The Museum as a Healing Space: Addressing Museum Visitors' Emotional Responses through Viewing and Creating Artwork

https://hdl.handle.net/2144/2419

Boston University
THE MUSEUM AS A HEALING SPACE

Addressing Museum Visitors’ Emotional Responses through Viewing and Creating Artwork

by

ARTHURINA FEARS

Bachelor of Arts in English, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2004
Graduate Certificate in Art History, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2009

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
MA in Art Education
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the generous support from the SIU University Museum and the Women’s Center. I appreciate the kind help and enthusiasm from children’s therapist Patty Weyhrich. From the beginning, Patty was interested in helping me make my research project possible. I express much gratitude to the museum education director, Bob DeHoet, for reserving the museum auditorium, lending and helping to set up tables and chairs, and for being so accommodating and opening the museum after hours. Dr. Brenda Gilbert provided me with recommendations regarding an anxiety assessment tool for the study. Counselors Cynthia Dudek and Shelley Smothers added support to the program and assisted with transportation for the participants. Elka Kazmierczak provided me with advice and suggestions for consent forms and photographing the art process while maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity required of the study. Much appreciation is also extended to those who participated in this study. I would also like to thank my husband, Paul Porter, for his unwavering support and encouragement throughout this program.
ABSTRACT

This museum-based study analyzes museum visitors’ emotional responses to viewing and creating artwork within the context of the museum space. Five clients from a women’s shelter participated in the study, with ages ranging from fourteen to fifty two years old. Museum visitors were instructed to choose an artwork within the museum that resonated an emotion, feeling, or memory, followed by the completion of a guided written response. Participants shared the chosen artwork with one another and discussed the rationale for choosing the object. Artwork was created in response to the museum tour. Data collected and examined include: a State Anxiety Inventory (SAI) before and after the program; museum narrative written response; observations; analysis of artwork and writing responses; and a follow-up survey. Participants demonstrated personal connections to viewing museum objects that corresponded to themes within their own artwork. Results of the study determine that anxiety was reduced overall, although certain levels of anxiety were unchanged or slightly increased within some participants. The findings provide insight into museum visitors’ responses to museum content and may be applicable to educators interested in implementing healing art-based programs in collaboration with museums and community organizations.

Keywords: anxiety, well-being, museum education, healing art, community outreach
Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................................... ii

ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................................................. iii

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................................................ vii

LIST OF FIGURES ..................................................................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .......................................................................................................... 1

   Background to the Study ...................................................................................................................... 1

   Research Goals ..................................................................................................................................... 2

   Research Questions .............................................................................................................................. 3

   Conceptual Framework ....................................................................................................................... 3

      Methodology ..................................................................................................................................... 3

      Methods of Data Collection ............................................................................................................. 4

      Methods of Analysis ......................................................................................................................... 4

   Theoretical Framework ....................................................................................................................... 5

   Significance of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 7

   Limitations of the Study ...................................................................................................................... 7

   Summary ............................................................................................................................................ 8

   Plan of Chapters ................................................................................................................................. 8

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................................................................... 9

   Conceptual Framework ....................................................................................................................... 9

   Review of the Literature ...................................................................................................................... 10

      Reasons for visiting museums ......................................................................................................... 10
THE MUSEUM AS A HEALING SPACE

Role of museums........................................................................................................11
Art museum education .............................................................................................12
Museum therapy.........................................................................................................12
  Emotional response ...............................................................................................13
  Meaning-making .....................................................................................................13
  Viewing and creating art .......................................................................................14
Conclusion ................................................................................................................14

3. METHODOLOGY ..................................................................................................15
Design of the Study .................................................................................................15
Research Methods ....................................................................................................16
  Museum participant observation .............................................................................17
  Anxiety and well-being assessment .......................................................................17
  Guided questions and narrative writing assessment .............................................18
  Art making workshop and narrative writing assessment ......................................19
  Follow-up assessment ...........................................................................................19
Data Collection ..........................................................................................................20
Data Analysis ...........................................................................................................20
Conclusion ................................................................................................................20

4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY ..................................................................................22
Significance of the Study .........................................................................................22
Bias and Validity .......................................................................................................23
Analysis of the Data ..................................................................................................24
Anxiety assessment ....................................................................................................24
Guided questions response ................................................................. 31
Art making .................................................................................. 33
Narrative writing response ............................................................. 37
Sharing artwork and program closure ............................................. 39
Follow-up survey ......................................................................... 41
Conclusion .................................................................................... 42

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .................................................. 44
Discussion ................................................................................... 44
Personal impact of the study ......................................................... 45
Impact on practice ......................................................................... 46
Rationale for the Unit ..................................................................... 47
Recommendations ......................................................................... 48
Conclusion to the Research ............................................................ 50
Advice to the field of art education ................................................ 50
Advice to art teachers ..................................................................... 51

REFERENCES .................................................................................. 52

APPENDIX ....................................................................................... 54
Informed Consent Form ................................................................. 54
Self-Evaluation Questionnaire ...................................................... 55
Museum as a Healing Space Guided Questions ............................ 56
The Museum as a Healing Space Post-Workshop Survey ............. 57
Unit Plan ........................................................................................ 58
## LIST OF TABLES

2.1 Conceptual Framework ........................................................................................................... 10

4.1 Participant 1 Anxiety Assessment Chart ................................................................................. 25

4.2 Participant 2 Anxiety Assessment Chart ................................................................................. 26

4.3 Participant 3 Anxiety Assessment Chart ................................................................................. 26

4.4 Participant 4 Anxiety Assessment Chart ................................................................................. 27

4.5 Participant 5 Anxiety Assessment Chart ................................................................................. 27

4.6 Participant 1 Changes in Anxiety Assessment Levels ............................................................... 28

4.7 Participant 2 Changes in Anxiety Assessment Levels ............................................................... 29

4.8 Participant 3 Changes in Anxiety Assessment Levels ............................................................... 29

4.9 Participant 4 Changes in Anxiety Assessment Levels ............................................................... 30

4.10 Participant 5 Changes in Anxiety Assessment Levels ............................................................. 30
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Art Making Process ...........................................................................................................33
Figure 4.2 Art Making Process ...........................................................................................................33
Figure 4.3 Art Making Process ...........................................................................................................34
Figure 4.4 Art Making Process ...........................................................................................................34
Figure 4.5 Art Making Process ...........................................................................................................34
Figure 4.6 Participant 1 Artwork ........................................................................................................35
Figure 4.7 Participant 2 Artwork ........................................................................................................35
Figure 4.8 Participant 3 Artwork ........................................................................................................36
Figure 4.9 Participant 4 Artwork ........................................................................................................36
Figure 4.10 Participant 5 Artwork .....................................................................................................37
Chapter One: Introduction

Background to the Study

Museums contain artwork that may evoke personal emotional responses. How can such emotions and feelings be addressed? It is important to understand how art educators can learn about and respond to the emotional needs of museum visitors. According to Hein (1998), educators should be aware of the ways in which museum visitors derive personal meaning from the museum experience, “meanings that mesh with the content of their own lives and what they already know” (Treadon et al., 2006, p. 289). Pittman-Gelles (1988) asserts that “the purpose of art museum education is to enhance the visitor’s ability to understand and appreciate the original works of art and to transfer these experiences into other aspects of visitors’ lives” (p. 289). Understanding how artwork affects museum visitors allows art educators to collaborate with museums and other organizations to create and implement specialized programs that address emotional needs, such as those targeted at reducing anxiety and improving well-being.

In recent years, some museums have expanded their programs to include specialized tours, such as those designed for Alzheimer’s patients to evoke memories and foster connections, as well as healing art tours for special populations; however, museums are not typically seen as institutions which deal with the therapeutic or psychological aspects of art. How can art appreciation merge with art therapy, and what are the ethical considerations of implementing healing art programs in museums? How do therapeutic-based programs enhance museum visitors’ well-being? What benefits or issues do museum visitors report from specialized tours? How can implementing an art making component during museum tours affect museum visitors? How can museum visitors’ emotional responses be measured? How can art educators, museums, and community organizations collaborate to offer specialized tours? This study examined the
process and results of an experimental healing art tour and art making component that took place at a museum with clients from a women’s shelter.

The background of this museum-based study is grounded in the researcher’s experience and interest in community outreach and utilizing art as a healing tool, which includes creating and leading art for empowerment workshops at a women’s shelter for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence for the past five years. The workshops are designed to help clients gain insight and resolve counseling issues through the art making process. The researcher also volunteers for community educational programs at two museums and has been a museum docent at an arts education festival and school tour in order to facilitate students’ interest and enthusiasm for art appreciation as they learn more about the world and to help students make meaningful connections through artwork.

Ways to bridge the therapeutic components of creating, viewing, and analyzing art within the museum space were explored through this study. The researcher’s background in art studio, art education, art history, and interest in art therapy were combined in order to explore the effects of creative expression. This study examines the psychological and social components of the museum experience and reflects how both viewing and creating artwork within the context of the museum can contribute to one’s sense of well-being.

Research Goals

The museum-based study enabled the researcher to explore and understand how art educators can collaborate with museums, as well as other institutions and organizations, in order to create meaningful programs for the community. The goal of this study was to understand museum visitors’ emotional responses to both viewing and creating artwork and to determine whether levels of anxiety decrease and if well-being is enhanced; another goal of this study was
to expand community outreach by increasing awareness for life-enriching and healing art educational programs at museums through collaborating with the local museum and a women’s shelter. The researcher implemented and led a specialized tour and art making workshop at the community museum for clients from a women’s shelter. Museum visitors’ emotional responses were analyzed through observation and interaction with the researcher during the tour and art making workshop; in addition, the participants completed an assessment to measure their emotional responses and levels of anxiety and depression both before and after the program.

Research Questions

The research question asks: What is the significance of the ways in which memories, feelings, and emotions are stirred through the viewing and creation of artwork within the museum space, and how can art educators respond to the emotional needs of museum visitors? Is there a decrease in levels of anxiety and depression and an increase in well-being after participating in a therapeutically-designed museum tour? The researcher consulted with a wellness center to determine which emotional assessments would most accurately analyze museum visitors’ responses.

Conceptual Framework

Methodology

A museum-based, qualitative study measured and analyzed museum visitors’ emotional responses to viewing and creating artwork; the museum experience was vital to this study. The researcher implemented a therapeutically-based art tour and directly observed and interacted with museum visitors. Previous experience in leading healing art workshops at a women’s shelter, as well as museum experience, enabled the researcher to design an experimental healing art-based art tour with an art making component at the museum. This study consisted of
collaboration between an art educator, mental health professionals, and museums and the exploration of art museums as a healing tool. The researcher read and analyzed literature written by those who have explored therapeutic aspects of museums and attempted to understand how emotional responses are elicited and addressed within the museum context.

Methods of Data Collection

This study detailed the results of the collaboration between clients at a women’s shelter and the resources of the community museum. Museum visitors were instructed to find an artwork within the museum that was significant to them; for instance, participants were asked to find an artwork that depicted a specific emotion or memory. Williams (2010) included a list of sample questions from his Personal Response tour which were helpful to this study; these questions stress the importance of thinking about personal connections. Following a discussion of the significance of the artwork, the museum visitors then created their own artwork in response to the museum experience. The researcher both observed and interacted with the participants during the tour, while observing during the art making component. The program concluded with a questionnaire for the participants to complete in order to assess their emotional responses.

Methods of Analysis

A review and analysis of relevant, scholarly literature enabled the researcher to learn the benefits, concerns, and limitations of conducting a healing art-based tour. The questions from Williams (2010) provided the basis from which to begin the tour and were tailored based on the needs of the clients at the women’s shelter. Although Williams (2010) conducted his research with medical residents, he suggests that other populations can benefit from a Personal Response tour, including support groups (Williams, 2010, p. 96).
Other methods of analysis included observations of the museum visitors’ interactions and discussions about the significance of the artwork they chose. Images of the museum’s artwork were not included in the study because of copyrights; however, descriptions of the artwork were included, such as the title, artist, year, and medium. After gaining their permission, museum visitors’ personal artwork was photographed. At the end of the day’s program, museum visitors shared their artwork with the group and completed a written assessment to record and measure their emotional responses.

**Theoretical Framework**

Reviewing relevant literature determined that the therapeutic aspects of art within museums have been explored by those from various fields, including art educators, museum educators, art therapists, and social workers. The articles were found in journals spanning from *Museum Management and Curatorship* to *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* and suggest that collaboration among professionals from other fields could contribute to expanded viewpoints and modes of research for therapeutic museum-based programs; this further implies that the emotional aspects of art are multifaceted and are relevant across a number of fields.

The proposed study was guided by techniques from Ray Williams (2010), a museum educator who has explored “the potential of the art museum as an environment that supports reflection, invites personal connections, and builds community” (p. 94). Williams (2010) invited a group of medical residents to “find a work of art that…embodies pure joy” (p. 93). Medical residents participated in a Personal Response tour in which they were given a guided question that instructed them to find “a work of art that resonated with some aspect of their life” (p. 94). After “several minutes of contemplation and reflection….the group reconvened to share their
works of art, the questions that had guided their wanderings, and the thoughts and feelings the experience had evoked” (p. 94). According to Williams (2010), “inviting museum visitors to share their thoughts and feelings, memories and associations, is both powerful and unexpected” (p. 96).

There are other researchers who have studied the therapeutic and psychological aspects of museums. Hein (1998) states that art museums “were founded to enhance the lives of everyday individuals and provide an arena for educational experiences” (Treadon et al., 2006, p. 288). Falk & Dierking (1992) cite Lakota (1975) in the assertion that museums are part of a large, social dynamic, in addition to being an educational environment (Falk & Dierking, 1992, p. 41). According to Mayer (1998), the museum experience allows individuals to better understand their lives (Treadon et al., 2006, p. 289). Silverman (1995) posits that the museum experience triggers connections from individuals’ lives in which they “make meaning” (Silverman, 1995, p. 162). Binnie (2010) studied how viewing art within a museum can positively impact museum visitors’ well-being and determined that either the museum environment or viewing artwork contributed to relaxation (Binnie, 2010, p. 199).

While most of the literature appears to advocate for programs that address museum visitors’ well-being, there exist critics who postulate that museums and art galleries oversimplify artwork and “accuse gallery staff of dabbling in ‘therapy’ or ‘social work’ rather than education when they seek to broaden their visitor base” (Barr, 2005, p. 16). Furedi (2004) argues that museums “adopt policies that ‘flatter’ students and visitors” (p. 16). However, Ander et al. (2011) conclude that museums can make positive and advantageous contributions when they focus on museum visitors’ well-being (Ander et al., 2011, p. 253).
Significance of the Study

There appears to be great potential for collaboration between museums, art educators, and community organizations. Williams (2010) has explored the therapeutic aspects of artwork and “the potential of the art museum as an environment that supports reflection, invites personal connections, and builds community” (Williams, 2010, p. 94). This study attempted to address the need for art educators to become involved in community outreach and to increase community access to the life-enhancing benefits of art. Furthermore, there are many individuals who have never been to a museum, and museums are often interested in expanding their audience; implementing programs, such as a healing art, could increase the number of museum visitors and would highlight and address important community issues.

Limitations of the Study

Because this study relied on involvement of clients from a women’s shelter, issues of confidentiality were of prime concern. The clients had to be able to speak in a confidential setting, yet the public space of the museum posed an issue; to resolve this, the museum educator director opened the museum after hours for the group, and the researcher reserved a private auditorium for the clients to speak in confidence with each other, the researcher, and a counselor. Observations and a written assessment were objectively organized and tailored to address the needs of clients at a women’s shelter within the context of the museum environment. Several techniques for conducting the healing art tour were derived from scholarly literature; the data from the study was triangulated with the literature. Photographs of artwork were also included, yet they remained anonymous due to issues of confidentiality. The study did not include any factors that personally identified the museum visitors who completed a waiver agreeing that their participation and responses could be included in the study.
Summary

Museums may be an appropriate venue in which to address museum visitors’ emotional needs. Scholarly literature was reviewed with studies suggesting the benefits of programs which focus on the emotional aspects of the museum experience. The background to the study has been described which details the rationale and methodology for implementing a therapeutic-based art program at a museum. The goal of the study was to examine ways in which art educators can respond to the emotional needs of museum visitors; clients from a women’s shelter participated in this study. Museum visitors were provided with guiding questions and chose a museum artwork in response; a corresponding art making activity followed. Museum visitors’ emotional responses, including levels of anxiety and sense of well-being were assessed.

Plan of Chapters

The following chapters will detail: a review of the literature comprised of scholarly data from which the sources for this study were gathered and analyzed in Chapter Two; methodology will be covered in Chapter Three; data analysis will be described in Chapter Four; and Chapter Five will conclude the study.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

How can viewing and creating artwork within the museum space impact emotional well-being? This study explored how art educators can collaborate with museums and other organizations in the community and implement life-enriching healing art-based programs that address museum visitors’ emotional needs. This chapter reviews the theoretical framework for a museum-based study with a foundation grounded in scholarly literature that examines ways in which museum visitors derive personal meaning from artwork based on the context of their own lives; the literature review further analyzes the therapeutic potential of museums.

Conceptual Framework

The researcher chose a museum-based inquiry in response to an interest in bridging the psychological aspects of the art making process with the museum experience (see Table 2.1). Instructing art for empowerment workshops at a women’s shelter enabled the researcher to understand the therapeutic benefits of the art making process; workshop participants noted that creating art aided in relaxation and provided an emotional outlet for issues otherwise difficult to verbally express. Furthermore, being a docent and volunteering for a museum education program provided further insight into the ways that museum visitors interact with and respond to art.

An interest in museum involvement in healing art was propelled during an art education history course at Boston University in spring 2011. The researcher noticed that healing art programs have been increasing, which led her to conduct a historical inquiry into three separate museum programs; as a result, one of the museums involved in the study invited the researcher to be a participant in a healing art roundtable discussion, which included an observation of a healing art tour for Alzheimer’s patients. Those involved in the roundtable were from various
professions, including museum educators, artists, and health care professionals. This experience demonstrated that communities may benefit from healing art programs and further strengthened the researcher’s interest in exploring the potential for healing art.

Table 2.1

Review of the Literature

Reasons for visiting museums.

At the heart of every visitor’s preconceptions and expectations is her personal context—her personal reservoir of knowledge, attitudes, and experience, influenced by expectations concerning the physical characteristics of the museum, what she will find
there, what she can do there, and who is accompanying her on this visit (Falk and Dierking, 1992, p. 25).

The impetus for instituting healing art programs can be addressed through considering the reasons why individuals visit museums. Museums are often visited for social-recreational, educational, and reverential reasons (p. 14). According to Falk and Dierking (1992), anthropologist Nelson Graburn describes the museum experience as “a place of ‘peace and fantasy’ where the visitor can escape the mundane…world” (p. 15). Hood (1983) posits that frequent museum visitors cite three reasons for visiting museums, including “opportunities to learn, challenges of new experiences, and doing something worthwhile”; however, infrequent museum visitors deem these factors least important and instead prefer social interaction, active participation, and feeling secure (pp. 17-18). While individuals visit museums for various reasons, it is their personal context which is “the single greatest influence on the visitor’s museum experience” (p. 37).

**Role of museums.**

Linesch (2004) suggests that before utilizing art museums for therapeutic purposes, it is first important to have a contextual understanding of museums (Treadon et al., 2006, p. 288). According to Silverman (2010), museums have always served social functions; museums are “institutions of social service…. [that] have both intentionally and unintentionally facilitated the expression and transformation of individuals and their sense of identity and contributed to the development and maintenance of friendship, family, and other important social bonds” (Silverman, 2010, p. 13). Silverman (2010) further states that museums are aligned with social work goals by citing the National Association of Social Workers (1973): “helping individuals,
groups, or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating social conditions favorable to this goal” (p. 13).

**Art museum education.**

Mayer (1998) states that art museum education has been evolving, and museums are faced with the dilemma of addressing the needs of both frequent museum visitors and the general public (Treadon et al., 2006, p. 289). According to the National Art Education Association (1989), the “philosophies of art museum education are based upon the values the museum promotes, the content it seeks to convey, those it attempts to reach and the methods the museum uses to attain those values” (p. 289). Pittman-Gelles (1988) posits that art museum education is intended to place the viewer, rather than the artwork, as its focus due to the idea that museum visitors must transfer an understanding of art to areas of their personal lives in order to create a meaningful experience (p. 289). According to Mayer (1998), the museum experience can help museum visitors understand more about their own lives (p. 289).

**Museum therapy.**

Museums play an important role in museum visitors’ emotional well-being. It is necessary to understand ways in which museums can further contribute to increasing well-being (Ander, 2011, p. 253). Art therapist Simone Alter Muri (1996) posits that combining museum visits with art therapy has therapeutic benefits: Combining art history with art therapy “can play a valuable role in enhancing self-esteem, sublimation, socialization skills, introspection, and creativity” (Alter Muri, 1996, p. 102). Williams (2010) recommends experiencing artwork “through the lens of our lived experience, to seek new insights, to share our thoughts and feelings with others” (Williams, 2010, p. 98). The artworks within museums become “manifestations of human experience, aspirations, and wisdom” (p. 95).
**Emotional response.**

Museum educator Ray Williams (2010) conducted a study that directed a group of medical residents to find an artwork that was personally significant. The Personal Response tour began with guided questions that instructed participants to explore the museum galleries on their own and allowed twenty minutes “to connect with one work of art for…contemplation and reflection” (p. 94). Following the personal reflection, the group shared their artwork, guided questions, and their personal responses with each other. The healing art tour in this study was based on several techniques from Williams’ Personal Response tour. Inviting museum visitors to share their personal emotional responses allows a chance “to muse, to share memories and associations, [and] to discover insights relevant to…life circumstances” (p. 98).

**Meaning-making.**

Museum visitors approach artwork through the context of their own lives. Silverman (1995) asserts that the “concept of meaning-making provides a useful new approach to understanding visitor experiences in museums…. [and] highlights the visitor’s active role in creating meaning of a museum experience through the context he/she brings” (Silverman, 1995, p. 161). Museums are personally relevant and meaningful to the public (p. 161). Museum visitors become participants with a unique emotional experience (Thumim, 2010, p. 292). Since individuals bring their personal experiences into the context of the museum, there must be a way to respond to the unique emotional needs of museum visitors. As Williams (2010) states, “art has always been about Life, and many…visitors are longing to reclaim that connection for themselves” (Williams, 2010, p. 98).
**Viewing and creating art.**

In addition to viewing works of art within a museum, it is also therapeutic to create art. Art making, in conjunction with viewing art, “creates a connection between client art and fine art, promotes group cohesion, and clearly increases the understanding of the many ways art can be a medium of psychological integration” (Alter Muri, 1996, p. 102). Silverman (1981) asserts that “art can be used to stimulate discussions on sensitive issues” (p. 102). Viewing artwork “facilitates the process of rendering unconscious material more conscious” (p. 102). Combining art history with art therapy “can enhance self-esteem, socialization skills, self-awareness, expression of repressed issues, and creativity…. [and] can motivate clients to take risks to put meaningful marks down on paper” (p. 107).

**Conclusion**

Research suggests that viewing art may lead to relaxation and decreased anxiety and that museums may be beneficial to personal well-being (Binnie, 2010, p. 199). Fernandez-Cao et al. (2010) cite Dissanayake (1988) in the assertion that art “influences the capacity for perceptive and cognitive analysis” and “offers a way to obtain… meaning from the experiences of life” (Fernandez-Cao et al., 2010, p. 402). According to Williams (2010), museums have great potential for public service and enable the public to make personal connections (Williams, 2010, p. 98). Museums naturally serve social service functions and contain artwork that evokes emotional responses within museum visitors. Several studies have concluded that the museum experience can be enhanced through emotionally enriching programs.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology for this museum-based study. The design of the study, research methods, data collection, and data analysis will be explained.
Chapter Three: Methodology

According to Alter Muri (1996), a therapeutic approach to art history, such as the incorporation of museum visits, may lead to an increase in self-esteem and sense of self (Alter Muri, 1996, p. 102). In response to the research question from Chapter One, this section describes the methodology for ways in which the museum environment may play a pivotal role in addressing museum visitors’ emotional states while maintaining a focus on the museum experience’s impact on anxiety and well-being. The design of the study, research methods, data collection, and methods of data analysis are explained in this chapter. The processes and results of this experimental healing art program may provide insight for researchers and educators when implementing similar programs within the community.

Design of the Study

This museum-based study analyzed the interactions and emotional responses of museum visitors and combined heuristic inquiry, phenomenological, and grounded theory perspective. The design of the study was in alignment with the researcher’s experience in instructing art for empowerment workshops at a women’s shelter and assisting with community art programs at a museum; both the shelter and museum served as the focus of the research project. In order to facilitate the research process, the researcher collaborated with the museum education director and a counselor at the women’s shelter for initial permission to conduct the study at the museum with clients from the shelter. Due to the psychological and potentially emotionally-provoking nature of the study, precautions were taken to ensure confidentiality for all participants as all results were reported as anonymous with no personally identifiable information. As further precaution, the researcher is trained in crisis intervention for survivors of sexual assault and
domestic violence, and three counselors from the women’s shelter were on hand to offer emotional support to participants as needed.

The researcher acted as both participant and observer during this study through the design of the workshop and observation of museum participants. Data measuring museum visitors’ levels of anxiety and well-being during a healing art-based museum tour and corresponding art workshop were collected to determine whether the program impacted emotional responses and what the responses signified. Methods of data collection and analysis consisted of: a state-trait anxiety inventory for participants to complete before and after the program; guided questions and individual and group discussion regarding personal significance of museum artwork, followed by a written response; a corresponding art making workshop, which included a narrative writing activity; and the program concluded with museum participants sharing their artwork and written responses with the group. In an attempt to ascertain whether the program had more than short-term effects, participants in the study were asked to complete a follow-up narrative assessment the following week. The results of this study may assist researchers in understanding the rationale for implementation of healing art-based programs and for collaboration with other organizations within the community.

Research Methods

Data collection was triangulated with relevant scholarly literature, museum visitor participation and self-reporting, in addition to the researcher’s prior experience. Clients from a women’s shelter participated as voluntary museum visitors and signed a consent form (see Appendix) that allow the results of the study to be reported. The population and site were chosen because of the researcher’s interest in combining therapeutic aspects of art with the museum experience. The following details the research methodology for the study. Each component was
designed to synthesize the museum going experience with art making to allow participants to engage in individual self-reflection within the atmosphere of a support group setting.

**Museum participant observation.**

The researcher maintained written observations of museum visitors’ interactions and dialogic responses. Only the two-hour tour and workshop enabled the researcher to directly observe the participants; however, a follow-up assessment occurred the following week and consisted of a written response by one of the participants. The healing art museum program was structured to allow for participant engagement through exploratory self-reflection. The researcher anticipated that the process of encountering emotions may result in nonverbal behaviors that may not otherwise be self-reported by the museum visitors; therefore, such interactions and responses were examined and included in the study. The researcher took an active role in structuring the tour and workshop by directly interacting with the participants by asking prompting questions about both the chosen and created artwork. Participants were encouraged to think about the reasons for choosing the artwork in the museum and how the corresponding art making project affected their emotional state.

**Anxiety and well-being assessment.**

The clients from the women’s shelter have experienced severe trauma and exhibit symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which include depression and anxiety. Would a guided emotional response museum tour and art making workshop decrease levels of anxiety and increase well-being, and if so, how? In order to measure museum visitors’ emotional responses, several modes of assessment factored into the study’s outcome. Before examining participants’ emotional responses to the healing art museum program, a pre-assessment occurred in order to first measure levels of anxiety. Psychologist Charles
Spielberger’s (1983) State-Trait Anxiety Inventory was implemented (see Appendix), and only the participants’ present anxiety states, rather than traits, were surveyed; the same assessment was utilized both before and after the museum tour and art making workshop. According to Spielberger (1983), anxiety states consist of “subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry,” and such emotional states are transitory (Spielberger, 1983, p. 1). When the museum participants arrived at the museum, they completed the survey, and the same survey was again completed before the clients left the museum. The survey was utilized twice in one day in order to discern whether levels of anxiety and well-being were affected by the program.

**Guided questions and narrative writing assessment.**

Only the museum participants can adequately describe their emotional responses. According to Binnie (2010), the most accurate method for measuring participants’ emotional state is through self-reporting (Binnie, 2010, p. 192). Museum visitors each received a list of seven questions from which they chose one to guide them to find a corresponding artwork within the museum (see Appendix). The guided questions directed participants to individually find an artwork that corresponded with three questions written by the researcher and four excerpts of sample questions from museum educator Ray Williams’ (2010) Personal Response tour. The researcher added a question to the handout to which the participants answered how the artwork is personally significant to them. The museum participants wrote a brief summary describing their emotional reaction to the chosen artwork. The group reconvened after twenty minutes and shared their chosen artwork and its significance.
Art making workshop and narrative writing assessment.

An art making workshop followed the museum tour and allowed museum visitors to visually respond to the museum tour. Participants were instructed to create an artwork based on the emotion they felt during the tour. Upon completion of the artwork, the participants wrote a narrative response detailing the significance for creating their artwork. Participants reconvened in a private museum auditorium to share their artwork and written responses in a confidential setting.

Follow-up assessment.

Binnie (2010) contends that “positive reactions to the experience of viewing art in a museum could also be longer lasting than instances of a change of mood” (p. 192). What are the potential long-term effects of this experimental program? How long do relaxing effects last? The week following the museum tour and art making workshop allowed museum participants to consider their state of well-being. The participants were asked write about their experience at the museum and how it related to their present emotional state. What factors contributed to their emotional response? Participants were asked the following question (see Appendix): How has your experience last week at the healing art museum tour and art workshop affected your present emotional state, mood, or outlook? The researcher provided the participants with an envelope in which to place their confidential response to be completed the week succeeding the tour and workshop, and there was also an option to e-mail the results directly to the researcher. Although one week’s duration cannot adequately account for the long-term effects of the program, the results may prove valuable in assessing any prolonged effects on well-being.
Data Collection

A consent form was needed from each participant to include the results of the study anonymously. The one-time session took approximately two hours, which was dependent upon the availability of the museum and participants. The majority of the data collection took place at the museum. Photographs were taken of the participants’ artwork. The photographs that were taken consisted of only the artwork, the art making process, and images of the participants’ hands during the art project. A follow-up assessment took place during the following week. Museum participants were asked to complete the follow-up assessment and turn it in to the researcher. Observations, surveys, and further data collected were be triangulated with data from scholarly literature examining the therapeutic aspect of museums.

Data Analysis

Assessments measuring levels of anxiety and depression took place before and after the tour and art making workshop and were compared to determine if there were any significant psychological changes within museum visitors. In order to analyze the data, the researcher: read and analyzed the written summaries from the guided questions tour; reviewed her written observations of museum visitors’ behavior and interactions; analyzed the participants’ artwork; read and analyzed the narrative writing responses following the art making component; and artwork was compared with the narrative responses and surveys.

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the design and methodology of the museum-based study. The results of this study revealed the ways in which museum visitors derive meaning from the museum experience and the applications this presents for implementing healing art-based programs within the community. The context of the healing art-based museum tour and art
making workshop was emotionally provoking and allowed museum visitors to make personal connections through viewing and creating artwork within a support group format.

Data analysis will be discussed in Chapter 4.
Chapter Four: Results of the Study

This chapter details the museum-based study’s findings regarding the significance of museum visitors’ emotional responses to viewing and creating artwork within the context of a museum. Data was gathered to assess the museum tour and art making workshop’s effect on anxiety and well-being. Museum visitors were from a women’s shelter and voluntarily participated in the study. The study consisted of observations, anxiety assessments, written responses to guided questions, an art making component, a corresponding narrative written response, and a follow-up survey. In addition to the participants, three counselors from the women’s shelter were present and were available for counseling support. Chapter Four also details implications, as well as bias and validity of the study.

Significance of the Study

The findings in this study suggest that viewing and creating artwork in a controlled museum setting reduces some levels of anxiety and has mostly positive effects on well-being. The evidence is based on the self-reporting of museum visitors. Museum visitors’ anxiety levels were affected by varying degrees to which levels decreased, increased, or remained steady. The most significant findings reveal that some participants reported an increase in feelings of calm and comfort, while nervousness, tension, worry, and confusion decreased by three levels.

An unexpected finding occurred in which some levels of anxiety increased slightly by one level. One participant reported a decrease in contentment, another’s level of feeling steady and at ease decreased, while another participant reported a decrease in feeling secure. Some anxiety levels remained unchanged. What factors contributed to increases in anxiety? Is the museum environment a trigger for anxiety? Could the same stimuli of conjuring certain memories and emotions both decrease and increase anxiety? Participant 2 mentioned that one of
the museum exhibits led to anxiety. Museum staff involved in a study by Binnie (2010) posited that “the type of immediate reaction to certain artwork was mostly dependent on what was depicted, and that it was likely that even negative effects could be in some way beneficial in the long run”; in addition, participants in the study claimed that their feelings were based on the museum’s displays and that factors such as “personality, expectations, prior experiences and knowledge, [and] interpretation” impacted their responses (Binnie, 2010, p. 198).

The findings in this study pertain to each participant’s individual response to the program. The results of the study confirm that the museum experience impacts museum visitors’ well-being. While certain museum exhibits and the personal responses they evoke may decrease or even increase levels of anxiety, viewing and creating artwork within the museum space may contribute to a generally increased sense of well-being depending on the content. Knowing that the museum contains objects which may affect well-being can help researchers and educators understand how to respond to museum visitors’ emotional needs and experiences. It may be helpful to tailor or add museum exhibits to align with museum visitors’ concerns, interests, and needs.

**Bias and Validity**

In order to assess the museum environment’s effects on museum visitors’ well-being, the researcher consulted with mental health professionals and reviewed scholarly literature in order to determine a comprehensive plan for the study. Several methods for organizing and conducting the museum tour were derived from scholarly literature. The researcher spoke with a licensed clinical professional counselor at the women’s shelter about her plans for assessing the clients’ levels of anxiety. The counselor recommended that the researcher contact Dr. Brenda Gilbert, a clinical center director with whom she was acquainted, in order to determine an
evaluation tool. Dr. Gilbert recommended the Spielberger’s (1983) State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and informed the researcher that only the state component of the inventory was necessary as it evaluated the participant’s current state of anxiety, rather than overall anxiety traits in general. The researcher stated her interest in assessing participants’ anxiety states both before and after the program, and Dr. Gilbert suggested that the same assessment should be given. Binnie (2010) cites Spielberger (1983) in the assertion that the STAI “has been used extensively within other areas of research, such as to examine the impact of stress and anxiety upon learning and performance, and provides a measure of the participants’ current state of anxiety” (p. 195).

Upon completion of the study, the researcher compared the participants’ self-reported anxiety assessments, narrative responses, artwork, and reviewed observations. The combination of triangulating data with scholarly literature led to further validity of the study. However, the results from working with a small number of participants cannot adequately account for a larger population. Due to constraints of the research, only one participant completed a follow-up survey. While anxiety was somewhat reduced overall for the five participants involved in the study and may be valid for that particular group, the results from the small sample cannot be generalizable across larger settings.

**Analysis of the Data**

**Anxiety assessment.**

Spielberger’s (1983) State-Trait Anxiety Inventory was used to assess participants’ present levels of anxiety both before and immediately after the museum tour and art making workshop. As suggested by Spielberger (1983), the researcher focused on a specific time period and instructed participants to “respond according to how they felt early in the task or while
working on the final portion of the task” (Spielberger, 1983, p. 3). In order to “assess changes in anxiety over time… the S-Anxiety scale [was] given on each occasion for which a measure [was] needed” (pp. 3-4). Participants reported how they felt “‘now, at this moment,’ both before and after they [completed] the task” (p. 4). The charts below (Tables 4.1-4.5) reflect each participant’s anxiety states both immediately before and after the program. The researcher compared the results in order to ascertain whether anxiety levels were affected. Participants were instructed to self-rate their states in the present moment and chose one of the following descriptors to correspond with statements such as “I feel calm”: not at all; somewhat; moderately so; or very much so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Assessment</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strained</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ease</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently worrying over</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possible misfortunes</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frightened</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jittery</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.2: Participant 2: Age 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Assessment</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strained</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ease</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently worrying over</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possible misfortunes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frightened</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jittery</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.3: Participant 3: Age 52

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Assessment</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strained</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ease</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently worrying over</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possible misfortunes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frightened</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jittery</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ levels of anxiety greatly varied from one another. Museum visitors’ most significant responses are as follows: Participant 1’s feelings of calm increased three levels, and nervousness decreased three levels; Participant 2’s tension decreased three levels, yet
contentment decreased one level; Participant 3 reported a slight increase by one level in calmness; Participant 4’s tension, worry, and confusion decreased by three levels, and comfort increased three levels, although feelings of being at ease and steady decreased one level; and Participant 5 experienced a decrease in two levels in indecisiveness with a one level decrease in feelings of being secure. The charts below (Tables 4.6-4.10) depict which levels decreased, increased, or remained steady.

<p>| Table 4.6 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 1: Age 29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently worrying over possible misfortunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frightened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jittery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently worrying over possible misfortunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frightened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jittery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
<th>Participant 3: Age 52</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strained</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ease</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently worrying over possible misfortunes</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frightened</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jittery</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.9

**Participant 4: Age 17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
<th>Calm</th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>One level</th>
<th>from</th>
<th>Very Much So</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>Very Much So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>Three levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strained</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>Two levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ease</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently worrying over possible misfortunes</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>Three levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>One level</th>
<th>from</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>Moderately So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frightened</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>Three levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>Two levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jittery</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>Two levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>Two levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>Three levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>Three levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>Two levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.10

**Participant 5: Age 14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
<th>Calm</th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>One level</th>
<th>from</th>
<th>Moderately So</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>Very Much So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strained</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At ease</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently worrying over possible misfortunes</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Steady</th>
<th>Same level</th>
<th>from</th>
<th>Moderately So</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>Moderately So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frightened</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jittery</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>Two levels</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Same level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>One level</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>Moderately So</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Guided questions response.**

Each museum visitor was given a list of questions to guide her through the museum. Participants were instructed to choose one question to help them choose an artwork with personal significance. The researcher reviewed the list of questions with the participants and asked if anyone had any questions. No one had any questions, and participants were directed to walk through the museum. Approximately twenty minutes were allowed for participants to walk around the museum and choose an artwork, with fifteen minutes to look and another five minutes to think about their response. The participants appeared thoughtful as they walked through the museum galleries. Everyone began writing at approximately the same time. The researcher allowed another couple of minutes for some of the participants to finish writing. The group then reconvened and shared their chosen artwork and rationale behind their choice. The researcher thanked the participants each time after they shared their responses with the group.

Participant 1 chose one of the museum objects, which was a fighting knife from Sudan, Africa. She chose the object for the following reason:

> I carry a knife for protection. Even though it is a simple hunting knife, I realize the reasons I carry it. I carry it for my own comfort and safety. This particular knife was carried by warriors. Its design is for throwing and to intimidate others. I carry one for what I think is my own safety. I wonder if the warriors feel as protected as I do at times.

She said that it represented safety, and it was at this time that one of the counselors brought up the importance of the theme of safety.

Participant 2 chose a photograph by Jacob A. Riis, *The Man Slept in This Cellar for Four Years*, 1890. She mentioned that the photograph was powerful, even one hundred years later after it was taken. Participant 2 described how the barrels in the picture were cultural and how
the image depicted immigrant life at the beginning of the century. In addition, she said that she felt connected to the photograph. She stated that the image allowed her to know empathy and represented caring about others’ lives. It represented her personal journey and kept her informed. She said that the photograph surprised her and that it reminded her of a memory. She wrote: “It reminds me about the homeless photographer workshop my friend and I organized in 2008. This picture is on my teaching Power Point in the first class.”

Participant 3 chose a photograph by Eugene Smith, *The Walk to Paradise Garden*. She said that the photograph reminded her of herself and her little brother visiting a village and was a “very good memory.” She wrote:

*The Walk to Paradise Garden* (Eugene Smith, 1946) is a photograph of two children (siblings) walking down a path. The piece brought back memories of my brother and I walking to my grandparents’ village through a footpath between the villages. The moment I saw the piece, my reaction was ‘this is it.’ I thought about the fun we had visiting my grandparents (maternal) and how close my brother and I were.

Participant 4 chose two related objects, which were a camera and a photograph. The first object she chose to talk about was an Exa Ihagee camera, *Version 4*. She described the camera as an object that can take one anywhere she wanted to be and wrote: “In this physical act it seems to calm because I enjoy photography. It seems to calm me and take me someplace other than where I am.” The second work was a photograph by Edward Steichen, *Gloria Swanson*, 1924: “This piece is just like me. I always have a veil over my true face.”

Participant 5 was drawn to a photograph by Robert Franks, *London*, from the 1950s. The participant described the subject matter as depicting “a little girl running away” and being afraid of staying where she is at the moment. She mentioned getting away and finding more in life,
while emphasizing that “risks hurt a lot” until one can find happiness: “The picture is of a girl running from a vehicle. To me this represents being afraid yet also having a longing to find something more and having to take major risks to find what it is you’re looking for.”

**Art making.**

Following the museum tour, participants were instructed to: Construct an artwork in response to the emotions, memories, and feelings that you experienced from viewing and analyzing the artwork that you chose in the museum. The participants sat together at one table and had the option to work with watercolors, soft pastels, and crayons (Figures 4.1-4.5). The time spent during art making was quiet, with Participant 4 listening with earphones to music on her phone, and Participant 2 worked on an independent drawing and social movement sign when she finished her artwork. One of the counselors engaged in dialogue with Participant 3 at one point during the art project. The researcher maintained an observatory role during the art making process. Participants began their narrative writing response upon completion of their artwork.
The artwork that the participants created was in response to their museum tour. Several connections were made between the artwork that the participants viewed and that which they constructed. The following images were created by the participants:
Figure 4.6  Participant 1

Figure 4.7  Participant 2
Figure 4.8  Participant 3

Figure 4.9  Participant 4
Each participant completed a narrative writing response describing the significance of her artwork. The researcher gave participants each a blank sheet of paper and asked them to write about their artwork. The following describes each participant’s personal connections between the museum objects they viewed and the artwork that they created.

Participant 1 wrote:

This art symbolizes the aspects of my evenings or any night that I walk. The figure with the reddish hair is me. The figures on the ground are my shadows. When I walk at night I carry a bright flashlight and knife. For me the walk is empowering and sometimes scary. I can also feel vulnerable. I always say I hope my shadow is all that follows me,
but when I looked there were 3 shadows. 1 represents the past that is behind me. The other off to the side is my present and the shadow that falls in front is my future. I am very aware on my walks. I could detect another human from far away. I could hear a car from a distance. The sky is something I enjoy, even though it is dark I can see the stars and blue tint to the sky. The tree in this painting represents the tree that I see is the last tree on my journey. This tree had been struck by lightning but it is very close to my home where my journey ends.

Participant 2 wrote:

Tai chi is the symbol of serenity, peace, and power. In today’s museum tour, the exhibition topic surprised me. The topic is “working” and working people in Carbondale in the past 150 years. There are some photos about female garment workers, miners, farmers, and immigrants. I started to join social movements since I was a college student, and the fighting/discussion of Human Rights has become part of my life. For me, it really surprised me that those things I care about are so close in my life. In my painting, the left word is human in Chinese, and the right side of the circle is justice. After years, these are the values I believe and stick with my value. I feel complete and able to move on in turmoil.

Participant 3 wrote:

The piece of art I saw and chose to write about brought back memories of several walks through the woods and brushes on a footpath between my village and my maternal grandparents’ village. On my drawing, I have attempted to depict some special objects we (my little brother and I) saw on the way. For example, the grasshopper represents memories of the time my brother chased after a grasshopper and I ran after them until we
ended up deep in the woods and couldn’t find our way back to the footpath. The plants with red fruit remind me of the wild fruit we picked and ate on the way. We always walked on bright, sunny days with beautiful blue clouds overhead.

Participant 4 added imagery to her narrative by adding a red pastel sun with rays in the background and a blue border surrounding the text:

My art represents the beauty of a storm and how even when something can be so gorgeous on the outside, inside, through all of the turmoil there can be a beautiful flowered vine resting against the lightning as if feeding off the bad, sucking it in, making the beauty more prominent. Because even if your true self is hiding behind a veil of sorrow, hate, or untrusting emotions there is always that vine growing behind, waiting for you to uncover it so it can shine through the clouds and rain, scaring it off and bringing joy to yourself and others around you.

Participant 5 wrote:

My drawing is of me when I tried to run away because my parents were arguing and I was scared about what the outcome would be like. I didn’t get very far. I was crying so hard I couldn’t see. So my drawing makes a feeling like I have to get away before someone I love got hurt.

Sharing artwork and program closure.

The participants convened in a private museum auditorium and shared their artwork with the group. This also served as a form of closure to the museum tour and art making workshop. In addition, this aspect of the program led the counselors to support the clients by encouraging them and elaborating upon the prevalent themes in the participants’ artwork. The clients made connections to the museum’s artwork through creating their own artwork.
Participant 1 said that she takes walks at night at that her artwork depicted her walk. She described how the three figures in her image are her shadows representing her past, present, and future. The tree in the image was a symbol for the end of her journey. The sky and the stars represented awareness. She said that “seasoned by nature,” the tree was struck by lightning. One of the counselors commented that she liked the meaning of the shadows and that walking allows one time to think. In addition, the counselor stated that something as simple as taking a walk can give things meaning.

Participant 2 said that she appreciated the museum tour. She said that the social movement in her home country of Taiwan was something in which she believed. She pointed out the Chinese symbol for human in her artwork. She also talked about justice and an ancient Chinese character about people changing people, as well as how she is connected to an institution. Participant 2 stated that she seeks serenity. She talked about the yin-yang symbol and how the circle means that “as long as you are balanced you can get strength inside if you keep moving.” She said that this was the only way to gain serenity. She stated that she had lost her balance. One of the counselors mentioned the significance of healing, balance, and strength.

Participant 3 told the group that she thought of a walk to visit her grandparents. The museum experience reminded her of a childhood memory, and she reminisced about a time during which her little brother chased after a grasshopper. She said that as one goes through difficulties, she has always found that connecting to childhood keeps her healthy. One of the counselors responded and said that it is sometimes easy to forget about the good things until one sees something which prompts a happy memory.

Participant 4 pointed out the grass at the bottom of her painting and a lightning storm. She described the image as the “beauty after a storm.” She mentioned that beauty existed,
despite chaos. She described the clouds as a veil, and that there was still beauty covered behind them.

Participant 5 drew a girl on the ledge of a window who was deciding if she wanted to go or stay. She said that the girl would remain in the same situation and would not know if anything would change unless she left. She further stated that “in our lives, we decide to be happy or stay put where we are.”

The meeting in the auditorium allowed time for the participants to talk about the museum experience. After each participant shared her artwork, the group clapped in appreciation and support. At the conclusion of the program, Participant 1 said that the program was a relaxing break for her. However, Participant 2 provided feedback that had been unanticipated. She stated that one of the exhibitions about workers was anxiety-provoking for her. Participant 2 thought that the museum exhibits would include artwork that specifically had a healing art theme. She suggested that it would be helpful to her to go on a tour that specifically had a healing art exhibition. Her anxiety was reflected in her assessment when her level of content was reported as dropping one level from “somewhat” to “not at all.” However, her levels of tension, strain, and worry decreased, and relaxation and steadiness increased.

**Follow-up survey.**

Participants were asked to complete a follow-up survey the following week asking: How has your experience last week at the healing art museum tour and art workshop affected your present emotional state, mood, or outlook? It was difficult to obtain follow-up surveys, which may be due to the following reasons: the workshop was a one-time event; the researcher does not see the same clients on a regular basis; and the clients’ individual schedules. Only Participant 3 turned in a response:
My experience last week at the healing art museum tour and art workshop was very pleasant. Throughout the week, I thought of the tour, the exhibit that caught my attention and on which I based my art work. I have shared my experience with friends and family alike. I also resumed work on (brought out and talked about) manuscripts of stories I was writing about the many adventures I had with my little brother growing up. My emotional state has been very positive and stable. I have been in a good mood. My outlook on life and the current situation of things in my life is quite positive and promising. For instance, I have great expectations of being able to complete some of these stories individually or compile them all into one, and hopefully have them published someday. The picture is etched onto my mind now and for inspiration I would return to the museum again and again in the near future.

Thank you so much for the opportunity. This has not been the best of semesters for me; my struggles both at home and school continue, but such activities…are very positive ways to relax and see the other side of life and the many good people and things around us rather than dwell all the time on the ugly.

**Conclusion**

Levels of anxiety were significantly to slightly reduced for the museum visitors. Even though one exhibition caused anxiety for one participant, some levels of her anxiety decreased at the end of the program. However, the participant’s suggestion for a museum to have a specific healing art-themed exhibition was compelling; it might provide an opportunity for museums and educators to work with community organizations to highlight important issues. The participant’s suggestion is also applicable to art galleries. As Binnie (2010) asserts, museums and galleries
“are spaces of calm within a busy world…and can be seen as places beneficial to personal wellbeing” (Binnie, 2010, p. 199).

It was very encouraging to have the support of both the women’s shelter and the museum, which demonstrates the importance of collaboration and community outreach. The confidential nature of the women’s support group was still maintained in a public setting with the help of the museum director who opened the museum for the group after hours. The participants’ data was extremely helpful in learning the benefits and limitations of such a museum program. The researcher learned that certain content within the museum space may provoke anxiety. In addition, the evocation of certain memories and emotions may have contributed to decreases in feelings of security and steadiness. From the data gathered, the program was a temporary relaxing activity for the museum visitors. Due to the group’s needs, it is recommended that a mental health professional is available in case difficult emotions arise and to add emotional support. A longer-term study would be needed in order to determine more comprehensive effects of this program.

Chapter Five will conclude the study and will also offer a unit rationale for integrating the museum experience with addressing students’ well-being and introspection.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

The personal and professional impact of this museum-based study will be discussed in this chapter in order to understand the significance of addressing museum visitors’ well-being in relation to viewing and creating artwork. This chapter will describe the ways in which the study has changed the researcher’s approach to thinking and teaching, both theoretically and philosophically. Recommendations will be addressed, including changes and suggestions, for implementing tours and programs for those who are interested in the effects and applications of the study. Summation of the research will conclude the study, including advice to art educators and the field of art education.

Discussion

The participants involved in this study experienced “perceptual engagement with…artwork…[demanding] full somatic responsiveness, joining perception with imaginative and often conscious association of memories and meanings” (Berleant, 1990, p. 35). According to Pekarik et al. (1999) and Packer (2008), “visitors use and appreciate museums for the experience of introspection” (Silverman, 2010, p. 45). Pekarik et al. (1999) posit that the museum experience allows museum visitors to turn “inward, to feelings and experiences that are essentially private, usually triggered by an object or a setting in the museum” (p. 45). This museum-based study allowed visitors to make personal connections to the objects they viewed, which in turn resonated within their own artwork. Each object evoked specific associations that were applicable to the participants’ memories, feelings, and emotions. The results of this study prompted the researcher to reflect upon the ways in which she was personally impacted and to carefully consider how the findings could be relevant and applicable to her teaching practice and methodology.
**Personal impact of the study.**

The process of implementing and analyzing the results of the study enabled the researcher to understand the importance of collaboration and utilizing the resources of the community. The researcher’s interest in encompassing a therapeutic approach to art education proved plausible within the context of the museum space. Museum visitors provided intriguing insights that significantly encouraged the researcher to rethink her approach to understanding how visitors experience the museum environment. It was determined that museum visitors make personal connections to artwork based on their memories, thoughts, feelings, emotions, and experiences. Whether the object was considered utilitarian or fine art, participants were able to find significant personal relevance. The objects stimulated personal responses within museum visitors and allowed them a time for reflection and introspection.

Several results from the study changed the researcher’s assumptions about anxiety, stress reduction, and well-being. It was assumed that all levels of anxiety would be reduced for participants, but this was not the case. The researcher discovered that viewing and analyzing museum objects has potential for alleviating anxiety, but certain exhibits may instead increase levels of anxiety. While increases in anxiety were small, this information is significant and informed the researcher about museum visitors’ interpretations of the artwork based on issues that were personally relevant to areas of their lives. The fact that anxiety may be heightened or alleviated in response to certain exhibits suggests that museum objects may have a profound impact on visitors based on personal aspects of their lives and experiences with connections that are far-reaching and more complex than the researcher had anticipated. Also of note was the discovery that levels of anxiety remained steady for some participants, although their overall response suggested that their sense of well-being increased.
The researcher also learned that the museum tour and art making component served as a relaxing break for participants to experience away from the stressors and issues with which they were experiencing. While the researcher has been involved in leading healing art workshops at the women’s shelter and saw how the clients benefitted from creating art, her attempt at bridging the therapeutic component with the museum environment was new to this population. The researcher discovered that in addition to creating art, it was also beneficial for participants to view and reflect upon museum artwork. The results of this study have encouraged the researcher to consider other ways to expand upon the museum experience. Applications of this study could be utilized in similar ways in other venues and can serve multiple populations in the community, which is something which the researcher is interested in pursuing.

**Impact on practice.**

The researcher chose to work with a group of clients from a women’s shelter to foster a sense of community. The support group setting was beneficial to this study because it provided a safe atmosphere in which the participants could interact. Williams (2010) recommends a group setting for those who “have a past and a future together, as it provides a structure for deepening conversations and relationships” (Williams, 2010, p. 96). The researcher believed that it was imperative for the clients’ counselors to be available because it added a level of familiarity in an unfamiliar setting and also served as precaution in case any difficult issues arose from the emotional content of the program. The researcher’s interest in community collaboration was increased in this study because working with others may lead to stronger and richer programs to address the diverse needs of the public.

The results of this study may enable educators to consider working with other organizations. Just as the researcher was compelled to consider how to more effectively utilize
the museum space, others may feel similarly with an interest in implementing similar programs. The researcher is interested in learning about new and effective methods to bring to organizations such as women’s shelters and museums and possibly expanding these ideas to other institutions; in this regard, doing so may inspire organizations to work together and foster partnerships. One of the most significant developments throughout the course of research is that the researcher is interested in expanding upon the project. Because the therapeutic approach to museums is still relatively new, Treadon et al. (2006) state that “it is important to be creative and inventive” (Treadon et al., 2006, p. 301). It is necessary to “meet the unique needs” of individuals while continuing to institute programs such as the one in this study “as the art museum might provide alternative opportunities” to serve the public (p. 301).

**Rationale for the Unit**

A unit plan was designed in order to align with the goals and findings of the study (see Appendix). The unit entails a museum visit with an art making project that is applicable to multiple settings, including school groups and community workshops. The theme of the unit is appropriate for various populations because it is designed to evoke personal connections to artwork based on the individual’s own memories, feelings, experiences, and emotions. Both viewing and creating artwork may “promote some degree of verbal sharing…sometimes from the quietest members,” which enables each individual to feel comfortable participating in the lesson (Silverman, 2010, p. 121).

Students may derive personal insight and understanding from the unit entitled *Finding Meaning in Museum Objects: Self-Identity Portrait and Narrative*. Through facilitating a personal response to museum objects, students will learn how to interpret the meaning of the artwork for self-expression. The museum experience is essential to the unit plan, although
alternative settings may serve as substitutes. The art educator must be creative in finding a suitable arrangement if there is not access to a museum. Settings such as galleries or online art galleries, as well as utilizing replicas, slides, and reproductions, can be substituted as long as students are allowed time for significant engagement with the artwork. It is vital that students are allowed to choose a personally significant work of art and to focus on the connections between the object and their emotions, memories, and feelings. Narrative writing responses will enable students to consider the rationale behind their choice while deepening the connection, and students must also be offered the opportunity to construct a self-identity portrait. Both viewing and creating a responsive work of art are vital to the unit. The art educator must be sure to facilitate a dialogue with the students and the artwork, encouraging them to consider what they have learned about themselves, how the content is applicable to aspects of their lives, and what the knowledge means for their future. Students must be allowed ample time for reflection. If time permits, it is recommended that students exhibit their artwork in order to consider how their individual experiences relate to the entire group in order to foster a sense of community.

Recommendations

While much was learned from this project, the researcher would make several changes if conducting the study again for improvement. This section will also detail areas of concern for other researchers who may be interested in this research. When obtaining permission from both the museum and the shelter, the researcher described the purpose and rationale of her study. Issues of confidentiality were a concern that needed to be addressed prior to the study. As a volunteer for the women’s shelter, the researcher cannot and should not disclose any information about the clients. Even though the results of the study were kept anonymous, the researcher needed to ensure that the policies of the women’s shelter allowed her to conduct the study and be
able to include the results. The researcher obtained permission from the women’s shelter prior to conducting the study. In addition, she also had participants fill out an informed consent form so that the data could be anonymously included in the study. These steps were essential for conducting the study so that the participants’ identities could be anonymous, and the signed consent forms ensured that the data could be included in the study.

The researcher also concurrently obtained permission from the museum to conduct her study there. Because the museum is a public setting, the confidential nature of the women’s shelter posed concerns. In order to maintain confidentiality, the museum education director opened the museum after hours specifically for the group. In addition, the researcher also reserved the museum auditorium for further privacy. The museum educator director lent the researcher tables and chairs for the art making project. Each step that the museum took enabled the researcher to implement the study, and the project would have been impossible without the museum’s support.

If the researcher were to conduct the study again, she would offer the program to the public and have participants pre-register directly with her. By working with the public, it would have been more convenient, particularly for the museum, to offer the program during normal museum hours. In addition, other organizations might have been interested in participating in the study, and more participants might have been involved. Furthermore, it would have been beneficial to have several programs over a longer duration in order to more fully analyze the results of the study. One issue that the researcher encountered was obtaining parental consent forms from two participants under the age of eighteen. The researcher allowed the two clients to participate in the museum project so as not to exclude them from the support group. While the forms were eventually obtained, it was time consuming to obtain to the fact that the results were
almost left out of the study. It was also difficult to obtain follow-up surveys from the participants. If time constraints had not been an issue, the researcher would have instead had the participants meet again and have a series of follow-up art making activities, museum tours, or both.

Conclusion to the Research

Viewing museum objects and exhibits may allow visitors to obtain insight about their lives, and combining this with opportunities for creating their own artwork may lead to further introspection (Silverman, 2010, p. 45). While this study was conducted with clients from a women’s shelter, the content is relevant to all populations. The guided questions described in this study may be tailored and modified in order to address the unique emotional and personal responses of individuals and groups. Similar programs could be instituted in art galleries or by bringing art objects to institutions such as hospitals and nursing homes (Alter-Muri, 1996, p. 107).

Advice to the field of art education.

The possibility that the museum experience may “create a sense of peace and calm that permits people to recover their cognitive and emotional effectiveness…could lead to an important change in the way museums are viewed” (Kaplan et al., 1993, p. 726). While the professions of art therapy and social work are typically reserved for such studies, it was discovered that there are not limitations for who can conduct a healing art-based program. This study is applicable to several professional areas and fields and is especially relevant to the field of art education. Art education is a field that invites students to find meaning within artwork, and expanding upon that capability through widening the scope of the profession ensures that significant connections and possibilities can be made for both educators and students alike.
Advice to art teachers.

By recognizing that each individual brings her or his own lifetime of unique experiences, memories, and emotions to the classroom or studio, art educators will be better equipped to react to students’ needs and concerns. As Williams (1994) states, it is vital that educators ensure that they allow “a safe space for sharing” (Silverman, 2010, p. 121). In order to grow as effective educators, it can be helpful to push the boundaries of art education and think outside the box. The researcher found that consulting resources from a range of professions with similar goals enabled her to reconsider notions of art education and to examine the significance of art in relation to individual experiences.
References


APPENDIX

Informed Consent Form

Title of Project: The Museum as a Healing Space: Addressing Museum Visitors’ Emotional Responses through Viewing and Creating Artwork

Purpose: This study, conducted by Arthurina Fears, a Women’s Center volunteer, SIU University Museum volunteer, and master’s degree student in Art Education at Boston University, is intended to explore the emotional responses of museum visitors and will analyze how viewing and creating art within the context of the museum affects levels of anxiety and depression and impacts well-being.

Participation: Your voluntary participation may help researchers understand correlations between viewing and creating artwork and well-being, as well as how to create and implement therapeutically-centered art programs within the community. In addition, you will view, analyze, and create artwork that allows for self-reflection.

Procedures: Participants will partake in a healing art-based museum tour and corresponding art making workshop. If you agree to take part in this research, you will: (1) be encouraged to engage in reflection and dialogue about artworks within the museum through responses to guided questions; (2) construct your own artwork corresponding to your emotional responses from the museum tour; (3) write about the significance of your artwork; and (4) complete a questionnaire to measure your levels of anxiety before and after the workshop. This one-time session will take between two to three hours. You will be asked to submit your artwork and writing response for analysis, which will be returned to you upon completion of this study.

Confidentiality: Only the researcher and counselors will have access to consent forms that indicate your identity. The study will not include any personally identifying information. All aspects of the workshop, including photographs of your personal artwork, questionnaires, writing responses, and discussion, will be confidential and included anonymously in the study. In the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed. Any names used in your artwork and writing will be changed for confidentiality.

I certify that I have read this form and volunteer to participate in this research project.

Please print your name: __________________________________________________________

Your signature: ________________________________ Date: ________________
SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Developed by Charles D. Spielberger
in collaboration with
R. L. Gorsuch, R. Lushele, P. R. Vagg, and G. A. Jacobs

STAI Form Y-1

Name __________________________ Date __________ S ____
Age _________ Sex: M ___ F ___

DIRECTIONS: A number of statements which people have used to
describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then
blacken in the appropriate circle to the right of the statement to indi-
cate how you feel right now, that is, at this moment. There are no right
or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement
but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.

1. I feel calm ............................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
2. I feel secure ............................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
3. I am tense ............................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
4. I feel strained ........................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
5. I feel at ease .............................................................. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel upset ............................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
7. I am presently worrying over possible misfortunes ........ 1 2 3 4 5
8. I feel satisfied ........................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
9. I feel frightened ......................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
10. I feel comfortable ....................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
11. I feel self-confident .................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
12. I feel nervous ........................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
13. I am jittery ............................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
14. I feel indecisive ........................................................ 1 2 3 4 5
15. I am relaxed ............................................................. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I feel content ........................................................... 1 2 3 4 5
17. I am worried ............................................................ 1 2 3 4 5
18. I feel confused ........................................................ 1 2 3 4 5
19. I feel steady ............................................................. 1 2 3 4 5
20. I feel pleasant .......................................................... 1 2 3 4 5

Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.
3803 E. Bayshore Road - Palo Alto, CA 94303
Museum as a Healing Space
Guided Questions

Instructions: Choose one of the following questions to guide you through the museum:

Find a work of art that makes you feel a sense of peace and calm.

Find a work of art that reminds you of a happy memory.

Find a work of art that brings you hope.

“Find a work of art that reminds you of something from your [past]…Think about the connections” (Williams, 2010, p. 98).

“Find the work of art that is most like you. What qualities do you have in common?” (p. 99).

“Find an object that, for you, embodies pure JOY!” (p. 99).

“Find a work of art that has something to tell you about your life. Look closely, and listen for the message” (p. 99).

Reference:

How is this artwork personally significant to you? Please write a brief summary describing your emotional reaction to this artwork:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
The Museum as a Healing Space
Post-Workshop Survey

*Instructions:* Now that it has been one week since the healing art museum tour and art workshop at the SIU University Museum, please take a moment to answer the following question and e-mail your response to Arthurina Fears at arthurina@hotmail.com or leave this form in the provided envelope at the Women’s Center front desk by Thursday, November 17:

- How has your experience last week at the healing art museum tour and art workshop affected your present emotional state, mood, or outlook?
UNIT PLAN

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
PROGRAMS IN EDUCATION

NAME: Arthurina Fears

THEME: Introspection and insight, sense of self, self-identity

UNIT RATIONALE:
Integrating museum objects with the creation of one’s own artwork may enable students to “take greater risks, resulting in art that is often more complete and richer than art produced without the inclusion of art history” (Alter Muri, 1996, p. 107). Viewing and creating art within the context of the museum may enable students to derive personal meaning and relay the content to areas of their own lives.

According to Silverman (2010), “introspection is a critical component of mental health and a process that involves identifying, reflecting upon, and understanding one’s feelings, experiences, and thoughts” (Silverman, 2010, p. 45). The museum is an ideal environment in which to make personal connections based on each visitor’s unique experiences. Silverman (1990), Williams (1994), Silverman (1995), Paris and Mercer (2002), and McCaffrey (2007) posit that “visitors naturally engage in both personal meaning-making and self-exploration in museums by contemplating what they encounter and/or discuss with others” (p. 45).

This unit will enable participants to engage with and find personal connections to museum artwork and is applicable to all age ranges and a number of settings, such as schools, shelters, and medical centers. This unit plan is also relevant to museum education programs for the public. If there is not access to a museum, alternative sites can instead be accessed, such as art galleries; alternately, slides, replicas, or online images from sites such as Google Art Project, can be utilized.

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE: Finding Meaning in Museum Objects: Self-Identity Portrait and Narrative

GOALS: Students should…

Understand:
- Ways of discussing and creating a personal response to artwork, explain its meaning, significance, features, and influences. (MACF Standards: 5 and 8)

Know:
- How to analyze and interpret meaning of artwork and the relationship between creating two-dimensional work from memory or observation for self-expression. (MACF Standards: 2 and 6)
**Be able to:**
- Explore a variety of art media and materials and construct an expressive self-portrait from imagination, observation, and/or symbolic abstraction and imagery. (MACF Standards: 1 and 3)

(based on Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework)

**INSTRUCTIONAL CONCEPTS:**
Silverman (1995) asserts that a “key influence on visitors’ meaning-making process in museums is self-identity…[and] we seek to make opportunities to create, express, and affirm who we believe ourselves to be—our sense of self” (Silverman, 1995, p. 162). Museum visitors express their individuality through “their choices, opinions, evaluations, preferences, knowledge, and personal stories in the museum” (p. 163). This unit will enable students to write a narrative and construct a self-portrait based on the museum object of their choice that is based on a memory, emotion, or experience that is personally relevant to an aspect of their lives.

**LESSONS:**

*Lesson One: Museum Response Tour and Narrative Activity*

This lesson entails a visit to a museum. Before entering the gallery space, the teacher encourages students to think about the definition of self-identity and introspection. The teacher distributes writing boards, writing utensils, and a handout instructing students of the following based on Ray Williams’ (2010) Personal Response Tour:

*Instructions: Choose and circle one of the following questions to guide you through the museum.*

“Find the work of art that is most like you. What qualities do you have in common?” (Williams, 2010, p. 99).

“Find a work of art that has something to tell you about your life. Look closely, and listen for the message” (p. 99).

*Please write a paragraph answering this question. Think about the reasons why you chose this work of art.*

The teacher reviews the handout with students, gives them a moment to read the instructions, and asks if they have any questions. The teacher encourages students to think about connections between the artwork and their own emotions, memories, and feelings. Students split up and individually view the artwork in relegated galleries so that students do not wander too far away from supervision. It is advised that another teacher or staff member is available to supervise students or answer any questions.

Students have approximately fifteen minutes to find an artwork with an addition five to ten minutes of writing. Students then reconvene at an appointed meeting place. The teacher asks students who would like to share their artwork, and as students volunteer, the group follows the student to the artwork to learn of the rationale behind their choice. When all students have had a
chance to discuss their artwork, the teacher will instruct students to begin thinking about their self-portrait that they will construct in the next class period.

Lesson Two: Self Identity Portrait
Students will refer to their narrative response from the museum tour to construct a self portrait. Upon completion, students write about the personal significance of their self portrait and will discuss its relationship with the artwork that they chose to view in the museum. Students sit together in a circle and share their artwork and rationale with each other. The teacher asks each student what he or she has learned about his or her sense of self and what the knowledge may mean for the future.

Lesson Three: Class Exhibit
For closure, students create their own art exhibit. The teacher asks students how the collection of individual self-portrait relates to the entire group of students together. This activity encourages students to collaboratively work together and to foster social bonds.

MATERIALS:
Writing board
Pens or pencils
Writing paper
Instruction handout
Oil and soft pastels
Watercolor paint
Watercolor paper
Synthetic paintbrushes
Cups for water

ASSESSMENT:
Narrative writing response
Group discussion sharing rationale for choice of art object
Individual discussion with art educator during art making project
Group discussion and sharing of artwork
Class art exhibit

REFERENCES:

