the couple's negative cycle, deepening into emotion in the context of the cycle, sharing that emotion with the partner in an enactment, processing this new interaction, and integrating / validating this new way of relating (Johnson, 2020). Non-Tango art interventions may lead-in to the EFT Tango through a process in Figure

11. Alignment of art interventions with the EFT Tango may provide greater fidelity to the EFT model, as shown in Figure 7 through deductive theoretical analysis with principles of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). The second theme is the use of EFT micro-interventions and skills with the art process and product at four points in the art intervention process—introducing the intervention, during artmaking, after artmaking, and potentially referring back to the art in future sessions, as shown in Figure 13. As identified and discussed in depth in the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020), EFT micro-interventions and skills are the therapist’s most basic tools: reflection, validation, evocative responding, heightening, empathic conjecture, limited self-disclosure, tracking in conjunction with reflecting, reframing, restructuring interactions, seeding attachment, and RISSSC (repeat, image, simple, soft, slow, client’s words). This theme also indicates greater alignment with the EFT model, as shown in Figure 7. Third, both of these themes regarding the EFT Tango and EFT micro-interventions shape and are shaped by emotional and attachment phenomena in the art product, process, non-verbal behavior and verbal discourse, as shown in Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8. As shown in Figure 15, these three intervention themes are guided by considerations in the progression of treatment over time through the steps and stages of EFT. These considerations are explored in Tables 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Lastly, as shown in Figure 15, the outer ring of the framework represents the integrated EFT art therapy alliance, which conceptually contains and guides all the other themes with potential considerations for therapeutic artmaking, such as safety, trust, acceptance, balance, relevance, art as a bid for connection, art as a tool for empathic attunement, intuition and spontaneity. In the following section, the framework is examined in the context of literature exploring art interventions in couple therapy, the EFT literature, and scant literature blending art therapy practices and creative interventions with EFT.

**Figure 15**

*Explanation of the Conceptual Framework for Integrating Art Therapy with EFT*



- 1) **Align Art Interventions with the EFT Tango**
  - a) Blend Art-Based Tango Moves with Verbal Tango Moves
    - May invite alteration of the art to reflect underlying emotion or bonding events
  - b) Lead-in to Move 1 from Non-Tango Art Interventions
    - When the art process, product, or verbal sharing illuminates the cycle
    - Choose art interventions that focus on the cycle, emotions, and attachment
- 2) **Apply EFT Micro-Interventions and Skills with the Art Process and Product**
  - a) Introducing art
  - b) During artmaking
  - c) After artmaking
  - d) Referring back to art in future
- 3) **1 & 2 in Reference to Emotion / Attachment Phenomena**
  - a) Identified in the art process, product, non-verbal behavior, verbal sharing
  - b) Special focus on the client's image and metaphor
- 4) **Considerations for EFT Steps / Stages**
  - a) Tailor 1-3 above to achieve steps
  - b) Mindful of defensive reactivity in the art
  - c) Choice of emotion to address with the art
  - d) Choice of partner(s) making art, with attention to balance and the sequence of Stage 2 change events
  - e) Art media *may* shift: structured to fluid

**Alliance Considerations**

- \* Art as a tool for empathy: a way to be seen, understood, validated, held
- \* Safety: emotional risk in artmaking, trust, acceptance, balance, relevance
- \* Intuition and spontaneity



## **A New Paradigm in the Couple Art Therapy Literature**

This study presents the first conceptual framework to align art therapy with EFT in a way that prioritizes fidelity to the EFT model. EFT is a brief, evidence-based treatment grounded in emotion and attachment. The couple art therapy literature in many ways reflects the broader evolution of marital and family therapy over time. EFT disrupted the dominant paradigm of marital and family therapy by de-pathologizing basic human attachment needs and highlighting the power of emotion to create more secure bonds (Johnson, 2020). This framework similarly reveals a new lens for systematically conceptualizing art interventions to expand emotional experience and create new bonding interactions that may increase attachment security. Previous couple art therapy literature described how art interventions may illuminate attachment dynamics, such as blame-withdraw cycles (Hinkle et al., 2015; Metzl 2017; Riley, 2003; Rober, 2009; Snir & Wiseman, 2010; Wadeson, 1972). However, systematic guidelines were not indicated for intervention both verbally and through art to expand emotional experience, de-escalate a couple's negative interaction cycle, and increase attachment security with fidelity to an evidence-based model. By contrast, this framework focuses squarely on what the therapist does in session to align art interventions with EFT's evidence-based methods. This framework may therefore challenge and expand previous scholarly research about using art therapy with couples the same way EFT challenged and expanded upon existing models in marital and family therapy.

This contribution is particularly important due to the copious outcome and process of change research of EFT and its foundation in attachment science (Johnson, 2020; Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). EFT may be the only couple therapy model categorized as evidence-based according to the most recent criteria of the American Psychological Association (APA; Sexton et al., 2011; Wiebe & Johnson, 2016). Studies showed efficacy where one partner experienced

childhood abuse (Dalton et al., 2013; MacIntosh & Johnson, 2008), with couples facing serious illness (Cloutier et al., 2002; Mclean et al., 2013; Walker et al., 1992), and in reducing symptoms of depression and PTSD (Denton et al., 2012; Dessaulles, 2003; MacIntosh & Johnson, 2008), along with other positive outcomes. By contrast, quantitative outcomes for art interventions in couple's treatment included one study, which showed an increase in marital satisfaction (Ricco, 2007). Barth and Kinder (1985) highlighted the limitations of the couple art therapy literature many years ago, which primarily consisted of redundant case studies by prominent figures. These limitations have not changed almost 40 years later; indeed, anecdotal results are not generalizable and many of the same interventions are cited again and again. According to Metzl (2020), systematic efficacy research is necessary to provide concrete evidence of the benefit of integrating art therapy with couple therapy. This framework provides a foundation for efficacy research, with structure and language to describe how art interventions combine with verbal interventions to prioritize fidelity to the EFT model. The framework has important applications in research by operationalizing art interventions to examine clinical efficacy.

A key component of the framework is the alignment of art interventions with the EFT Tango sequence, along two conceptual pathways, as shown in Figure 10. This is the first time art therapy or creative interventions are specifically named in the context of the EFT Tango in the literature. To provide context in the scope of the development of EFT over time, this finding represents alignment with the latest version of the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020). The EFT Tango was not named and highlighted in the two earlier editions (Johnson 1996, 2004). Recent literature co-authored by the founder of EFT described the Tango as "...at the center of EFT intervention" (Allan et al., 2021, p. 5). This finding is particularly helpful because the Tango is used across the steps and stages of EFT to maintain fidelity to the EFT model (Johnson, 2020).

Some of the art-based Tango moves in this study are also new in the literature—several variations for drawing the negative cycle for Move 1, interventions highlighting communication of needs for Move 1, a body map as a joint enactment for Moves 3 and 4, managing defensive reactivity in Move 4, and consolidation of change for Move 5 using the metaphor of the dance. The framework also proposes a specific way to conceptualize new art interventions attuned to the unique needs of couples, particularly through art-based Tango moves, as well as specific verbal interventions before and after in a sequence to create new positive cycles of interaction. This study therefore challenges and expands previous literature about art therapy with couples, both with examples of new art interventions that clearly align with EFT, and with a conceptual framework to reimagine art intervention in couple therapy in alignment with the EFT model.

### **Benefits of Art in EFT Treatment**

The research question for this study did not directly explore why art interventions may be useful in EFT treatment, although many ideas emerged in the interviews and analysis. The literature revealed art interventions may increase emotional engagement and empathic attunement especially with disowned painful emotions (Harris & Landgarten, 1973; Hinkle et al., 2015; Kerr, 2015; Metzl, 2017; Ricco, 2007, 2016; Riley, 2003; Wadeson, 1972). In this study, multiple participants deepened from secondary into primary emotion through verbal EFT micro-interventions during the art process, prompting alteration of the art to express these expanded feelings. The literature revealed art may also illuminate relational dynamics and circumvent rigid interaction patterns (Harris & Landgarten, 1973; Hinkle et al., 2015; Kerr, 2015; Metzl, 2017; Ricco, 2007, 2016; Riley, 2003; Riley & Malchiodi, 1994; Rober, 2009; Wadeson, 1972). Similarly, this research showed Stage 1 art interventions may blend with verbal interventions to de-escalate a couple's negative interaction cycle using evidence-based methods. In the literature,

authors believes art interventions may enhance EFT when a verbal approach reached an impasse (Hinkle et al., 2015). In this study, art was similarly used when a couple may not grasp their negative cycle or because the cycle would rigidly arise due to trauma or attachment injury. The literature also revealed the art was helpful for a withdrawn partner to share emotionally, by experientially deepening engagement while speaking about the visual artifact (Hinkle et al., 2015; Metzler, 2017). The EFT literature similarly espoused how verbal imagery facilitates working with blocks: “Use of imagery can often tighten and block exits from the ‘container’ as clients become engulfed and captivated by the scenes that are created through careful listening, tracking, evocative questioning, and reflecting” (Allan et al., 2021, p. 6). Therefore, many ideas in the literature about the benefit of imagery and art in EFT treatment are supported in this study, and all of these represented ways of working through potential impasses in treatment.

Art was also useful from the perspective of attachment—as a mirror, to be seen and understood both by the therapist and one’s partner (Kerr, 2015; Riley, 2003; Riley & Malchiodi 1994; Wadeson, 1972;), to explore attachment needs and fears (Hinkle et al., 2015; Metzler, 2017; Riley, 2003; Wadeson, 1972) and to assess affection in one’s family of origin (Riley, 2003). This research similarly showed art may increase empathic attunement because art makes emotions real and the art does not lie—art could be conceptualized in EFT as a bid for connection.

### **Application of the Framework to Existing Case Studies**

The conceptual framework provides specific language for conceptualizing and communicating how art interventions can be integrated with EFT. The structure of the framework also inherently conveys how to integrate art interventions with EFT in a way that prioritizes fidelity to the EFT model. In this section, the framework is applied to relevant case studies, with additional context from the EFT and couple art therapy literature.

### *Art Media*

Although the findings indicate art media may potentially shift from structured to more fluid materials as treatment progresses, the majority of interventions aligning clearly with the EFT model cite drawing media such as colored pencils, markers, and pastels. Analysis of art interventions in case studies from the literature, as examined in the literature review, also revealed a prevalence of structured materials, specifically drawing media and collage.

### *Assessment and Joint Drawings*

The findings both align and deviate from the literature regarding assessment with joint non-verbal/verbal drawings. Metzl (2020) described the use of joint verbal and non-verbal drawings, originally espoused by Helen B. Landgarten (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973) in a first session when integrating art therapy practices with sex therapy and EFT. In the framework, this is categorized as a non-Tango art intervention, as shown in Figures 9, 10 and 15. Fidelity to the EFT model, according to the framework, could be achieved by leading into the EFT Tango during or after the artmaking process, as shown in Figure 11. This provides alignment with the EFT model according to several EFT-TFS skills (Denton et al., 2009). Metzl (2020) described verbal processing after the joint drawing: “After the drawings are completed, we explore each partner’s experience of engaging in the task and what symbols/meanings emerged for them” (p. 144). According to this conceptual framework, this exploration may illuminate attachment or emotional phenomena in the art product or process that connect to the couple’s negative cycle, which may then be tracked and reflected to lead-in to Move 1 of the Tango sequence as shown in Figure 11. The theory behind this process dovetails with research on attachment and joint drawings by Snir and Wiseman (2010), who proposed that tension may arise through differences in perceptions and emotional reactions to a joint drawing task, as experienced by partners with a

combination of anxious and avoidant attachment. Through the lens of EFT, this tension could reflect the couple's negative cycle. According to Snir and Wiseman (2010):

It might be important for couple's therapists to use the post-joint drawing discussion, as an opportunity to enhance couples awareness to the mutual effect of their reactions, as a way to increase the secure base that each partner can provide for the other. (p. 124).

The framework provides a systematic way to structure this dialogue suggested by Snir and Wiseman (2010) and Metzl (2020), in alignment with EFT. Leading into the Tango from a non-Tango art intervention such as a joint verbal/non-verbal art task transitions from artmaking into tracking the couple's negative interaction cycle, deepening into attachment-related emotions, and sharing these emotions between partners to create new bonding interactions. This process is central to EFT practice (Allan et al., 2021) and supported by copious process of change research in EFT (Brubacher & Wiebe, 2019; Greenman & Johnson, 2013).

However, the findings of this study reveal a joint drawing may not be indicated in the first session of EFT treatment, unless the couple specifically seeks art therapy. Most participants did not use art in assessment; it remains unclear whether the use of art in EFT assessment is indicated, and how. Participants cite issues in the alliance such as the need of partners to feel heard in early sessions, issues in managing defensive reactivity with high-conflict couples, and the need for additional trust and rapport before introducing artmaking. This is an interesting finding because a prominent theme in the couple art therapy literature is the use of artmaking to assess relational dynamics (Harriss & Landgarten, 1973; Metzl, 2020; Riley, 2003; Snir & Wiseman, 2010; Wadeson, 1972). It is noteworthy that Landgarten (1987) and Metzl (2017) both described how clients were unsure about wanting to do an art assessment. Through the lens of the EFT literature, this may indicate an issue of perceived relevance of the task, a key component

of the therapeutic alliance in EFT (Johnson & Talitman, 1997). Research showed that out of several elements, the alliance regarding the tasks of therapy accounted for the most variance in treatment outcome (Johnson & Talitman, 1997). Therefore, in EFT, it is very important for clients to be confident the tasks of therapy are relevant to their presenting problem (Brubacher & Wiebe, 2019; Johnson, 2020; Johnson & Talitman, 1997). The findings of this study indicated a couple may not see the art assessment task as relevant in early sessions because they have a pressing need for their presenting issues to be heard. It is also worth noting tentatively that if this is the case, it may indicate a shift away from the collaborative nature of the EFT alliance to one espousing the therapist as an expert. As described in the EFT-TFS, “Therapists should not speak or behave in an authoritative or ‘expert’ manner” (Denton et al., 2009, p. 5). In EFT, explicit focus on emotion, attachment issues and the couple’s negative cycle helps tasks feel relevant (Johnson, 2020). If an art assessment is used, perhaps the way the art assessment is introduced could impact perceived relevance by explicitly framing the intervention in terms of attachment and leading in to the EFT Tango afterwards to support greater accessibility between partners—both of these ideas are key notions of the framework revealed in this study.

### ***Alignment of Art Interventions with the EFT Tango***

The EFT Tango sequence is considered central to EFT practice (Allan et al., 2021) and is supported by copious research on the process of change in EFT (Brubacher & Wiebe, 2019; Greenman & Johnson, 2013). A core, primary feature of the framework presented in this research is the alignment of art interventions with the EFT Tango, along two pathways, as shown in Figures 9, 10, and 15. Deductive theoretical analysis reveals that in general, art-based Tango moves may be more aligned with the EFT model than non-Tango art interventions in several areas of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009). A list of art-based Tango moves is shown in Table 6.

Hinkle et al. (2015) included one multi-part art intervention in their article exploring creative interventions blended with the EFT model. This intervention also clearly aligned with the EFT Tango, although there was no specific mention of the Tango. This may coincide with how the Tango only appeared in the most recent version of the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020), published after the Hinkle et al. (2015) study. The art was used first to deepen into the emotion of a partner who had given up on connection; however, it was done in a way that signified it was an enactment by inviting the client to show their partner through the art: “John, I want you to show Philip what you just described. Take these colored pencils and draw a visual representation of what it has been like to be without him” (Hinkle et al., 2015, p. 242). After artmaking, visualizing techniques were used to both track and reflect the cycle and deepen emotion through heightening. Through the lens of the framework proposed by this research, this represents a combination of verbal and art-based Tango moves for Moves 1, 2, and 3. As cited in the case, EFT micro-interventions and skills such as heightening were used in relation to emotional and attachment phenomena in the art, such as the loneliness and fear of being stranded at sea, unable to reach the partner (Hinkle et al., 2015). This also aligns very clearly with the framework presented in this research. This was followed by a verbal Tango Move 4, where the other partner was asked what it is like to hear and imagine these feelings captured in the art and verbal processing (Hinkle et al., 2015). Then, he was invited to add to art to represent his desire to reach for his partner, which represented an art-based Move 4 of the Tango, very similar to a case in this study—“Body Map Joint Enactment.” Therefore, the framework aligns very clearly with the case presented by Hinkle et al. (2015), which demonstrates how the framework provides a clear way to describe and conceptualize how art interventions can be integrated and aligned with EFT.

### ***Art Interventions Based on a Client’s Verbal Image***



Other alignments with the framework in the literature include art interventions based on a client's verbal image (Kerr, 2015; Metzl, 2017). The importance of working this way is contextualized in the EFT literature. Developing an art intervention in response to a client's spontaneous verbal image may represent a special way of attuning to clients. The use of a client's verbal imagery in treatment is an important component of EFT practice, because it helps clients deepen into their emotional experience (Johnson, 2020). Using a client's words specifically may help them feel heard and understood (Allan et al., 2021). Findings indicate a key intervention of the framework is to draw a client's verbal image, which aligns with Tango Move 2, to deepen into emotional experience. The therapist may also refer to this image in future sessions as a way to track and reflect the cycle, Tango Move 1. This was similar to the way Metzl (2017) used this intervention with clients' verbal images of hitting a wall and a shared voyage, in an eclectic approach to couple art therapy using EFT along with other models. Verbal processing after artmaking seemed to track and reflect the couple's negative cycle exploring the attachment frame (Metzl, 2017), which may indicate Move 1 of the Tango. Metzl (2017) described both partners drawing the image. By contrast, in this study it was just one partner who drew their verbal image to deepen into that person's experience, Move 2. Using the language of the framework, the art intervention using a client's verbal image may therefore be used differently whether intended as an art-based Move 1 or Move 2. Kerr (2015) similarly highlighted the power of verbal metaphor in conjunction with art intervention in couple treatment to create an empathic bridge between partners and the therapist. It makes sense that this art intervention highlighting a client's spontaneous verbal image could be applied to potentially all of the Tango moves. In this way, the framework provides new language to

specifically describe how art interventions may align with EFT, expanding and elaborating upon existing literature.

The specific verbal image chosen for this type of intervention is also an important consideration. One participant in this study identified “a dark place” as the client’s verbal image, which was echoed in the EFT literature. The metaphor of light and dark is common in EFT (Johnson et al., 2005). The client’s image cited by Metz (2017) of hitting a wall is also similar to a common EFT image of one’s partner being behind a door (Johnson et al., 2005). Other common images may inform this type of intervention, as cited in the EFT literature, including being on the edge of a cliff, an alarm going off, facing a dragon, a little child, being paralyzed or numb, a ticking bomb that may explode, temperature (hot, cold, frozen), military images (foxhole, shoot, run for cover), being in a desert (thirst), a dance, water (deep or shallow, drowning or flooding), passing a test, and being on trial (Johnson et al., 2005). Therefore, the literature reveals clues as to which verbal images may be most useful for this art intervention.

The framework also emphasizes the client’s verbal image should be of an emotional, attachment-related nature to align more closely with the EFT model. Findings indicate other verbal imagery may bring the couple into discussing the content of their problems versus the process, potentially diverting session focus. The step and stage of treatment may also impact the verbal image chosen for an art intervention, moving into deeper attachment fears and disowned attachment needs in Stage 2. The choice of the partner to focus on with this type of intervention may also be determined by the progression of treatment, going deeper to re-engage a withdrawn partner before the blaming partner in Steps 5, 6, and 7 of EFT. Therefore, the framework provides several considerations for applying an art directive based on a client’s verbal image, a

common intervention in the literature, in ways that align very specifically with the EFT model both in terms of intervention and a couple's progression through treatment over time.

### ***Uniqueness of Art Interventions Aligned with the EFT Model***

The findings of this research highlight the uniqueness of art interventions integrated with EFT in a way that prioritizes fidelity to the EFT model. For example, body maps are found in the literature in the treatment of trauma (Lubbers, 2019; Zoldbrod, 2015) and work with couples (Metzl, 2017, 2020). Metzl (2020) described a body map to explore sexuality in couples with the use of EFT micro-interventions in the context of artmaking. The framework in this study builds upon this idea, with a body map also aligning with two art-based Tango moves in the context of the EFT Tango sequence of verbal interventions. The framework also indicates micro-interventions during artmaking may help deepen into primary from secondary emotion through alteration in the art product. Alignment with the Tango may help place emotional and attachment phenomena in the art into the couple's negative cycle, restructure interactions through an enactment, process that new interaction, and consolidate change. All of these unique interventions associated with the EFT Tango increase fidelity to the EFT model through alignment with skills of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) and distinguish this way of working with the art from other methods.

### ***Integrated EFT Art Therapy Alliance***

The integrated EFT art therapy alliance guides all areas of the framework, as shown in the outer ring of the diagram in Figures 8 and 15. This is consonant with the humanistic nature of the model: "Active empathy is a necessary prerequisite for and integral part of all EFT interventions..." (Johnson, 2020, p. 53). A core theme of the framework is artmaking in the attachment frame, as a way to be seen, validated, understood, and metaphorically held. This

consideration may guide the way clinicians interact with their clients and how they view art in the context of treatment. In this section, the EFT literature adds context for unique qualities of the integrated EFT art therapy alliance, with considerations from the art therapy literature.

**Art as a Tool for Empathic Attunement.** According to Johnson (2020), a key part of the therapeutic alliance is empathic attunement, which requires imagination to metaphorically take up residence in the inner world of partners. The findings reveal art interventions may deepen this attunement to guide treatment, because art brings hidden emotional realities into visual form, making them real. According to participants, the art also does not lie, it tells the truth of underlying emotions. These ideas were supported in the literature (Harris & Landgarten, 1973; Kerr, 2015; Metzl, 2017; Ricco, 2016; Riley, 2003; Wadeson, 1972). The participant with the most formal EFT training noted, “I use the art making as a reflective medium to further deepen attunement... to hold, reflect, to mirror.” Kerr (2015) espoused that art based on a client’s verbal metaphors creates a bridge of empathy between partners and the therapist. The findings reveal attunement through art may also create a roadmap for treatment by visually highlighting key emotional landmarks, helping clinicians avoid the pull into content issues. In EFT, empathy also reduces anxiety and increases emotional experiencing (Johnson, 2020). Similarly, one participant shared how referring to a client’s past artwork contained escalation, helping them feel understood and heard.

**Art as a Bid for Connection.** A key feature of the alliance in this framework is the idea of art as a bid for connection, which may conceptually guide how clinicians discuss the art process and product. Artmaking can be introduced as a way to meet basic attachment needs, to be heard, understood, validated and held, using language such as, “show us,” “show your partner,” “show your partner that you’re holding all these injuries,” “show me,” “help me

understand,” etc. One participant explicitly stated a partner’s pain would be witnessed and validated through the art process. The EFT intervention of seeding attachment was also used, citing how one partner’s pain had never been seen before, by themselves or their partner, and the art intervention was a way for that to happen. This also incorporated the EFT intervention, “RISSSC,” with repetition and verbal imagery to heighten the attachment significance of being seen, repeating many variations of “show us your pain... if you had a mass in your stomach, you would be going for an x-ray and we would see that mass.” Hinkle et al. (2015) used similar language: “John, I want you to show Philip what you just described. Take these colored pencils and draw a visual representation of what it has been like to be without him” (p. 242). The second part of the intervention, when the partner drew on the same image, also had similar language: “Try to reach him now. Show him you want to remove the obstacles and reach out to him” (Hinkle et al., 2015, p. 243). In this way, the concept of artmaking as a bid for connection is supported in the framework and literature, and may provide helpful language for introducing art interventions in a way that emphasizes the attachment frame.

**Safety, Acceptance, Balance, Genuineness, and Relevance.** Other qualities in the EFT alliance translate to the integrated EFT art therapy alliance of the framework. In EFT, safety is a primary concern because partners are asked to take emotional risks with each other and the therapist (Johnson, 2020). Findings suggest artmaking may represent similar risk and may require additional trust in the alliance, which may preclude art in assessment. Managing defensive reactivity also creates safety in the alliance in EFT (Johnson, 2020). Findings similarly suggest avoiding or being cautious with art with defensive reactivity. Through the lens of the attachment frame, risk in artmaking may involve fears of not being heard or understood, of one’s inner world being revealed to others in a way that is frightening, and of rejection or

abandonment. According to Metzl (2020), "...it is important for therapists to create a non-judgmental therapeutic space in which curiosity and compassion foster psychological explorations through creative tools" (p. 146). Metzl (2020) suggested co-creating art directives may support the alliance, as well as focusing on the experience of artmaking as opposed to the final art product. This framework also cites acceptance in the alliance by accepting the art product and accepting a client's wish not to make art. This aligns with key aspects of the EFT alliance, acceptance and collaboration (Johnson, 2020). Balancing time with each partner is another alliance consideration in EFT (Denton et al., 2009). Findings reveal this may translate to using art with partners equally in Stage 1 and going deeper individually in Stage 2 depending on EFT change events. Genuineness of the clinician is also important (Johnson, 2020), which may align with findings of self-disclosure and transparency when introducing the art. Perceived relevance of tasks is also key, accomplished by a focus on emotion, attachment, and the negative cycle (Johnson, 2020). Similarly, a core feature of this framework is the focus of art interventions on the cycle, emotion, and attachment issues—each component of the framework supports this focus in prioritizing fidelity to the EFT model.

## Conclusions

This study presents the first conceptual framework to align and integrate art interventions with EFT in a way that prioritizes fidelity to the model. It has wide applications in clinical practice, teaching, and empirical inquiry. Considering the importance of verbal imagery in EFT (Johnson, 2020), alignment of art interventions with the model may complement clinical practices for those with relevant training. The literature reveals art interventions may increase emotional experiencing and empathy, particularly to address rigid interactional positions and other impasses in EFT treatment (Hinkle et al., 2015; Kerr, 2015; Metzl, 2017, 2020; Riley, 2003). In addition, given the large evidence-base of EFT compared to that of couple art therapy and the field of art therapy, this framework provides a valuable contribution—a systematic blueprint for blending verbal and art interventions with couples in alignment with well-researched humanistic methods.

EFT is unique as it harnesses the power of emotion as an organizer of inner experience and relationships to create more secure bonds (Johnson, 2020). It challenges previous prevailing assumptions about the nature of relationships and how to treat them in the field of couple therapy. It de-pathologizes dependency as a natural part of the attachment bond and frames love as a survival mechanism. Examination of the literature reveals how changes in couple and family therapy over time guided and shaped couple art therapy practices. This framework similarly challenges prevailing assumptions about art therapy practices with couples by providing the first systematic method for working with emotion experientially to create bonding interactions in alignment with an evidence-based model. This framework provides structure, common language, and a roadmap for clinicians to integrate EFT and art interventions, to reimagine the way art therapy has been used with couples in the literature over the past 50 years.

## **Implications for Clinical Practice**

The framework is grounded in clinical practice and fidelity to the EFT model, with structure and language to describe on a granular level how art interventions can be aligned with EFT. It focuses squarely on what the therapist does in session. It may therefore be useful as a didactic tool in teaching clinicians how to integrate art interventions with EFT, although it is not meant to replace formal training in art therapy practices and EFT. Multiple participants in this study cited the need for a framework to conceptualize how to integrate the two approaches. The framework may provide a roadmap for clinicians who are already combining art interventions and EFT to conceptualize their work, particularly in a way that prioritizes fidelity to the EFT model. Clinicians may use the framework as a lens to examine the literature, as well as videos of their sessions to determine if art interventions are in alignment with the EFT model. In the same way that the structure of secure bonds encourages human exploration in attachment theory, the structure of this conceptual framework may promote greater creativity and flexibility when using art interventions in EFT treatment, attuning to the unique needs of couples. Clinicians may use this framework, for example, to develop new art-based Tango moves, particularly suited to Stage 2 change events that use culturally relevant art materials and metaphors. This framework may act as a guide for clinicians in the context of their own intuition and experimentation to explore art interventions at various points in the EFT Tango, whether tracking the cycle, deepening, as an enactment, processing an enactment, highlighting a new sense of connection, or tying the bow after a new interaction. The framework also provides a ground for dialogue between clinicians who integrate these two approaches with common language to describe ways of working. This may support the development of a community of clinicians who integrate art interventions or other creative interventions with EFT.



This framework represents the first time in the literature that art interventions are conceptualized in the context of the EFT Tango. This is perhaps the most notable contribution of the framework for clinical practice, and a useful starting point for those wishing to learn how to integrate art interventions with EFT. Figure 15 outlines several other considerations applicable to clinical practice. Although this research was not intended as a type of recipe book for selecting art interventions to use in EFT treatment, many of the tables in the analysis section show examples of art interventions that may be useful for those wishing to integrate the two approaches. For example, these findings reveal the first description in the literature of drawing the pursue-withdraw cycle, and how this art intervention is blended with systematic verbal interventions to shift the cycle experientially in session. Table 4 includes a list of potential art-based Tango moves. Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 give examples of verbal EFT micro-interventions supporting Tango moves in relation to emotional and attachment phenomena, at four points in the art intervention process—introducing the art intervention, during artmaking, after artmaking, and referring back to the art in future sessions. Potential considerations for how art interventions may change across the steps and stages of EFT are also explored in the analysis section, with Tables 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Potential alliance considerations are also proposed.

### ***Eclectic Applications***

For clinicians who take an eclectic approach to couple art therapy, combining models, this framework also specifically demonstrates how to move into EFT from art interventions that may align with other approaches. This involves leading into the EFT Tango sequence when the art product, process, or verbal processing illuminates a couple's negative cycle, as shown in Figure 11. Several participants in this study worked this way in clinical practice, which is also reflected in the literature (Metzl, 2017, 2020). In this way, the framework is flexible and

potentially applicable in many clinical contexts, although in the EFT literature, a clinician's inclination for movement between models may indicate an impasse in treatment that requires special attention through the lens of EFT (Johnson et al., 2005).

### ***Applications with Individual and Family Therapy***

In alignment with the framework, the EFT Tango is also central in Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy (EFIT) and Emotionally Focused Family Therapy (EFFT; Johnson, 2019). Aspects of the framework may be clinically relevant when integrating art interventions with these other treatment units, using the EFIT and EFFT models.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

This study has several limitations that may be addressed in future research. Limitations related to the methodology include the sample size, referral source, participant backgrounds, the recruitment process, the nature of the semi-structured interviews and cultural considerations. There were also limitations of the researcher in terms of reflexivity and time.

### ***Participant Sample***

A larger sample of clinicians who integrate art therapy and EFT would be preferable as some potential themes in the analysis were only demonstrated in two or three participants out of the five. Additional considerations for integrating art therapy and EFT may be illuminated by a larger sample. None of the participants were sourced directly from the EFT community, and none were certified in EFT by ICEEFT, which implies several limitations and opportunities for future study. The advertisement for this study also specifically targeted clinicians with any amount of experience integrating art therapy with EFT, and the resulting sample included some clinicians who primarily use other models. These limitations might reflect in areas of divergence from the EFT model. To mitigate these issues, deductive theoretical analysis was conducted

using principles of the EFT-TFS (Denton et al., 2009) as well as the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020). However, these recruitment issues could limit the variety of art interventions shared by participants that align with the EFT model. The research reveals an important question about whether parallel process art interventions that do not explicitly focus on emotion, attachment, and the couple's cycle are useful in EFT and in what context. A related question involves non-verbal enactments, specifically how clinicians may use art as a way to create a non-verbal dialogue between partners and how this may be useful in EFT. Specifically targeting art therapists who primarily use EFT in their work, with both certification in EFT and copious experience in art therapy, may be helpful to explore these questions. Lastly, self-selection bias may also indicate limitations with the participant sample—participants may have favored integrating art therapy and EFT, which could limit the data to positive reports.

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

Several limitations relate to problematic characteristics of the semi-structured interviews. Self-report bias among participants may introduce bias in the form of selective memory, remembering only certain features of their work with couples. Attribution could be another issue, with participants ascribing positive outcomes to their clinical work. Exaggeration could be an issue as well. Semi-structured interviews were also limited by the researcher's ability to ask questions related to the research topic to elicit the data. The interviewer may have influenced the response of the participants by the way the questions were asked. In addition, each interview was different, as participants organically described their cases and the researcher inquired about relevant topics. Each participant covered the same interview topics, but participants were not asked exactly the same questions, which may have impacted the accuracy of the data. The qualitative nature of the inquiry also imposes limitations. Quantitative research through outcome

studies may illuminate efficacy of art interventions, perhaps in the context of key process of change events in EFT. Systematic analysis of video sessions integrating EFT and art therapy may also explore the impact of interventions.

### ***Reflexivity***

Reflexivity represents a limitation in the thematic analysis process, particularly when combining inductive and deductive approaches. Although the EFT-TFS skills (Denton et al., 2009) and the EFT manual (Johnson, 2020) provided key lenses for the deductive theoretical portion of the analysis, the researcher's formal and informal EFT training also provided a foundation for the analysis. The analysis involved interpretation on the part of the researcher, which may be flawed. In addition, the researcher's own clinical work integrating art therapy with EFT may have influenced the analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a 15-item checklist for good thematic analysis, which was used by the researcher. At several points the analysis was redone in specific areas and refined according to the checklist, iteratively returning to coded extracts in the data throughout the process. However, some themes were not presented and explored through analysis, due to time constraints of completing the study as a master's research project. Replication of this research in other contexts may address these issues.

### ***Cultural Considerations***

Demographic information of participants including race, ethnicity and gender, were not collected to protect confidentiality of the participants as well as their clients. Specific demographic variables about clients were also omitted to protect confidentiality. This constitutes a major limitation in the research as this inquiry is inherently embedded within cultural contexts. This limitation may mirror a greater systemic issue—EFT research "...has been conducted almost exclusively on White, middle-class, heterosexual couples" (Greenman & Johnson, 2013, p. 12).

Cultural sensitivity is critical as needs of diverse couples may not parallel those who participated in EFT research (Greenman & Johnson, 2013), and culture impacts expression of emotion (Bradley & Furrow, 2007). Power imbalances may also impact the therapeutic alliance. Therefore, cultural considerations in the context of integrating art therapy and EFT represent a particularly important area for future inquiry.

### **Personal Reflection on the Research Process**

This study deeply enriched and shaped my identity as an EFT therapist, art therapist, researcher, and relational being. I gathered inspiration from a very supportive EFT training environment in my EFT externship, local and international EFT communities, and EFT Core Skills training. I used the framework suggested by this research in my own clinical work and as a didactic tool with beginning art therapy / marital and family therapy students as the analysis unfolded. These opportunities were exciting and motivating. In terms of research tools, NVivo qualitative data analysis software facilitated what I believe was a much deeper and more systematic exploration than would have otherwise been possible. The ability to code and re-code the data, visualize the data and search for patterns greatly supported the emergence of the framework. On another note, I researched this meeting place of love, relational distress, art, and creativity during a global pandemic, which heightened the personal significance of the study. During a time of historic global isolation, relational distress, and fear, my chance to explore this work and connect with each of the participants felt immensely important and meaningful. The pandemic highlighted the great importance of relationship as we all retreated into quarantine. A heartbreaking increase in relational distress was reported around the world at a time when we needed each other the most. For me, this research was a way to make a contribution, potentially, to help meet this great human need for love and belonging in a time of historic distress.

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## Appendix A

### IRB Approval Letter

Thank you for submitting your IRB application for your protocol titled *Integrating Art Therapy with Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples*. 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 **May 6, 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 SP 50 R**.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Julie Paterson

**Julianne Paterson**

Research Compliance Specialist

1 LMU Drive, University Hall, Suite #1878

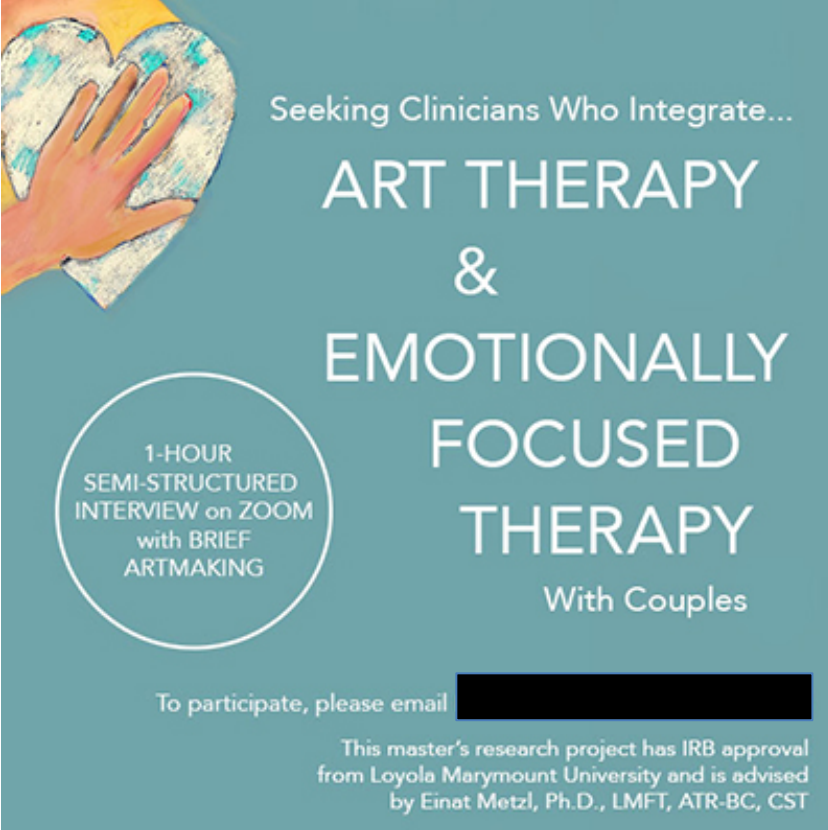
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Telephone: (310) 258-5465

Email: [Julianne.Paterson@lmu.edu](mailto:Julianne.Paterson@lmu.edu)

## Appendix B

### Advertisements



Seeking Clinicians Who Integrate...

# ART THERAPY & EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY

With Couples

1-HOUR  
SEMI-STRUCTURED  
INTERVIEW on ZOOM  
with BRIEF  
ARTMAKING

To participate, please email [REDACTED]

This master's research project has IRB approval from Loyola Marymount University and is advised by Einat Metzli, Ph.D., LMFT, ATR-BC, CST

#### Email to LMU Marital and Family Therapy Alumni

Subject: Seeking Clinicians Who Integrate Art Therapy and EFT with Couples

Body: Dear Alumni,

I'm a Marital and Family Therapy / Art Therapy graduate student at LMU with training in emotionally focused therapy (EFT). This research aims to support the art therapy community by addressing a gap in the literature on integrating EFT and art therapy with couples. Relationship distress is an escalating problem during the pandemic, your participation could help colleagues align couple art therapy with an evidence-based approach, EFT.

**I'm looking for clinicians who work with couples using art therapy and EFT to participate in a one-hour semi-structured interview, including a brief art making activity. The interview will take place at your convenience, over Zoom, any time before July 31, 2020.**

This master's research project has IRB approval from Loyola Marymount University and is advised by Einat Metzl, Ph.D., LMFT, ATR-BC, CST.

**To participate, please email [REDACTED].** If you have any experience *at all* aligning art therapy with EFT, it would be very helpful to connect.

I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you!

### **Post to the American Art Therapy Association Online Member Forum**

**Subject:** Seeking Clinicians Who Integrate EFT and Art Therapy with Couples

**Body:** I'm a Marital and Family Therapy / Art Therapy graduate student at Loyola Marymount University with training in emotionally focused therapy (EFT). This research aims to support the art therapy community by addressing a gap in the literature on integrating EFT and art therapy with couples. Relationship distress is an escalating problem during the pandemic, your participation could help colleagues align couple art therapy with an evidence-based approach, EFT.

**I'm looking for clinicians who work with couples using art therapy and EFT to participate in a one-hour semi-structured interview, including a brief art making activity. The interview will take place at your convenience, over Zoom, any time before July 31, 2020.**

This master's research project has IRB approval from Loyola Marymount University and is advised by Einat Metzl, Ph.D., LMFT, ATR-BC, CST.

**To participate, please email [REDACTED].** If you have any experience *at all* aligning art therapy with EFT, it would be very helpful to connect.

I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you!

**Email to the ICEEFT Listserve for Clinicians Trained in EFT**

Subject: Integrating Art Therapy with EFT

Body: Hello EFT Community!

I'm a Marital and Family Therapy / Art Therapy graduate student at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, CA with training in EFT. My master's research project aims to address a gap in the literature on integrating EFT and art therapy with couples.

**I'm looking for clinicians who work with couples using art therapy and EFT to participate in a one-hour semi-structured interview, including a brief art making activity. The interview will take place at your convenience, over Zoom, any time before July 31, 2020.**

This research has IRB approval from Loyola Marymount University and is advised by Einat Metzler, Ph.D., LMFT, ATR-BC, CST.

**To participate, please email [REDACTED].** If you have any experience *at all* aligning art therapy with EFT, it would be very helpful to connect.

I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you!

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent

#### Loyola Marymount University Informed Consent Form

**TITLE:** Integrating Art Therapy and Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples

**INVESTIGATOR:**

**ADVISOR: (if applicable)**

**PURPOSE:**

You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate couple art therapy and emotionally focused therapy in the treatment of relationship distress. You will be asked to complete a one-hour semi-structured interview with the investigator, discussing your clinical practice with couples, including an artmaking activity, using Zoom teleconferencing software. The audio of the interview will be recorded on an external device, not connected to the internet, and will only be used in data analysis – the audio recording will never be published or disseminated. You will have the option to receive the transcription of the interview to make necessary changes before data analysis. A digital photographic image of the art created during the interview will be captured through a screenshot and saved on the investigator's computer. The researcher may also ask you to capture an image of the artwork to send to the researcher over email. Artwork may be used in presentations and publications.

**RISKS:**

Potential risks may include discomfort discussing your clinical practice and professional expertise, as well as discomfort during the artmaking process. There might be a professional concern of accidentally sharing identifying information of a client. To minimize these risks, no imagery or video of you will be recorded. Your name and client names will be de-identified through the assignment of pseudonyms when discussing your contributions. The audio recording of the interview will be used for data analysis only and will never be published or disseminated. You will also have the opportunity to approve the transcription of the interview and make necessary changes before data analysis. You will be provided a list of local no cost / low cost mental health agencies you may contact for support, in the unlikely event you become distressed. You may also contact Dr. Einat Metzl, a licensed therapist and the mentor of this project, to debrief, at [REDACTED]

**BENEFITS:** There is a gap in the literature about couple art therapy, and ways to integrate art therapy with emotionally focused therapy (EFT). You would be contributing to clinical and theoretical knowledge of these fields, as well as possibly benefitting the community of clients treated as the result of this new knowledge. The research may be beneficial due to aligning art therapy with an evidence-based treatment for couple distress, EFT. You may also benefit through greater understanding of your clinical work, as a result of talking through your cases. You may also benefit from knowledge produced by the research, through greater understanding of ways to integrate art therapy with EFT.

**INCENTIVES:** You will receive no gifts/incentives for this study. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your demographic information is not collected. Your identifying information and client names will never be used in any public dissemination of the data (publications, presentations, etc.). Your name and client names will be de-identified through the assignment of pseudonyms when discussing your contributions in all written materials including transcriptions for data analysis and digital file names. All research materials and consent forms will be encrypted and securely stored on a password protected computer, never connected to cloud storage. All emails between you and the researcher will be deleted from the researcher's account. When data analysis is complete, the audio recording of the interview will be destroyed. When the research study ends, any remaining identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:** Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled, your class standing or relationship with Loyola Marymount University.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:** A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request, by approximately May, 2021. You may also contact [REDACTED] to inquire about the summary of results.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:** I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. If the study design or use of the information is changed I will be informed and my consent reobtained. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact Dr. David Moffet, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2659 or by email at

[REDACTED]

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Participant's Signature

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Date

## Appendix D

### Semi-Structured Interview Questions

#### Integrating Art Therapy with Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples

The data collection method of this project is a 1-hour semi-structured interview that aims to address the following possible topics/questions. Please have art materials at hand for a brief art task aligned with question number 2, as well as a way to photograph the art to email a copy to the researcher. A mobile device with a camera is suitable for this purpose. Please note that we do not have to cover all the topics below, these are just the possibilities that were approved by the IRB. Thank you so much for your participation!

- 1) Tell me about your work with couples?
- 2) What was a useful art directive you used with couples that aligned with the EFT model? Can you recreate the art to illustrate the process?
- 3) Tell me about a specific case where you integrated EFT and art therapy?
- 4) What was the setting like?
- 5) When did you first introduce the art? How?
- 6) Was art used in assessment? How?
- 7) How did you talk about the art product and process?
- 8) How do you integrate art with the five moves of the EFT tango?
- 9) How do art directives change with the couple's stage in EFT?
- 10) How do you select materials throughout treatment?
- 11) How did you use the art product or process to turn up (heighten) or turn down (contain escalating) emotion?
- 12) What, if any, theoretical ideas support your work integrating EFT and art therapy?
- 13) What are the challenges of integrating art therapy with EFT? What are the benefits?
- 14) Are there specific circumstances where art is or isn't used?
- 15) How often do you think you use art with couples during EFT treatment? Every session? 50%? 25%? Rarely?
- 16) What percentage of couples do you use art with in your practice?
- 17) What is your background or training in EFT and art therapy?



## **Appendix E**

### **EFT Training**

The researcher's formal EFT training during the planning and execution of this research study began with an EFT Externship with Sue Johnson and Scott Wooley (28-hours) conducted in conjunction with the International Center for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy (ICEEFT). EFT Core Skills was completed with trainer Sharon Chatkupt Lee in conjunction with the Portland Center for Emotionally Focused Therapy (PCEFT) and ICEEFT. EFT group supervision happened with several ICEEFT-certified EFT trainers, as well as individual supervision with an ICEEFT-certified EFT supervisor. Additional trainings included "Getting Grounded in the EFT Tango," a 7-hour event presented by the Los Angeles Center for Emotionally Focused Therapy (LACEFT), as well as a 9-hour Tango Clinic provided by Sharon Chatkupt Lee and the PCEFT. Adjacent trainings included Level 1 Certification in Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy with Sue Johnson and Leanne Campbell, and Level 1 Certification in Emotionally Focused Family Therapy with Gail Palmer and Jim Furrow.