

# Review of: "Picture collage: A pedagogical reflective practice tool for nursing students in mental health practice"

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**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

This is a well-written article re-asserting the value of picture collaging as a pedagogical tool in health education. The research is supported by extensive reading of relevant literature and makes a convincing case for collage to be used in helping nursing students reflect on their experiences within the context of mental health. It is hoped that more educators will pick up on the insights offered by this paper and implement picture collaging in their teaching. Seeing some of the collages reproduced and coupled with the students' comments I found extremely useful and effective as it gives a concrete idea of how students responded to the task. The quality of the reproductions could be better, as has been noted already in the comments, and finding adequate means to document visual material can be challenging (this is my experience). It almost requires a different mindset – one attentive to the importance and richness of visual data. We are so used to communicate and record things with words and in text- or word-based formats that visualisation, as a practice, is easily neglected in the process – even when it is the very aim of the exercise. Documenting students' work with greater care will also open up the data for further study. As a researcher in the field of arts education, I would be interested to see some additional analysis being done of the collages themselves as this could highlight some of the ways in which students construct a 'narrative' in visual form – whether individually or collectively as a group. This would help researchers like myself to develop a language capable of analysing and interpreting visual content generated by these sessions, but perhaps this is beyond the scope of the article. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind, I think, that visual material is often denied the kind of attention that verbal texts enjoy within an educational or academic context (back to my point above). Having said this, I find it incredibly encouraging to see the picture collage being used so effectively within a non-arts context. I therefore consider this article an important contribution to a wider and growing body of research across the disciplines, linking the arts and sciences, that insists on the need to diversify the means or 'modalities' by which students learn. This way we can overcome the limitations of an educational system that privileges alphabetic literacy and has done so for a long time. Working with images to develop students' visual thinking has important benefits in a world and society saturated by social media that are highly visual in content. I also have some questions which are more to do with the exchange between student and tutor. Was the use of picture collaging contextualised in any way prior to the start of the session? Were the students offered any support or guidance during the actual making of the collage? Was there any interaction with the tutor at this point? I ask this because it is my experience that students benefit from some feedback in action, although this may be dependent on the aim of the session (in my case the collage is used in preparation for an essay). It would also be interesting to know if students were unequivocally positive about the session or if any students struggled to express themselves visually, as some students can have a preference for verbal forms of expression (this at

least is my experience) and they can find visual tasks daunting and challenging, even intimidating, though they tend to be in the minority (arguably, this only serves to affirm the importance of image-based learning in preparing students for professions where multi-modal forms of communication are the norm).