

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION OF STUDY

7.1 Introduction

The objectives of this chapter are to provide a **condensed overview** of how the **existing literature** relates to this study, to give an abbreviated report of the **findings of the empirical research process**, to reveal the degree to which the **hypotheses** were **achieved** or realised, to make evident the **weaknesses of the empirical research process** and to offer **suggestions** on how to improve the implementation of the research process with further investigation.

7.2 Aims of the Study

7.2.1 Immediate aims:

- ✓ Designing a practical procedure, with the aim of creating a holistic portfolio, by employing multiple media to create a visible and audible construct that can literally be viewed on a television screen, in order to stimulate self-insight in the client.
- ✓ Establishing the effectiveness of a procedure designed to create a holistic picture of the client's situation, as depicted by self-generated visual and expressive media.
- ✓ Determining whether the client experienced any meaningful inner response during such a practical and professional looking process.
- ✓ Gaining insight into the value that a multiple arts therapy and media approach holds for the counselling process.
- ✓ Determining the elements regarded as most enlightening, enjoyable and worthy within the parameters of the case study, as well as the exercises that need to be altered, in order to optimise client co-operation.
- ✓ Establishing the meaning of the final private screening for the client's situation.

7.2.2 Secondary aims

- Constructing a marketable, enjoyable and sensory approach to counselling and the motivational arena.
- Triggering self-development and self-discovery in clients, such as discovering talents for activities they did not consider before.
- Enabling clients to leave the process feeling personally enriched, because they were involved in a creative process for which they have proof.

7.3 Findings Based on the Literature

As stated in **Chapter 1**, the study focus differs from other approaches in which visual and expressive therapies, or arts therapies, are combined, not only in the structured, rehearsed and *positive* confrontational emphasis, but also in its attempt to **implement video affirmatively**. The combinations in the arts therapy domain that attempt to employ a more “inclusive” grouping consist of the following, as discussed in **Chapter 4**:

- art therapy, drama therapy, movement therapy, sound and therapeutic writing;
- art therapy, drama therapy, music therapy, play therapy, and sandplay therapy; and
- art therapy, photo therapy, sandplay therapy and video therapy.

The combination that was employed in the research process consisted of elements taken from the following arts therapies: **art** therapy, **collage** therapy, **drama** therapy, **photo** therapy, therapeutic **humour**, therapeutic **writing** and **video** therapy.

Literature seems to lack step-by-step procedures or plans for “non-creative” counsellors to follow, in order to meaningfully integrate expressive modalities. The objective with the research process or procedure that was designed in **Chapter 5** and implemented in **Chapter 6** was, and is, to see, among others, how feasible and practical *a possible* step-by-step “plan” for the arts in the counselling environment may be.

Literature differentiates between the arts *as* therapy and the arts *in therapy*, based on the degree to which the counsellor engages the client in drawing meaning from the “product” or process. A search was undertaken to find out how many different legitimate arts therapies (and adjuncts) actually exist in practice, and to learn about the basic nature of each therapy and its applicable environment and procedures.

To aid the study focus, an artificial division was made between the visual and expressive therapies, for the purposes of classification and structure. Twelve different types of visual therapy, including adjuncts, were found, ranging from art therapy to video therapy, and fourteen expressive types of therapy, including adjuncts, could be listed, ranging from adventure therapy to poetry therapy – see **Table 1, Chapter 2**.

The ten most common recurring themes in the 26 abovementioned arts therapies and adjuncts were identified in **Chapter 3**. Literature reveals that the arts therapies can provide the following beneficial elements:

- a **cathartic experience**, which can open the client for further therapy;
- **an awakening of creativity** that may, in turn, uncover spiritual paths;
- **healing** of early psychological wounds, which can be facilitated in the reparative space of the arts therapies;
- **metaphors**, which may allow the counsellor and client to transcend communication barriers;
- opportunities for **projection**, allowing the client to reveal personal material in an affirming environment;
- **ritual** that can establish a healing frame for personal ceremony;
- **the heightening of spirituality**, as a result of the inner order being facilitated by the arts experience;
- **symbolism** that affords the client the opportunity to express difficult personal issues;
- **the enhancement of self-knowledge** in all the aspects of **self** by the “mirror” function of the arts therapies; and

- **the rising of unconscious** issues to the **conscious mind** by the unexpected, as well as planned, discoveries prompted by the arts therapies.

Chapter 4 attempted to provide insight into the type of creative exercises or techniques that may be employed by the various arts therapies, in order to illustrate that the type of exercises combined for the empirical research process (**Chapters 5 and 6**) are very credible, in the light of existing exercises and techniques. Each of the arts therapies discussed in **Chapter 4** is listed below and most are accompanied by an example of a possible or credible exercise, as described in **Chapter 4**.

Visual Therapies

- **Art Therapy** - *Family drawing and communication collage*
 - Boxes - *Self-boxes*
 - Clay - *Figurative sculpture*
 - Mandala - *Creating the Wheel of Life*
 - Spiritual Art Therapy - *Meditation and clay sculpture*
- **Collage Therapy** - *Magazine photo collage*
- **Photo Therapy** - *Self-portraits*
- **Sandplay Therapy** - *Creating the world*
- **Video Therapy** - *Video interviewing and script reading*

Expressive Therapies

- **Adventure Therapy** - *Therapeutic day camp (fishing and art-making)*
- **Dance and Movement Therapy** - *Integrated movement [including dialogue and art-making]*
- **Drama Therapy** - *Affective constellation sculpture*
 - **Drama Therapy Variations**
 - ✓ The integrative five-phase model
 - ✓ Psychodrama
 - **Clown Therapy** - *“Gibberish”*
 - **Story and Storytelling**

- *Playback Theatre, Voice and Musical Theatre*
 - ✓ Playback theatre
 - ✓ Voice movement and musical theatre - *Fairy Tale*
- **Music Therapy** - *Fill-in-the-blank*
 - *Drumming* - *Drumming circle dialogues*
- **Play Therapy** - *Costume play therapy*
- **Therapeutic Writing** - *Letter to self*
 - *Poetry Therapy* - *Songs for the 'receptive component' and Psalms in therapy*

Most of the exercises listed above require the expertise of a counsellor or therapist that was schooled in a particular arts genre to render a service that is beneficial to both the counsellor and the client. As mentioned above, the research process was constructed and implemented with the aim of creating “manageable” exercises that may even be facilitated by counsellors who do not regard themselves as being too “creatively competent”.

7.4 Findings Based on Empirical Research Process

The respondent has a keen interest in creativity and an aptitude for art-making. It became apparent that his verbalisations (expressive constructs) were by far not as informative as his aesthetically crafted visual constructs. When he was engaged in the art-making process he seemed **alive** and **resourceful** but when he had to communicate within the framework of the Counselling Manual, his verbal responses lacked conviction and depth.

It may be that he expressed an interest in the intended research programme because he was attracted to the art-making aspects and was, perhaps, not fully aware of the other expressive demands the process would pose. He maintained an introvert “artistic” stance throughout the process that left the answers to some questions “hidden”, because it seemed, in some instances, that he was not prepared to venture verbally beyond his inner borders.

Throughout the process, the respondent appeared to be in complete control of the constructs and he worked carefully and methodically. He was a bit reluctant when aspects had to be written down but he became alive when we started to work with the images. It seemed that the imagery evoked a response from the respondent that made him emotionally more responsive. He appeared “happier” and more open after the visual construct steps but did not verbalise the extent of his “satisfaction”. He also appreciated the photocopies that were made and he remarked that photocopying made the constructs look professional.

Even though I felt that the expressive component suffered at times, due to his allegiance to art-making, the process afforded him an opportunity to be brave within himself and to increase his own level of risk-taking in an environment that was supportive. For an introvert young man, he was very brave to consent to participating in something that kept him actively busy for three and a half days, during which he had to grapple with his own inner issues on many levels.

The process was designed to allow the client the privilege to craft the self’s own constructs and, hopefully, to reap the “ongoing” benefits of self-knowledge over time. He completed the whole process and, even though his verbalisations, or expressive constructs, were lacking some detail, I felt his perseverance in manufacturing detailed visual constructs and his determination to continue with a process in which he was constantly mirroring himself, revealed the traits of a young man of courage who **must** have learned a lot about himself.

Initially, the respondent was slightly uneasy when the video recordings were made but he made successful appearances throughout the process. He remarked, however, that he found it uncomfortable. At times, it seemed that he wanted to get it over with as soon as possible but, at the same time, a sense of achievement appeared in his behaviour. It was as if he wanted to say he actually enjoyed it but he was not prepared to admit it.

During the process, he made brave advances but, as stated earlier, at strategic verbal assignments where greater self-disclosure was called for, he held back. The constructs revealed material from which deductions could be made but the client had the privilege of hiding behind the constructs. Even though the respondent did not clarify all the imagery, I was able to obtain a clearer view of who he was, due to the recurring themes and images that emerged being difficult to ignore.

When I look at his visual constructs collectively, a sense of deep thought and a search for personal meaning seem to prevail and a lack of social involvement and an overemphasis on his interest in nature seem evident. His constructs also seem to convey a sense of “suspicion” underlying the very “tranquil” portrayal of his reality. I did not stop during the process to probe into these “deeper” aspects, because this process was designed to allow the client the opportunity to confront himself by means of the visual and expressive constructs. Furthermore, the focus of this study was to establish how a combined arts therapy approach could be implemented in practice and to probe the demands of such an endeavour.

The photographic session was an enjoyable and relaxed situation that lent itself to personal disclosure in a quiet way. I allowed the respondent to take pictures of me too and it became an excellent opportunity for building rapport and coming into each other’s personal spaces. He seemed to enjoy the humorous picture and posed without much encouragement, even though he stated that he did not like photos being taken of him. It was clear that he was delighted with the results of the photographic step.

The step that required the respondent to take a few photographs of his living environment was not successful. The respondent failed to respond to the requirements because of various factors, the most obvious one being that he thought he had the 20 photographs we needed in his album but, eventually, he could only find six and we had to supplement his deficit with magazine images, which lacked the personal involvement or personal connotations of a photograph.

Towards the end of the process, the respondent made it clear that he was becoming excited about completing the process. He wanted it to finish! Even though he was anxious to finish, he was very successful in the making of the personalised clock face, which was clearly a personal favourite, because he dedicated himself to its creation and had a clear idea of where exactly it was going to be mounted on their living-room wall.

During the concluding steps of the process, it appeared that he was not fully interacting with the display of his constructs and that he was merely using pat answers that were easy, which could have been the result of **emotional** and **physical fatigue**. It could be that the demands of the visual constructs on his self-stated “perfectionist” nature required so much energy that it “drained” him verbally, or that he eventually came to regard the verbalisation aspect of the process as being of less importance.

The **screening** of the **edited video** took place five days after the counselling process was completed. Before the screening, a display was made of the constructs and my promoter and the respondent engaged in dialogue around these constructions. The client appeared relaxed and answered the questions that were put to him with the greatest of ease.

The respondent, my promoter and I watched the edited video together and the respondent was clearly at ease with his screen image and the imagery depicted. Afterwards, he answered questions as if he was discussing something very natural. He was delighted with the end result and he called it “inspirational”. To me, it seemed that he may have been talking from a position of growth. He did not have a problem with the background music that was chosen but suggested that it would have been a privilege to sit in on the editing process, in order to have input regarding the background music.

7.5 Testing of Hypotheses

7.5.1 A “visual (video) narrative” will enable clients to become more aware of recurring personal themes.

This hypothesis was confirmed. The respondent kept on referring to the uncertainty of his career choice and his inner need for combining creativity and his love for nature in his

eventual career decision. Another important aspect of his personal views was the apparent need to find the “deeper meaning to life” that surfaced repeatedly in his outlook.

7.5.2 Different arts therapeutic approaches and counselling techniques can be meaningfully combined to create a sensory client-friendly process to produce a personal motivational portfolio.

This hypothesis was confirmed. Twenty-six different arts therapies (including a few adjuncts) were successfully combined, according to the process described in **Chapter 5**, in order to allow the client the privilege of generating constructs that illustrate personal motivational material. The process culminated in the screening of the edited video that captured the core aspects of the expressive and visual constructs. The respondent called the viewing of the edited video “inspiring”.

7.5.3 A visual and expressive display of inner concerns can trigger meaningful self-insight in clients, because the client’s self-respect will be enhanced by professional-looking, motivational material that was manufactured or designed by the client.

The degree to which this hypothesis was confirmed is uncertain but the process did, indeed, trigger a measure of self-insight in the client (according to his responses as described in **Chapter 6**). The EPI results bear witness to the fact that the process as a whole has contributed to his self-insight. Further research into the degree of self-insight made possible by this particular approach to arts therapy is needed.

7.5.4 It is practically possible to assist a client in manufacturing meaningful stimuli (visual and expressive constructs) that will be decorative but, at the same time, laden with a personal message to motivate change.

This hypothesis was confirmed. The client left the counselling environment – a room that was equipped with art materials, a video camera, videotapes, lights and other miscellaneous items that the counsellor and client could use to manufacture the client’s

personal constructs – with various constructs that he had manufactured under the guidance of the counsellor and could display at home.

7.6 Empirical research weaknesses

Limitations, weaknesses, and suggestions (researcher and participant perspectives)

(a) Researcher

(i) Limitations

The results of the intended research process are only valid with regards to the empirical research situation described here, as it occurred with this respondent's co-operation documented in this dissertation.

The respondent did not answer all the questions in the manual. He had the privilege to indicate which questions he preferred to answer or which ones he regarded as being irrelevant. In hindsight, I realise that a few more pertinent or “deeper” questions could have been designed for the manual.

(ii) Weaknesses

It is possible that a measure of the (true) emotive meanings of the respondent's words in Afrikaans was lost, due to translation into English.

I realise that I was subconsciously and literally very concerned with the practical demands that the process made on me and that I could have tried harder to gather more revealing verbal responses from the respondent.

(b) Respondent

I drew up a list of questions (see **Appendix F**), which I wanted the respondent to answer after the screening of the edited video and the interactions with my promoter were concluded. His answers were brief.

The questions and answers are given below:

- Was the process too long? (*No*)
- Was there too much repetition? (*No*)
- Did the steps logically build upon one another? (*Yes*)
- Could you distinguish between the different meanings embedded in each step? (*Yes*)
- What did you like the most? (*Monoprints and painting of the clock-face.*)
- Did you experience the pace of the process as being rushed? (*No*)
- Would you have preferred to receive a list of materials you needed to have before the process started? (*It would have helped.*)
- How did you experience the workspace? (*Was sufficient.*)
- What do you think would be the ideal place or space in which to represent this “workshop”? (*Hall – big classroom.*)
- Were the art materials and equipment sufficient to complete the assignments? (*Yes*)
- What was the core message of the process – to you? (*Everybody has a purpose and nobody is useless. Every person has meaning.*)
- Who do you think would benefit from this process? (*People who would like to get to know themselves better.*)
- How suitable do you think the process is for a group setting? (*No comment.*)
- For which age group would you recommend this process? (*Teens 13- 20*)
- Was the process at all worth the effort? Provide reasons for your answer. (*Yes, I learned more about myself.*)
- How do you feel about the type of artworks or constructs the process employs? Were you satisfied with the results? (*The artworks are OK and I am happy with the results.*)
- Can you think of any other interesting art projects that are suitable for this counselling workshop environment? (*No suggestions*)

- Do you think the two collages were meaningful or must the second one be replaced with a different activity that will describe the identity? (*Necessary*)
- Do you think the way video was used in this process can make any contribution to self-discovery? (*Yes*)
- Would you have liked to use still more or other media? (*Tape recorder*)
- How did you experience the final screening of the edited video? (*Inspiring*)
- Have you made any inner progress of which you are already aware? (*Yes, I gained self-insight.*)
- Did you experience the process (as it was presented) to be supportive of the inner person or was it degrading? (*It was supportive.*)
- Do you have any other suggestions? (*None*)

The respondent did not feel that the process, as it was, needed to change but he suggested that the client be sent a list of requirements (of personal artefacts) needed before the process commenced and he indicated that the inclusion of a tape recorder could be considered. He said that he would have enjoyed selecting the background music for the edited video music himself. With reference to the tape recorder: during the research process it appeared that he did not enjoy writing and he suggested that a tape recorder could be used to capture personal thoughts in an easier format.

7.7 Summary

The empirical research process revealed that it is indeed possible to employ a structured arts therapy approach that is based on the deliberate combination of various visual and expressive arts therapies. A counsellor with an interest in the arts therapies can successfully guide and assist a client, according to a step-by-step procedure, to generate personal constructs. These constructs can be documented and recorded in order to produce more tangible counselling “products” to facilitate dialogue during the counselling process and to stimulate and initiate a greater measure of self-insight or self-knowledge in the client.

This study also proved that video can be used more affirmatively in counselling and that the edited video, which contains the gist of the constructs, has the potential to keep the personal “growth” that was begun in the counselling environment “alive”. By means of video, the evidence of personal “gains” made during the process may be accessed long after termination of the counselling process.

Recommendations

- A study should be conducted to see how deeply therapy is affected by this particular approach of arts therapy.
- It may be interesting to see how the process can be facilitated within a group context.
- It may be credible to use this process to do team counselling with a group of various experts. This process has potential to allow a group of counselling experts to work together to assist the client to build a holistic portrayal of the client’s world.
- The process may still be too long. Some exercises or steps may be combined to save time.
- A group of counselling experts should brainstorm the type of questions that should follow each step, in order to facilitate optimum self-insight in the client.
- It could be that the respondent built up resistance towards the counsellor that was continually around him and, in order to combat this, the process could be conducted in an environment where there are more people in the vicinity.
- Some “unprepared” or spontaneous video recordings could have led to more spontaneous responses. Perhaps the pattern of writing before each recording needs to change, because it is too predictable.

- At the start of the process, I explained the whole process of what was to follow but perhaps only a few highlights needed to be shared, because the process may have seemed too “familiar”.
- Perhaps I should not include all the questions in the manual, as it gives the client an opportunity to rehearse answers! Perhaps a file-type of manual could be used, so that the questions can be entered as the process progresses.
- This study was aimed at discovering how this combined arts therapy process could be implemented and, certainly, more can be done to draw issues from the client. During this first trial with the respondent, I was, at times, preoccupied with the practicalities and it may be said that I inevitably “neglected” the respondent (client) but, what compensated for the “neglect” is the fact that the respondent had the opportunity to collect personal information by means of various media, steps and personal levels.
- Perhaps the client needs to complete a questionnaire regarding personal interests at the start of the process, so that if a particular arts exercise is not that favourably received, another could be substituted that might be more favourably received. The recordings and creative aspects can be built around the client’s preferences, for example, if the client does not respond to expressing his thoughts on paper, then the exercise can be built around something else, such as making a drawing or making use of more voice recordings.
- The photographic exercise could be supplemented with a video therapy exercise, so that the client can feel more in charge of the process, or feel that the camera is not an intimidating instrument. Allowing the client to videotape his world and then commenting on the scenes or images as they are videotaped, could break the barrier that the medium could create between the client and the counsellor and the client can understand even more that that the medium is there to serve him.

- The quality of the video equipment and the environment could be improved. The quality of the available equipment I used was average and, with better equipment, more could be done to render a touch of electronic excellence.
- It would be interesting to see how people without an affinity for the creative arts would react when subjected to the practical and expressive demands of this arts therapy approach.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to highlight the concerns stated in 7.1 and to emphasise the fact that a combined arts therapy approach can be successfully implemented in counselling. I found this study challenging but enriching.