

Psychological Messages of Collage Works

Maher Mahmoud Omar^{*}

- Ph. D. in Psychological Guidance, Michigan Ann Arbor, U. S. A. 1983.

Lecturer, Psychology Department. Kuwait University.

Abstract

One hundred and fifty college students, comprising fifty seven males and ninety three females were selected randomly from several colleges of kuwait University to participate in this research. The Omar psychological picture Album (OPPA) is employed with a Facilitating Question Card, as an instrument for this study. The instrument was administered to the collage creator as well as to the selected sample in order to: investigate the relationship between the collage creator's psychological state and the nature of his works; investigate whether the collage creator's perception of his works will be similar to or different from that of the audience, and to investigate the relationship between the audience's psychological states and their perceptions of the collage works.

Collage has been defined in English Dictionaries as: an artistic composition of materials and objects pasted over a surface, often with unifying lines and colors. Ghanim, in 1985, said that collage works have been known and presented by the old Egyptian Pharaohs, as shown in their temples and monuments. (Ghanim, 1985). Later, he described the collage art as an expression of cognitive sensation. The researcher describing the art of collage, photomontage, as a collection of different pieces of pictures, objects, and materials to be shown in an artistic uniqueness, implied certain meanings that stimulate psychological messages to the audience (Omar, 1989).

Collage works have been used largely in Art Psychotherapy during intensive care. Art psychotherapists, with different approaches, have used collage works in their treatment to ascertain the patients' psychological states and disorders. In the direction approach of treatment, some of them have asked their patients to produce collage works by providing several materials to be used in their products. In the non-directive approach, others encourage their patients to create their own collage works by collecting selected materials by themselves. A great number of psychotherapists ask their patients to tell stories about presented collage plates, either individually or in groups. Several psychotherapists stimulate psychological messages to their patients by asking them to perceive the meanings of each presented collage plate (Omar, 1989).

Accordingly, in Art Psychotherapies, collage works are not considered psychological measures nor tests, but considered as projective techniques, used to help in the diagnosis and treatment of individual psychologically disordered patients. In addition, collage works can be used with groups for the purposes of research.

Linesch, In 1988, presented several cases of defense mechanisms and psychological disorders diagnosed by using collage works in Art Psychotherapies with adolescents. Landgarten, 1987, presented collage works as diagnostic techniques in Family Art Psychotherapy. Rubin's 1987, editing of several approaches to Art Therapy, implied the importance of using collage works as diagnostic techniques. Dalley et al., 1987, referred to collage works as an image of Art Therapy. Previously, Dalley, 1986, edited several articles about Art Therapy understanding the Therapeutic uses of collage works.

The problem to be studied in this research is the psychological messages of collage works. The research questions to be addressed are:

1. Is there a relationship between the collage creator's psychological state and the nature of his works? If yes, what is it? If not, how far is his psychological state from his works?
 2. Is the collage creator's perception of his works similar to that of the audience? If yes, what are the similarities between the two perceptions? If not, what are the differences between them?
-

3. Can the collage works be used to ascertain an individual's psychological state? If yes, how can they be used? If not, why can't they be used?

Accordingly, the objectives of this research can be stated as:

1. To investigate the relationship between the collage creator's psychological state and the nature of his works.
2. To investigate whether the collage creator's perception of his works will be similar to, or different from, that of the audience.
3. To investigate the relationship between the audience's psychological states and their perceptions of the collage works.

Null hypotheses discussed in this research, according to their problems, questions, and objectives may be stated as:

- (1) There is a relationship between the collage creator's psychological state and the nature of his works.
- (2) The collage creator's perception of his works may be similar to, or different from, that of the audience.
- (3) The collage works can be used to ascertain an individual's psychological state.

Method

Population and Sample

The population studied was adult male and female college students at Kuwait University in the State of Kuwait. The total number of the population according to the last census in 1988 is 13325 college students, comprising 4769 males and 8556 females. They were surveyed according to a random sample represented by 150 college students, comprising 57 males and 93 females selected randomly from several colleges of Kuwait University.

Instrument

The Omar Psychological picture Album (OPPA), a projective technique, using 16 collage plates selected by the researcher, from 78 plates created by the famous artist Mr. Ahmed Ghanim, is employed with a Facilitating Question Card, Answer Booklet and analysis sheets, devised by the researcher, especially for this research.

Facilitating Question Card includes five questions. Both open and closed types of questions are included in it. The first two open questions are intended to allow the examined subject to provide spontaneous responses in his or her own words, while

the other three closed questions are included for the purposes of easy quantification.

Answer Booklet includes six major sections: (1) instruction for the examined subject, (2) note for the examined subject, including his/ her background data, (3) note for the therapist, including his/ her comments about the examined subject, (4) answer sheets of the 16 pictures, arranged from picture 1 to picture 16, respectively, (5) sum of the scores by pictures, and (6) sum of the scores by questions.

Analysis sheets of popular responses include popular response sheets related to personal and social aspects of the personality, in addition to an interpretation sheet of the findings concerning each one of the 16 pictures, included in OPPA.

In selecting the presented plates used in the OPPA, the researcher relied on the considerable experiences, opinions, points of view, and sound advice of several judging experts, comprising academic professors and professional clinicians specialized in the field of Mental Health, in the United States and in the Middle East. A Facilitating Question Card was developed by the researcher to help in stimulating the psychological messages to the subjects.

The researcher agrees with Klopfer and Davidson, 1962, about the problems of validation, including the reliability and validity of the projective instrument. They stated that projective techniques attempt to describe rather than to measure the individual psychologically. On the other hand, the researcher agrees with Caruso, 1987, about the necessity of developing a tool that should be very flexible and unbounded by administration rules and scoring methods.

The product of received responses is not standardized in the same sense as the product of the traditional psychological measures and tests (Omar, 1989).

OPPA is a projective technique that could be used in clinical interviews, data gathering, treatment process, and descriptions of psychological states of individuals for the various skilled professionals in mental health settings. This, in part, explains why this instrument (OPPA) is referred to as a technique rather than as a test.

Procedure

A sample of 150 college students, including 57 males and 93 females was selected randomly from several colleges at the University of Kuwait. The research was administered in the beginning of the fall semester of the academic year during the period from September to November, 1988. Group administration of OPPA, by means of showing slides of its plates to small groups, was used for the purpose of this research (50 subjects each).

Firstly, the instrument was administered within two hours in two class sessions with each group of 50 college students, males and females. The subjects saw the first eight plates and answered the first facilitating question within 48 minutes after

they got the instructions from the researcher who gave them in 12 minutes. After one week, the same subjects saw the last eight plates and answered the first facilitating question within the same period of time. The subjects were not allowed to spend more than six minutes, seeing the plates and answering the facilitating question. They answered the question according to their first reaction without discussing the probabilities of responses with each other. Their responses were reported in a special Answer Booklet, developed by the researcher. The responses were analyzed on Analysis Sheets, developed by the researcher especially for this research.

Secondly, the OPPA was administered to the collage creator who created the pictures included in it, in order to explore his perceptions of his work, several years after their production and exhibition. This administration was held in two hours, including the time spent in two individual interviews with him under the similar conditions of administering the OPPA to the college students. In addition, the creator was asked to report his memories, feelings, perceptions and circumstances about these pictures before and while he was creating them so as to refer to his total psychological state.

Thirdly, a comprehensive analysis of all responses was done and reported. Simple statistics were used to clarify the research findings.

Results

To investigate the first research question: "Is there a relationship between the collage creator's psychological state and the nature of his works?", certain analyses of the creator's responses to each picture included in OPPA, in relation to his written comments, memories, feelings, circumstances and perceptions, may be discussed, as the following:

Picture number one: "Mr. Dollar" reflects his perceptions about the capitalism that is characterized by the power of money. This picture illustrates the symptomatic manifestations of his hatred of the power of finance. In his own words, "It represents the value of a human being, in the view of other people. Man is valued as nothing when he doesn't have a dollar. Accordingly, morality is replaced by a money value!!!!;

Picture number two: "The earthly stage" manifests his conflicts between his feelings about life and death. He perceived that he lived in such a terrible world, and that it was so difficult for every one to save himself from the danger of the conflicts between the nations, that this might lead to a new world war;

Picture number three: "Cubist mirror of the witch" reflects his perceptions about a broken woman in a terrible world. He expressed his feelings by saying that a woman might be seen as very beautiful, but she might have a broken self because of the dangerous

conflicts between good and evil inside her personality. "No one can trust a beautiful woman in this terrible world because there is no safe life nowadays", he perceived these feelings more than once in his responses to this particular picture;

Picture number four: "2 + 1 = -3, second work" reflects his perceptions about the frigid sexual relationships between a husband and his wife that may push any of them to have sexual affairs with another partner. This picture may manifest his past personal experiences in sexuality. He never said this, but alluded to it by his implied comments about this picture;

Picture number five: "Factory of modern beauty, second work, the making of a Cyclope" gives another implied message of his perceptions about women's beauty. He sees that the beautiful face of a woman may deceive any man in the world because it may hide misery and pain for him. In his own words, "I see that a beautiful woman and a monster are two sides of the same coin";

Picture number six: "A sleepy man in a shadow of a red rose" manifests his true perceptions about love and sex. He perceived that a man might be assassinated by his feelings of love and his desire for sex. This picture may also give an implied message of his own past experiences with women;

Picture number seven: "Love story" reflects his view about the relationship between any couple that may manifest an implied message of a solid love as stones and rocks. They may show warm feelings and hot sexuality toward each other, but they hide a cold relationship between them in the depth of themselves.

Picture number eight: "Lady of fear" represents the features of this age which is called the age of anxiety by authors, poets, artists, and psychologists (Tyler, 1969). This picture manifests his perceptions about anxieties, fears, depressions, frustrations, and conflicts that characterize people's behaviors. Humanity needs angels' caring mercy, love, affection from Allah (God) to be saved from the danger of this terrible world;

Picture number nine: "An arm of the man who struggles for his existence" represents his perceptions about the struggle of the human being, in the terrible world that he lives in, to stay alive. Life pushes him down, but he tries to get up. No one knows if he is going to be raised or to be buried;

Picture number ten: "Lust" represents the woman sexuality. The artist stated that he was always confused each time seeing this picture, even though he created it. He perceived a woman's sexual instinct as an animal behavior, not as a human need for satisfaction;

Picture number eleven: "The steely woman: Faye Dunaway" manifests his perception about the selfishness of a woman who sacrifices her own child in return for sexual pleasure. He hates and condemns any woman who prefers abortion to motherhood;

Picture number twelve: "The mirror of Lady Macbeth" reflects his perceptions about the beautiful woman who uses her beauty for deceiving, betraying, and killing. Her beauty is covering her evil self like Lady Macbeth. "Who knows, it may be that every beautiful woman is like Lady Macbeth", as he said;

Picture number thirteen: "The daughter of the queen of poetry: A portrait on the mountain" reflects unexpected perceptions. He saw a piece of mountain stone like the beautiful face of a young girl. He saw the abstract face of a young girl as a golden dream. It means that he dreamed of a beautiful young girl without features in order to enrich the imagery of his dream girl;

Picture number fourteen: "To my mother" manifests his perceptions about the holy motherhood. He saw the warm affection between a mother and her child; represented by his location in her eye center. It seems that he is influenced by his mother's love and care, as manifested in the psychological message of his picture;

Picture number fifteen: "An approach to the art of modern sleeping" reflects his internal struggles against his fears. It seems that he is experiencing defense mechanisms against his anxieties and fears. Sleepiness is a way of escape from the real world in which a man lives. The artist could not frankly express his perceptions about this picture by making explicit comments, but he expressed his feelings by asking several anxious questions about its meaning that indicated his anxieties and fears;

Picture number sixteen: "The white woman" manifests his confusion about women in general. He stated that a woman might be colored. It means that any woman may have several faces as if she had multiple personalities. A man may see his woman as he likes, but not as she is.

According to the analysis of the artist's responses to his sixteen pictures included in OPPA, it seems that he is experiencing fears, anxieties, frustrations, and confusion in his relationships with people in general, and with the opposite sex in particular. He shows high respect and much love to his mother as a model for holy motherhood.

Accordingly, there is a strong relationship between the collage creator's psychological state and the nature of his works as presented in this research.

To investigate the second research question: "Is the collage creator's perception of his works similar to, or different from, that of the audience?", certain analyses of the examined subjects' responses to each picture included in OPPA, in relation to their comments and perceptions may be discussed according to the second hypothesis of this research, shown in tables 1 and 2 below.

TABLE 1
Similar Responses Of The Artist And The Audience

Picture Number	Similar Responses	Male		Female	
		F	%	F	%
1.	Morality is replaced by a money value	7	12.3	19	20.4
2.	Dangerous conflicts between nations	1	1.8	2	2.2
3.	A woman has good and evil characteristics	5	8.8	3	3.2
6.	An assassinated man by his feelings of love and sex	8	14	2	2.2
8.	Anxieties and fears characterize people's behaviors	1	1.8	8	8.6
9.	The struggle of a human being in the terrible world	3	5.3	1	1
10.	The woman's sexual instinct is like an animal's behavior	2	3.5	0	0
11.	Selfishness of a woman who prefers abortion to motherhood	9	15.8	15	16
12.	A woman may deceive a man by her beauty	7	12.3	3	3.2
14.	The holy motherhood	0	0	12	12.9
16.	A man may see his woman as he likes	2	3.5	3	3.2

Table 1 shows the similar responses of the artist and the audience corresponding to pictures 1,2,3,6,8,9,10,11,12,14 and 16 respectively. The highest percentage of female and male responses indicates the similar perceptions of their percep-

tions and those of the collage creator's relating to picture 1 and 11 respectively. Almost sixteen percent of male and female subjects perceived picture 11 the same as its creator perceived it. Only one of males gave similar responses to those of the artist's corresponding to pictures 2 and 8; and only one of females indicated a similar response to the artist's relating to picture 9. None of the females or males perceived pictures 10 and 14 the same as the collage creator perceived them. Accordingly, a few of the examined subjects perceived some of the pictures included in OPPA the same as the collage creator perceived them. Thus, there are a few similarities between the perceptions of the collage creator and the audience's, as represented by the examined subjects.

TABLE 2
Different Responses Between The Artist
And The Audience

Picture Number	Male		Female		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	50	87.7	74	79.6	124	82.7
2	56	98.2	91	97.8	147	98
3	52	91.2	90	96.8	142	94.7
4	57	100	93	100	150	100
5	57	100	93	100	150	100
6	49	86	91	97.8	140	93.3
7	57	100	93	100	150	100
8	56	98.2	85	91.4	141	94
9	54	94.7	92	99	146	97.3
10	55	96.5	93	100	148	98.7
11	48	84.2	78	84	126	84
12	50	87.7	90	96.8	140	93.3
13	57	100	93	100	150	100
14	57	100	81	87.1	138	92
15	57	100	93	100	150	100
16	55	96.5	90	96.8	145	96.7

Table 2 shows the different responses between the collage creator and the audience relating to the sixteen pictures, used in OPPA. The different perceptions between the examined male and female subjects and the collage creator are indicated by the common perfect percentage of the subjects' responses, corresponding to pictures 4, 5, 7, 13 and 15. A perfect percentage of female and male responses reflects the differences of perceptions between them and the artist corresponding to

pictures 10 and 14 respectively. The lowest percentage of female and male perceptions, different from the collage creator's perceptions, corresponds to pictures 1 and 11 respectively. Accordingly, a great number of the examined subjects perceived most of the pictures included in OPPA differently from the collage creator's perceptions. Thus, there is a wide range of differences between the perceptions of the collage creator and the audience's as represented by the examined subjects.

To investigate the third research question: "Can the collage works be used to ascertain an individual's psychological state?", certain analyses of the collected responses to each picture included in OPPA, in relation to the audience's comments and perceptions, by using the interview in counseling and psychotherapy (Omar, 1985) may be discussed, according to the third hypothesis as follows:

There is a wide range of differences between the responses of the audience, represented by the examined subjects. A great number of them perceived most of the sixteen pictures, used in OPPA, differently from each other. A few similarities between some of their responses have been shown to be related to some of the pictures. They gave common responses mostly relating to pictures 1, 2, 8 and 11 which were perceived as: "morality is replaced by a money value"; "dangerous conflicts between the nations"; "anxieties and fears characterize people's behaviors"; and "selfishness of a woman who prefers abortion to motherhood". There is a contrast between two groups of perceptions related to picture 11, entitled "The steely woman: Faye Dunaway". One group of examined subjects perceived it similarly to the popular responses to its implications. They indicated the selfishness of a woman who prefers abortion to motherhood. On the contrary, the other group perceived it as a good example of motherhood, characterized by love, affection, and care. Accordingly, each picture, included in OPPA, manifests the perceptions hidden inside the audience. Thus, the collage works can be used to ascertain an individual's psychological state.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

It is evident from the results of this research, including the responses to the instrument and the additional written comments and perceptions, that the collage creator and the examined subjects participating in this study have very few similarities and a wide range of differences between their perceptions related to the pictures used in OPPA. Thus, the results of this research lead to the conclusions that there is a strong relationship between the collage creator's psychological state and the nature of his works, and that the collage works can be used to ascertain an individual's psychological state.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this research, further studies should be done. Research investigating the therapeutic and statistical analysis of popular responses to the

Omar Psychological Picture Album (OPPA) should be conducted. Case studies describing the psychological states of the collage creator as well as describing the psychological states of other artists, using their artistic works, should be researched. Case studies describing the psychological states of the individuals who perceive the pictures included in OPPA unpopularity, should be investigated. Finally, further investigations should be made into the possibility of using the new projective technique OPPA with the exceptional individuals (Omar, 1987), as well as using it in relation to other scales such as youth Problem Checklist (Omar, 1986) for the purposes of enriching the field of Art Psychotherapy.

Bibliography

- Caruso, K.R. **Projective Story Telling Cards: Basic Users Manual (version, 1)** FL.: Northwest Psychological publishers, Incorporated, 1987.
- Dalley, T. **Art as Therapy: An introduction to the use of art as a therapeutic technique.** New York: Tavistock Publications, 1986.
- Dalley, T.; Case, C.; Schaverien J.; Weir, F.; Halliday, D.; Hall, P.N. and Waller, D. **Images of Art Therapy: New developments in theory and practice.** New York: Tavistock Publications, 1987.
- Ghanim, A. **Collage: Approach To The Purpose (1): The Pamphlet of his exhibit.** Kuwait, 1985.
- Ghanim, A. **Collage: Approach To The Purpose (2): The Pamphlet of his exhibit.** Kuwait, 1985.
- Klopfer, B. and Davidson, H. H., **The Rorschach Technique: An Introductory Manual.** New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1962.
- Landgarten, H.B., **Family Art Psychotherapy: a Clinical Guide and Casebook.** New York: Brunner/Mazel Inc., 1987.
- Linesch, D.G. **Adolescent Art Therapy.** New York: Brunner/Mazel Inc. 1988.
- Omar, M.M. **Omar Personality Projective Apperception Technique (OPPAT): The General Manual.** Kuwait, 1989.
- "Guide and Counseling for the Exceptional Children: Analytic Study" Kuwait: Kuwait University. **Annals of The Faculty of Arts.** Vol. 8:43, 1987.
- **Youth Problem Checklist: Guidance Scale for secondary school student** Alexandria, Egypt: Dar Al Ma'refah AL Gameiah, 1986.
- **The Interview in Counseling and Psychotherapy.** Alexandria, Egypt: Dar Al Ma'refah Al Gameiah, 1985.
- Rubin, J.A., **Approaches to Art Therapy: Theory and Technique.** New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc. 1987.
- Tyler, L.E. **The Work of the Counselor.** New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969.