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AN ART-BASED STUDY OF ADULT PERSPECTIVES
ON ATTENTION-DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

A DISSERTATION

(submitted by)

DINA FRIED

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

LESLEY UNIVERSITY
May 2019



Lesley University
 Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences
 Ph.D. in Expressive Therapies Program

DISSERTATION APPROVAL FORM

Student's Name: Dina Fried

Dissertation Title: AN ART-BASED STUDY OF ADULT PERSPECTIVES
 ON ATTENTION-DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Dissertation Committee Chairperson: Shaun McNiff March 25, 2019

Internal Committee Member: _____ Vivien Marcow-Speiser _____ March 25, 2019

External Committee Member: _____ Debra Lee Kalmanowitz _____ March 25, 2019

Director of the Ph.D. Program/External Examiner: _Michele Forinash, DA_ March 25, 2019

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Shaun McNiff

 Dissertation Director

I hereby accept the recommendation of the Dissertation Committee and its Chairperson.

Sandra Walker

 Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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SIGNED: ____Dina Fried _____

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Abstract

This art-based inquiry set out to investigate if adults living with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) could deepen their understanding of their relationship with the disorder through creative writing and visual art. In five individual sessions, each of four participants (referred to as co-researchers in this study) created writing texts and visual art, and observed and discussed the videos and visual art that I as researcher created in response to their work. Results showed that a multimodal artistic expression of the relationship with ADHD, enriched by an “artistic conversation” with the researcher, gave co-researchers new perspectives on how the condition had informed and crafted aspects of their identities. Co-researchers felt listened to and respected without judgment; were able, through the response art, to see themselves as others might see them; and began to realign entrenched views they had adopted over decades about themselves and ADHD.

Keywords: ADHD, art-based research, adult, response art, multimodal.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

When I decided I would do this research, I already knew my topic was going to involve the making of art, which has grown to be part of my working, artistic, and personal identity. I also knew I wanted to research ADHD, which is part of who I am as well.

Over the years I have come to terms with living with ADHD, but never really overcome the sense that it has, at times, caused material damage to my life. It still influences who I am today, as a partner, parent, therapist, and community member. I am personally and professionally intrigued by the question: Is it possible to change the relationship you have had with a disorder your whole life? What if you do not even know the ways in which the disorder has grown with you and into you, affecting the structure of your body and mind? How can you identify what needs to be changed, and what can be changed?

When looking into the history of usage of art as a way of coping with disability, I am struck by the words of pioneering art therapist Mickie McGraw (2012), who said that “By creating art, a person symbolically re-creates him or herself and begins to put the pieces back together” (Art Therapy Studio, 2012, 5:43). McGraw, who in 1953 contracted polio at age eleven and has been in a wheelchair ever since, was a founder of what is now the oldest medical art therapy program in the United States, the Art Therapy Studio at Highland View Hospital in Cleveland OH. One of the things that McGraw has emphasized over her professional life is ‘seeing the ability in the disability,’ and this revolutionary approach she brought, along with her art materials, into the hospital rooms of hundreds of patients undergoing long term rehabilitation at Highland View.

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‘Seeing the ability in the disability’ is an inviting concept at the cognitive level, but, embarking on my pilot study in which I engaged in art-based research to attempt to discover for myself whether a multimodal approach would be helpful in reassessing my relationship with ADHD, I was extremely doubtful that this could be achieved at the emotional level. I would have laughed off the notion, had anyone suggested it at the beginning of the pilot, that ADHD had contributed anything at all to my life that was positive. I had surely developed some admirable coping tools over the years, but I would rather not have had the disorder and not have had to develop the tools.

The pilot surprised me in a number of ways, but most of all by helping me to understand that the bizarre bursts of intensity and energy that have characterized my youth and early adulthood, and that to some extent are still part of how I function today, have been a blessing in certain contexts. It was an astonishing and new experience to think of ADHD as something above and beyond a phenomenon that had held me back, set me apart from others, obstructed my progress, interfered with my development, invested my childhood with numerous, almost unbearable complications, and made me work four times harder than anyone else I knew. My ‘bursting energy’ — my loudness, my intensity, my directness, my busy-ness — these were gifts of a sort.

In designing the main body of the research, I wanted to find out if a similar study would produce similar results for others who had lived a lifetime of ADHD. Would they be able to identify positive aspects of the disorder, as I had done? I had also discovered certain limitations in the pilot that I wished to correct in the research, which is why I introduced the responsive art as a form of art conversation. The shared aspects of the experience, I thought, might enhance the results.

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When dealing with a disability people generally do not want to be part of a community that shares the same symptoms, as this can stigmatize them and set them apart. If there is lack of acceptance that one has a disability, then joining a community of those who share such a disability may feel counter-intuitive to many. 'Pride' as a concept has been late to enter the disability arena, having been applied more frequently and successfully to those who seek equality in terms of sexual orientation, gender choice, and recognition of abuse and trauma. The aloneness of the disabled person has therefore been more pronounced. In my study, it was my hope that by sharing the ADHD experience with other adults I would be able to offer an alternative to their aloneness and mine.

After completion of the study and exploring the artistic results, I am convinced not only that the art created was helpful to my participants (whom I called co-researchers) but that the study can be extrapolated for other disabilities. If for example, Mickie McGraw and three other polio survivors who had been in wheelchairs since childhood had been the co-researchers in the study, what texts would have been written, and what drawings would have been created? What films would have resulted in which we could have watched the unfolding of that experience in color, composition, and movement? Is there "ability" to be found in being wheelchair bound all one's life? I imagine that McGraw would say that there is; and that this ability can be located and built upon, when art is used to open up the soul.

In my last sessions with the co-researchers, I was fascinated by the way they each looked at the art they had made in retrospect; by the way they watched the films, and talked about colors and shapes, and spoke freely of what they had experienced. I hope this research has done justice to them and to their process, just as their honesty, creativity, and generosity of spirit have done justice to mine.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The literature review presented here examines how and why art therapy is useful in helping people with disabilities in general, and how the art and activism of disabled artists has profoundly contributed to our understanding of the experience of disability. The use of art therapy in the research and treatment of the particular disorder of ADHD is also investigated. Art-based research is explored as the method of choice for the design of the study, along with response art and the multimodal approach as valuable tools in the ongoing search for a real understanding of how people experience their inner world, and how this can be communicated to researchers, therapists, educators, social activists, and all those who have a role in the building of an enlightened community.

Arts Therapy and Disability

Disability affects more than an individual's physical or cognitive abilities, and the way culture understands, expresses, and verbalizes disability can affect the way it limits or facilitates those who are deemed disabled (Murphy, 1987; Peers, Spencer-Cavaliere, & Eales, 2014). We know that health problems that limit motor and occupational abilities, and social difficulties that arise from disability-related stigmas, often impact self-identity and self-esteem in disabled people (Ditchman et al., 2013; Paterson, McKenzie, & Lindsay, 2012; Shuttleworth, 2004). In addition, individuals with physical or neurological disabilities often struggle with inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity, all of which affect day-to-day functioning (Luzzatto et al., 2017). Yet traditional methods of psychotherapy based on verbal communication are at times inadequate and inefficient for people with disabilities (Ainsworth & Baker, 2004; Caprio-Orsini, 1996; Miller & Bachrach, 2006).

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Moon (2004) speaks of a “restoration of soul through art” (p.8). The expressive arts and expressive therapies have been successful in helping people who are vulnerable, at risk, or with disabilities to increase emotional wellness and social connectivity (Allan, 2005; Barnes, 2003; Fenge, Hodges, & Cutts, 2011; Gray, 1997; Malchiodi, 2013; McNiff, 1992). There is a need for research that will provide us with a better understanding of the emotional challenges of people with disabilities and the ways in which we can respond (Barnet-Lopez, Pérez-Testor, Cabedo-Sanromà, Oviedo, & Guerra-Balic, 2016; Riddell & Watson, 2014).

Because art can be used as way of processing information in the presence of emotions evoked through images (Holmes, Lang, & Deeprose, 2009; Weber, 2008), it is a useful healing tool for individuals with poor mental health as well as for those who struggle from the emotional impact of physical challenges (Moon, 2004; McNiff, 2007; Van Lith, 2014). Though art therapy may not function as a cure in the traditional sense, it can have a positive impact on disabled individuals and on the people around them (Eren et al., 2014; Freilich & Shechtman, 2010) as it helps to improve damaged or poor self-image, and to increase the connection that clients feel to their own bodies, emotions, and experiences (Goodwin and Attias, 1999; Gunther, Blokland-Vos, van Mook, & Molenaar, 2009; Patterson, Crawford, Ainsworth, & Waller, 2011).

It is important to note that the use of art to express the experience of disability is not an “invention” of art therapists. In fact, Europe has had programs for artists with disabilities in place for decades (Lemanczyk, 2004), all located within communities and run by fine arts facilitators and workshops. It was only in the 1970’s that art therapists started to interact with these programs (Block, Harris, & Laing, 2005). What was special about these “art centers” was that they functioned

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outside of the clinical setting, and empowered marginalized individuals by enabling them to share their art with others (Caves, 2000).

Today there is a community of artists with disabilities who have taken on the role of activists and who use their art to advocate for people with disabilities. Artists like Mickie McGraw (2012), Stephen Wiltshire, and Joseph Cartin are living examples of McNiff's (2007) notion that "vulnerabilities and rejected aspects of our lives" can be "empathetically embraced" (Cosslett, 2017). These artists use their art to deliberately cultivate this embrace and to communicate both their inner and outer world to the people and institutions that surround them. Mickie McGraw created what is today one of the oldest and best known hospital art-centered programs in the United States (Rubin, 2009). She and other artists led a cultural movement that seeks to dismantle stereotypes, challenge stigmas, and see the human being as more than his or her disability (Lubin & Johnston, 2008). As activists, artists with disabilities undermine prejudice by enabling others to encounter the experience of disability and to see people with disabilities as equals (Riddell & Watson, 2014). These artists' use of art to "interact" with their disability serves to strengthen the theory that art therapy can help any or all disabled people better understand and process their experience.

While there is much to celebrate in the interaction between disabled artists and the art therapy community, it is worth noting Eisenhauer's (2007) concern that making a study of artwork by artists with disabilities can potentially undermine the goal of artists as activists. If we view their art as a "genre" or "phenomenon," then we may emphasize the disability rather than the art i.e. we are admiring not the art, but the artist's ability to create despite his or her limitations. This approach can encourage the perception of people with disabilities as limited, and of artists with disabilities as people who seek to be like "normal" artists. Still, Eisenhauer does note

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that art created by artists with disabilities can offer a focused, critical examination of attitudes towards disability.

A body of research is now emerging that is shaping the next steps towards a better understanding of how the expressive therapies can help people with disabilities. The following case studies reflect some of the groundwork accomplished in the last two decades by arts researchers and therapists using different modalities.

In response to the need for evidence-based practice in the field of disabilities, Epp (2008) conducted a study on the use of group art therapy as an intervention for children with ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder). Art therapists worked with groups of children ($N=79$) on a weekly basis over the course of a school year (September-May). During the sessions, therapists employed cognitive behavioral strategies together with art making. Teachers and parents completed questionnaires that enabled therapists to measure improvement in the children's social skills and behavior. Results indicated significant positive change in internalizing behaviors and hyperactivity. The study suggests that group therapy and art therapy work well together and that when combined they can be an effective intervention for children with ASD. (The study is limited though through its lack of a control group, as the improvement could also have been linked to the skills of the therapists who designed and implemented the intervention.) Cooper and Widdows (2004) likewise concluded that as a visual and concrete modality, art therapy could be especially helpful for children with ASD, as individuals with ASD tend to be visual and concrete thinkers.

Both prose (developmental creative writing) and poetry are used in the healing context (Furman, 2003; Jeffs & Pepper, 2005; Malchiodi, 2005; Nicholls, 2009). Using creative writing in the form of prose and poetry allows people to become

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children at play, where reality is being re-formed within a fantasy framework and is being processed and understood in an instinctive rather than a cognitive manner (Freud, 1959). In a 2012 study using poetry to help men with physical or psychiatric disabilities (Thompson, Furman, Shafi, & Enterline, 2012), researchers observed that poetry expanded participants' perceptions of self, impacted the relationship between disability and the construction of male identity, and appeared to have value for participants as a way of identifying, expressing, and processing their emotions. In addition to improving mental health, poetry in a therapeutic framework appeared to help each participant reconstruct a sense of self through which he could value his individuality, rather than abandoning his "self" in order to find belonging in society. In their conclusion, Thompson et al. presented some tools that might be used by therapists for clients with other disabilities.

Darewych, Carlton, and Farrugie (2015) noted the successful use of art therapy using digital technology for adults with developmental disabilities. In another 2015 study, Barnet-López et al. used the Kopitz human figure drawing test to evaluate the influence of D/MT (dance and movement therapy) on the emotional wellbeing of adults ($N=30$) with Intellectual Disabilities (ID). The research team focused on ways to help participants improve their sense of identity, self-worth, self-esteem, happiness, humor satisfaction, and body awareness. Participants attended one-hour sessions of D/MT twice weekly for a period of three months. Results showed that following the therapy, negative emotional indicators decreased and there was an improvement in emotional wellbeing. This research confirmed findings from earlier studies on the impact of D/MT on emotional and body awareness (Pérez et al., 2009). Schrade, Tronsky, and Kaiser were successful in their employment of Mandelas to help reduce stress in individuals with ID (2011).

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The DIS-ART Creative Journey study conducted in Italy by Luzzatto et al. (2017) used two cycles of ten sessions each in a group art therapy program for people with physical and neurological disabilities. These sessions worked on (a) image making and distancing, and (b) interactive communication within the group. Thirty-six of the participants were divided into groups for adults, and there was one group of children (N=19). The participants' difficulties included learning problems, neurological functioning, ADHD, psychiatric problems, deafness, and Down syndrome. All participants engaged in image making, using such techniques as colors and shapes, collage, and tree imagining. At the end of every session therapists conducted an evaluation rating the participants' autonomy, attention, communication, and socialization. Results showed that these sessions improved the capacity of the participants to listen to the art therapist, to engage in art making, to acknowledge their existence in the group, and to interact better with others in the group. An even greater improvement was noticed in the second of the ten session second cycles. The researchers concluded that the process of the program would be effective for a wide range of physical and neurological conditions.

These studies and others have contributed to a new social and political awareness of the value of art therapy in helping disabled adults and children cope with the mental, emotional, and physical challenges they face (O'Farrell, 2017). Arts programs for those with disabilities have been developed all over North America and Europe (Muller & Bader, 1972). In Canada for example, the Center of the Arts in Human Development (CAHD) offers unique facilities in creative therapies to adults with developmental disabilities. Students, researchers, and the wider community of Montreal visit the center and are involved in its challenges and goals (Lister, Tanguay, Snow, & D'Amico, 2009).

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Arts Therapy and ADHD in Adults

There has been plentiful research over the last two decades on the use of art therapy in helping children and youth deal with ADHD (DuPaul and Jimerson (2014); Freilich & Shechtman (2010); Smitheman-Brown & Church, 1996; Tubbs, 2008). Safran (2002), a leading researcher in the field, noted the benefits of art therapy for ADHD not only in terms of the practical help that it offers to children, but also in terms of how it can be used to monitor development and positive change during the therapy process. In another study, Safran concluded that art enables people who are not contemplative by nature to express their feelings, and that art therapy interventions for children with ADHD helps them work on increasing positive behaviors and decreasing negative ones (Safran, 2011).

But ADHD does not end with childhood. Studies have shown that 60-70% of children with ADHD continue symptomatology into adulthood (Barkley, 2015; Gregg, 2013; Turgay et al., 2012; Wender, 1995; Wender, 1998). One third of these will be able to progress satisfactorily through their adult lives, while the remaining two thirds will develop significant problems (Ingram, Hechtman, & Morgenstern, 1999; Murphy & Barkley, 1996; Thompson & Thompson, 2003). Adults with ADHD are frequently impatient, restless, impulsive in their interactions, frustrated, and disorganized, with a predilection for losing things (Al-Yagon, 2016; Okie, 2006). They tend to underachieve and change jobs frequently, often believing that ADHD substantially impacts their ability to advance and succeed (Barkley, Murphy, & Fischer, 2010). These feelings of frustration and failure often lead to comorbidities like anxiety and depression (Marangoni, Chiara, & Faedda, 2015). Some adults develop a tendency towards substance abuse when ADHD has been undiagnosed

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and/or untreated (Lee, Humphreys, Flory, Liu, & Glass, 2011).

Yet although ADHD is considered a condition of impaired neurological development that presents throughout the life span (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Gregg, 2013; Pitts, Mangle, & Asherson, 2015), far fewer studies have been conducted on adults with ADHD than on children. Today, medication is the most widely used treatment for adults with ADHD, but the benefits of medication are short term if behavioral and emotional issues are not addressed (Jensen et al., 2005).

The goals and emphases of research that aims to improve the quality of life for adults with ADHD (Turgay et al., 2012; Wender, 1998) are quite different from the goals and emphases of research carried out for children and adolescents (Jensen et al., 2005; Smitheman-Brown & Church, 1996; Tubbs, 2008). In the latter case, since such a large part of the child's negative experience is related to the classroom setting and to education (Al-Yagon, 2016; DuPaul & Jimerson, 2014), as well as to relationships within the family, the aims of the research, and of the therapies developed by advancements in the research, are primarily to allow children with ADHD to develop awareness of their condition, to be able to anticipate problems created by impulsivity and lack of attention, and to alter their behaviors accordingly (Safran, 2011). In adults, some of these tools have already been mastered by decades of trial and error—by intelligent application of experience to the challenges that continue to arise, by awareness of past errors in judgment, and by the use of psychotropic medication (Dere-Meyer, Bender, Metzl, & Diaz, 2010).

In a desire to propel further research in the expressive therapies regarding the role that art therapy plays in combined treatment with psychopharmacology for individuals with ADHD, bi-polar disorder, or depression, researchers Dere-Meyer,

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Bender, Metzl, & Diaz (2010) in their overview of the literature on this combination, found that art therapy can be effective in helping adults and children regulate themselves and generally address their emotional or mental health needs in a way that medication alone does not. They found (a) that art therapy can be a valuable tool in measuring the effectiveness of psychotropic medication for ADHD, (b) that implementing art therapy in combination with medication enhances positive skills, and (c) that art therapy itself is a sensitive form of non-judgmental communication through which clients' perception of treatment with medication can be explored. Other researchers have also concluded that in many cases art therapy is able to engage the minds and emotions of people with ADHD more effectively than other forms of therapy, and that art therapy activities help to stabilize moods and decrease anxiety (Dalebroux, Goldstein, & Winner, 2008; Kröger et al., 2011).

Several other studies support the notion that art therapy can have a significant positive impact on people with ADHD: It can promote positive changes in self-esteem and self-control (Murphy, Paisley, & Pardoe, 2004; Smitheman-Brown & Church, 1996); decrease behavior difficulties (Safran, 2003; Mackenzie, Chisholm, & Murray, 2000; Rees, 1998); increase social and verbal skills (Tubbs, 2008); and improve the ability to function in society (Henley, 1998).

Art-Based Research and Response Art

Art-based research. The limitations of suitable research tools for the investigation of health and disability in the 21st century have resulted in art-based research as a relatively new and rapidly developing alternative form of inquiry to traditional, quantitative research. Art-based research can be defined as:

The systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in

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all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. These inquiries are distinguished from research activities where the arts may play a significant role but are essentially used as data for investigations that take place within academic disciplines that utilize more traditional scientific, verbal, and mathematic descriptions and analyses of phenomena (McNiff, 2008, p. 29).

The primary purpose of the art-based research method is to provide evocative access to multiple meanings, offering interpretations associated with lived diversity and complexity (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Barone & Eisner, 2011, McNiff, 1998a; McNiff, 1998b). Art created in this context captures experiences that are hard to put into words and allows multiple layers of consciousness and awareness to emerge, eliciting representation that would not come to light through descriptive and linear language alone (Allen, 2012; Leavy, 2017; McNiff, 2011; McNiff, 2012; Weber, 2008;), and allowing people to connect to their cognition and emotions (Lafer-Sousa & Conway, 2009). In his 2012 introductory video to the special issue of *The Journal of Applied Arts and Health* Shaun McNiff noted that art based research can “help us deal with problems that are best reached through the intelligence of art” (McNiff, 2012, 3:04).

Response art. Donald Winnicott, a pediatrician, described his “Squiggle Game” as a way of eliciting drawings in his child patients as early as 1958. The game involved an exchange of squiggle drawings as a form of “art conversation” between Winnicott and his child patients (Berger, 1980).

The use of response art in art-based research builds on this concept of the art conversation by incorporating art created by the researcher in response to that created

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by the participants into the methodology of the study. Fish (2008) used images that had been created by therapists in order to understand their clients' process and art better. Some of the therapists chose to share their art responses with their clients, while others chose to keep their art to themselves. In the former case, the response of the clients was on the whole extremely positive, with clients expressing pleasure in the therapists' investment in their personal process.

Although Fish's study was conducted in a supervision framework, it indicates that in the research context, too, participants' pleasure in the response art of the researcher could benefit the research process in much the same way that it benefits the clinical process. Response art allows for communication between the researcher and co-researchers about their experiences, life situations, and the obstacles and challenges they face (Fish, 2008; Fish, 2012; Kapitan, Litell, & Torres, 2011; Van Lith, 2014; Wadeson, 2011). Through response art, researchers can express their understanding of the participants' experiences without preconceived notions or judgments entering into the response (Moon, 2009; Johnson, Lahad, & Gray, 2009). Allen (1999), who used her own images and writing in her art-based research, argues that response art allows researchers to uncover another layer of "truth" in their findings, while McNiff reported in his 2007 study that response art helped the researcher to focus more on the artistic process than on the human subject, contributing to the objectivity of the research. Havsteen-Franklin and Altamirano (2015) have offered that responsive art-making establishes crucial forms of communication when words are not available and is a valuable tool that should be included in the clinical repertoire of all art therapists.

Van Lith (2014) explored the relationship between response art and recovering from mental health issues. In her cooperative inquiry, esthetic engagement with art

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involved a reflective process of contributing and receiving for both Van Lith and her participants, with Van Lith exploring the collected interviews for inter-subjective responses afterwards. The focus of the study was how thoughts can be given visual expression to allow for alternative knowing and for beliefs and feelings to emerge. After Van Lith had created her artistic responses she took them back to the group to see how they would respond. They were moved and engaged by the fact that she had created art in response to her interviews with them. Van Lith concluded that her art responses helped realize the role of art making in the recovery process, creating a space for a renewed sense of self in each participant.

The Multimodal Approach

A number of researchers have led the way in conceiving different combinations of creative expression such as poetry, visual art, dance, drama, and music as a joint therapy known as Expressive Arts Therapy (Knill, Barba, & Fuchs, 2004; Levine, S. K., 2005; Levine, S. K., & Levine, E. G., 1999; McNiff, 1981; Moon, 2002). “The goal of this approach to art therapy” says McNiff (2016), “is the creation of a space where we can open ourselves to the complete spectrum of human expression, trusting in the intelligence of the creative imagination” (p. 473). Ryan (2014) states that when we take the context out of real life experience and emotion and project them through different art modes, reflective learning and transformation can occur. Each art mode that we use—brush stroke, key note, movement, and so on—helps us enter the world of the abstract where we can work on our unfolding experiences. In plastic art, space will be the place to facilitate the colors, strokes, and energy of the endeavor. In the literary and media arts, human experience is made imaginable, and imagery can come to life through the use of words (Ryan, 2014).

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When we are writing freely, creative writing can bring out our deepest thoughts and feelings related to a past that has yet to be revealed (Seih, Chung, & Pennebaker, 2011), so it is not surprising that writing creatively is an art form that can be used effectively in multi-modal research. It holds within it the opportunity for those who are living with life-long disabilities or hardships to express their experiences (Bruera, Willey, Cohen, & Palmer, 2008; Henry, Schlegel, Talley, Molix, & Bettencourt, 2010). In his haunting book “The Body Silent,” Murphy (1987) describes the increasing loss of his physical powers and the multiple frustrations and humiliations accompanying his treatment as a sojourn into territory no less strange to him than the Amazon forest. In writing his book he viewed himself as an anthropologist taking studious notes within the alien domain of his illness.

In art-based research and in expressive therapies using both creative writing and visual art (Rogers, 1993), the boundaries between the writing and visual art become blurred, opening up space for deeper meaning. In the ekphrastic setting, where a visual work of art is vividly described verbally or in writing (Ryan, 2014), the writing allows a reflective dialogue to take place first between the artwork and the writing piece, and then between the writer and the reader. It allows for exploration of writing and the visual, adding new meaning through the arts and suggesting new perspectives (Al-Joulani, 2010). The focus is not then on critiquing or commenting on the art work, but rather on placing oneself at the center of a dialog between the two modes and promoting deep learning through the re-formation of one’s literate identity.

Looking at video footage of ourselves in action allows us to step back and take a different view of our experience, which in turn has the potential to deepen our understanding of a given condition (Barone, 2003). Hearing, seeing, and feeling the

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lived experience through film not only helps the experience come to life and feel believable, but enables connection to others with similar experience (Weber, 2008). The use of visual media has become a major part of the way we communicate today. Transforming research data into film, or vice versa, has been developed by many (Eisner, 2006; Fish, 2017; Pink, 2001a; Pink, 2001b; Roberts; 2008; Sparkes, 2002; Sparkes, Nilges, Swan, & Dowling, 2003) and has been used in art therapy for almost 50 years (Carlton, 2014; Fryrear & Corbit, 1992; Malchiodi, 2000; McLeod, 1999; McNiff, 1981; McNiff & Cook, 1975). The studies of Malchiodi (2011), Leavy (2015), and Winther (2018) show the powerful potential of film to facilitate communication between researchers and co-researchers. When referring to the title of an article he wrote with Hearing in 2018, *Film as Research/Research as Film*, Kip Jones wrote:

It is possible to work on one or both sides of that oblique stroke, so that in the end, it is not really a separation anyway. I see it more as two sets of performative promise with the potential to work singularly or in concert. These possibilities are in the tools available to us as researchers if we are only brave enough to work with them.

Ruby (2000) notes that in research, film technology should be used carefully, since film has become deeply ingrained in western culture and has become part of our identity. In their 2004 study, Alfonso, Kurti, and Pink concluded that combining qualitative research with the usage of visual methods can carry a variety of meanings that can appeal to different audiences in diverse cultural contexts. Similar to written text, visual text can be turned into relevant and meaningful understanding that can connect with the cultural experiences of participants (Malchiodi, 2011). In addition,

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the usage of the visual modality has the potential of making the viewers emphasize, feel, imagine, and recognize the human condition (Sayre, 2001). Using film is another way of offering representation of reality as participants see it, and much like other art modalities, it has the potential to enable different ways of making meanings of participants' experiences (Winther, 2018). But the use of film as an art medium, it should be noted, is not a more "truthful" or "objective" method than any of the other approaches (Buckingham, Pini, & Willet, 2009). Films and images are viewed, felt, created, and expressed by the values and experiences that both the filmmaker and the viewer bring to them, and they often represent multiple layers of interpretation and bias.

Transformation

If new levels of knowledge, understanding, and perspective for the participant/client are the goal in both the research and clinical settings because these can lead to changes in self-image and behavior, how is this transformation to be observed, absorbed, measured, and assessed (Patterson, Crawford, Ainsworth, & Waller, 2011)? Holmqvist, Roxberg, Larsson, & Persson (2017) addressed this issue when they researched how inner change is explored by therapists (N=36), and how it can manifest during art therapy. The emerging themes were reviewed, defined, and labeled. Results revealed five themes: therapeutic alliance, creating, affect consciousness, self-awareness, and ego strengths (p. 47). The study showed that when the therapists were asked about how they identify that their clients have gone through some kind of inner change, they responded by saying they saw it through what they had seen, heard, observed, experienced and reflected on.

If we are able to look upon the life-long "thing" we are dealing with from afar,

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using the “magic” of the art process and our ability to communicate with others to facilitate a journey from within to without, then we are finally being seen by ourselves. Therein lies the potential for our transformation (Allen, 1995; McNiff, 2015).

Summary

Art therapy has for decades been helping people deal with various lifelong conditions through different art modalities. As an alternative method of dealing with some of the hardships and challenges of life with disability, art therapy offers not “medication” or “cure” but a new landscape of thinking for disabled and able people alike—new perspectives, new understanding, and through these, the potential for empowerment and social activism. With its emphasis on forms of expression that work alongside, but independently of, the spoken and written word, art-based research has been and continues to be an invaluable tool in the attempt to dive deeper into the human disability experience and to illuminate it. The power of the multimodal artistic inquiry and its potential to transform is what set this research project in motion.

CHAPTER 3

Method

Research Questions

In setting up the study, the following three research questions emerged for the researcher:

1. Can adults living with ADHD further their understanding of their past and present relationship to the disorder through creative writing and creating visual art?
2. How does the responsive approach, in which researcher and participants create an artistic conversation, deepen or enrich that understanding?
3. If there is new perspective as a result of this multimodal artistic process, does it have the potential to be transformative?

The Experimental Sessions

The study involved four participants (henceforth referred to as co-researchers), each engaged in five individual sessions. The sessions were labeled *Session One*, *Session Two*, *Session Three*, *Session Four*, and *Session Five*, with each session lasting between one and two hours. In addition, three other sessions were conducted in which I, the researcher, worked alone without the presence of a co-researcher: the first described as *Researcher's Art Response*; the second as *Preparation of Arts Portfolio and Edited Film*; and the third, *Researcher's Second Art and Film Response*. Sessions with co-researchers were conducted at their residences in three of the cases, and at my art studio in the case of the fourth co-researcher.

Session one. Co-researchers were seated at an art table equipped with a number of different drawing and painting materials, such as colored pens, different size pencils (AB, B1, B3, B6, B9), colored charcoal, acrylic paint, watercolors,

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colored pencils, oil pastels, oil sticks, and water based pastels. Scissors, glue, colored glue, colored paper, erasers, and an assortment of stickers were also provided. Several sizes of paper were available, from 21x 29.7 cm to 41.91 x 59.4 cm. Larger surfaces were not provided because the time limit of the sessions precluded the possibility of creating larger works of art.

Once seated, co-researchers were asked to cast their minds back to their childhood experiences of ADHD, and to ponder their past relationships with those experiences, writing down, in the form of free verse or prose, the memories, thoughts, and reflections that came to mind. The wording used for this request was:

I want you to cast your mind back and think about the relationship that you have had with ADHD and about the role that it has played in your past. Then I would like you to write down any memories or thoughts you have about this relationship, in prose, poetry, or any other form that you choose. You can write as little as a paragraph, or as much as a page or two, whatever feels right for you. When you have finished, you can read aloud to me what you have written if you wish, but you are not required to do this. Then I would like you to create a piece of visual art, with any combination of the materials that I have provided, as a response to your creative writing.

Creative writing produced by each co-researcher in the first session was labeled *(Initial of first name) Creative Writing One*.

When creating the visual art, co-researchers could choose to engage in dialogue, sharing observations and feelings while they worked, or to create quietly, with space and silence providing a meditative environment for focus and reflection.

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Visual art produced by each co-researcher in this session was labeled (*Initial of first name*) *Visual Art One*.

Session one was filmed in its entirety using a video camera placed to one side of the co-researcher at table level, with the co-researcher's face not visible. The footage from this session was labeled (*Initial of first name*) *Video Session One*.

Session two. The second session was an exact replica of the first in terms of structure, but this time co-researchers were asked to focus on memories, thoughts, and feelings about their present experience of ADHD. The wording of the request was:

In this session I am going to ask you to take time to reflect on the role that ADHD plays in your present, everyday life, and on the relationship that you have with it now. Then I would like you to write down, in any form that you like, thoughts or reflections that you would like to share with me about this present relationship. When you have finished, you may read aloud to me what you have written, or not, whichever you prefer. After that I would like you to create art as a response to what you have written, with any combination of the materials that I have set out for you.

Creative writing produced in this second session was labeled (*Initial of first name*) *Creative Writing Two*. The visual art created in this session was labeled (*Initial of first name*) *Visual Art Two*. Filmed footage from this session was labeled (*Initial of first name*) *Video Session Two*.

Researcher's art response. An art response session, which I conducted on my own without the presence of the co-researcher, was introduced at this stage of the inquiry. I created a piece of art in response to the two pieces created by each co-researcher, and labeled it (*Initial of first name*) *Researcher's Art Response*. The aim of the response art was: (a) to gain a deeper understanding of what had been

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experienced by each of the co-researchers, and (b) to create an opportunity to present them with a complex and multi-layered expression of each of their experiences.

Creative writing pieces and video footage from the first two sessions were not examined at this time, but were put aside for later study (see below), in an attempt to ensure that the art response would be as instinctive and authentic as possible.

Session three. All three pictures were laid out on the table in front of the co-researcher:

- *Visual Art One,*
- *Visual Art Two, and*
- *the Researcher's Art Response.*

Co-researchers were told:

You are invited to examine and reflect upon the two pieces of visual art you created in the last two sessions, and my artistic response to those pieces. After you have examined the three pictures, I will ask you, as I did in the previous two sessions, to respond first by writing a text, and then by creating art with the materials I have provided.

Creative writing produced by co-researchers in response to this request was labeled *(Initial of first name) Creative Writing Three.*

The co-researcher's artistic response to the three pieces was labeled *(Initial of first name) Visual Art Three.* Co-researchers were allowed to work quietly or to share their thoughts while working. Verbal expressions of their thoughts during this process, if they arose, were recorded on video and treated as informal interview material. Video footage recorded in this session was labeled *(Initial of first name) Video Session Three.*

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By the end of sessions one and two, the response art session, and session three, four pieces of visual art associated with each co-researcher had been created;

- ☐ *Visual Art One,*
- ☐ *Visual Art Two,*
- ☐ *Researcher's Art Response, and*
- ☐ *Visual Art Three.*

Preparation of portfolios and edited film. The second session conducted by myself alone, without the presence of the co-researcher, was then introduced into the inquiry. In this session, all three writing texts and all three visual art pieces created by the co-researcher were examined in an attempt to discern what may have been expressed in the words and imagery. Video footage from each of the three sessions was viewed carefully, and notes taken on hand movements, images, and content and frequency of speech and conversation. For each session, I created an exact, word-for-word transcript of all comments made by the co-researcher during the creation process of texts and the paintings, and of all conversations with me. Interestingly, all co-researchers had chosen to read their creative writing texts aloud, even though they were not required to do so. This gave the added benefit of the texts being “brought to life” by the co-researchers’ tone of voice, inflections, pauses, fluidity, and body movements. This was an unexpected outcome. At the time of designing the study I saw the creative writing simply as a way of opening up memory and experience and as a conduit to the authentic expression of the visual art; I had not considered that reading the text aloud would be emotionally laden and significant for the co-researcher, who in this one act was both absorbing what he or she had written, and communicating the text and its emotional context to me.

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As I worked my way through the footage and listened to co-researchers connect to memories and stories from their past and present experiences, I saw how these unfolded through their hand movements, their choice of paper and materials, and their choice of color and image. I was able to identify and make note (using time codes) of moments that felt important, vibrant and meaningful and to focus on those movements and sounds that seemed to me to be the essence of the co-researchers' experience and expression.

I then created a two-column film script with video in one column and audio in the other. For the visual side of the script I used sections of the video footage that I had marked as most expressive of the co-researcher's process and most relevant in terms of the research questions. For the audio, I used the marked excerpts from the creative writing read aloud by the co-researchers, and from their informal comments and conversations with me, which I believed would be informative for their sense of their relationship with ADHD.

It became clear to me at this point that I would use the voice of the co-researcher as a kind of sound track to the film, giving authentic expression to the visual experience of the creative works unfolding. On the one hand, superimposing "voice" from some parts of the session onto actions from other parts of the session would be a manipulation of the chronology i.e. a departure from the accurate presentation of events as they occurred in real time. On the other hand, the "doubling up" of picture and sound would provide, I believed, a rich, succinct, and concentrated experience for the co-researcher. The edited film, in contrast to the raw footage, was after all a created piece of response art from me and was intended to be my aesthetic encapsulation and presentation of the co-researcher's process.

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Using the above method, I constructed a rough-cut of each film that was usually about eight minutes in length. This edited video response, based on the first three sessions, enabled me to hear the co-researchers' voices as they read their creative writing aloud, while grasping in the same short time the art that emerged from that writing.

I was concerned, however, that these eight-minute versions of the films would not sustain the interest and curiosity of the co-researchers while they were watching them, so I edited the films down to a five-minute final version.

By the end of this session, a presentation portfolio for the co-researcher had been created that contained:

- ☐ The two pictures created by the co-researcher in the first two sessions,
- ☐ The researcher's response art picture,
- ☐ The co-researcher's third picture created in response to the researcher's art,
- ☐ A page of the researcher's condensed notes written in clear and simple language, and
- ☐ A USB uploaded with the video edited by the researcher.

The portfolio for each co-researcher was labeled *(First initial) Presentation Portfolio*.

Until this point the research method proceeded exactly as planned. But after editing the film of the first co-researcher (G) and putting together her portfolio for presentation at the fourth session, I took the opportunity to leaf through the paintings

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and notes, and watch the film, trying to get a sense of how G would experience it. I was struck by the “purity” and simplicity of the texts and the paintings, contrasted with the highly constructed nature of the edited film. Though the edited film was artistically satisfying as a polished product (at least to me), I was worried that something in the research had lost momentum and freshness. Above all, the camera angles used to film the pictures being created gave a sense of distance instead of intimacy. Once this distanced footage was further edited into the short film, the material seemed doubly removed from the essence of what the research was trying to express, i.e. the creation of the art in the consciousness of the co-researcher as a moment to moment experience.

My advisor, too, felt this lack of engagement and I consulted with him about the possibility of adding an extra session in which co-researchers would be asked to create a fourth painting in response to the portfolio, using a different filming technique that would achieve a better result. I purchased a GoPro camera, which not only produces high-resolution professional video, but also has the added advantage of being small, with an adjustable strap that allows it to be affixed to the co-researcher’s forehead. Over a few days I experimented with the GoPro by attaching it to volunteer friends and family members at home and examining the film footage obtained. The results were dramatic. The art that was created in each case unfolded in front of the camera as if through a third eye, allowing me to watch the process from almost the exact point of view of the co-researcher. The video footage was crystal clear in terms of resolution, light, and color and was also fresh and immediate. The process of the formation of the images and colors in the paintings felt almost organic when filmed from this angle. I felt ready to proceed to the fourth session and to request a further piece of response art from each co-researcher, using this improved filming method.

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Session four. Co-researchers were invited to view the edited film. They were then asked to respond to it with another piece of visual art. Video footage recorded in this session using the new GoPro technique was labeled *(Initial of first name) Video Session Four*.

Researcher's second art response. In the third and final session in which the co-researcher was not present, I created an art response to *Visual Art Four*, also using the GoPro filming method. Two short films, each between a minute and two minutes long, were created from the GoPro footage with minimal editing: the first from the GoPro footage created by the co-researcher in Session Four, labeled *(Initial of first name) Second Edited Film*; and the second from the GoPro footage of the art response, labeled *Researcher Art Response Film*.

Session five. The six completed visual art pieces

- ☐ *Visual Art One,*
- ☐ *Visual Art Two,*
- ☐ *Researcher's Art Response,*
- ☐ *Visual Art Three,*
- ☐ *Visual Art Four, and*
- ☐ *Researcher's Second Art Response,*

were laid out on the floor so that they could be viewed simultaneously by the researcher and co-researcher. The co-researcher was then invited to watch all three of the films; the edited film of the first three sessions (which had already been viewed in Session Four), the new GoPro-filmed video showing the co-researcher's visual art

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being created in Session Four, and a second new GoPro-filmed video showing my art response to this.

Co-researchers were then asked:

1. Can you describe your experience of the art-making process in each of the three sessions? What are your thoughts and feelings now that you are looking at the three finished pieces that you made? What are your thoughts about the researcher's response art? Has the process and result of this art creation suggested to you any new aspects of your relationship with ADHD?
2. Can you describe your thoughts and feelings after watching the edited film? The two last films? What was it like to see my response to your process through the short film?
3. Having read my thoughts, observations, and preliminary conclusions in the written notes, is there anything you would like to add that you feel has not been mentioned or explored? Do you disagree with anything that has been written?
4. Please make an oral statement as long or as short as you wish, describing the overall experience of the study, your estimation of whether you gained anything from it and giving details if you feel that you did so. What, in your opinion, might be changed or improved in future studies?

The presentation of all six pictures, the viewing of the films, and the ensuing discussion were filmed in this fifth session, with the video footage labeled as (*First initial*) *Video Session Five*.

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Table 1

Example of Labeling System for all Materials for Fictitious Co-Researcher X.

Session	Labeled Materials
Session One	<i>X Creative Writing One</i> <i>X Visual Art One</i> <i>X Video Session One</i>
Session Two	<i>X Creative Writing Two</i> <i>X Visual Art Two</i> <i>X Video Session Two</i>
Art Response	<i>X Researcher's Art Response</i>
Session Three	<i>X Creative Writing Three</i> <i>X Visual Art Three</i> <i>X Video Session Three</i>
Preparation of Edited Video and Portfolio	<i>X Presentation Portfolio</i> <i>X Edited Film</i>
Session Four	<i>X Visual Art Four</i> <i>X Video Session Four</i>
Researcher's Second Art and Film Response	<i>X Researcher's Second Art Response</i> <i>X Second Edited Film</i> <i>X Researcher Art Response Film</i>
Session Five	<i>X Video Session Five</i>

Examination of Materials from the Sessions

Creative writing. The texts from *Creative Writing One* and *Two* for each co-researcher were examined. Notes were made on: (a) issues that were raised; (b) style and length of writing; (c) body language while writing; (d) connections between the writing, the picture created, and the filmed material from that session; and (e) noticeable changes between the writing of different sessions.

Visual art pieces. The six finished pictures were placed on the floor and examined. Suggested or expressed ideas, correlations, connections, and contrasts between the images of the pictures were noted, as well as choice of materials, choice and intensity of color, composition, and execution.

Video footage. All video recordings of the creative writing, the creation of the visual art, the informal comment and discussion, and the responses and remarks of the fifth session were transcribed and reviewed. The filmed material was approached holistically, i.e. as a multi-modal communication of the co-researcher's experience of ADHD over time, with attention paid to significant terms and phrases, images, descriptions, stories, and other verbal accounts that arose in the dialogues. Visual suggestions of emotions such as body language, mood, tone of voice, and frequency of verbal communication were also considered. A close scrutiny of video footage of the final discussions of Session Five was of particular import in the summing up, because this footage included the insights of the co-researchers into the process and effects of the inquiry, and their views on whether it had been transformative for them in any way. I then added my own reflections and conclusions, discussing any new knowledge that might have been gained from the inquiry.

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Recruitment

Adults between the ages of 30 to 80 who had been diagnosed with ADHD, and who continued to exhibit symptoms of the disorder, were recruited from the general community. Recommendations were requested from art therapy colleagues, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, and family members. Candidates for selection were presented with several categories of important information: (a) the research questions and aims of the research; (b) expectations of how many sessions would be involved; (c) what would be required in each session; and (d) the circumstances in which any creative writing pieces, visual art, or video footage from the sessions might be used in the future. The importance of studying the ADHD experience was explained in terms of trying to empower adults to develop a better relationship with ADHD, with an emphasis on the intention of using the results of the research to help others. Age, gender, artistic experience, ADHD diagnosis, perceived level of reliability and commitment, willingness to share and expose feelings through art, and availability for the number of hours required were used as criteria for selection.

At the end of this process four volunteers were selected for the study:

- ☐ a woman in her mid-thirties in the late stages of pregnancy, by profession a software engineer;
- ☐ a woman in her late fifties, by profession a filmmaker, writer, and editor;
- ☐ a woman in her early eighties, by profession a former nursery schoolteacher and former public relations employee at a girls' orphanage; and
- ☐ a man in his mid-forties, by profession a drama therapist.

All methods and goals of the study were articulated clearly to the volunteers. They were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, and that copies of the dissertation and of the videos made from the sessions would be

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made available to them after completion of my doctoral studies. These terms and conditions were stated in writing in the Preliminary Consent Form, signed by each co-participant at the beginning of the inquiry.

Emotional Wellbeing of Co-Researchers

It was not expected that the study would be stressful for co-researchers. Art-based research does not necessarily protect people from encountering painful memories, but it was hoped that the beneficial effects of the research would eclipse moments of discomfort, anger, or sadness. Painful or difficult emotions did not arise during the inquiry, but nonetheless vigilance about the emotional state of co-researchers was maintained throughout, so that if highly charged situations arose, they could be sensitively addressed. When co-researchers did express negative emotions as a result of thinking about their experiences both past and present, the creative process appeared to channel these feelings safely towards calm self-expression. The aim was to create an environment in which co-researchers felt comfortable in expressing their inner thoughts and memories, and on the whole they were able to achieve this.

Conclusion

My aim was to give co-researchers an opportunity to reshape their understanding of the effects of ADHD on their lives and give them deeper insight into their relationship with the disorder. Would their artistic process in the case of both the creative writing and visual art, and my own art response, offer new ways of discovering and knowing their experience of ADHD? If so, there was a chance that the study might in some way prove to be helpful, or even transformative, for those involved.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This artistic inquiry addressed the following three research questions:

1. Can adults living with ADHD further their understanding of their past and present relationship to the condition through creative writing and creating visual art?
2. How does the responsive approach, in which researcher and co-researchers create an artistic conversation, deepen or enrich that understanding?
3. If there is new perspective as a result of this multi-modal artistic process, does it have the potential to be transformative?

Three of the co-researchers participating in the inquiry were women: G, a software engineer in her 30s; K, a translator and editor in her 50s; and S, a retired nursery-school teacher in her 80s. The fourth was a man, L, a drama therapist in his 40s. All had been dealing with ADHD since childhood. The inquiry consisted of five separate sessions for each of the four co-researchers (twenty sessions in all). Four main outcomes resulted from the inquiry.

Outcome 1

Outcome 1 maybe summarized as: *Making changes to the research method during the course of the study enhanced the study's depth and effectiveness.*

The aim of the original method, consisting of four sessions in which the viewing of the five-minute edited video would mark the end of the study, was to use multimodal creativity to attempt to answer the three research questions listed above. However, as discussed in the method chapter, the first three sessions, though useful to co-

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researchers for the emotional pain revealed and for a clearer picture of how they were perceived by themselves and by others, did not produce spontaneous, instinctive art emanating from a place of depth and awareness. By the end of session three, when I was editing the first five-minute response video, I could see that the outcomes as they stood did not satisfactorily address the research questions

In a discussion with my dissertation advisor about why this might be, we considered the possibility that the methodology as originally conceived lacked immediacy, intimacy, and the power to allow co-researchers to be fully present in their art creation. Rather, the formal framework of the creative writing, the painting, and the examination of my art response, as well as the standard way in which the sessions were filmed for the 5-minute video (from the side and in long-shot), appeared to force a rigid external structure on the co-researchers' process, putting distance between them and their experience. For example, here is the link to the video made for G, the youngest of the co-researchers:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/qqecvgwulpdkku7/G%20%205%20minute%20movie.mov?dl=0>

(For links to the edited videos made for all four co-researchers after session three, see Appendix C).

My advisor suggested that co-researchers be given the opportunity, after reflecting on their portfolio and five-minute film in the fourth session, to create a fourth and final piece of art in response to all these materials, filmed with a GoPro camera attached to the forehead. I would then respond to this last painting with a painting of my own (created and filmed with the GoPro, and not in the presence of the co-researcher), i.e. the second art response of the inquiry. Co-researchers would then, in an added fifth session, be able to view these two new videos—(a) the unedited

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footage of their creation of the fourth painting, and (b) the unedited footage of my art response to that painting.

This addition of the creation of a fourth piece of visual art by co-researchers and a second piece of response art by me, each filmed using a different camera and from a different angle than that used in the first three sessions, produced dramatic results, and a marked change in the direction of the study. The overwhelming advantage of the GoPro camera was that it recorded the moment-to-moment creation of the picture from the point of view of the artist, and not from the point of view of a camera placed to one side of the artist. Co-researchers had the real-time experience of watching the art unfold on the page just as it had when they (or I) were creating it.

Here for example are the links to the GoPro film of G's creation of her fourth painting and to the GoPro film of my response:

- G session four

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/kfsqdo4enjgkhq0/G%204th%20session%20.mp4?dl=0>

- G art response

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/jsvjc6o7c2qnn31/G%20response%20.mp4?dl=0>

(see Appendix D for links to all GoPro fourth paintings and all GoPro response paintings).

This ability to revisit the intensely intimate unfolding of the painting appeared to engage co-researchers in quite a different way than the examination of their finished paintings in previous sessions. In fact, in the first three sessions co-researchers were interested in their process only in as much it produced an end-result—a painting that could be analyzed for truths and clues. They paid little or no attention to what may have prompted the emergence of each image or stroke on the

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page, to the order in which these images emerged, or to whether each image had in some way prompted the creation of the one that came after it.

Now, viewing the two new unedited videos, they were far more interested in the “live action” of what was happening on the paper as a reflection of how different thoughts and emotions were working inside them. The result was that, having watched their own creative process and mine without wishing to reduce either to a tangible result, they were able to bring in-depth observations and reflections to the final discussion that had not surfaced in previous sessions, expressing their moments of discovery in different ways.

“It feels as though I have been through a process and that is why maybe I connect to it more,” said G after watching the GoPro footage of my second art response. “Something about the second one stirs more emotions in me. It made me think about how ADHD affects me and how I let myself do or not do things.” She concluded that the last two films had a much bigger effect on her than the first edited video. The paintings unfolding from her point of view and mine, she said, made the viewing process much more emotionally intense.

G was struck by the image of the eye that appeared again and again in her creations. “It makes me think of how I was perceived and if I was even seen at all. Or that I was not good enough. And I was holding myself back because of it.” She was surprised by the free movements of her hand on the paper in her last painting, noting that there was something completely new here about her mode of expressing herself. That is when it touched her emotionally, she explained, because she believes that the new form of expression will affect her in the long run.

This awareness that change had taken place was expressed by S, who said she noticed in the GoPro film that her hand was no longer shaking as she drew. She

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described the movement as more free and enjoyable, and spoke of the colors she had the courage to use in contrast to the stark black and white drawings of the earlier sessions. This, she felt, was a sign of confidence, of being proud of herself.

L, the only male co-researcher, talked about my GoPro filmed response art as giving a human form to his feelings on the one hand, and an abstract expression to them on the other, allowing him room to respond emotionally to the pictures.

At the end of the last session, when co-researchers had viewed the final two videos, all noted that they had enjoyed the study much more than they had anticipated. The more they progressed through the artistic process, and the more my responses acknowledged their difficulties, they said, the more they realized that what had stopped or restricted them before need not necessarily do so today

The ongoing assessment and successful restructuring of the inquiry while it was taking place is probably one of the most significant outcomes of the study, because rather than adhering to fixed methods that were determined in advance, the methods were responsive to the ongoing process of the research, indicating that art-based research can itself emerge as the art of the participants or co-researchers emerges. My advisor affirmed this notion. We discussed how a flexible and dynamic approach, in which the possibility for in-study alteration is built in to the methodology, allows for organic and effective enhancement of the research as it unfolds. This has implications for the methodology of research into the adult experience of other conditions and disabilities.

When looking at whether Outcome 1 addresses Question 1 of the research: “Can adults living with ADHD further their understanding of their past and present relationship to the condition through creative writing and creating visual art?” we can say that Outcome 1 addresses it but with a qualification: Adults do appear to be able

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to further their understanding of their relationship to ADHD using creative writing and visual art, if the creation of that art, emerging gradually and organically over a number of sessions, is re-experienced by them through the lens of a camera recording their process, and through response art “conversations” with a researcher/therapist.

Outcome 2

Outcome 2 may be summarized as follows: *The responsive approach, in which researcher and co-researcher created an artistic conversation, proved to be crucial in deepening and enriching the co-researchers’ understanding of their relationship with ADHD.*

Outcome 2 directly addresses the second question of the research: “How does the responsive approach, in which researcher and co-researchers create an artistic conversation, deepen or enrich that understanding?” It definitively answers this question because of the crucially important role of the response art in allowing co-researchers to feel that an artistic conversation was taking place, and that this conversation was fruitful and revelatory. In their statements during the study co-researchers observed that the inclusion of my response art gave them equal status in the endeavor of the inquiry, establishing them as co-researchers (rather than clients or participants). K observed:

First of all, there’s the intimacy of it. The shock almost, that you’ve shown someone else the innermost workings of your mind, of your soul? It is a mirror, someone holding up a mirror. But not an impersonal mirror. Not with the exactness and cruelty of a mirror, but with a kind of compassion. Because what’s amazing about the third picture is that Dina’s soul is in there too. It’s not her just reflecting my soul back to me, as in: “I peeked inside you and this is what I saw.” But it’s her being prepared somehow to put her soul in there

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too. So it's like both of our souls are on the line here (see Appendix C, Link to K's edited video, 5:20).

The co-researchers' feeling of being part of a joint endeavor formed a bond of trust and confidentiality between them and me, releasing them from feelings of vulnerability and embarrassment and enabling them to express without reservation memories and reflections that were painful.

In attempting to discover why the response art was so effective in helping co-researchers gain more insight into their relationship with ADHD, the three modes of response art used in the inquiry need to be considered.

First mode of response: Art response one. An inspection of the response art pieces I created for the four co-researchers between sessions two and three reveals that after reading their stories and looking closely at their visual art, there was a strong need on my part to start from the images that arose in their painting. Here for example are G's first two paintings and my response painting:



Figure 1. The picture created by G in session one

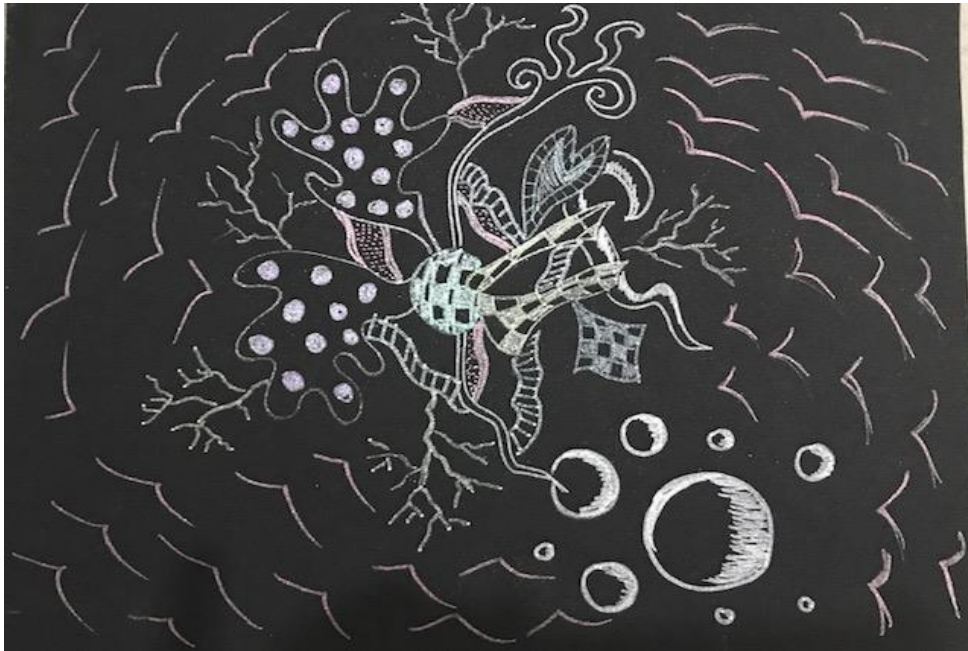


Figure 2. The picture created by G in session two



Figure 3. Art response to Figures 1 and 2

In all four of the response paintings, I integrated elements of the co-researchers' first two paintings. My attempt to connect the different images of the

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first two paintings was my way, I believe, of bringing respect to the co-researchers' process. While painting I was aware of wishing to "preserve" their artistic expression and not to inadvertently corrupt the communication of the thoughts and emotions they had brought to their work.

However, I was not aiming for a mirror-like reflection of what the co-researcher had created; I wished to allow my own spontaneous responses to be artistically expressed. Perhaps this desire to cherish and retain the imagination and drive behind the co-researcher paintings while at the same time allowing my own creativity to surface resulted in the densely populated, intensely colored creations that were the response paintings.

In three cases out of four, the first two paintings of the co-researchers go from: figurative representation to more abstract expression; from the careful and the narrative to the liberated and the playful; and from a preoccupation with clearly recognizable images that deliver message and content, to a deliberate escape from this convention. G, for example, chose black paper instead of white for her second picture, and L tried to "sculpt" his experience rather than just draw it, by crumpling up and folding his paper into a three dimensional shape.

In each case, the three paintings together do give a sense of flow and progression, rather than just individual and unrelated splashes of art on the page. K said:

You made me feel very. . . . looking at your picture much more than looking at my picture made me feel very introspective, very philosophical. My pictures were about myself, about me the individual. But what I see in your picture. . . is a little girl who's me but she's also all the other little girls. What comes out most here, is that she is a child. And we're always a child.



Figure 4. The picture created by K in session one



Figure 5. The picture created by K in session two



Figure 6. Art response to Figures 4 and 5

(See Appendix E for each co-researcher's first two paintings and my art response.)

The co-researcher creative writing texts that immediately followed their viewing of the three pictures together reflect, to some degree, the overall “shape” that the response art lent to series. In their writing, co-researchers relate more to an overarching idea or concept conceived from the three together as a unit, than to the three pictures as individual creations.

L, for example, used the images in all three of the pictures to give a lyrical description of his ongoing battle with ADHD:

This time it's not easy. Last time I horned some words. When I did I realized that they were the little demons. On my way home it hit me that I had not written or mentioned PROCRASTINATION, the greatest of all evils. So welcome you smiling demon of fire, super villain of my life, your smile

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unnerves me, you mock my chivalry. My blind superhero rides an empty horse, an empty horse on a non-path to a lost era. Dreamland has come true, embarrassing, and not very hopeful. So far to go, but why are you behind me? Get in front of me, do battle, stop taunting me. . . . You know that I am posing, phony, faking my way. You have unmasked me, brought me to my knees. Please, let me into the forbidden city.

Co-researchers then proceeded with visual art responses to Response Art One, lengthening and deepening the artistic conversation. They tended to move towards different kinds of expression for their third piece of art, indicating that they felt a need to “wrap up” the inquiry with a picture that defined their arrival, emotionally, at a certain point. G and S chose images of contentment and closure, while L and K tended toward the lyrical and the mystical (to view the third pictures of all four co-researchers see Appendix F).



Figure 7. G’s third picture after seeing the art response

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Second mode of response: The edited video. The individual edited videos that were created in response to the first three sessions elicited exclamations of pleasure and curiosity from co-researchers when these were presented to them in session four (here for example is a link to the video that was edited for L: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/z884osvi2tyzbro/Movie%20L.mov?dl=0>). Most co-researchers mentioned that they had forgotten some parts of the sessions and were excited to remember them again when looking at the video; in each case about a year had elapsed since the first session. All smiled as they watched, and appeared to be happy to see themselves talking, writing, drawing, and creating (for links to all four edited videos, see Appendix C). They also appeared to be fascinated not just by their visual art as presented in the film but by the texts they had written and read aloud: perhaps because these were brought to life in the film by the use of voice-over and by close-ups on some of the words and sentences (see Appendix G for excerpts from co-researchers' verbal responses to the edited video).

After looking at the portfolio of texts and paintings, and after viewing the edited video, co-researchers proceeded with a fourth painting, this time filmed with a GoPro camera. Once more, the artistic conversation was set in motion, with co-researchers responding to the edited video as my artistic expression of their overall process so far. These fourth pieces of art by the co-researchers differed quite markedly from the earlier three paintings in composition, color, and speed of execution.

Third mode of response: Art response two. After session four, and in the privacy of my own studio, I created an art response to the co-researcher's fourth painting. This was filmed in the same manner as for the co-researchers - with the

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GoPro attached to my head. Here for example are the links to the GoPro footage of L's fourth painting and to my response painting:

L, session four	https://www.dropbox.com/s/cky6poe2se9vv9h/L%20response%20.mp4?dl=0
L, my art response	https://www.dropbox.com/s/e07azddtqj55hzg/L%20final%20response%20.mp4?dl=0

Figure 8. L: links to both GoPro videos

(See Appendix D for links to all GoPro fourth paintings and all GoPro response paintings.)

After watching both videos, co-researchers compared the two finished pictures carefully, looking for similarities in the lines and colors, shapes and images (to see the fourth pictures for each participant, and my response, see Appendix H).

In the ensuing discussion about the value of the different stages of the study, co-researchers were enthusiastic about these last two pictures. G remarked:

The last two movies, especially the response art movie, had an effect, it did something. There was great importance to the procedure. If I were to see the last two movies at the beginning it would not have had the same effect as it did now at the end.

. . . . Your response feels the same like mine, but when I saw the process of it being done I thought that it was much more intense—the same but completely different. To see the reaction, the way you used the art in reflection to mine, hit something inside of me. It was able to show things that I thought of that I was not able to express.

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(For excerpts from the verbal responses of co-researchers to the GoPro films, see Appendix I-1.)



Figure 9. G's Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro



Figure 10. Response to Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro

Some conclusions about the response approach. When looking at the importance of the response approach in the study we can conclude that the first two sessions, consisting of introspective writing and painting, were a good starting point from which co-researchers could proceed. But from the onset of the artistic conversation in session three, i.e. from the point at which co-researchers saw the first response paintings I had made, they began to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the role of ADHD in their lives. Once all of the paintings were laid out on the floor, and the last GoPro filmed art response had been watched, co-researchers began to look at their lifelong process with the disability from perspectives that were new to them. At this stage all four of them reflected deeply on their past and ongoing relationship with ADHD and seemed to discover enlightening aspects of it. One of these, to quote K, was that “the relationship with ADHD really is a relationship.” S, the oldest of the participants, remarked that not only was it not too late to change the way she perceived herself and to gain confidence, but that these changes would move outward through her circles of connection, influencing her interactions with her “next of kin” and others who were close to her. L’s greatest revelation, he said, was that the study helped him to make more sense of “what is universal ADHD and what is me,” giving him a sense of context and community, and making him feel that a shared experience of the condition can be comforting.

In the fifth session co-researchers expressed being more aware of how ADHD is still influencing them. Dealing with how they are perceived by others appears to be key in all four cases. It was this factor above all others that co-researchers said they needed to release in order to fully experience the study and access core issues.

Letting go of societal expectations seems to have been the longest and hardest part of their life journeys so far (and of the process in the inquiry). In the case of S

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and K, the older two participants, this liberation from the expectations of others felt integrated and complete; in the case of the younger two, L and G, less so.

Since exposure to others and their judgments was such a sensitive issue with all four co-researchers, it is interesting that my mirroring of their experience and my emotional stake in that experience through the response art pieces was appreciated, valued, and enjoyed. In fact, given that such a large part of participants' experience of ADHD is the anxiety from childhood about how others perceive them, the art response methodology is surprisingly effective.

Outcome 3

Outcome 3 may be summarized as: *Adults living with ADHD may find the introspection that accompanies creative writing and painting useful in the extraction of memory and in the shaping of thoughts associated with the disorder. In this study, however, there was no indication that greater understanding or new perspectives were achieved using these methods alone. It was the “art conversation” with the researcher, in which the response paintings and response films were incorporated into the process, that allowed co-researchers to think about their relationship with the disorder in previously unexplored ways.*

Like Outcome 1, Outcome 3 to some extent addresses Question 1 of the research: “Can adults living with ADHD further their understanding of their past and present relationship to the disorder through creative writing and creating visual art?”

The answer to this question in the context of this inquiry is that creative writing and creating visual art were good starting points for beginning to explore the relationship with ADHD past and present, and certainly were catalysts for the retrieval of memory, the organization of thoughts and the confrontation with, and expression of, some painful emotions. But they were not in themselves enough to

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produce a multi-layered new perspective for co-researchers, to whom the inward looking meditation of the writing and painting was less helpful than the reflection of themselves and their condition in my response art and in the conversations that resulted from it.

We cannot say however that the reflective writing texts and paintings created in the first three sessions were of no use at all to co-researchers in their journey toward greater understanding. On the contrary, according to co-researcher statements the creative writing texts of the first and second sessions played the part of ‘private investigator’ for co-researchers, opening the vault of memory in each case and extracting from it experiences and reflections long suppressed or simply forgotten (for co-researcher remarks about the value of the creative writing, see Appendix J).

Touching those experiences again through the writing was tough, some co-researchers said, with negative feelings sometimes accompanying them for hours or days after the session. Indeed, the creative writing texts from session one reflect this—memories were almost always associated with feelings of insufficiency and failure, most particularly in the school setting. In the paintings that followed, the isolation and difficulties of childhood emerged clearly in the imagery of three out of the four (see Figures E4, E7, and E10 in Appendix E). Co-researchers appreciated the value of the creative writing from the first two sessions as preparatory, or meditative elements in the research process. To simply pick up art materials from the table and start drawing or painting without the thoughts and emotions stimulated by the writing would perhaps have been too difficult, they said, or would have required a quiet period of reflection anyway.

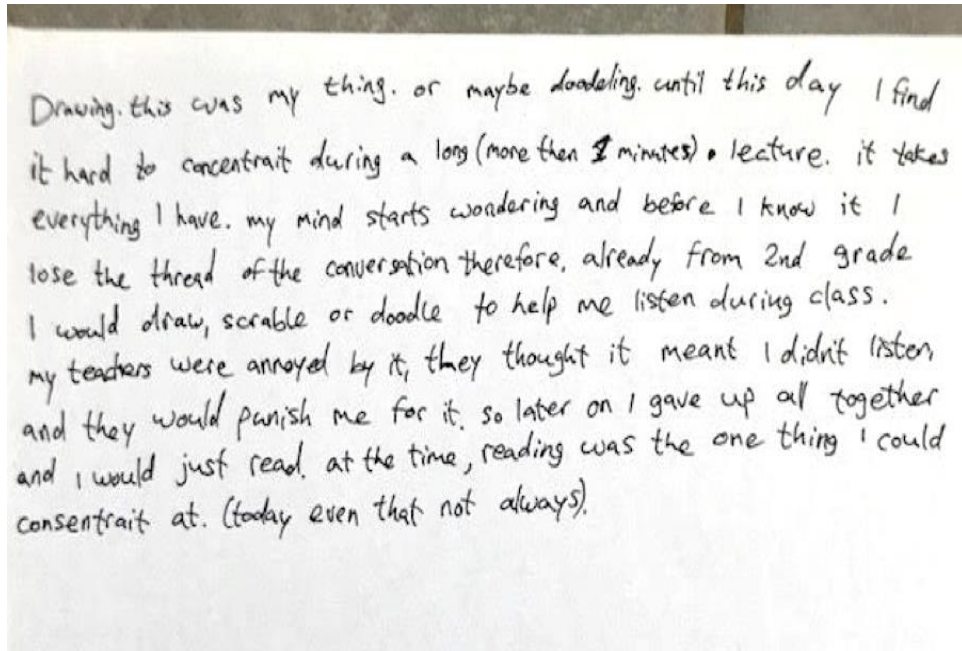


Figure 11. G's creative writing from session one

(To hear G's reading of this text, see Appendix C, Link G.)

One unanticipated and positive element of the creative writing stage was that co-researchers chose to read aloud their texts after completing the writing. They put much expression into their reading, appearing in their intonation to re-inject into the text the emotions they had experienced while writing it. The writing was therefore a channel through which co-researchers could access their experience, both past and present, twice and in slightly different ways. Perhaps this is why, in the discussions and conversations of the fifth and final session, co-researchers described the creative writing as crucial to the process of allowing for memory and experience to surface (to view all creative writing texts, see Appendix K).

Outcome 4

Outcome 4 may be summarized as: *Whereas co-researchers expressed only negative feelings associated with ADHD at the beginning of the study, they had gained a number of positive perspectives on living with the condition by the end of the study.*

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Noticeable among all co-researchers in the final session was the positive note embedded in their overview of the process: all used words of acceptance, hope, and awaiting a brighter future (see Table I-1, Appendix I). This was in stark contrast to the first three sessions where only one co-researcher expressed something positive about dealing with ADHD. For the most part the associations and reflections were negative: difficult experiences at school, lack of acceptance among family members and peer group, the feeling of constantly being watched and judged, and most of all, co-researchers' convictions that their potential had not been actualized and that they had failed in some important areas of their lives.

As the last session unfolded, however, positive statements abounded. An important element in these positive feelings appears to have been co-researchers' status as outside observers of their relationship with ADHD in the past and present, and of their own process in the inquiry. They felt that the opportunity to experience their story as "someone else's story" gave them the distance they needed from painful experiences and a measure of perspective and calm. L. expressed this most poignantly when he said:

It stressed my understanding that time is my biggest enemy, putting life and face on my experiences. You did it in art and that gave me what I needed to put it in words. Your response art gave a human form, which is the kind of thinking I usually do and which sprung something poetic from me. . . . participating in such a research project will allow me for the first time to actually test what is universal ADHD, and what is me. To know that others might have similar themes to mine, begs the question that we have more in common than I thought.

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Perhaps it is the “someone else’s story” quality of the study that gave co-researchers the opportunity to see their ADHD as a strength as well as a challenge. Some said that while they were not able to change what had already happened, they did feel that coping with the condition, and the tools that they had had to acquire in coping, might well have given them the power to change and influence things in the future. Strategies they had to develop to “control” their ADHD, such as the discipline and acceptance required to take regular medication, or the learning of certain life skills in order to anticipate areas of difficulty, had become absorbed into their adult identities.

But do some of these new positive perspectives allow co-researchers to put early trauma behind them, and move forward with their lives? This is the essence of the third research question: “If there are new perspectives as a result of this multi-modal artistic process, does it have the potential to be transformative?” Perhaps the answer to this question lies beyond the scope of the inquiry, which took place over too short a time period for myself and the co-researchers, to judge. But the potential for transformation can perhaps be gleaned from co-researchers’ own comments on the altered way in which they view their relationship with ADHD post-inquiry.

Summary of Outcomes

The outcomes of the study address the research questions in the following way:

1. Can adults living with ADHD further their understanding of their past and present relationship to the condition through creative writing and creating visual art?

The outcome was that creative writing and visual art on their own, while allowing co-researchers to access memory and experience and express feelings related

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to these, did not appear to help adult co-researchers with ADHD enhance their understanding of their relationship with the disorder. Only when the art they created became part of a larger “art conversation,” in which I responded to their work artistically through the paintings and films, and both their artwork and mine was examined and discussed, did they begin to see their relationship to ADHD in a wider and deeper context.

2. How does the responsive approach, in which researcher and co-researchers create an artistic conversation, deepen or enrich that understanding?

Co-researchers described inclusion of my response art as key to the inquiry because it lent equality to the process and built trust in me and in the research, relieving it of judgmental elements. The response art, when viewed and discussed together with their own work, gave co-researchers a more complete view of their relationship to ADHD over time and allowed them to see themselves as others see them, so that for the first time they could experience their story as “someone else’s story.” This opening up of distance between co-researchers and their emotions gave them a sense of context in their communities and an appreciation of what they had achieved in their lives, despite, and sometimes because of, their past and present struggles with ADHD.

The value of the responsive approach, however, goes beyond this first level. In this study, unanticipated developments resulted in alteration of the methodology, addition of sessions, and changes in some technical aspects of recording the outcomes, all while the inquiry was taking place. In this respect the response art did not just honor and communicate with the emotions and experiences of the co-researchers, but it allowed for a continuous reassessment and re-imagination of the rhythm and structure of the research method. This was a different kind of listening,

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observation, internalization, and response. It was crucial in helping co-researchers gain nuanced new perspectives on their relationships with ADHD.

3. If there is new perspective as a result of this multi-modal artistic process, does it have the potential to be transformative?

The transformative potential of the multi-modal method employed together with a responsive approach proved to be marked for the time period of the study and in the short term. By the end of the study co-researchers had a good many positive comments to make about their lives with ADHD, as opposed to the beginning of the study where both the art and the discussions revolved mostly around the negative and the painful. More importantly, co-researchers saw themselves differently, dismantling perceptions of themselves as vulnerable, unlucky, and less “successful” than their peers, and building new assessments of themselves as brave, determined, well balanced, and wise from their learned skills. However, other follow up studies will have to be carried out in order to discover whether the new tools and perspectives acquired by co-researchers during the study contributed to an improvement in their ability to cope with ADHD months or years after its completion.

In conclusion and looking at the four main outcomes, the study seems to have created for co-researchers moments of clarity, moments in which they all realized how they had been carrying ADHD with them since childhood. During the inquiry they were able, it seemed, to stop and look fully at parts of their identities that had been crafted by the condition, and to attempt at some level to reconstruct the ones that they felt were most detrimental to future development and success. But there were other aspects of their identities, equally built into their personalities by the experience of ADHD, that were revealed to them as worthy and valuable.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Aims of the Study

None of the co-researchers recruited for this study presented with substance abuse, difficulty in finding and sustaining employment, or depression. However, they struggle with inattention, impulsivity, procrastination, and lack of organization, all of which affect their day-to-day functioning as employees, partners, parents, and members of the community.

I had noted from the work of Rees (1998), Malchiodi (2000), Wender (1998), and others that art therapy could be of value to adults in addressing the consequences of living with the disorder, but my hope was that together, the co-researchers and I might address adult ADHD through “the other end of the telescope.” I was less interested in evoking behavioral change in the co-researchers than in their ability to apply their hard-won wisdom, maturity, and perspective (conspicuously absent in children and teenagers!) to the memories and emotions they might reveal in the creation of their art, and in the art-response conversations they would have with me. Rather than addressing in detail how they might deal with their every day frustrations, I wished to discover what it was that my co-researchers believed about themselves and their ADHD, and how these beliefs informed their relationships, their habits, and their aspirations. I wondered if they could discover new and more positive ways of viewing the disorder and that this would help them to change the way they thought and felt about it.

Design of the Research Method: Coming Up Against Reality

I have been emboldened and encouraged by the researchers whose work over the last thirty years has revealed art-based inquiry as the invaluable tool it is (Barone

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& Eisner, 2006; Barone & Eisner, 2011; Malchiodi, 2012; McNiff, 1998a; Safran, 2003). Within the framework of the art-based method I chose a multimodal, responsive approach through which co-researchers might address first, how their childhood experiences and emotions had crafted their identities, their perceptions, and their self-image, and second, how that basis today informs their ability to cope or not cope with the challenges that arise. The inquiry was therefore structured in such a way as to probe the two separate timelines of past and present, with the hope of helping co-researchers to integrate them and create for themselves something new from this integration. However, as Weber and Mitchell (2014) have shown us and as I was to discover, an art-based inquiry may start out with the clear objective of addressing a particular question, but may need to undergo organic change as it progresses when other important questions not initially considered come to light. In his preface to the 1998 edition of the book “Art Based Research”, McNiff notes that an important quality of the art-based inquiry is that

There is less concern with making sure the study fits standard definitions of research and more involvement with determining whether or not the plan for inquiry passes the researcher’s personal test of truthfulness: will the study be of use to others and to ourselves? Will the process of inquiry help people in any way? And, most important, does the study resonate with the researcher’s experience of creative arts therapy? (p. 14)

In using art-based research to explore the experience of adult ADHD with a group of four co-researchers, my aim was to a) allow participants to feel relaxed and respected b) encourage them to access memory and experience c) provide them with a wealth of art materials and media tools with which to express themselves fully and authentically, and d) facilitate an open artistic conversation to help them discover

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new levels of meaning and understanding. But as I described in the Results chapter, it was McNiff's "researcher's personal test of truthfulness" that posed a problem after the first three sessions had been completed. These sessions, though successful in terms of (a) and (b), did not adequately allow the study to progress in terms of (c) and (d). I did not feel, after the completion of the first three sessions, that the results of the study would be of use to others suffering from ADHD or to others suffering from any disability; and I did not feel that the five minute films I had so painstakingly constructed from the written work and paintings of the co-researchers resonated with my experience of creative arts therapy.

Talking through this problem with Professor McNiff turned out to be a turning point in the study. We realized together that we needed more sessions filmed from the point of view of the co-researcher, and a continuation of the art-response conversation to allow for the research to unfold effectively. Restructuring the inquiry while it was taking place introduced experiential and emotive moments into the co-researchers' process, illustrated in their art, which may not have come into being using traditional interviews producing chronological life stories. Though unanticipated by me and by the co-researchers, the need to add further sessions that would be executed differently and using different technology than that used in the original sessions, bears out the core quality of arts-based research as a journey in which art uncovers emotion which in turn uncovers truth (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Leavy, 2017; McNiff, 1998b).

Creative Writing and Visual Art as a Combined Research Tool

Given that I was persuaded of the power and effectivity of arts-based research that focuses on painting and film (Allen, 2012; Fish, 2017; Leavy, 2017; McNiff, 2008; Winther, 2018), and given that I believed in it as a conduit to knowing, one

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might ask why I felt it necessary to include creative writing in the study as well. The opposite question could also be posed: why not choose creative writing only as that conduit to knowing, when many researchers (Bruera, Willey, Cohen, & Palmer, 2008; Henry, Schlegel, Talley, Molix, & Bettencourt, 2010; Seih, Chung, & Pennebaker, 2011; Thompson, Furman, Shafi, & Enterline, 2012) have noted that creative writing can bring out our deepest thoughts and feelings related to a past that has yet to be revealed, and can help those with disabilities to find new creative meaning, new ways of engaging with living, and new abilities to switch perspectives.

The answer is that the two modes of expression were not intended merely to be different paths to the ADHD experience, but rather, that in the journey to the center of emotion and memory (Johnson, Lahad, & Gray, 2009) they represented different stages in that journey, with the creative writing acting as a conscious “scout” into the deeper realm of repressed and/or forgotten emotions and events (Freud, 1959). In this respect I have realized that my first research question “Can adults living with ADHD further their understanding of their past and present relationship to the condition through creative writing and creating visual art?” is possibly an ambiguous one. Creative writing and visual art were not, in this instance, intended to be used as separate methods for increasing the co-researchers’ understanding of their disorder. Rather, the two types of creative expression were combined and used as one tool, with each enhancing the depth and quality of the other. The usage of creative writing in this study was perhaps the opposite of its usage in Ekphrasis, in which “the memorized, recalled, and pictorialized are (re-)studied, (re-)analyzed, and intellectually and emotionally comprehended” (Al-Joulani, 2010, p. 39). Ekphrasis (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, 2019) is defined as “a literary description of, or commentary on a visual work of art,” but in this inquiry, intellectually

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comprehended and written memories and emotions were re-imagined and re-expressed in the visual art. Rather than aiming to make intellectual meaning of a picture, this study involved making a picture of intellectual meaning, in an attempt to dismantle deeply entrenched constructs in the mind, developed over decades of adult life, and to return to raw emotion and experience. The writing helped co-researchers to reorganize their memories of their encounters with ADHD, turning these events into stories that later continued to develop through their visual art creations. Once the co-researchers had entered and connected to their experience using the creative writing, their visual art expression was able to stand on its own (Ryan, 2014). The five minute edited video was an interim conclusion to their journey, and they were not asked to write any more. Once “out,” the visual art had a rhythm of its own. The energy of the colors and shapes in these pictures do not “tell” the story—they *are* the story, and whatever the story means when beheld through the eyes of the researcher.

The Responsive Approach

The use of visual art in the responsive approach. The second research question to be addressed in the study was: “How does the responsive approach, in which researcher and co-researchers create an artistic conversation, deepen or enrich that understanding?” My experience reflected that described in the literature (Allen, 1999b; Johnson & Lahad, 2009; Kapitan, Littel, & Torres, 2011; McNiff, 2007; Moon, 2009), with the artistic dialog that went back and forth between the co-researchers and me revealing and expressing the unfolding essence of the co-researchers’ experiences. The greatest gift of the artistic conversation apart from the built-in aspect of its equality and humility (Berger, 1980; Fish, 2008), is its ability to sharpen the focus of the inquiry by bringing attention to the different images created from two perspectives instead of just one. Additionally, the art conversation gave the

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study its pace, allowing the co-researchers the time and the tools to connect to some inner experience that needed to be processed for a while before it could get any meaning. That meaning started to emerge in the last session where co-researchers could see their journey from the beginning to end and then arrive at some new discoveries.

Moon (2004) says that “The world of imagination is at times one of mist and shadows. Those who attend to this world must embrace the mystery and cultivate a sense of reverential seeing” (p. 7). One cannot respond to the art of a co-researcher without a sense of reverence, but it is this very reverence that at times held me back from creating my response art fully, freely, and without self-consciousness. The studies conducted by Fish (2017), Havsteen-Franklin & Altamirano (2015), McNiff (2011), and Van Lith (2014), had given me a good indication that response art could be of great value in the research and therapeutic settings, yet I could not be sure that co-researchers would be engaged by (rather than put off by) my art responses to their work, let alone gain any insight from them. Furthermore, having set up the expectation in both co-researchers and myself that the response art would hold within it a certain power or potential for revelation, I was not sure I would be able to do justice to the co-researchers’ process. There was the sense in my execution of the both the pictures and the films that I needed to “deliver” satisfactorily for the co-researchers and for the study. This made it harder to let the research art flow naturally from me – I feared the judgment, or dissatisfaction, of the co-researchers.

Notwithstanding, co-researchers’ pleasure in the response art was palpable. Expressions of their emotions and experiences would have been vastly downsized, I believe, had we attempted to have our conversation with the written word alone.

The use of film in the responsive approach. One of the biggest outcomes of this research was the power and role of the two different types of video created during the study. The first edited film was a good way of summarizing the initial stage of the co-researchers' process to them and to me. In the research proposal, editing the five-minute film was meant to be my artistic response to the participants' process, but the finished result was more documentation than creation. Though it *was* a form of response in terms of the painstaking editing of the different sessions and the use of co-researchers' voices to tell their own stories, I realized that what was missing in these films was the movement and rhythm that would enable co-researchers to connect to their own process in an immediate and intimate way.

The creation of the GoPro videos was an attempt to answer the questions posed by the research without layers of social context, preconception, conversation, and conservatism intervening between the co-researchers and their art, between me and my art, and between co-researchers' art and my response. The GoPro movies of the fourth and fifth sessions, filmed from the point of view of the person creating the art and edited only very minimally so that the raw experience was preserved, resulted in a unification of all the different languages and modes of expressions that had been used in the sessions. The unfolding of the art through the eyes of the co-researchers and from their point of view resulted in the art becoming more abstract, yet more concentrated and focused, as if the "white noise" of their experiences had been cleared. It seems that the experience is reduced to its essence when people can relate to it not just as personal anymore, but as a shared experience (Wadeson, 2011). My conclusion is that the response method was in some respects the backbone of the inquiry. It allowed co-researchers to have insight into their perception of their relationship with ADHD that a non-responsive method would not have produced.

The Potential for Transformation

The third research question of this inquiry asks: “If there is new perspective as a result of this multi-modal artistic process, does it have the potential to be transformative?”

As discussed in the Results chapter, the four co-researchers in this study did appear to experience a transformation in their perspectives on their relationship with ADHD, at one level or another. Though at first they were mostly interested in the end product of their artistic creation, the last two sessions sparked a new kind of discussion and a new way of looking at their process, so that they were able to reassess the role of ADHD both in childhood and in adulthood. Holmqvist et al.’s concerns (2017) are still pertinent here. Transformation was perceived to have taken place both in the eyes of the co-researchers and myself, yet how to observe, record, measure, or assess the transformation, so that it might be useful to other researchers and therapists? In this study some transformation in style and expression is directly visible in the paintings of all of the co-researchers, and in conversation they freely expressed their sense of having undergone meditation and change. But largely, the question of the potential of this kind of study to be “transformative” must be left open as McNiff, (2015) suggests.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations mentioned here are those experienced both by me as researcher and by the participants co-researchers.

Time commitment. Lack of time that can be a limitation in many studies (Findholt et al., 2011; Levy & Weber, 2011; Mampaso, 2010), as participating in research is often time consuming. Finding participants who were willing to act as co-

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researchers over a period of more than a year proved to be challenging and resulted in only four co-researchers taking part in the study.

Artistic ability. It was not sufficient to locate adults who had experienced ADHD over many years and were willing to explore that experience. Co-researchers also needed also to be interested in the artistic expression of the experience, and to understand the research as a specifically art-based endeavor.

Cost. The practical consideration of the cost of a rich choice of high quality art supplies for all the co-researchers in all sessions needs to be taken into account. Moreover the technical costs of the different types of equipment for filming and editing were also a factor to consider.

Adaptability for other disabilities. This study was focused on ADHD, a very specific disorder, and so it is hard to know how this method would work with other disabilities. Even when considering that the study was developed to investigate adult ADHD, the number of participants was low (N=4) and it could be argued that a great many more people with ADHD would have to have been involved for the results to be considered relevant to an entire community.

New Outcomes for Disability?

As seen in the literature (Al-Yagon, 2016; DuPaul & Jimerson, 2014), although ADHD today is still very much the focus of intensive research, at least for the early years (Safran 2011), the extent to which it influences adult life is still unclear (Barkley, Murphy, & Fisher, 2010; Gregg, 2013; Pitts, Mangle, & Asherson, 2015). In constructing the Literature Review, I found that studies on adults with ADHD were scarce. This is perhaps because most adults today with ADHD consult therapists because of secondary comorbidities such as depression, addiction, failure of

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relationships, difficulty in staying employed and so on, and may not have a primary diagnosis (Turgay et al., 2012).

The co-researchers in this inquiry used writing, poetry, drawing, and film to reach into themselves and to arrive at “a fusion of imagination and awareness” (McNiff, 1992) in an attempt to understand better the disorder that they had lived with for as long as they could remember. This research offers a way of dealing with ADHD using art-based research, which may be more effective and more appealing than standard ADHD treatments, especially when working with vulnerable participants (Fenge et al., 2011; Gray, 1997). Looking forward, I would like this research to expand in such a way that this method could be used with other disabilities as well, because it does not claim to “cure” an illness, but rather to stimulate people to look at the challenges they face in new and helpful ways.

Conclusion

This research aimed to study whether adults living with ADHD can further their understanding of their past and present relationship with the condition through creative writing and creating visual art. It also set out to investigate if the responsive approach, in which researcher and co-researchers create an artistic conversation, can deepen or enrich that understanding. Finally, the study sought to clarify if gaining a new perspective as a result of this multi-modal artistic process might have the potential to be transformative.

In order to study these questions I used art-based research as my inquiry tool, as it is my belief that fundamentally, knowledge can be created from experience and that art-based research will continue to contribute significantly to scholarship in the expressive therapies professions. Using art-based research enables us to examine

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roles that have been assigned unjustly to disabled individuals and its premise is that roles, no matter how deeply entrenched in society, can be eliminated or transformed. This art-based study did not necessarily shield co-researchers from the raw and painful emotions that sometimes arose, but I believe after reviewing the results that the overall need to express human experience, and the opportunity to channel this experience through the creation of art, did in fact result in a positive, empowering, and optimistic process, in which reflections and feelings that were manifested in artistic images were gently allowed to take shape, and ultimately make new meaning to the co-researchers.

I am sure that if it had been possible to add more sessions to this process then new meanings would have arisen, as this is a transformative process, and as I learnt from this research, the more the co-researchers and I engaged in art making regarding their experience, the more we discovered new meanings. I think that one of the ways I would like this research to expand in the future, is perhaps to try and work with different disabled communities and to use this method as a long trial, studying the ramifications of those outcomes over months or even years.

My original question about the possibility of this research leading to a change in the way co-researchers viewed their relationship with ADHD was answered. As this research was carried out after I did a pilot on my own experience, deep down I was hoping my experience was not just mine alone, and I was glad to see a lot of similar patterns between the co-researchers' experiences and mine emerge. The pilot did much to help me view the entire research study as a shared experience, and the result of this, I find, is to feel less lonely about the ADHD that I live with as an adult.

Another revelation that was important to me was the power of the responsive approach used in this method. Co-researchers responded warmly and were waiting

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curiously to see how I had responded to their art. I think that other than the art itself that was produced, the mere fact that someone was thinking about their experiences and taking the time to respond to them artistically was very important to them. This “mirroring” through art and not through conversation was the key to our joint journey in this study.

I think that answering the first two research questions of the study sets the stage for further investigation into the third and final research question, the all important question of whether what is gained in this kind of artistic journey can lead to transformation. It is my hope that the outcomes of my inquiry will be relevant not just to my own studies, but will inform and enrich future questions being posed by other researchers about adults dealing with life long conditions. Perhaps the result of this study can contribute a new way of understanding to how we may speak truth to ourselves and how we may communicate this truth to others. This is an important process perhaps for all people but is crucial for those who have been cast as “different.”

APPENDIX A

LESLEY UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL



29 Everett Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel 617 349 8234
Fax 617 349 8190
irb@lesley.edu

Institutional Review Board

DATE: August 25, 2017

To: Dina Fried

From: Robyn Cruz and Terrence Keeney, Co-chairs, Lesley IRB

RE: **IRB Number: 16/17 - 040**

The application for the research project, "An Art-Based Study of the Perspectives that Adults Have on the Different Challenges They Face in Dealing with Their Disabilities." provides a detailed description of the recruitment of participants, the method of the proposed research, the protection of participants' identities and the confidentiality of the data collected. The consent form is sufficient to ensure voluntary participation in the study and contains the appropriate contact information for the researcher and the IRB.

This application is approved for one calendar from the date of approval.

You may conduct this project.

Date of approval of application: August 25, 2017

Investigators shall immediately suspend an inquiry if they observe an adverse change in the health or behavior of a subject that may be attributable to the research. They shall promptly report the circumstances to the IRB. They shall not resume the use of human subjects without the approval of the IRB.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

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**An Art-Based Study of the Perspectives that Adults have on the Different Challenges
They Face in Dealing with Their Disabilities.**

Principal Investigator: Professor Shaun McNiff,
PhD program in Expressive Therapies, Lesley University

You are being asked to volunteer in this study to assist in my doctoral research on the adult experience of ADHD. The purpose of the study is to see if we can gain deeper insights into ADHD in adults through creative writing and artistic expression.

In the first two sessions, you will be asked to remember ADHD experiences from the past and present respectively and to use these memories to produce a piece of creating writing. You will then be asked to produce a piece of visual artwork. In the third session you will be creating a third artistic piece, this time in response to an artistic creation that I created in response to your first two pieces. Each session will last between 60-75 minutes, and will take place either in my studio, or in your own home, depending on your preference. During sessions you will be videotaped so that I will be able to record your process and preserve important responses and discussions. In all four sessions you will be filmed from the neck down only, so that your face will not appear in any of the footage from the sessions.

In the fourth session you will be presented with a portfolio consisting of your artwork, my artistic response to your creations, my notes and comments on the inquiry so far, and a three-to-five-minute edited video of some of the moments from the previous sessions. This will be made available to you as a gift after I have completed the dissertation of my doctorate. A copy of the dissertation itself will also be presented to you.

Any information gathered in the study, such as photographs of your writing and artwork, and/or filmed footage of the sessions, may be used in future publications or professional presentations, but always anonymously so that you cannot be identified. However all other data from the study, including the unedited film footage, notes and transcripts will be destroyed after 5 years.

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the committee chairperson at irb@lesley.edu

You will be personally interacting with only myself as the researcher.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I _____, consent to participate in a study on the adult experience of ADHD.

I understand that:

- ☐ *I am volunteering for four art therapy sessions involving creative writing and artistic expression, approximately 60-75 minutes in length.*

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- ☐ Sessions will be videotaped and edited videos created from the filmed materials. My face will not be identifiable on the videos.
- ☐ My identity will be protected.
- ☐ Session materials, including reports, drawings, paintings, creative writings, video, or audiotapes will be kept confidential and stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's possession. They will be used anonymously for the dissertation research. All art works and creative writings will be returned to me at the conclusion of the study. Any other transcripts or data related to the study will be destroyed after 5 years.
- ☐ During all four sessions, and particularly in the last session, verbal discussions will arise which may include details about my present life, childhood, and cultural self-identification.
- ☐ The session may bring up feelings, thoughts, memories, and physical sensations. Emotional reactions are to be expected, however I am free to end the session at any time if I so desire. If I find that I am experiencing any distress, I will be provided with resources and referrals to assist me, and will not lose any benefits that I might otherwise have gained by staying in the study.
- ☐ This study will not necessarily provide any benefits to me. However, I may experience increased self-knowledge and other personal insights that I may be able to use in my daily life. The results of the study may also help to increase public and professional awareness of the needs and experiences of adults who live with ADHD.
- ☐ I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences.

Investigator's Signature:

Date:

Name: Dina Fried

Email: dinaherbst@yahoo.com

Phone: 053-336-2709

Subject's Signature:

I am 18 years of age or older. The nature and purpose of this research have been satisfactorily explained to me and I agree to become a participant in the study as described above. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time if I so choose, and that the investigator will answer any questions that arise during the course of the research.

Date:

Name:

APPENDIX C

LINK TO THE EDITED VIDEO FOR EACH CO-RESEARCHER

Co-Researcher	Link
G	https://www.dropbox.com/s/qqecvgwulpdkku7/G%20%205%20minute%20movie.mov?dl=0
L	https://www.dropbox.com/s/z884osvi2tyzbro/Movie%20L.mov?dl=0
K	https://www.dropbox.com/s/pf7dcr7050e6wmn/K%20movie%20final.mov?dl=0
S	https://www.dropbox.com/s/wqwreci3n4izpk9/S.%20film%205.2.mov?dl=0

Figure C1. Links to the edited videos made for co-researchers

APPENDIX D

LINKS TO SESSION FOUR GOPRO VIDEOS AND GOPRO ART RESPONSES

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Artist	Link
G, session four	https://www.dropbox.com/s/kfsqdo4enjgkhq0/G%20th%20session%20.mp4?dl=0
G, my art response	https://www.dropbox.com/s/jsvjc6o7c2qnn31/G%20response%20.mp4?dl=0
L, session four	https://www.dropbox.com/s/cky6poe2se9vv9h/L%20response%20.mp4?dl=0
L, my art response	https://www.dropbox.com/s/e07azddtqj55hzg/L%20final%20response%20.mp4?dl=0
K, session four	https://www.dropbox.com/s/ppor74s0nv870e2/K2.mp4?dl=0
K, my art response	https://www.dropbox.com/s/xk2zbzru0sttwrp/K%20response%202%20.mp4?dl=0
S, session four	https://www.dropbox.com/s/d0j64wop15dcvo2/S%20respond%20to%20movie%20.mp4?dl=0
S, my art response	https://www.dropbox.com/s/iofby3uzb2ckzuz/S2.mp4?dl=0

Figure D1. Links to session four GoPro videos and GoPro art responses

APPENDIX E

VISUAL ART BY CO-RESEARCHERS SESSIONS ONE AND TWO

AND VISUAL ART RESPONSE



Figure E1. The picture created by G in session one

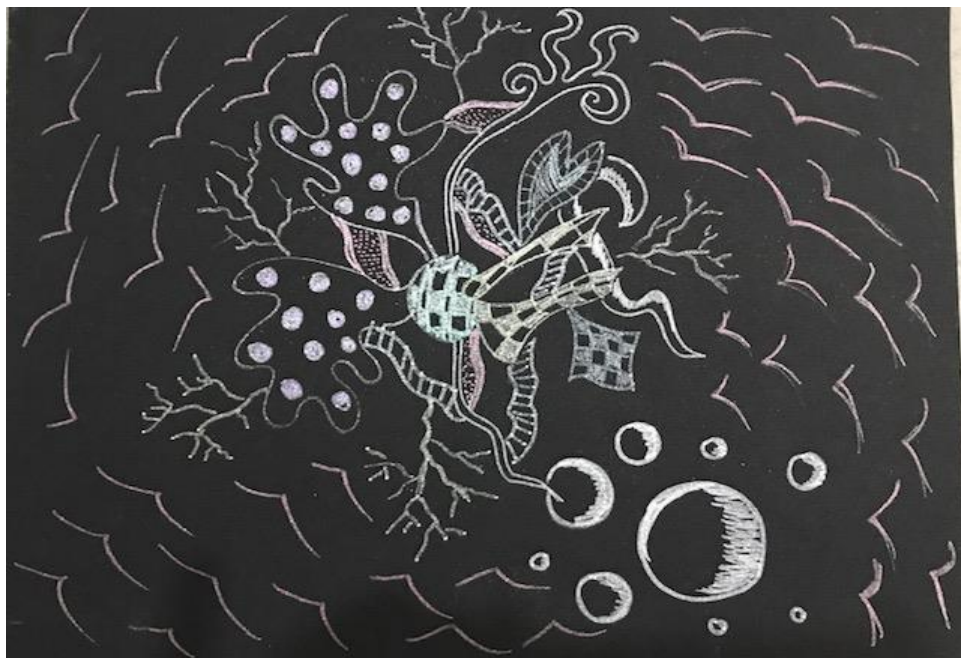


Figure E2. The picture created by G in session two



Figure E3. Art response to Figures F1 and F2

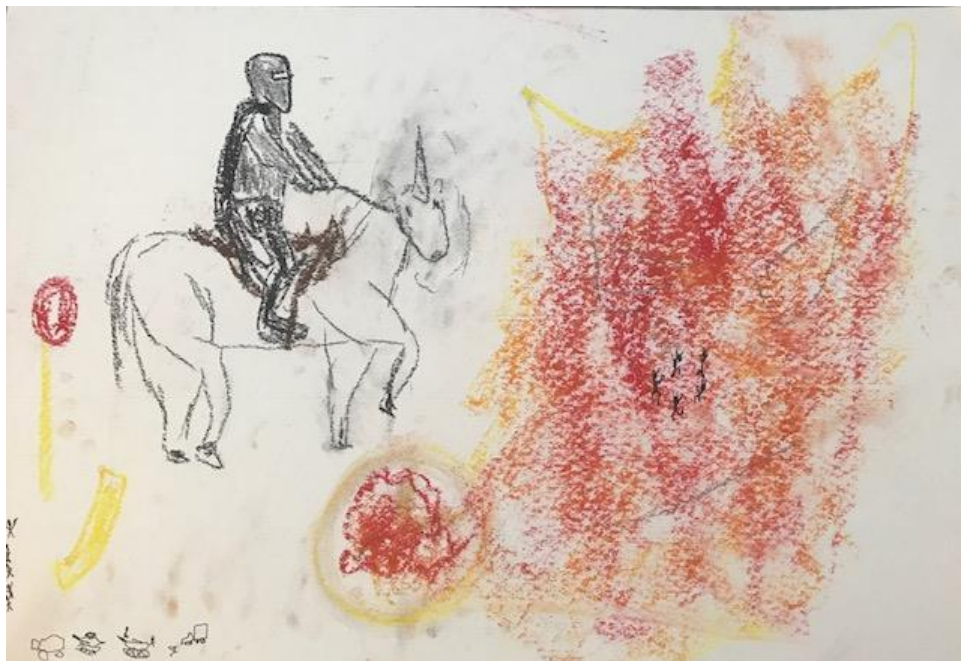


Figure E4. The picture created by L in session one



Figure E5. The picture created by L in session two

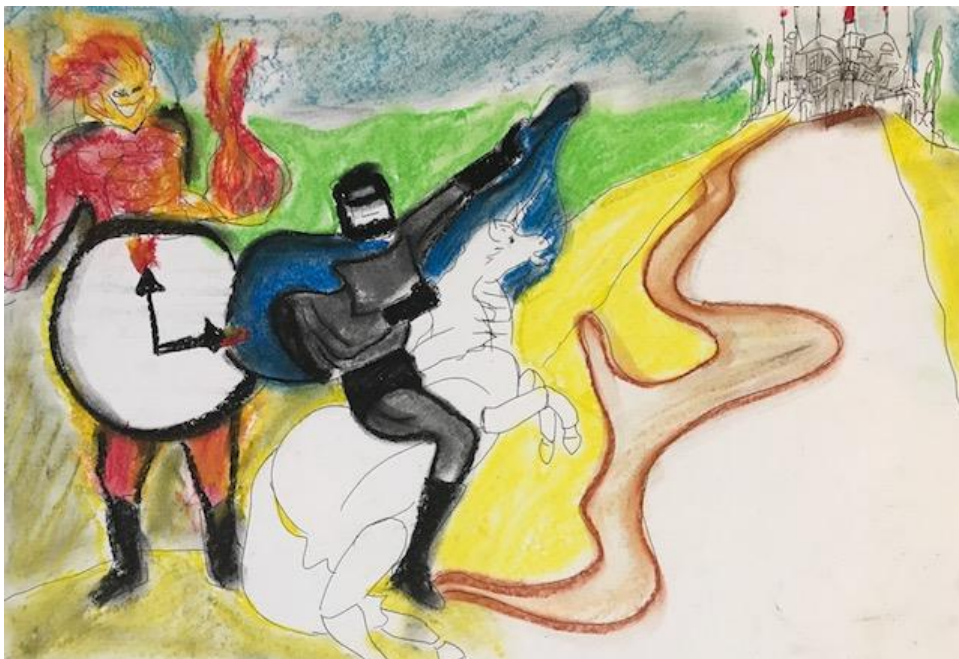


Figure E6. Art response to Figures F4 and F5



Figure E7. The picture created by K in session one



Figure E8. The picture created by K in session two



Figure E9. Art response to Figures F7 and F8

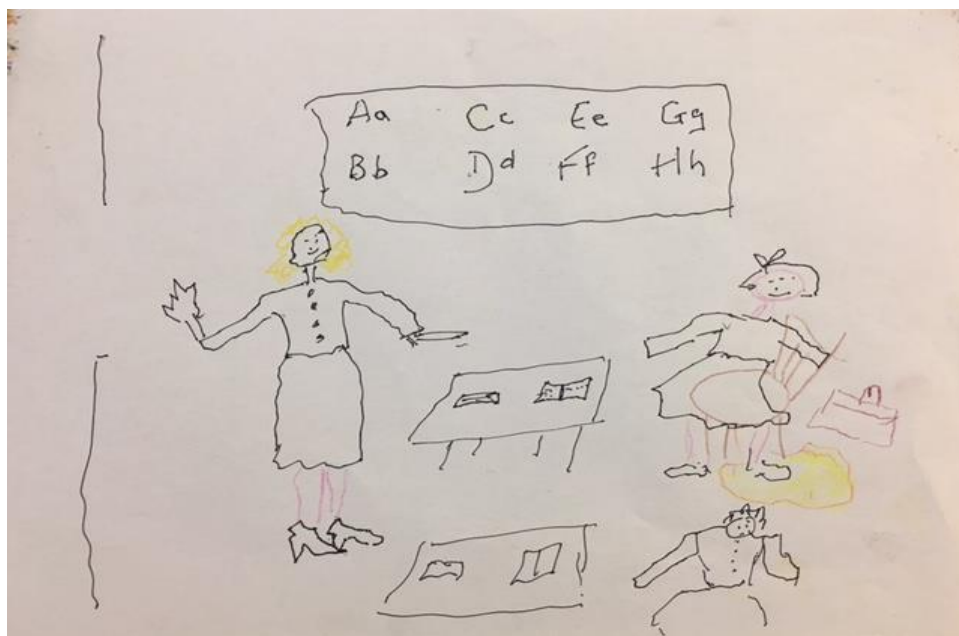


Figure E10. The picture created by S in session one



Figure E11. The picture created by S in session two



Figure E12. Art response to Figures F10 and F11

APPENDIX F

VISUAL ART THREE: THIRD PAINTING BY EACH CO-RESEARCHER



Figure F1. G Visual Art Three: G's third painting



Figure F2. L Visual Art Three: L's third painting



Figure F3. K Visual Art Three: K's third painting



Figure F4. S Visual Art Three: S's third painting

APPENDIX G

EXCERPTS: CO-RESEARCHERS' VERBAL RESPONSES TO EDITED VIDEO

G	The edited film was captivating, and it was interesting to hear what I wrote while I drew, interesting to see the process.
L	My first response was wow it's dramatic, it was a remarkably different experience than just seeing the work. I can imagine it on like, "Discovery Channel." I realize I am part of a research project and, wow, I actually have a story that I am saying here, and that is not something I tend to do. I would not have thought of this.
K	I was very moved by the film, it was the first time I understood that it's not about the picture I have created but about the process. . . . In film I have seen people unfold in front of the camera, I have seen personalities unfold, but I have never seen art unfold like that, I couldn't have got that just by looking at the finished pieces.
S	The last two movements show the confidence with which I drew, as opposed to the first film where I was more hesitant, where I held on to the pen for dear life! And it bugged me that my hand was shaking, and I could not do the shapes I wanted to. I found this whole experience as a revelation: it brings back to me that perhaps if I would have gotten this opportunity earlier I could have done something with it.

Figure G1. Excerpts: Co-Researchers Verbal Responses to Edited Video

APPENDIX H

CO-RESEARCHER FOURTH PICTURE AND ART RESPONSE PICTURE



Figure H1. G's Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro, session four



Figure H2. Art response to G's Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro



Figure H3. L's Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro, session four



Figure H4. Art response to L's Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro



Figure H5. K's Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro, session four



Figure H6. Art response to K's Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro



Figure H7. S's Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro, session four.



Figure H8. Art response to S's Visual Art Four, filmed by GoPro

APPENDIX I

CO-RESEARCHER COMMENTS ON GOPRO FILMS

Table I-1

Co-Researcher Viewing of GoPro Films: Excerpts From Verbal Responses.

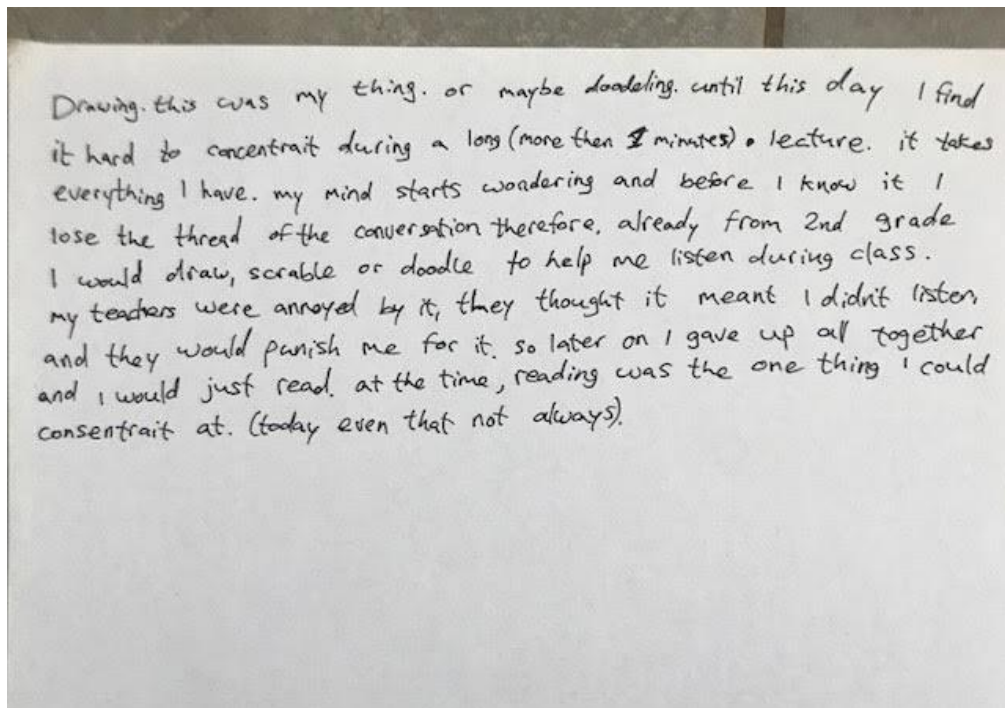
	GoPro film Visual Art Four	GoPro film Second Art Response
G	<p>The last two movies, especially the response art movie, had an effect, it did something.</p> <p>There was great importance to the procedure. If I were to see the last two movies at the beginning it would not have had the same effect as it did now at the end.</p>	<p>Your response feels the same like mine, but when I saw the process of it being done I thought that it was much more intense—the same but completely different. To see the reaction, the way you used the art in reflection to mine, hit something inside of me. It was able to show things that I thought of that I was not able to express.</p>
L	<p>To watch myself respond to the video was less interesting, I was more fascinated of the GoPro, and how there were 5 centimeters off in the film, as it was on my head. I don't remember getting emotionally moved from that, from my response.</p>	<p>Wow, I actually have a story that I am saying here, and that is not something I tend to do. I would not have thought of this.</p> <p>However seeing you respond . . . was a little hard because it was abstract, and I didn't understand it. It's a good thing I didn't see these movies until the end, I'm not sure I would have responded as I did.</p> <p>Perhaps I liked the second response more because it captured more, because it was a response to me after I was more open and free. It feels that I have been through a process and that's why maybe I connect to it more. Something about the second one stirs more emotions in me. It made me think about how ADHD affects me and how I let myself do or not do things.</p>

APPENDIX J**CO-RESEARCHERS' COMMENTS ABOUT THE CREATIVE WRITING**

G	Trying to put my feeling into words brought things that I was not aware of to life. The past was the most significant, it brought up a lot of experiences that I had.
L	I think that what was the most meaningful is what happened after, when I went home. The question of what is ADHD and what it has to do with me is an issue, and always has been. “Just try harder”—very unsolved. Retouching this is tough. Touching the feeling that I am under-performing.
K	Creative writing is part of my world, so I can’t say that for me the creative writing was a whole new area of expression that I haven’t used before. Having said that I have never addressed my ADHD with my creative writing. It was like touching a new subject with old tools. Regarding insights I had, I don’t remember saying some of the things I said: for example calling Ritalin “My darling R.,” understanding that I have a relationship with the drug. I noticed through the writing how positive I was, how great it is to be my age.
S	As I grow older and read more, I realize I know what my problem was. My only regret was that I was not aware of it, and I lost out, because I might have had the potential, and I might have made more than I did.

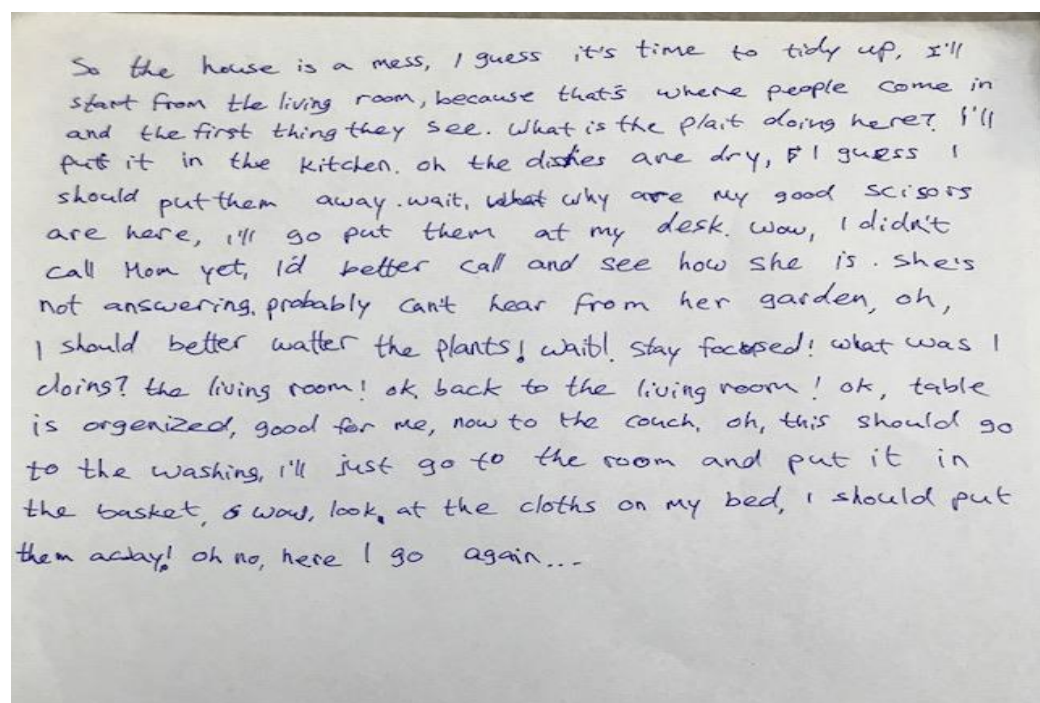
Figure J1. Excerpts from co-researchers’ comments about the value of creative writing, session five.

APPENDIX K**CREATIVE WRITING TEXTS OF ALL FOUR CO-RESEARCHERS**



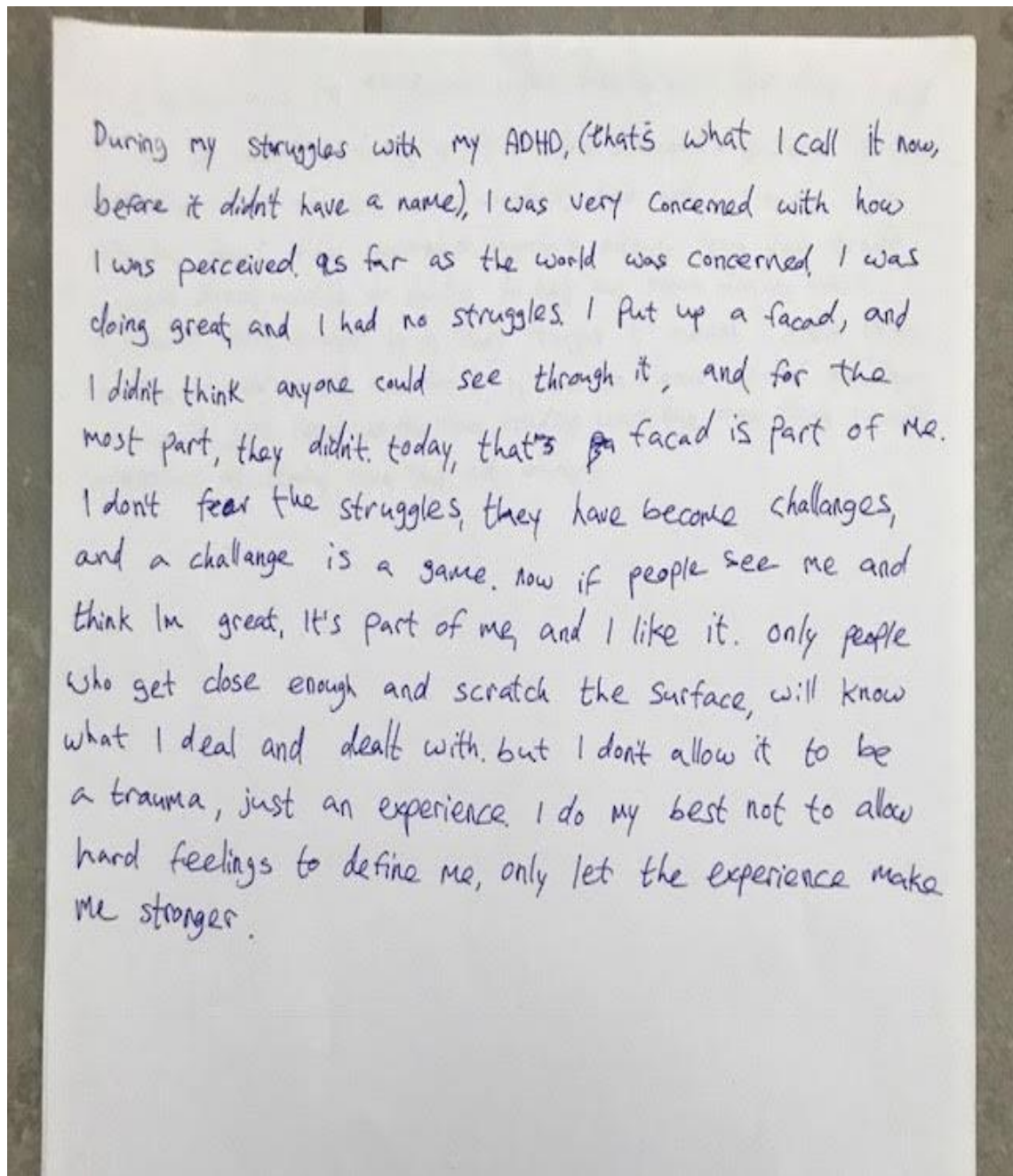
Drawing. this was my thing. or maybe doodling. until this day I find it hard to concentrat during a long (more then 2 minutes) • lecture. it takes everything I have. my mind starts wondering and before I know it I lose the thread of the conversation therefore, already from 2nd grade I would draw, scrable or doodle to help me listen during class. my teachers were annoyed by it, they thought it meant I didn't listen, and they would punish me for it. so later on I gave up all together and I would just read. at the time, reading was the one thing I could consentrait at. (today even that not always).

Figure K1. G's creative writing, session one



So the house is a mess, I guess it's time to tidy up, I'll start from the living room, because that's where people come in and the first thing they see. What is the plant doing here? I'll put it in the kitchen. oh the dishes are dry, & I guess I should put them away. wait, what why are my good scissors are here, I'll go put them at my desk. wow, I didn't call Mom yet, I'd better call and see how she is. She's not answering, probably can't hear from her garden, oh, I should better water the plants! wait! stay focused! what was I doing? the living room! ok, back to the living room! ok, table is organized, good for me, now to the couch, oh, this should go to the washing, I'll just go to the room and put it in the basket, & wow, look, at the cloths on my bed, I should put them away! oh no, here I go again...

Figure K2. G's creative writing, session two

A photograph of a piece of white paper with handwritten text in blue ink. The paper is slightly wrinkled and has a dark border around it. The handwriting is in a cursive, slightly slanted script. The text is a personal narrative about ADHD, written in the first person. It describes a past struggle with perception and a current shift in perspective, viewing challenges as games and experiences as strength-building. The text is written in a single paragraph with several lines of indentation at the beginning.

During my struggles with my ADHD, (that's what I call it now, before it didn't have a name), I was very concerned with how I was perceived. as far as the world was concerned, I was doing great, and I had no struggles. I put up a facade, and I didn't think anyone could see through it, and for the most part, they didn't. today, that's ~~my~~ facade is part of me. I don't fear the struggles, they have become challenges, and a challenge is a game. now if people see me and think I'm great, it's part of me, and I like it. only people who get close enough and scratch the surface, will know what I deal and dealt with. but I don't allow it to be a trauma, just an experience. I do my best not to allow hard feelings to define me, only let the experience make me stronger.

Figure K3. G's creative writing, session three

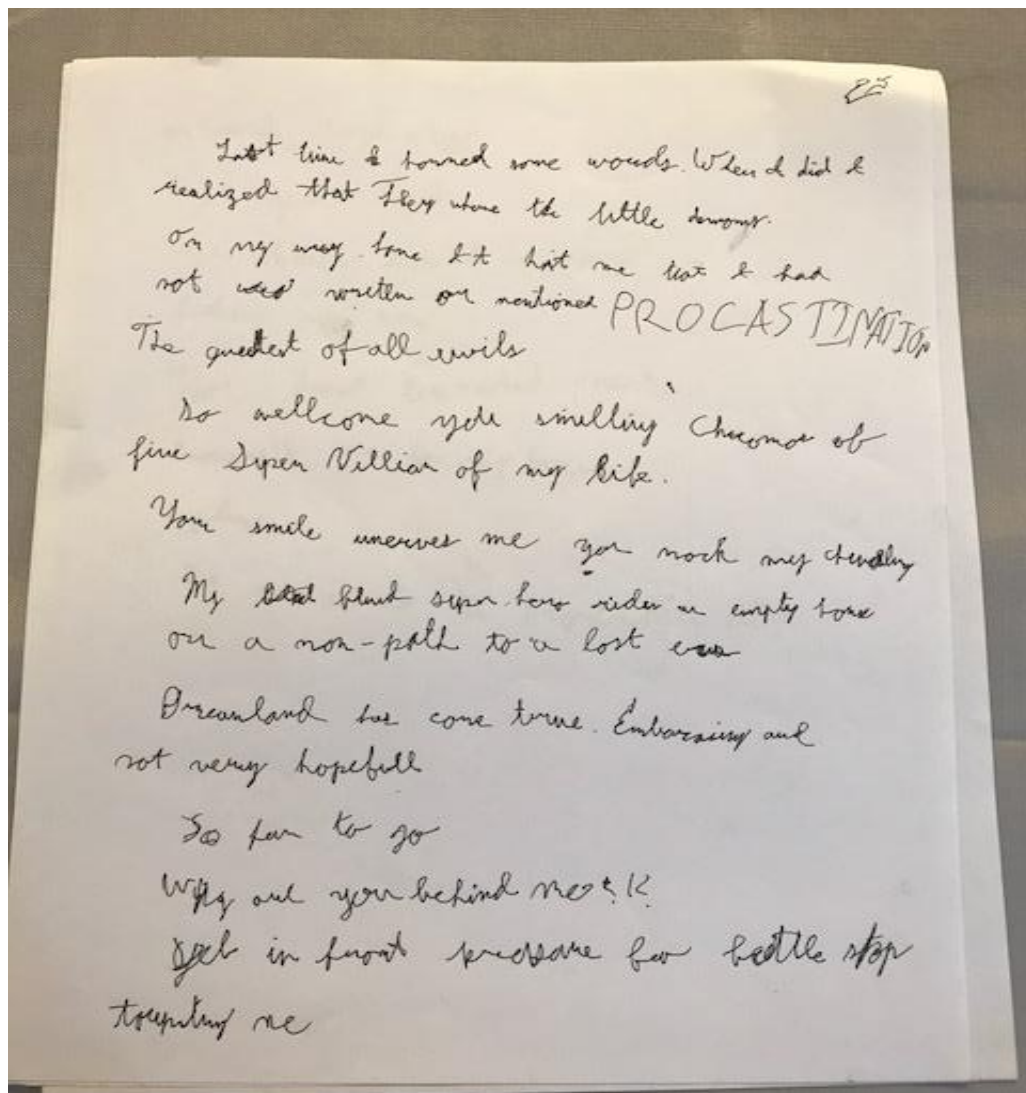


Figure K5. L's creative writing, session two

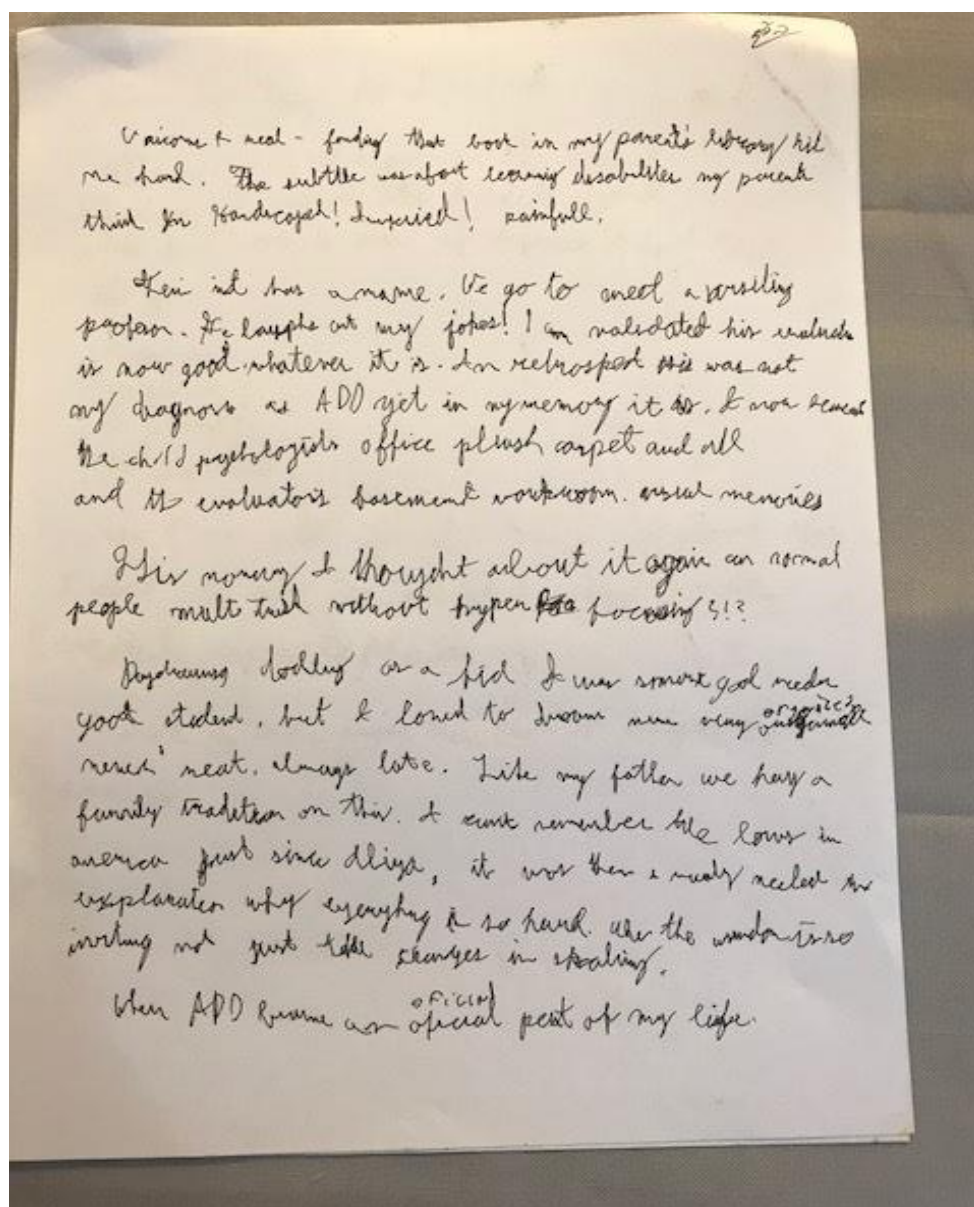


Figure K6. L's creative writing, session three

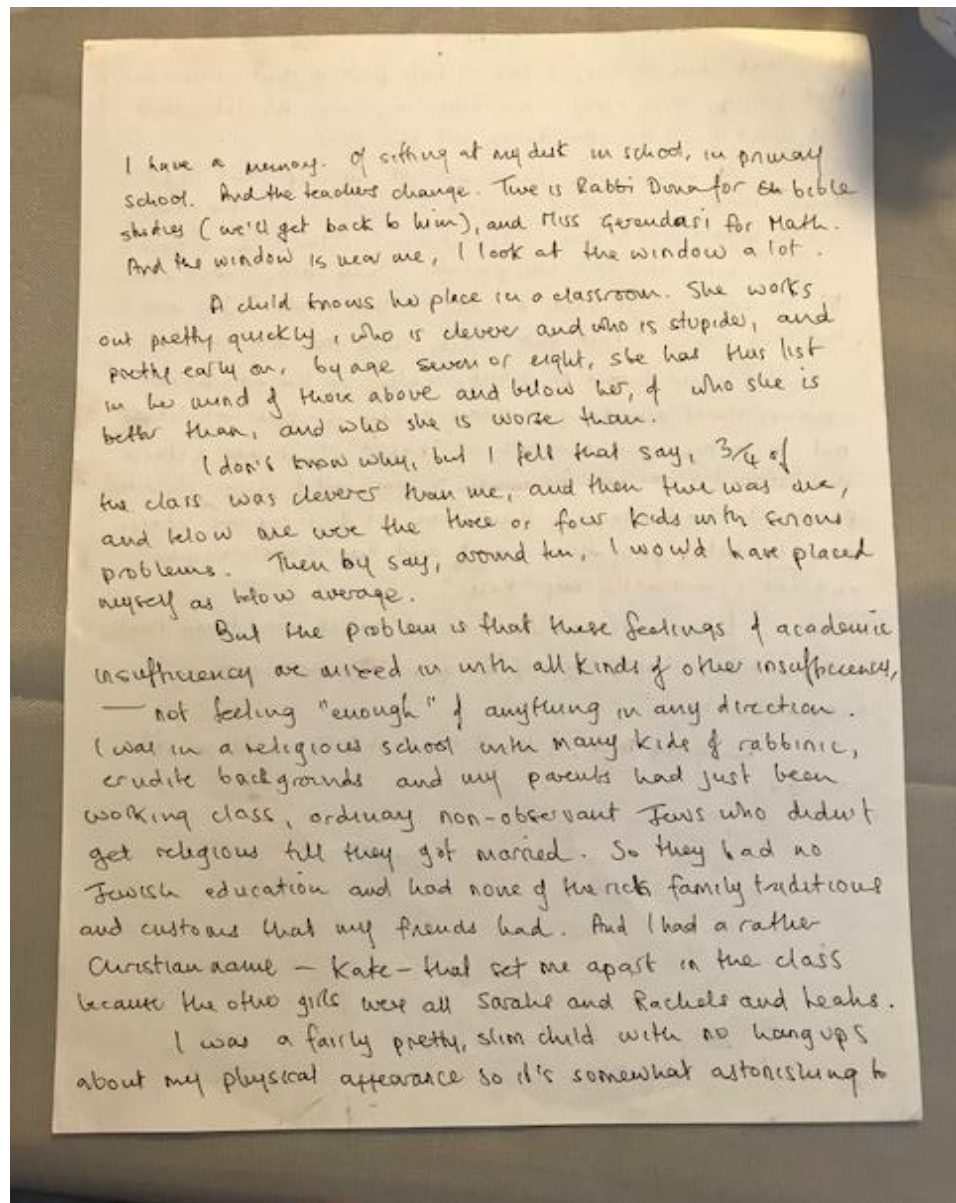


Figure K7. K's creative writing, session one

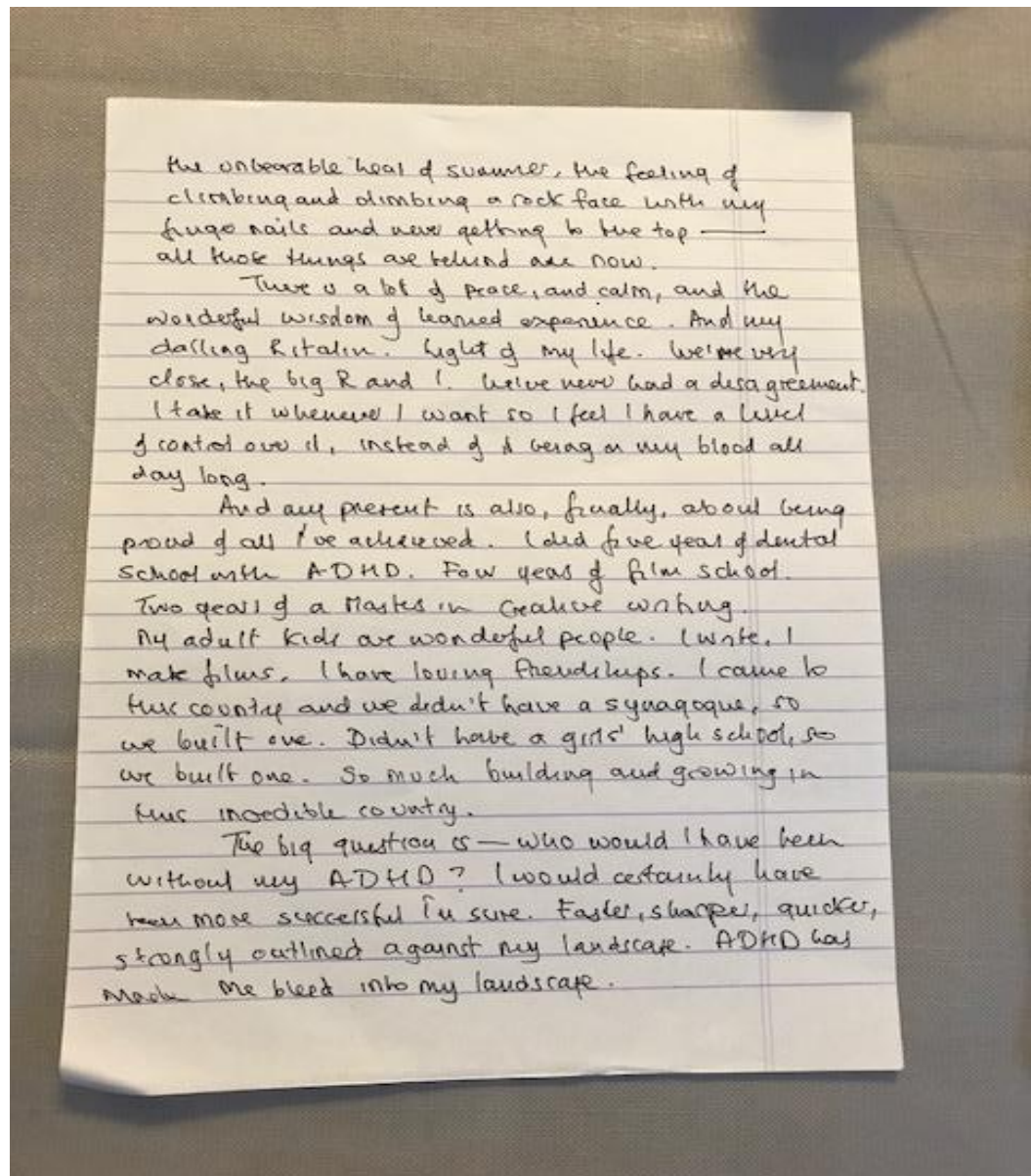


Figure K8. K's creative writing, session two

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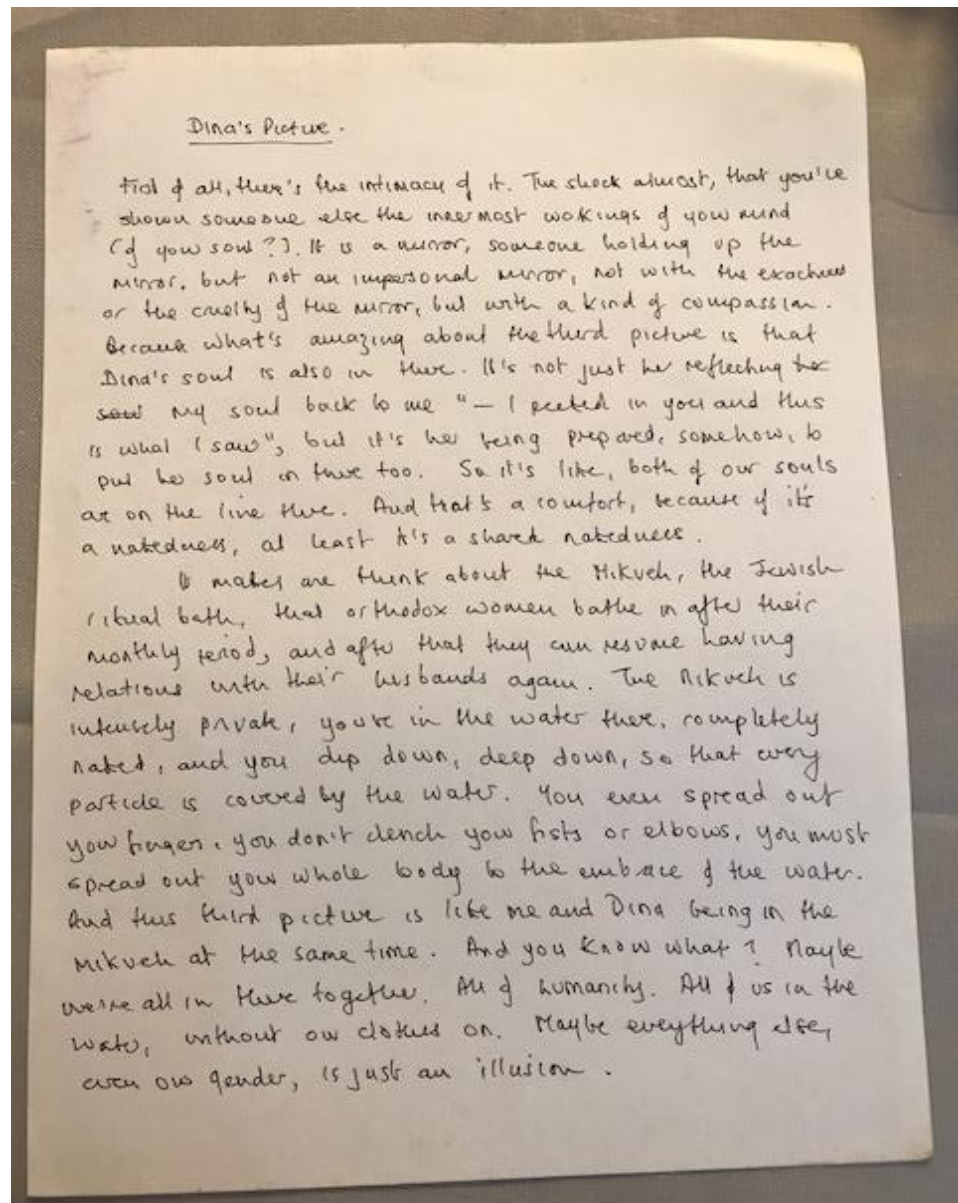


Figure K9. K's creative writing, session three

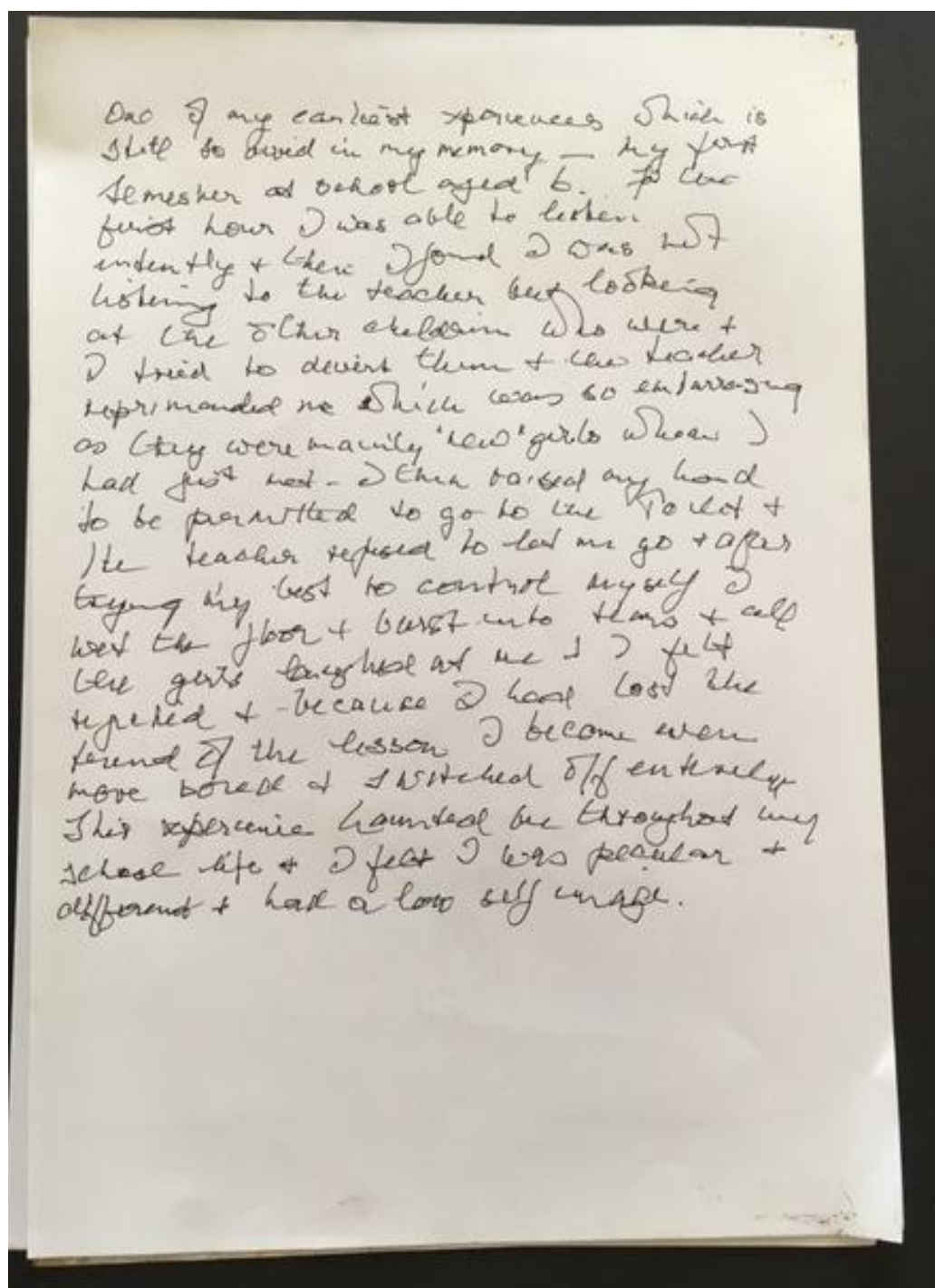
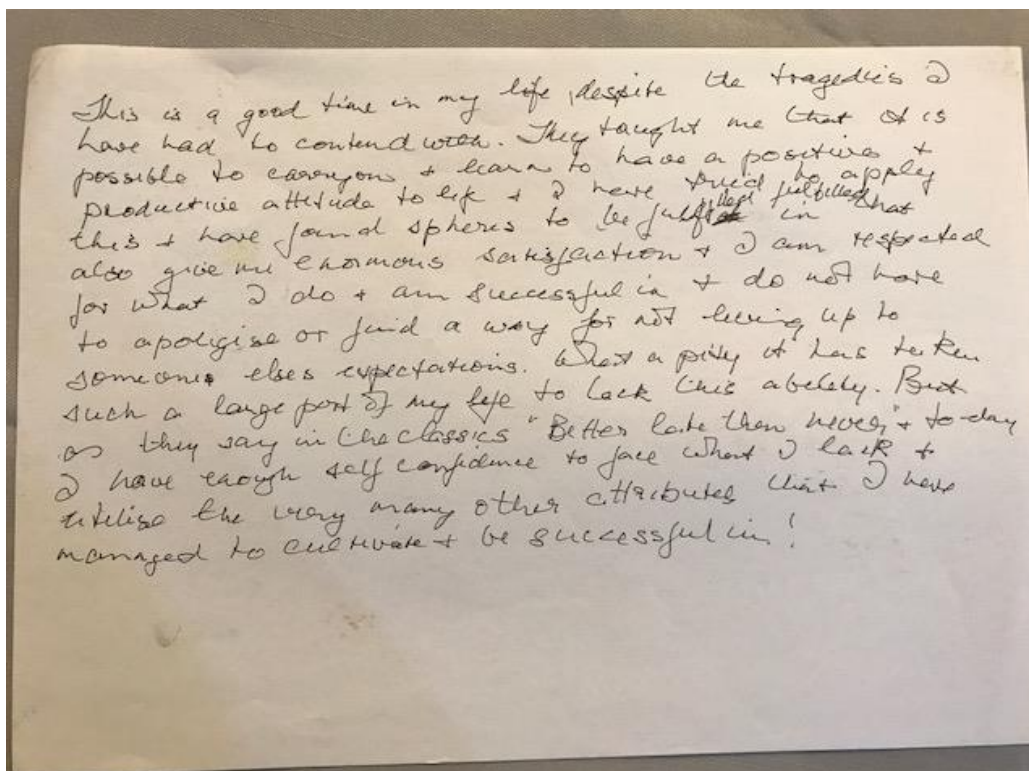


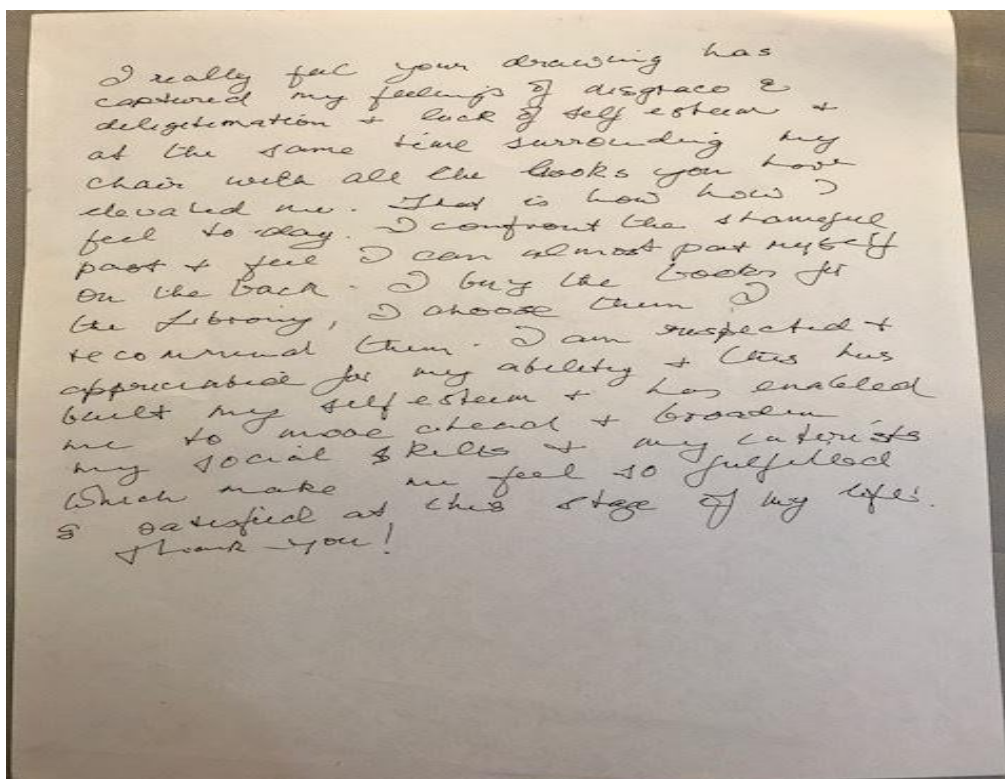
Figure K10. S's creative writing, session one

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This is a good time in my life despite the tragedies I have had to contend with. They taught me that it is possible to overcome + learn to have a positive + productive attitude to life + I have ~~been~~ ^{been} fulfilled that this + have found spheres to be fulfilled in also give me enormous satisfaction + I am respected for what I do + am successful in + do not have to apologise or find a way for not living up to someone's else's expectations. What a pity it has taken such a large part of my life to lack this ability. But as they say in the classics "Better late than never" + today I have enough self confidence to face what I lack + utilise the very many other attributes that I have managed to cultivate + be successful in!

Figure K11. S's creative writing, session two



I really feel your drawing has captured my feelings of disgrace + dejection + lack of self esteem + at the same time surrounding my chair with all the books you have elevated me. That is how how I feel today. I confront the shameful part + feel I can almost put myself on the back. I buy the books for the library, I choose them I recommend them. I am respected + appreciated for my ability + this has built my self esteem + has enabled me to move ahead + broaden my social skills + my interests which make me feel so fulfilled + satisfied at this stage of my life. Thank you!

Figure K12. S's creative writing, session three

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