

AN EXPLORATION OF THE PROCESS OF USING EXPRESSIVE ARTS COUNSELING  
TECHNIQUES AS EXPERIENCED BY HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR TRAINEES

By

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(Under the Direction of Jolie Daigle)

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of a qualitative study which explored the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques. Specifically, the process as it was experienced by high school counselor trainees was the focus of the data collection and analysis. The researcher identified themes which were developed into a grounded theory. Developmental and cross-cultural considerations were explored as well. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results and recommendations for future research.

INDEX WORDS: Expressive arts, school counseling, adolescence, creative arts, social justice, developmental counseling

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my friends and family. There is absolutely no way I could have succeeded in this program without the laughter, tears, and quiet presence of this wonderful and amazing group of people. Three years ago I began a journey of academic pursuits; little did I realize then that I would be faced with nearly impossible personal challenges at the same time. My hope is to someday repay my friends and family for what they have provided for me and my children.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

F.W. Nietzsche once stated “A man’s maturity consists in having found again the seriousness one had as a child, at play” (Nietzsche, F., 1886, n.p.). Expressive art counseling techniques bring together art, cognitive ability, and creativity (Ray, Perkins, & Oden, 2004). Due to developmental differences, children and adolescents may not have the verbal ability to express their thoughts, feelings, and/or experiences (Shen, 2006; Veach & Gladding, 2007; Yassa, 1999). Therefore, the use of expressive arts in school counseling programs can be extremely beneficial and rewarding.

School counselors work in elementary, middle and high schools to meet the needs of students, families, faculty, and the community (ASCA, 2004). The demands upon the school counselor vary at each level. The elementary school counselor lays groundwork which is built upon at each subsequent level. The middle school counselor acts as a liaison between middle and high school. And the high school counselor assists in the transition into post-secondary options, including work and college. To meet the needs of those served, school counselors rely upon a variety of resources to provide appropriate interventions.

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), school counselors meet the needs of those they serve in three primary counseling domains: academic, career, and personal/social. A challenge faced by school counselors is the ability to meet the cultural and developmental needs of the people, communities, and agencies they serve. Each of these groups has different needs and, therefore, have different responses to interventions. School

counselors are better equipped to work with these variations if they have multiple methods from which to choose.

One option school counselors can utilize is to incorporate non-verbal techniques; specifically expressive arts. Natalie Rogers once described the use of art as a form of self-expression and a “language between us” (Sommers-Flannagan, 2007, pg. 122). Working with expressive arts techniques offers the opportunity to communicate feelings in a non-verbal manner. While literature supports or at least acknowledges the use of these techniques in some settings, such as in private counseling and hospital programs, (Osmun, 2000; Shen, 2006), there is limited literature supporting the use of these expressive arts techniques in high school settings.

In this chapter, an overview of research is presented which explored the use of expressive techniques in high school counseling programs. Additionally, the background of the problem and the methodology for the research are presented as well. Later chapters further describe the literature related to expressive arts counseling techniques and the methodology of the research proposed.

This is a qualitative study which seeks to present a grounded theory of the use of expressive art techniques by school counselor interns when counseling high school students. Through the identification of themes which were identified from the qualitative data, the primary researcher developed a grounded theory which explained the process of using expressive arts in high school counseling programs as it was experienced by school counselor interns. At the time of this research, there is not an existing theory for this phenomenon.

A qualitative study design was selected for its use of giving participants presence in the research and using their experiences as the context for the data used to explore the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The use of personal stories and experiences provides rich contextual

information. The fluid and exploratory nature of qualitative research fit the needs of this study as the primary researcher examined personal experiences of high school counselor trainees' use of expressive arts through their voices (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Traditional talk-therapy is limiting when considering the demands of working with cross-cultural and developmentally varied segments of the population, each with a variety of needs. It is important to understand not everyone responds to traditional talk-therapy (Baker, 2006; Bradley, Whiting, Hendricks, Parr, & Gordon, 2008). Developmentally, some people are less able to articulate their thoughts and feeling through verbal methods (Gladding, 2006; Ray et al., 2005). Additionally, limiting the exploration of therapeutic needs through verbal communication is not thorough enough to fully examine presenting concerns. Culturally, there are groups which will be offended when asked to talk about why they may need to see a counselor (McKelley, R., 2007; Miranda, A., 1998). Feelings of shame, guilt, or exposure are occasionally associated when professional counseling is sought. Through creative measures, school counselors can offer a method to overcome these obstacles. In fact, Gladding (2008) stated "Without creativity there would not be counseling" (p. 95).

Not all children are able to express themselves using traditional methods (Chelsey & Gillett, 2008). Offering alternate opportunities in the counseling environment fosters different forms of expression. Not all presenting problems are the same; therefore, it is natural to see that not all interventions should follow the same process either.

Adolescents appear to not only need alternate methods from verbal means, but this group has also been evidenced through research as responding to expressive arts methods specifically (Chilton, G., 2007; Lehtonen, K. & Shaughnessy, M., 1994; Yassa, N., 1999). Although

literature has advocated for the use of expressive arts techniques with all ages, we still continue to see a deficit in the use of expressive techniques in high school counseling settings (Shen, 2006).

Students experience developmental changes during the formative years of high school (Veach & Gladding, 2007). These children are transitioning from childhood ways of thinking and behaving and are beginning to assume adult responsibilities and experience maturation. Adolescence is described by historical theorists as a period of “normative upheaval and turmoil” (Freud), a time of identity struggle (Erikson), and containing significant biological changes (O’Connor & Schaefer, 1994, p. 159). Interestingly, adolescent years closely resemble many of the developmental stages present during early infancy.

During adolescence there are many cognitive and emotional developmental changes (Veach & Gladding, 2007). Movement from concrete thinking into the ability to engage in abstract thought helps adolescents gain a greater understanding of their place in society (Yassa, 1999). Expressive counseling methods can bring together creativity, cognitive ability, and healing (Ray, Perkins, & Oden, 2004) to inform that understanding. Carl Jung believed expressive arts cultivates awareness to thoughts and feelings so that inner healing can occur (Serlin, 2008). Counselors incorporating expressive techniques are offering a creative pathway to these healing capacities.

The non-verbal format of expressive arts is one aspect of this type of counseling intervention. Another aspect relates to cross-cultural implications. When working with students whose culture is different than that of the majority within his/her community, finding a creative method can be helpful (Baker, 2006). Using expressive arts techniques assists in overcoming cultural obstacles and help people progress toward a more actualized existence (Gladding, 2008).



A counselor's ability to be creative in his/her methods is considered to be an asset to the facilitation of understanding people's differences and abilities (Thompson, Brossart, Carlozzi, & Miville, 2002).

Some cultures hold beliefs against seeking mental health support (Kalish-Weiss, 1989). However, other cultural values have supported creativity as a means of creating a healthy psyche (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Herring, 1997). Understanding the community in which students live offers insight into the appropriate methods for counseling interventions (ASCA, 2004). This insight can lead to fostering a positive counseling relationship which ultimately becomes supportive for the adolescent needing assistance.

### **Background of the Problem**

Historically, expressive methods have been supported by numerous theorists and practitioners in counseling (e.g. Carson, D. K. & Becker, K. W., 2004; Frey, D., 1975; Gladding, 2006). Expressive arts in the academic setting are shown to foster positive relationships, academic motivation, increased sense of responsibility, and a climate of respect (Keller, Lavish, & Brown, 2007; Shen, Y., 2007; Veach, L. & Gladding, S, 2007). Involvement in expressive arts "helps individuals recover from traumatic experiences and the stress of daily living" (Gladding, 2006, p. 2). Additionally, there is evidence that expressive arts promote cognitive, self-management, and social capacities among children (Boldt & Brooks, 2006).

Creative techniques in a school setting have been shown to support an increase in positive school behavior and decrease undesired school behavior (Boldt & Brooks, 2006). Children and adolescents spend a significant portion of their time in an academic setting. School counselors can take this opportunity to create an effective counseling environment in schools.

Gladding (2006) has listed a number of benefits of the use of the arts, not just with children, but with adolescents as well. Namely, he believes creativity in counseling increases energy and process, focus, creativity, a sense of self, insight, socialization and cooperation. He also adds that creativity in counseling can offer concrete representations of abstract ideas or feelings, which attends to the developmental needs of adolescents experiencing transitionally challenging growth (Gladding, 2006).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study and related research questions were designed with considerations including stages of development, cross cultural counseling, and tenets of social justice. The purpose of this study was to examine high school counselor trainees' perceptions of the use of expressive arts with high school students. Specifically, the process high school counselor trainees experienced when using expressive arts was examined. The primary research question of this study was: What is the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school students as it is experienced by high school counselor trainees? Through a thorough examination of participants' responses to this question, the primary researcher hoped to gain insight into the use and efficacy of the expressive arts techniques for the purposes of suggesting training recommendations to counseling programs. For the purposes of this study, grounded theory was defined as theory generated from data systematically obtained and analyzed through the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2003, 2005, 2008; Creswell, 2007).

### **Methods**

This study was designed as a qualitative research design. Qualitative research was selected as the design because the research participants provide the contextual, rich, personal data (Charmaz, 2003, 2005; Creswell, 2007, 2009; Heppner & Heppner, 2004). In order to

capture the experience of the data, the primary researcher wanted to have conversations with and understand the stories of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Even where stories overlapped, personal qualities of each participants' experience may be lost if the voices are not given space to be heard, explored, and further delineated.

Grounded theory acted as the guiding methodology. Grounded theory is described as "symbolic interactionism" (Heppner & Heppner, 2004, pg. 148). This description highlights the ability grounded theory has of crossing participant voices with the context in which the phenomenon being studied occurs (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). The primary researcher looked at these interactions and developed a grounded theory to describe the phenomenon of expressive arts counseling techniques as it was experienced by high school counselor trainees.

The participants for this study consisted of conveniently and purposely sampled current high school counselor trainees. The trainees were selected from a pool of students completing their internship during the Fall 2010/Spring 2011 semesters. The primary researcher presented a brief overview of expressive arts counseling techniques to all of the students in the internship course. This presentation included instruction from a university faculty member who teaches the course on expressive arts and play media in counseling course. After the presentation, students were told that they may volunteer to participate in the research if they met the following criteria: a) currently placed in a high school internship setting, and b) previous successful completion of the course "Expressive Arts & Counseling Techniques." Preliminary views of the course roster, when compared to students whom had taken the expressive arts course, showed ten possible participants for this study.

After the initial opportunity to volunteer for the study was offered only three participants volunteered. The primary researcher decided to expand the participation criteria to include a)

currently placed high school counselor internship students, and b) either successful completion of the course “Expressive Arts & Counseling Techniques,” or, participation in the brief overview of expressive arts counseling techniques offered by the primary researcher during one of the internship classes. Expansion of the criteria yielded four additional volunteers.

After a total of seven participants volunteered to participate in the study, the potential participants were given an informed consent form. For each participant who signed a consent form the initial interview was scheduled to take place via telephone. Five of the seven initial volunteers scheduled interviews. Participants were offered the opportunity for face-to-face interviews; however, due to logistical issues (i.e. geography) each of the participants requested phone interviews. The interviews followed a semi-structured interview format (Appendix A) to allow for modifiable yet structured questions.

After the initial interview had been completed, participants used expressive arts techniques in his/her high school internship placement. Specifically, participants used one technique from each of the following areas: art, drama, literature, and music. After completing two sessions using two different techniques, the participants engaged in a second interview following a semi-structured interview format again (Appendix B).

After completing the second interview, the participants utilized the two remaining types of expressive arts techniques. Following the completing of all four techniques with high school students, the participants were each interviewed again for the third and final time (Appendix C). All three interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed.

The primary researcher transcribed the interviews and followed the coding process as outlined by Charmaz (2003, 2005). This coding process assisted in an examination of the data and allowed the researcher to interpret meaning and phrases which best described the

phenomenon being studied. Throughout the coding process, the primary researcher constructed memos of thoughts and insights regarding the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques as they were perceived by the school counselor trainees. These memos are explored later in the discussion portion of this paper. The codes and memos became the groundwork for theoretical sampling. The highlighted codes were compared to the data and the participants were asked to review them as a method of constant comparative interpretation. As the primary researcher examined the codes against the data and received feedback from the participants regarding the saliency of the theories presented the researcher formulated the grounded theory. This grounded theory is explained in the findings section of this paper along with a visual representation of the process as experienced by the participants.

There were delimitations which guided this research. The parameters selected for the purpose of this study focused the attention on the phenomenon being studied (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). This study was delimited by the requirement that participants be current master's level students completing an internship in a high school counseling setting. This was necessary to increase the data which is currently limited regarding expressive arts techniques in high school counseling settings. Participants must also have had either previous successful completion of the course titled "Expressive Arts & Counseling Techniques" or participated in the three-hour orientation to expressive arts counseling techniques offered by the primary researcher.

Another delimitation of this study was the inclusion of several expressive arts techniques (i.e. art, drama, literature, music) rather than focusing on one specific method. The purpose of this research was to explore the use of expressive arts techniques as a broad category of interventions. It was not the intention of this study to explore specific methods within this broad category.

## **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the main research question:

1. How do school counselor trainees define expressive arts?
2. What are the implications for using expressive arts techniques as they are perceived by high school counselor trainees?
3. How does the process of using expressive arts techniques develop?
4. What are the developmental implications for the efficacy of expressive arts techniques?
5. How did cross cultural counseling relationships experience the use of expressive arts techniques?

## **Definitions and Operational Terms**

### **Expressive arts**

For this study, the term expressive arts was defined as those techniques which use creative mediums during counseling sessions. Specifically, creative mediums used includes, but is not limited to, art, drama, literature, and music.

### **High school counselor trainee**

Participants in this study identified as counselor trainees were master's level students enrolled in a supervised high school counseling internship at the time of the study. All of the high school counselor trainees were at the same stage in their school counseling master's program at the time of the study.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented preliminary information regarding the focus of the study. Background information was presented along with the rationale for the need of a grounded

theory related to expressive arts counseling techniques. The primary researcher intended to develop data that will become a useful addition to the pool of available literature related to expressive arts in high school counseling programs. The following chapters will discuss previous literature as it relates to expressive arts, highlight the gaps in the literature, and further discuss the need for this study. Additionally, the methodology for the research is outlined. The final chapters include the findings and discussion of the identified grounded theory, including a link to previous research and limitations in this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter presents a review of literature related to the use of expressive arts. Gaps in the literature are emphasized as a rationale for the purpose of this study. The primary researcher shares historical references, highlights developmental considerations, discusses specific expressive arts techniques, and explores tenets of social justice through a discussion of cross-cultural considerations. Further study regarding the use of expressive arts in school counseling with high school students is needed. The primary researcher explored the extensive literature which supports the use of creative arts techniques in historical contexts and with children in modern educational systems. Although numerous studies support the benefits of creative art therapies with children and adults, little research is evident for the use of creative methods with high school students.

Through the research, the primary researcher intended to explore the experiences of school counselor trainees as they utilized expressive arts techniques with high school students. The intent was to develop research which may be added to the existing pool of literature, expanding upon the available literature referencing school counselor and high school student experiences with expressive arts in counseling. Additionally, the intent was to use the research to develop a theory grounded in counselor trainees' experiences in using expressive arts with school-aged students.

#### **Definition of Expressive Arts**

For the purposes of this research, the term expressive arts was used to describe the use of non-verbal media, such as visual arts, drama, music, and literature used with students in a school



counseling setting. Although numerous studies support the benefits of expressive art therapies with children and adults (Bradley, Whiting, Hendricks, Parr, & Jones Jr, 2008; Gladding, 2006), little research was evident for the use of expressive arts with high school students.

Children respond better to a playful attitude when working through serious problems (Bennett, 2008). Carl Jung said “expressive arts brings consciousness to what was previously denied, and it evokes the healing power of the psyche or the self” (Snyder, 1997, pg. 80). Expressive arts give children a way to show us what is wrong rather than tell us. Additionally, these methods provide an opportunity to overcome cognitive defenses which may be otherwise hindered by the use of verbal methods alone (Paisley & Young, 1998). Expressive arts in the academic setting have been shown to foster positive relationships, academic motivation, increased sense of responsibility, and a climate of respect (Conrad, 2005). There is also evidence that the creative arts promote cognitive, self-management, and social capacities among children (Boldt & Brooks, 2006). Involvement in creative arts helps individuals heal from traumatic experiences and relieves common daily stressors (Gladding, 2006).

These creative techniques: a) improve academic performance, b) improve academic performance for students with disabilities, c) support better social and emotional adjustment, d) improve self-concept, e) decrease aggressive acting out behaviors, and f) reduce stress and anxiety (Boldt & Brooks, 2006; Ray, Perkins & Oden, 2004; Paisley & Young, 1998). The experience of using expressive arts is described as process oriented, emotionally sensitive, socially directed, and awareness focused (Paisley & Young, 1998).

### **History**

Throughout history, expressive arts techniques have been utilized across generations (Baker, 2006; Gladding, 2006). The ancient Egyptians encouraged people with mental illnesses

to explore their creative interests (Gladding, 2006). People identified with mental disabilities were also encouraged to attend performances, such as concerts and dances. It was believed that these activities could initiate the release of harmful feelings which would assist the person in becoming whole again (Gladding, 2006). Hebrews used musical interventions to assist in the development of healthy relationships (Gladding, 2006). In ancient Asian cultures, Confucius believed music was essential for a harmonious life (Gladding, 2006).

During the Middle Ages, the “use of music, dance, painting, and literature as healing forces in African, Native American, and Asian cultures was even more widespread” (Gladding, 2006, p. 5). The use of metaphor and healing narratives became integral in Native American healing. The use of narrative therapies is still evident in modern society within various cultures, such as Native American and Middle Eastern (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

During the Renaissance era, cultures continued to infuse arts as a mental health service (Gladding, 2006). Expressive arts were not only viewed as a remedial service, but a preventative mental health service as well. Tommaso del Garbo, a 17<sup>th</sup> century physician, advised his patients to think positively and listen to music as a means to avoid the plague. Moral therapy, a form of counseling developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was developed by reformers in the United States, France, and England. These reformers believed that healing could occur through environmental experiences. They would send mental patients to country retreats where interventions such as music, painting, and “individual attention” would occur to promote healing. Although moral therapy was beneficial, the cost and time dedication became exhaustive (Gladding, 2006).

In recent history we have seen the inclusion of expressive arts among highly-recognized therapists. For example, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Arnold Lazarus, and Carl Rogers’ daughter, Natalie Rogers, have all supported and exercised creative techniques

within counseling. The influence of these powerful presences within the counseling field assisted in the growth of creative arts during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Specifically, creative arts techniques such as writing, drawing, and music were utilized with veterans of World War II. Traditional talk-therapy methods were not always the most appropriate or even possible approaches for this adult population experiencing trauma, grief, loss, and depression (Baker, B., 2006). “Art celebrates humanity, including both the playful times and the times of grief and mourning” (Boldt & Brooks, 2006, p. 224).

### **Examples of Expressive Arts**

There are many creative methods which could be utilized across the P-16 settings. However, not every method is appropriate in each setting. According to recent literature, adolescents seem to respond best to techniques which most closely meet the needs of their developmental stage (Chilton, 2007; Kalish-Weiss, 1987; Veach & Gladding, 2007). Advocates for the use of expressive arts in school counseling may consider developing, incorporating, and studying these approaches. Providing outcome data referencing the techniques can encourage implementation of expressive arts into school counseling programs and training. A variety of expressive arts techniques exist. Art, drama, music, and literary therapies will be discussed here along with examples of efficacy and implementation.

#### **Art**

Expressive art therapy is perhaps one of the more common techniques of creative arts. These methods are therapeutic because it “is a vehicle for awakening dormant creativity. It is a means for accessing hidden resources” (Synder, 1997, p. 74). Visual arts can be both preventative and restorative when utilized appropriately. Art techniques can assist the child in verbally discussing creative drawings related to personal events (Ray, Perkins, & Oden, 2004).

Images created mediate between conscious and unconscious, between the individual and the collective, and between the individual and the world (Serlin, 2007). Art therapy methods provide a way to use non-verbal representations as an entry-point for verbally exploring the related experiences in a supportive social context (Lysahak, 2007).

Research has shown a correlation between visual arts in counseling adolescents and positive outcomes related to conflicts with peers, career exploration, and substance abuse (Veach & Gladding, 2007). The use of visual arts have also been used in counseling with sexually abused adolescent girls, adolescents coping with depression, adolescents recovering from addiction, and even with visually impaired adolescents.

Examples of creative arts techniques are finger painting, the Squiggle Drawing Game, Kinetic Family Drawing, Mask Making, and mandala creations (Synder, 1997). Some examples of creative art mediums used successfully with adolescents are clay, paints, collages, and photography applications (Veach & Gladding, 2007). Artistic techniques are cost effective and require little or no artistic expertise (Snyder, 1997; Veach & Gladding, 2007).

The Rosebush Fantasy (Allan, 1998) is another technique used by counselors with a wide variety of participants and has been selected as the art technique for this study. This technique involves a three stage process: relaxation and imagery, drawing, and post-drawing reflection. The counselor begins with a scripted relaxation phase which encourages the participant to imagine themselves as a rosebush. The participant, or student, is guided to pay attention to various characteristics of their leaves, their thorns, flowers, and location. Then, the student is given paper and drawing materials to create their image which was just conjured during the imagery exercise. The counselor, during this stage, remains quiet yet reflective, if necessary. The next phase involves processing the activity. The counselor is careful to not impose their

own meaning upon the drawings; the explanation of the drawing by the student is where meaning should be noted (Allan, 1988). The process of the guided imagery along with the drawing and explanation of the drawing is guided by the counselor or therapist but is defined by the client.

The Rosebush Fantasy technique has been researched in several studies (Allan, 1988; Ray, Perkins, & Oden, 2004). The image of the rosebush allows projection of thoughts and feelings in a safe manner which may facilitate deeper discussion later. This technique has been specifically researched as a potential screening tool for detecting sexual abuse (Allan, 1988). The Rosebush Fantasy technique was selected as the art technique for this study.

When a student is particularly resistant to explore an artistic medium in counseling, the counselor may consider providing some structure from which creation can occur. Providing this structure through which creative expression is a helpful technique for those students who may show such resistance. Rubin, a therapist, referred to this method as providing a “framework for freedom” (Chilton, 2007, p. 60).

An example of a technique which offers structure to the student is altered book therapy. Altered book therapy, discussed later in this paper, is an example of providing this “framework for freedom” from which adolescents can create a unique artistic expression in a counseling setting. The process of ripping, cutting, changing, and altering someone’s published work can be cathartic in its experience and expressive in its outcome. Further, the process of creating “art in an intentional manner becomes healing, life affirming, and helpful in producing growth and change” for children and adolescents (Chilton, 2007, p. 59).

## **Drama**

Adolescents are often dramatic in their actions. Through drama, they can learn to gain control of their own lives and learn new roles as well. Drama, developmentally, works on the

experiential and cognitive levels (Veach & Gladding, 2007, p. 76). School counselors trained to offer dramatic methods in counseling can access the developmental level of the adolescent and foster a deeper sense of discovery for the student. This discovery is essential during adolescence as identity formation is continually being challenged (Veach & Gladding, 2007).

Jung believed that during times of stress, such as adolescence, counselors can look at a student's unconscious for understanding and purpose (Allan, 1998; Snyder, 1997). When a student begins to symbolize their fantasies and realities, healing is activated (Allan, 1988). School counselors can encourage this healing through various dramatic techniques.

Examples of dramatic techniques include role playing, script writing, and group script writing. One method of incorporating dramatic expression into counseling is to re-create events which have occurred in the student's life or at school. The re-creation of events in a script or ad-lib format was selected as the drama technique for this study. As an example of this activity, Conrad described a dramatic intervention with a group of adolescents after a recent disciplinary incident at school (Conrad, 2005). Conrad asked students in her therapy group to write an informal script and play roles of various players depicting a recent incident on a school bus. The dramatic interpretation created was called "The Bus Trip."

Each student was asked to give their character, which they would be playing, a name other than the real name of the person involved. Then, the group reenacted the incident as they remembered it. What had occurred on the bus involved a student purchasing alcohol while on a school field trip, taking the alcohol onto the bus, then several students engaging in the consumption of the alcohol. One student reported the activity to an administrator who then enforced punishment.

As the students acted out the scenes, the therapist would occasionally stop the actors and ask them, in character, what they were thinking. The animation and processing with the counselor resulted in a heightened awareness of individual motivations, peer group relations, perspectives on rule-breaking, relationship to school authorities, and individual sense of justice (Conrad, 2005). Students were able to not only see themselves as characters in a play, which allowed for a different view of their own actions, but also act out different roles. By playing a character other than themselves, students were able to gain insight and understanding of others' perspectives.

Communication skills are important tools for acceptance and tolerance (Boldt & Brooks, 2006; Kalish-Weiss, 1989; Yassa, 1999). Theater offers a means for youth to “express, explore, and evaluate their own and each other’s perceptions and understanding of the world. In performance there is potential for change. By creating roles for themselves in drama they learn they can create roles for themselves in life” (Conrad, 2005, p. 38).

Yassa’s (1999) research reported that “involvement in drama classes enhances social interaction and self-confidence” ( p. 37). Yassa outlined several themes which were identified from her study regarding the efficacy of creative drama: increased self-confidence, increased assertiveness, healthier regulation of emotions, and increased sense of democracy. One student reported that the best benefit from a creative drama experience was the ability to get along with different kinds of people. She related the effectiveness of the technique to a “sphere larger than the school” (Yassa, p. 45). This student’s reflection exemplifies Bronfenbrenner’s *Ecological Systems Theory* because it recognizes the influence of a micro-level experience upon a macro-level experience (MacMahan et.al., 2010). Counselors seeking to encourage social justice themes in their comprehensive programs may seek to explore creative drama in secondary

schools for this reason. Through the use of expressive techniques, such as creative drama, counselors can assist students with identifying barriers and resources within the community. Understanding student concerns as they exist within his or her systems fosters greater understanding for the school counselor and creates an opportunity for advocacy.

For the purposes of this study, the drama technique selected was scripting and/or role playing. The research participant selected a high school student with whom to use for the drama technique. The student acted out a moment in his or her life which has either happened in the past or is anticipated to happen in the future. With the assistance of the research participant, the student worked through the feelings associated with this “scene” in his/her life.

### **Literature**

The use of children’s literature has been described as “respectful and non-blaming” which centers people as experts on his or her own life (Bennett, 2008). These techniques can be used to assist in promoting cognitive and interpersonal development for adolescents (Paisley & Young, 1998). School counselors can incorporate literary techniques in counseling individually or with small groups.

Through the use of biographies and autobiographies, school counselors provide opportunities for adolescents to gain insight into what they can be and how they can grow- thus “enhancing developmental tasks of identity and individuation” (Veatch & Gladding, 2007, p. 75). Exploration of historical figures can be performed on an individual or group basis, dependant upon the developmental needs of the students.

Reading literature in a focused and purposeful manner can support adolescents through their transition to adulthood. A variety of literary options exist- creative writing, reading non-



didactic poems, such as works by Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, or James Dickey, creating a group poem, and the reading of biographies and autobiographies (Veach & Gladding, 2007).

Literature helps adolescents realize possibilities and meaning for their lives. Biographies and autobiographies are especially relevant to high school age students. Through reading and learning of the lives of successful, historical, and powerful people, adolescents can gain a sense of encouragement for their own direction in life. Some examples of relevant pieces include *Margaret Mead: A Life* by Jane Howard (1984), *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* by Edmund Morris (1979), *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story* by Ben Carson (1991), *Hoyt Street* by Mary Helen Ponce (1993), and *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan* by Robert Shelton (1986) (Veach & Gladding, 2007). Participants in this study were asked to select a children's book to read with either a student or group of student(s) for further discussion.

Through creative literary approaches adolescents can “gain a sense of universality” and enhance a sense of empathy and sensitivity toward others (Veach & Gladding, 2007, p. 75). Stories typically include a moment of catharsis through which adolescents can become emotionally involved and share the experiences of the characters they identify with or seek to exemplify.

Researchers have shown support for the use of an art technique known as “altered book therapy” and biography/autobiography literature interventions (Chilton, 2007). Altered book therapy is a technique which involves the creative transformation of existing literature. For example, a children's book such as *The Giving Tree* (Silverstein, 1964) may be altered by a student through application of pictures, cutting out pages or sections of pages, and adding textural features. For the adolescent faced with the challenge of exploring personal identities, the very act of defacing an existing work of literature provides a sense of healthy rebellion.

Counselors using this technique are cautioned to explain the difference between defacing property and using this technique in an appropriate manner. The transformation of the book from “uniform to unique” is an appropriate metaphor for adolescence. The art of the adolescent “concretizes” a life transformed (Chilton, 2007, p. 61).

Research participants were asked to select a children’s book to read with a high school student for the purposes of this study. Participants were shown, during the expressive arts orientation how to use the children’s literature as a therapeutic technique. Specifically, participants were instructed to read the literature with a high school student and then processed, either through discussion, written words, or both, the feelings associated with that particular children’s book.

## **Music**

Pablo Casals, a humanist and master cellist, said ““music expels hatred from those who don’t love. For the restless it gives peace, for the crying, comfort. Those whose road is blocked will find new paths and those who reject everything will have new certainty and hope”” (Lehtonen & Shaughnessy, 1994, p. 18). Teenage music represents “pure psychic energy” (Lehtonen & Shaughnessy, p. 12). It is not uncommon to observe many adolescents listening to music throughout their daily activities. Adolescents bond with their peers through musical interests and the culture which is generated within musical genres.

Music “activates emotions” (Lehtonen & Shaughnessy, 1994, p. 7) that can foster moments of understanding, breaking barriers for deeper conversations and meaningful interactions. School counselors can utilize music therapy as a means for expressing and listening to student experiences. High school students are often interested in song writing and may seek to express themselves in counseling sessions through lyrical expression (Veach & Gladding, 2007,

p. 72). Examples of music counseling techniques include exploring lyrics of a selected song, creating music through group member collaboration, and processing thoughts and feeling after listening to a selected piece of music. For this study, participants played a selected song with a student or students and ask the student(s) to share his or her thoughts experienced while listening to the selected piece.

School counselors must recognize that music is a powerful source of communication and social influence during adolescence. Appropriate music is believed to be life-saving by increasing pro-social behavior (Veach & Gladding, 2007). In fact, researchers have found significant differences between adolescents engaged in music therapy compared to those without such intervention (Hendricks, Robinson, Bradley, & Davis, 1999).

In a 1999 report, researchers stated that music therapy techniques appear to be an effective treatment for depression in adolescents (Lehtonen, 1994). With approximately 30% of adolescents reporting significant problems with depression and one in five individuals reporting a minimum of one major episode of major depression by the age of 18 (Hendricks et al., 1999, p. 39), it is clear music therapy would be beneficial in a high school counseling program.

In a 1994 study reported by Lehtonen and Shaughnessy, adolescent boys who participated in a music therapy program significantly improved destructive behavior. Some of the participants ceased destructive behavior entirely. These boys were selected to participate in the music therapy program because of previously reported self-destructive behaviors. Although these behaviors were prominent, the participants' engagement in the music therapy program was believed to have significant influence upon their improvement.

Post-secondary institutions have implemented music interventions as a means of support for college students. Duke University began a program called the "Duke Digital Initiative"

(<http://dukedigitalinitiative.duke.edu>) in 2004. Every incoming freshman received an iPod<sup>®</sup>, an mp3 player, as part of this initiative. The purpose was to determine the efficacy of offering digital downloads, electronic resources, and audio components to the curriculum in specific courses. Although the impact upon student achievement was not readily available to the researcher, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) was reporting that by 2007 1,300 students and 85 professors at Duke University were participating in the initiative (Carvin, 2007). Although this intervention was utilized as a means of including technology as a form of instruction, the implications for using technology with young adults is easily understood.

The music technique selected for this study was the use of a current musical selection with high school students as a method of touching upon feelings. Participants were asked to select a song, play it for a student or students, and then discuss what thoughts the student(s) experienced as he or she listened to the musical selection.

### **Ethical Guidelines and Accreditation Standards**

School counselors are bound by professional standards and ethics. School counselors may identify with one or more local, state, and national governing organization whose primary purpose is to oversee counselors and the services they offer. Nationally, agencies such as the American Counseling Association (ACA), American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), and the Association for Play Therapy (APT) require adherence to ethical standards. Within the ASCA ethical standards (ASCA, 2004), section E.2.g states, “Work as advocates and leaders in the school to create equity-based school counseling programs that help close any achievement, opportunity and attainment gaps that deny all students the chance to pursue their educational goals.” Following this guideline, school counselors can utilize expressive arts as a method of offering equity-based

programs as described by ASCA's ethical standards. The counselor who advocates for marginalized populations by incorporating expressive arts techniques is acting ethically and professionally, according to the aforementioned guidelines.

Similarly, counselor educator programs are bound by standards and criteria as well. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is the accrediting agency for counselor education programs. Graduate schools seeking CACREP accreditation align their curriculum to meet CACREP standards. These standards, revised and are effective as of July 1, 2009, outline specific programmatic requirements for universities, colleges, and various other educational institutions. Standard G.2.b states that studies aligned with CACREP components must offer students "experiential learning activities designed to foster students' understanding of self and culturally diverse clients" (2009). Again we see where, although expressive arts training is not included, it is clear how these interventions meet the needs of various professional entities.

### **Developmental P-16 Considerations**

Review of the literature indicates a discrepancy between the use of creative arts with elementary versus high school students. Regardless of the reports supporting the efficacy of this approach across age groups, school counselors continue to view creative arts as a method more appropriate for the younger populations (Shen, 2006). However, developmentally, high school students appear to not only need this type of creative method, but have also been evidenced through research as responding to creative arts methods as well (Chilton, G., 2007; Lehtonen, K. & Shaughnessy, M., 1994; Yassa, N., 1999). Mental health literature has advocated for the use of expressive arts techniques with all ages, yet we still continue to see a lack of inclusion among secondary school counselors (Shen).

High school students are in their prime adolescent years, moving beyond their childhood experiences and approaching the threshold of adulthood. This developmental stage involves forming and reforming peer groups, identifying personal identity, and coming to terms with physical changes experienced during adolescence (O'Connor & Schaefer, 1994). There is a struggle to achieve milestones (Koller, 2008) as cognitive and emotional maturity are challenged and developed (Veach & Gladding, 2007). According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1952), younger students have limited ability to think abstractly and generalize from specifics to greater societal environments. Adolescence is a period of moving from concrete thought processes toward more abstract thinking (Yassa, 1999). Expressive techniques assist students with a concrete medium to explore abstract thoughts and feelings. School counselors working primarily with adolescents need to respect their need to withhold thoughts (O'Connor & Schaefer, 1994). Creative methods engage students at a primitive and playful level which is non-threatening by bridging the concrete and abstract worlds. The counselor who manages to incorporate expressive arts techniques with an adolescent has not only met the students' needs developmentally, but has also encouraged a healing process in an open, basic, and creative manner.

“Creative arts may help adolescents with developmental needs related to individuation, identity, cohesiveness, and concrete forms of connection with peers” (Veach & Gladding, 2007, p. 74). Research supports the efficacy of expressive arts in a high school setting. In fact, expressive arts may be the most developmentally appropriate method for adolescents (Paisley & Young, 1998). These techniques offer the adolescent a means to overcome cognitive defenses (Paisley & Young).

Yassa (1999) conducted a study with dramatic arts in a high school. Students participated in various dramatic activities, including role playing, script writing, and acting. The research not only showed significant positive behavioral changes among the student participants, but there was also a clear difference between the students in the lower high school grades and those in higher grades. Students in the lower grades seemed less able to articulate the application of skills explored through the dramatic intervention to life situations outside of school. Therefore, not only is there support for the use of expressive arts methods in high school overall, but there are clear developmental differences within the high school population itself. The findings of Yassa's research will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

### **Cross-Cultural Considerations**

Effective counselors are aware of the multidimensional nature of the profession and are able to work with a variety of populations by using appropriate interventions. [Creative arts] enable persons from diverse cultural backgrounds to develop in ways that are enjoyable as well as personally and socially enhancing (Gladding, 2006, p. vii).

Peoples of varying cultural backgrounds have methods of expressing themselves creatively and artistically which are preferred within the culture's norms (Gladding, 2006). Creativity is a worldwide occurrence which crosses cultural boundaries. Creative techniques, such as art therapy, are considered less culture-bound than traditional therapy styles (Kalish-Weiss, 1989). Expressive arts support healthy development of people from diverse backgrounds in a way that is personally enjoyable (Paisley & Young, 1998). A counselor's ability to be creative in their methods is considered to be an asset for the ability to understand people's differences and abilities (Thompson, Brossart, Carlozzi, & Miville, 2002). When the culture or

native language of the student is different than the majority of the community, utilizing a creative method can be helpful in the counseling process (Baker, 2006).

Counselors exposed to expressive arts techniques may become more sensitive to the needs of students who are different than them. The willingness to explore different cultures may have an improved ability to engage in effective relationships with students and their families (Thompson et al., 2002). Counselors may consider immersing themselves in current societal trends in order to most appropriately meet the needs of their students.

Western psychological models are criticized for being “monocultural and ethnocentric” in their perspectives of majority societal groups (Herring, 1997, p. 105). However, the perceptions of therapeutic interventions by minority groups may determine whether or not individuals and families seek assistance.

Hispanic communities have typically viewed “mental health services” as irrelevant or oppressive (Kalish-Weiss, B., 1989). These communities and Asian communities as well, tend to support needs through hierarchical family systems. Similar views of response to mental health needs are seen in Black and Native American communities as well (Kalish-Weiss, 1989).

Native American culture has engrained creative arts into their teachings; it is an “inalienable aspect of Native culture” (Herring, 1997, p. 105). Specifically, narrative therapies are common within the community (Freedman & Combs, 1996). School counselors and counseling programs which recognize this approach already existing within Native American families should learn, experience, and incorporate such techniques in their counseling program. “The interconnectedness of creative arts and Native existence represents a viable option for helping professionals who work to improve the quality of wellness with this population” (Herring, p. 105).



Herring (1997) shared a story of a Pueblo chief, Santiago. Santiago was in his seventies and was in the hospital receiving medical interventions for an unnamed condition. He asked his doctor if the doctor was a good healer; the doctor responded by listing his medical degrees and credentials. Santiago then asked the doctor if he liked to dance. The doctor shuffled his feet a little next to the chief's bed and asked Santiago if he could teach him some steps. Santiago replied, "Yes, I can teach you my steps, but you will have to hear your own music."

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the research cited in this chapter was to present information related to the use of expressive arts techniques with high school students. Social justice considerations and implications for counselor training programs were examined as well. The literature has shown evidence of the efficacy of various creative techniques with adolescent populations. However, additional research is needed because the literature available is minimal, hence, the rationale of this study.

Expressive arts have historically been respected as a useful tool for therapeutic change and intervention (Gladding, 2006; Sommers-Flanagan, 2007). Nonverbal techniques are needed; counselors can break the cycle of traditional "talk therapy" because research has supported the effectiveness of creative, expressive, non-verbal techniques. Natalie Rogers, daughter of the psychotherapist Carl Rogers and creator of the Person-Centered Expressive Therapy Institute ([www.nrogers.com](http://www.nrogers.com)) stated, "Art is a therapy" (Sommers-Flanagan, 2007, p. 123). Carl Jung said "individuals need to establish the basis for a dialogue with the inner self by using the symbols and images of the unconscious mind" (Synder, 1997, p. 76). Counselors must move beyond the restrictions of verbal counseling techniques, move beyond the ego boundaries, and move toward increasing freedoms of expression (Dimidjian & Elias, 2001).

Frostig and Essex (1998) recognize that professionals in creative arts and education share common goals for students. In the “current political and economic climate, creative arts are an effective tool to meet the growing needs of children in schools” (Osmun, 2000, p. 29). Dr. Victoria Jean Dimidjian (Dimidjian & Elias, 2001, p. 112-113) shared a poem written by one of her students about a child’s experiences with creative counseling:

### A Child’s Fate

(A tribute to Annie Rogers)

He comes to you with vacant eyes  
 Your past you hear in his hardened cries  
 The yearnings of his soul you can’t forsake  
 They pulse into you until you wake

His temper flares with vagrant stares  
 Others wonder, you can’t help but already know  
 What has made this tender young boy relinquish control  
 His nights are long with memories strong  
 Of a wandering loss most terribly wrong

He locks his heart and shields his fancy  
 Yet in you he sees a flash of light

In you his tiny encumbered heart can’t help but flicker  
 The hopes of renewed faith  
 In which to bathe his soiled past

How could such a little one know such boundless pain  
 Although you can realize the possibilities  
 Sighing in your own past disdains

For you know his story all too well  
 As it is ingrained I you and this he can tell

So in you he opens his tiny emblazoned heart and a bond is  
 Forged into brilliant flame  
 That only flickered in the start  
 For in your tumultuous past you one could not fully see  
 Through these thickened walls now turned into translucent  
 Windows

Voids of healing light with past shadows cast on history's  
Arduous walls tracing themselves in to  
The light this little one befalls

These dark shadows slowly relinquish the past letting more  
Light within they turn to angel's wings casting  
Their love on time's past spells

Then the true healing grasps firmly  
Casting out the fears that once blanketed you both

Trust confronts calamity and establishes a gentle  
Rapport this is when true healing opens its  
Once shackled door

The journey is hard and many turn in fear  
Yet your souls become one giving strength without jeer

In time the wounds slowly are patched  
With a young boy's heart rendered once again intact

Eyes once empty and covered with fear now glow in trust  
With the imprint of your healing and kindly touch

Now you tread forward with new confidence in your trade  
With comfort in knowing your past had a purpose  
Not meant to be forbade

So in these words I give tribute to you  
With each soul you mend may yours be renewed

You are an artist painting the most important portrait of  
Them all an impervious light shining into one  
Vacant souls

God's speed to you, oh picture of perfect kindness  
Stretch your hear and leave ill pasts behind us  
--Adam Musolino

FGCU Student in counselor Education, September 1998

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Preceding chapters presented a background of the problem to be studied and discussed the current literature related to expressive arts counseling techniques. This chapter presents the methodology for this study. The chapter begins with a description of the design of the study, then continues with a description of the participants, presents data collection procedures, discusses data analysis, and explores the methods of trustworthiness for this study.

#### **Design**

##### **Interpretivism**

A research paradigm was used in conjunction with the methodology as a means to inform the design of the study. Research questions, interview protocols, and data analysis procedures are filtered through a paradigm in order to focus on specific elements to be researched. All qualitative paradigms assume that multiple realities are socially and individually constructed (relativist ontology), the knower and the known are intertwined (transactional epistemology), and assume a dialogic interpretative methodology (Hepper, 2004).

Interpretivism was the research paradigm for this study. Grounded theory contains both positivistic and interpretative elements (Charmaz, 2003). The interpretivist side of grounded theory stresses how people construct actions, meaning, and intentions (Charmaz). The interpretivist researcher seeks to explore how participants make sense of their personal and social world using the meaning participants give to events and experiences (Osborn, 2003). The researcher attempts to learn about the participants' psychological world view for the purpose of understanding the meaning as it is perceived by the participants (Osborn).

“What you see depends on how you look” (Heppner, 2004, pg. 136) is a statement to consider when conducting qualitative research. In order to analyze the data efficiently and with integrity, an interpretative lens was adopted by the researcher. The purpose of this study was to use data collected from high school counselor trainees using expressive arts techniques in a high school setting, specifically, because expressive arts have not been largely studied with this population and setting. Therefore, the interpretative lens was preferred for this study.

### **Qualitative**

This study used qualitative research methodology as the guide for collecting and analyzing data related to high school counselor trainees’ use of expressive arts counseling techniques. The primary researcher selected qualitative research methodology for this study because it is best suited to uncovering meanings people assign to their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is defined as:

A means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data...Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2009, pg. 4).

Qualitative research serves as a narrative of emergent themes based on the researcher’s own disciplined observations (Sutton, 1993). Researchers performing qualitative studies manage

the integrity of the data by maintaining the contextual piece from the analysis process (Sutton, 1993). By doing this, the researcher can feel confident in his/her inductions about the data collected.

Perhaps one of the most important goals of qualitative research is to achieve understanding of the participants, their experiences, and the relationship of the data (Sutton, 1993). A term used to describe this understanding is *verstehen*, which literally means “sympathetic understanding” (Sutton 1993). The achievement of *verstehen* occurs through the relationship which develops between the researcher and the participants. This relationship is a key element in qualitative research.

### **Grounded theory**

Grounded theory was selected as the research design for this study. The purpose of grounded theory is to develop a theoretical analysis of the data that fits the data and has relevance to that particular area of study (Charmaz, 2003, 2005). Fassinger (2005) described grounded theory as “the most influential paradigm for qualitative research in the social sciences” (pg. 156). She continues, “The aim is to produce innovative theory that is grounded in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their lived experiences in a social context” (pg. 157).

The term “grounded theory” refers to both the method and product of inquiry (Charmaz, 2003, 2005). Rather than focusing solely on the results of inquiry, grounded theory focuses on the constant comparison of data and theory for the development of theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2005). The purpose for conducting research on the use of expressive arts counseling techniques was to develop a theory which emerges from the data collected from the participants.

There is currently no theory on this phenomenon; therefore, grounded theory methodology supports the development of the innovative theory.

Grounded theory emerged from sociology work by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s and has since evolved into several traditions (Charmaz, 2003, 2005, 2008). For the purposes of this research, the grounded theory style as outlined by Charmaz (2003, 2005) is utilized. Charmaz's work is the most contemporary form of grounded theory and is the best fit for the questions postulated in this study.

Following Charmaz's form (2003, 2005), grounded theory is creating theoretical categories that are directly grounded in the data. She outlines several tenets, a) minimizing preconceived ideas about the problem, b) using simultaneous data collection and data analysis to inform each other, c) remaining open to varied explanations and/or understanding of the data, d) focusing data analysis to construct middle-range theories (Charmaz, 2005).

### **Role of the researcher**

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is directly related to the data collection and analysis process. The researcher is the meaning making instrument through which the theory, in this case, is developed and shared. It is important for the researcher to remain aware of what he or she brings to the study simply by performing the research. The primary researcher's relationship with the participants, the primary researcher's background, and the primary researcher's competence as a researcher all affects how the study unfolds.

### **Description of the Participants**

For this study, the primary researcher selected participants from a convenient population readily available during the research process. The primary researcher selected master's students completing their school counseling internship in a high school setting during the time of the

study. This sampling method was purposive because the researcher was seeking to understand the experiences of a specific population of counselors and counselor trainees. As mentioned in previous chapters, research on expressive arts techniques with this population is scarce; therefore, data is needed within this specific criterion of participants.

Participants for this study were selected via purposive sampling from convenient populations available to me at the time of the research. Specifically, the researcher sought to select approximately five to ten current high school counselor internship students. The internship students were selected from course enrollment in a school counseling internship course at a Southeastern college. These students were placed in a high school internship setting at the time of the study.

Another criterion for the research participants included: a) successfully completed the course titled “Expressive Arts in Counseling” offered at their current university, or, b) participated in the three-hour orientation to expressive arts counseling techniques offered during the internship course. Previous exposure to the expressive arts allowed the participants to have a base knowledge and experience with these techniques prior to participating in the research. Prior work experience was not considered for participation criterion; however, it was included in the data analysis process.

All participants were given informed consent forms as outlined by the University of Georgia’s IRB guidelines. Participants were permitted to opt-out of participation or choose to leave the research process at any time. After explaining research criteria and offering the opportunity to volunteer in research participation to the counseling internship students, five women participated.



## **Pilot Study**

In a pilot study conducted by the primary researcher in 2009, participants were selected from a convenience sample of current high school counselors. The pilot study was phenomenological in nature. One participant was selected for an individual interview and several were selected as a focus group. All of the participants were working in large high schools (> 1,500 students) in a Southeastern state. A triangulation of the data occurred through the use of a focus group, an individual interview, and exploration of photographs. Incorporation of several data collection methods, triangulation, is a rigorous method to increase validity of the research (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, the primary researcher identified, explored, and bracketed personal biases which may have impeded the research process.

A criterion-sampled homogeneous group available through a colleague provided the focus group participants. High school counselors were purposefully selected as focus group participants to increase dependability and transferability of the findings into other high school counseling settings (Creswell, 2007). The individual interview participant was also conveniently and purposely selected. The third and final form of data collection was photography. Photographs provided an unobtrusive method of data collection. Several photographs of high school counseling offices were taken from two different high schools. Themes and phenomenon identified in the rich pictorial data were explored. The identified themes from the phenomenological pilot study helped inform the design and methodology of the study for the research presented in this paper.

The pilot study yielded several themes related to the process of using of expressive arts counseling techniques in a high school setting. For example, one major theme was a concern that high school counselors do not have enough time to utilize expressive arts techniques.

However, after using the techniques the participants expressed a sense of comfort and belief that the techniques could be implemented in the high school counseling setting. Another identified theme in the pilot study was the resistance to using the techniques. Specifically, in the pilot study, participants expressed a desire to learn more about expressive arts techniques but felt resistant due to lack of materials and proper training. These themes assisted the primary researcher in the development of the primary research question in the research presented in this paper. Additionally, the identified themes from the pilot study also informed the primary researcher in the questions for the semi-structured interviews.

### **Data Collection**

Participants in this study were current counselor trainees completing their internship at a high school. In the beginning of the semester all, of the internship students were provided an orientation in expressive arts counseling techniques. In addition to the three-hour orientation, a current faculty member in the counseling program, whom is also the instructor for the “Expressive Arts in Counseling” course, briefly described expressive arts counseling techniques to the counseling internship students.

Following the brief presentation, all the internship students were informed of this study and the opportunity to participate. Participation criteria was explained to the internship students, specifically, a) intern must have been completing his or her internship in a high school setting during the time of the research, b) intern must have participated in the brief overview of expressive arts, or c) intern must have successfully completed the Expressive Arts in Counseling course. Initial interviews were scheduled according to participant preference within in one week following the signing of the informed consent form.

For this study, the primary researcher conducted individual phone interviews with each of the participants. According to Fassinger (2005) interviewing is the data collection method of choice for a grounded theory study. This study utilized a semi-structured interview protocol. The semi-structured interview addresses four main purposes: a) assists in establishing rapport, b) the order of the questions is less important than in structured interviews, c) the researcher is free to explore areas of interest which may arise, and d) the researcher can follow the participants' lead, provided it is related to the central question (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The semi-structured interview protocol, as described by Creswell (2007), offers the researcher the opportunity to seek answers to specific research questions and still permits room to follow the participant where they need to take the conversation, as it pertains to the research. Therefore, the primary researcher used the protocol as a guideline, but allowed for redirection as the participants' answers guide.

Over the course of the study, three phone interviews were conducted with each of the five participants, resulting in a total of 15 interviews. The first interview occurred after the training in the expressive arts but before the participant(s) utilized an expressive technique in the high school setting. The second interview occurred after two expressive arts sessions had been used by the participant(s). The third interview occurred after all four expressive arts techniques had been used in a session with a high school student.

Although there was not a time-limit to the interviews, each interview lasted no longer than 60 minutes. Allowing the participant to take the data where they need to provides deeper data than would be allowed if there were time constraints (Creswell, 2007). However, it is important to keep the interview structured enough to remain on the research topic. The interviews were digitally recorded using an Olympus WS-100 digital voice recorder. Audio

recordings were stored on a personal computer hard drive for transcription performed by the primary researcher. Interview transcripts were coded according to the coding system as described by Charmaz (2003, 2005). Themes which occurred most often were coded as possible themes and were compared to the larger body of data. The themes which best represented the phenomenon being studied were then identified as either subthemes or major themes, dependant upon the representativeness and influence upon other themes. Participant identities were kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms assigned by the primary researcher.

During the collection process, using the interview data, another component utilized was “memoing” (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). Memoing is the process of the researcher taking field notes describing contextual information about the participants and the interview process. Information included in these memos might include length of interview, environment, any conflicting factors (i.e. interruptions during the interview), or characteristics of the participant not previously noted. Data in the memos is included in the research process as a tool for further data collection and informing the analysis process.

Theoretical sampling was used to develop the final grounded theory of the research. Theoretical sampling incorporates the codes, memos, and additional interviews with participants until saturation has occurred (Charmaz, 2003). All three of these procedures (coding, memoing, and theoretical sampling) are described further in the next section.

### **Data Analysis**

Grounded theory “develops out of the process of systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon” (Heppner & Heppner, 2004, pg. 149). The analysis process is a key element to grounded theory because that is where inferences will be made for the developing theory. In fact, this is described as an advantage of the grounded theory

methodology- researchers can concentrate on examining the data rather than get overwhelmed by procedural guidelines (Heppner & Heppner , 2004).

### **Coding**

The reading and coding of transcripts has been described as a creative process (Peters & Wester, 2007). As the primary researcher listened to the interview recordings and transcribed them into text, while remaining aware of the process and focused on the research questions to be answered. One method of streamlining the process to focus on the purpose of the study is to utilize qualitative data analysis software. The primary researcher transcribed and coded the data with ATLAS.ti (ATLAS.ti GmbH, 2010) software. This software allows the qualitative researcher to easily code, link, and graphically describe the phenomenon being studied.

Transcripts from each of the interviews were reviewed and coded using the aforementioned software. “Coding is the link between collecting data and developing an emergent theme” (Charmaz, 2005, pg. 93). Codes are created by defining trends within the data (Charmaz, 2005). The coding process is both interactive and comparative, allowing the researcher to take the grounded theory process deeper into the phenomenon being explored.

Charmaz (2003) outlined several steps for the coding process. The researcher begins by establishing which codes occur most frequently or appear to be largely significant. Then, looking at the codes, the researcher evaluates which codes best explain the phenomenon. Tentative theoretical categories are formulated next which are then compared against the large body of data. The researcher looks for “carrying capacity”- which codes seem to best carry the weight of the research process (Charmaz, 2003). The codes that provide “analytic momentum” are then used to develop the theoretical categories which are later used for theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2003). Using constant comparative methods, the primary researcher established

distinctions between and among the codes. The relationships identified among the codes provided the researcher with rich data from which the theory was developed.

The graphic description of codes became the visual representation of the grounded theory derived from this study. As the final stage of the data analysis process, the primary researcher created a visual representation via matrices and charts of the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques in the high school setting. The final graphic image of the identified grounded theory is represented as a flowchart defining the three phase process of using expressive arts counseling techniques.

### **Memoing**

After categories were defined the primary researcher memoed ideas in process and in progress (Charmaz, 2003). “Memoing” allows the researcher to explore his or her ideas about the categories which have been defined (Charmaz, 2005). Additionally, memos provide the framework for exploring, checking, and developing ideas (Charmaz 2003).

### **Theoretical Sampling**

Charmaz (2003, 2005) outlined the procedure for theoretical sampling. This step in the grounded theory process takes the categories developed through coding and memoing back to the participants. After initial interviews, participants are asked increasingly focused questions to explore for strength of the categories defined in the data. Through this process the researcher can elaborate the meaning of categories and discover meaning and gaps between them. This process keeps the study grounded in the data.

Theoretical sampling, which is described by Fassinger (2005) to be the hallmark of grounded theory studies, is the process of taking emerging themes to the sample of participants for concurrence. This can also be performed by taking the themes and comparing them to the

transcripts from participant interviews. Any irregularities or incongruence should be further explored or removed from the theory being developed. Theoretical sampling is a method trustworthiness for the qualitative researcher (Fassinger, 2005).

### **Trustworthiness**

The primary researcher addressed the element of trustworthiness through several procedures. The primary researcher worked with the participants for the duration of several months. This length of time allowed for improved rapport between the participants and the primary researcher. Additionally, the primary researcher utilized memoing procedures through the data collection and analysis process which increased the trustworthiness of the research (Charmaz, 2003, 2006; Creswell, 2007, 2009). And, as the interviews were transcribed, the primary researcher utilized member checking to allow the participants the opportunity to clarify what was said during the interview (Creswell, 2007, 2009). Finally, through theoretical sampling, identified themes were compared back to the data as a measure of representativeness (Charmaz, 2003, 2006).

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented the methodology utilized for exploring the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques in a high school counseling setting. Within this chapter was an outline of the design, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and credibility components of the study. The intention with this chapter and the previous chapters as well was to thoroughly discuss the justification of the need for this data to be added to the pool of available literature related to this subject.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

Presented in this chapter are the findings of the study in which qualitative methodology, specifically grounded theory procedures were used. The purpose of the research was to understand the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques as perceived by master's level internship students in a high school setting. Five research questions guided the research:

1. How do high school counselor trainees define expressive arts?
2. What are the implications for using expressive arts techniques as they are perceived by high school counselor trainees?
3. How does the process of using expressive arts techniques develop?
4. What are the developmental implications for the efficacy of expressive arts techniques?
5. How did cross cultural counseling relationships experience the use of expressive arts techniques?

Qualitative research was selected because participants' experiences are used to explore the phenomenon being studied (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). Additionally, as the meaning making instrument, the researcher's background, history, and personal experiences become part of the data analysis process (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative research included a total of 15 phone interviews with five participants. Each participant was interviewed three times; the interviews lasted approximately 50 minutes. All of the interviews were completed between October 2010 and December 2010. The primary researcher recorded and transcribed each



interview. Transcripts were analyzed using ATLAS.ti software. Participants were given a copy of their transcripts for member checking (Charmaz, 2006).

This qualitative study utilized grounded theory methodology. The goal of grounded theory is to construct theories grounded in research data (Charmaz, 2006). The methods of grounded theory involve systematic yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data for the purpose of developing a theory around the phenomenon being studied. The grounded theorist tries to learn what the participants' lives are like and understand the setting in which the studied phenomenon occurs (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout the research process data was reviewed and compared to transcripts. Additionally, interview protocols were flexible to allow the participants to share their experiences in a focused yet individual manner.

This chapter begins with a description of each of the five participants. Each participant was given a pseudonym and identifying information was removed. Table 4.1 displays participant descriptions; participants are listed in alphabetical order by their pseudonym. Following a description of the participants is a discussion of the substantive theory which was identified in this study. A visual representation of the theory is included as well.

### **Participant Description**

*Table 4.1*

Participant Descriptions

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Name	Sex	Ethnicity	Age	Expressive arts training
Angela	F	African American	52	Three-hour training
Brandi	F	Caucasian	23	Three-hour training
Kim	F	Caucasian	26	Three-hour training and expressive arts course

Tammy	F	Asian	26	Three-hour training and expressive arts course
Tysh	F	Caucasian	25	Three-hour training

### **Angela**

Angela is a 52-year old African-American female. Angela grew up in the Northeast region of the United States and now lives in the South. She is a mother and a grandmother. Although her undergraduate degree was Psychology, Angela's previous work experience was in the field of computer science. After spending time in this career Angela made the decision to enter a School Counseling master's program to become a school counselor.

At the time of this research Angela was completing her internship in what she described as an "affluent" high school. She described this high school as a fairly large school consisting of mostly Caucasian students and approximately 25% Asian students making up the largest minority group. Angela works with students in all grade levels at the high school for mostly academic reasons.

Angela's experience with expressive arts counseling techniques was the three-hour training offered in her internship course during the Fall 2010 semester. She had not utilized these techniques before and was apprehensive about using them in a high school setting. Angela said "I really don't see how expressive arts apply to high school students." She was concerned that high schools students would think the techniques of expressive arts were too juvenile.

Angela defined expressive arts as "students using different techniques to express their feelings and to talk about what is going on in their lives. Examples would be art, through books, or drama. Expressive arts include non-verbal ways that students express themselves." She had

used these techniques in a middle school before (i.e. drama), but said the middle school students felt “weird” about the techniques.

Prior to using the techniques with high school aged students, Angela said “I’m hesitant to use expressive arts with high school aged students. I can see how it would be useful for younger students, but not older students.” Angela appeared to feel as though students might react negatively of her and the techniques. She said “Students might think that I don’t need to read to them and that I am treating them like a little kid.”

It seemed as though Angela was not interested in the techniques or the research based upon her interview. When asked what techniques she planned to use first, Angela remarked that she hadn’t thought about it or planned anything. This lack of preparation was a symptom of Angela’s self-proclaimed apprehension to using the techniques with high school aged students. Through further discussion she selected art and music as the techniques to use first.

Angela forgot about our second interview; however, was agreeable to being interviewed at our scheduled time. Again, this appeared to be a symptom of her apprehension. For the researcher, it not only felt as though she was resistant to the use of expressive arts techniques, but resistant to the research process itself. This was noted in the research memo following the second interview with Angela, as seen in Figure 4.1.

*Figure 4.1*

## Memo from Angela's second interview

Although our second interview was scheduled at an agreed-upon time, Angela said she forgot. The interview had an awkward start. I feel as though Angela is still feeling apprehensive to expressive arts and this research.

The second interview was scheduled to occur after Angela had completed two of the four expressive arts techniques required in this study. Angela, however, had actually completed three: art, music, and drama. Her feeling about how the high school students worked with these techniques was varied. The art technique was the Rosebush Fantasy technique (Allan, 1988). When asked about this technique, Angela said "It was good." Angela used the Rosebush Fantasy technique with two female students. Angela said the students took their time in the drawing portion and explained what each element in the picture meant. However, Angela shared her feelings of discomfort with the technique. She said, "It felt weird to say the script that goes along with the Rosebush Fantasy technique. It felt strange."

Angela used the music technique with a small group of students in a computer class. She played a piece of music and asked the students to write down thoughts as they were listening. Although the students described the song selection as "girly," both the girls and boys participated and responded positively. Angela said the students were "responsive." She did not read what the students wrote, but shared that one of the boys told the group he had written something "personal."

For the drama technique Angela chose a female student who she described as “dramatic.” The student wrote and read a script about her recent move to the United States. Angela said this experience went well but that it did not occur as Angela had expected. Angela said she was a little frustrated because the student “read the script instead of acting it out.”

At this point in the research process Angela said she was feeling more comfortable with expressive arts techniques but still not confident with the Rosebush Fantasy technique. Angela said a positive aspect of the expressive arts was that it offered a “different way for students to express themselves and his or her feelings.” It appeared as though Angela’s initial resistance was starting to fade and was being replaced with confidence in herself and the techniques.

Angela utilized literature as her final technique for the study. She read a book to a male and female student and asked them to write personal reflections related to the book. She said both students were “responsive” and offered good responses in his and her writing portion. At her final interview Angela conceded that she was surprised by how much she enjoyed using the expressive arts techniques. She said “Doing these techniques was better than I expected.” She specifically remarked on her opinion about using literature with high school aged students. She said “Initially I didn’t see how I could use children’s books with high school students, but I changed my opinion. Of all the techniques we used, the one I would mostly likely use again in the future is literature.”

Of all the participants, Angela appeared to have the greatest amount of shift in her opinion of expressive arts techniques with high school aged students. In the beginning she was apprehensive and even resistant at times. By the end of the process, however, Angela was endorsing the use of expressive arts counseling techniques. Throughout the research process Angela frequently emailed me to ask clarifying questions about the techniques and often asked

for additional resources. Angela communicated with me the most out of all five participants. It was interesting to watch her develop and work through the phases of using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students.

Angela described the high school where she was completing her internship as being more culturally diverse than the high school she attended. The students Angela worked with during this research included various cultures, some with similar ethnicity as Angela. Throughout the interviews, Angela never commented on how cross-cultural counseling relationships occurred in her experience. Cultural and/or ethnicity were not used as selection criteria when choosing the students to work with through expressive arts.

### **Brandi**

Brandi is a 23 year-old Caucasian female. She was born and raised in the South. Brandi completed her undergraduate degree and went directly into the school counseling master's degree program. During her academic ambitions Brandi held several part-time jobs. Some of her work experience included working with students with disabilities.

During the research Brandi was completing her high school counseling internship requirements at a relatively small high school. Among the participants' internship placements, Brandi's was the smallest high school. She described this high school as "not very diverse." The student population consisted of mostly Caucasian students from middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. Brandi worked with students from all grade levels in the high school for mostly academic reasons.

Brandi's experience with expressive arts was the three-hour training offered during the Fall 2010 semester in her internship course. Related to the expressive arts was Brandi's personal experience with expressive techniques. She shared her training in dance and personal interest in

music as she was growing up. Brandi reflected how much dance and music helped her during stressful and difficult times. When asked how she felt about using expressive arts techniques with high school students, Brandi stated she was “excited to see how expressive arts work and how the students respond.” She said she was ready for a different technique to use with the students because she had already gotten “into a routine of sitting down and talking.”

The first two techniques Brandi used were literature and the Rosebush Fantasy technique. She selected a male student for the literature technique because he seemed to be “a good listener.” Brandi read a children’s story to the student as he drew and wrote what came to mind as he was listening. Brandi stated “I am happy; it went well.” She said the student took the technique seriously and had insightful thoughts about his life.

Brandi selected a different male student for the Rosebush Fantasy technique. In her words, “I really enjoyed the parallel of the questions and asking about his character as the rosebush. I loved it!” Brandi described the student’s energy in his drawing and said he took a lot of time to complete his picture. He discussed the components of the picture as it related to the technique. Her emotion when describing her feelings related to this experience was full of excitement. Figure 4.2 shows the drawing completed by the student.

*Figure 4.2*

Rosebush Fantasy drawing by a male high school aged student



Brandi reflected on the process of using expressive arts during our second interview. She shared that her opinion of expressive arts had changed because she had become more comfortable with the techniques. Brandi said “I am feeling more comfortable with expressive arts and how it fits into counseling.” Her biggest challenge she said, at this point, was finding a way to introduce the techniques to the students.

For our third interview Brandi discussed her use of music and drama. She selected female students for both techniques. When discussing the music technique, Brandi encountered difficulty accessing websites that played music which were not blocked by the school’s internet protections. She was able to find a classical piece of music, which she played for the student. As the student listened to the music she was asked to write down thoughts openly and freely.

Despite struggles accessing the musical selection, Brandi felt this technique was well received by the students and she was comfortable facilitating the activity. Her student reflected



on choices she and her family had made related to health and future successes. The student was insightful about what control she had in her life and what she could change to make a new direction for herself. Brandi described the process positively and shared new knowledge about the student unrelated to academics.

The drama technique was also received positively by the students and Brandi felt comfortable utilizing this expressive art. Brandi selected a female student who she described as being dramatic. The student acted out a moment when she was in contact with law enforcement. Brandi said the technique worked well; the students and Brandi were receptive and open to the experience. She said, "It was similar to what we do normally do anyway." She further explained that the drama technique didn't feel drastically different from interactions with students she already experienced. Working through concerns in an expressive and dramatic way felt "natural" to Brandi.

Looking back on the process of using the expressive arts with high school aged students, Brandi stated "I am more willing to use these techniques. Experiencing these techniques made me realize it doesn't always have to be structured or planned. I can do it spontaneously [without much planning]. I believe it works well with high school aged students." Brandi said what helped her most was experiencing the techniques rather than anticipating them. Her final thought was "I am signed up to take the Expressive Arts in Counseling course. I am itching for more."

Brandi shared her thoughts about cross-cultural implications for expressive arts. She said the high school where she completed her internship is not culturally diverse. However, she explained that the population of the students she worked with was diverse. She said, "I work with students from different racial groups and different socio-economic backgrounds." Brandi

believed “using expressive arts had a positive effect” on her counseling relationship with students from different cultural backgrounds. She also added, “Expressive arts are universal and appropriate for students of all social groups, which is a huge benefit.”

### **Kim**

Kim is a 26-year old Caucasian female born and raised in the South. Kim has previous work experience in the marketing industry. She decided to change careers so she entered the master’s of School Counseling degree program.

Kim’s completed her high school counseling internship during the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters at a high school in an upper-middle-class community. The school’s website describes the community as “predominantly college-educated, high income professional and business leaders.” The school did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) during the 2009-2010 academic year. Most of students Kim counsels are referred for academic reasons.

Kim had completed the Expressive Arts in Counseling course while completing her School Counseling practicum. Additionally, Kim participated in the three-hour training offered during the School Counseling internship course. Although she described her personal experience with expressive arts as “relaxing and calming,” she was nervous about using expressive arts techniques with high school aged students. She felt that high school students might feel the techniques were “elementary.”

Kim began the process of using expressive arts techniques with the music and drama techniques. Kim selected sophomores for both techniques. For the music technique Kim selected a male who had shown an interest in music before. The student had not heard the song Kim selected, and this made Kim feel uncomfortable with the technique. Although Kim stated “the student seemed really comfortable with the music,” she said “I wasn’t comfortable with a

song he didn't know." She shared her concern that the student may not relate to the song without a sense of familiarity. Later in the interview, however, Kim said "I believe the music technique was really helpful for the student. It was definitely helpful using a song he hadn't heard before because he had to listen to the lyrics."

A sophomore female was selected for the drama technique. Kim said the selected student had some family changes recently which she felt the student needed to discuss. The student didn't write a script but rather talked through various characters in her story. Kim said she couldn't fully assess how comfortable the student was with the technique. She said, "She kept falling out of character; I don't know how comfortable she was doing the drama technique." However, later in the interview, Kim shared "I think it was helpful because the student was able to see her situation from a different perspective." Kim felt the insight gained from viewing the situation from various positions was a positive experience for the student. When discussing her own comfort, Kim said "I was fine with the drama technique. I felt comfortable with it."

The last two techniques Kim utilized were the literature and Rosebush Fantasy technique. Kim had noticed one of her ninth grade students gravitating toward books in the office when she would come in for counseling. Kim thought this technique would be a good match. The student was described as someone who likes to talk about her family and personal life. The technique was well received by the student. Kim said the student liked the technique and seemed very comfortable. Kim also felt comfortable using the technique but wondered "how the technique would work with a non-verbal student."

Kim worked with an eleventh grade female student for the Rosebush Fantasy technique. Kim initially felt the technique didn't go well because the student drew a picture of a dream she had the previous night rather than drawing a rosebush as the technique prescribes. However,

after further discussion, Kim saw the insight from the student and felt she learned more about her. Kim remarked that the technique “was a relaxation method at first.” She felt the student “could benefit from learning more relaxation techniques to help her with her test anxiety.”

In her final reflection upon the process of using expressive arts techniques with high school aged students, Kim shared “Expressive arts is counseling. It is something high school students are comfortable using. After using these techniques I feel reassured expressive arts works with high school students.”

### **Tammy**

Tammy is a 26-year old Asian female. Tammy grew up in the South, completed her undergraduate degree at a Midwest university, and has returned to the South to complete her master’s degree.

Tammy completed her school counseling internship at a high school in an affluent community. The student population at this high school consisted of approximately 95% Caucasian students from upper-middle class families. Tammy described the high school as “high achieving.” Students are referred to the counseling department for mostly academic reasons.

Tammy’s experience with expressive arts includes completion of the Expressive Arts in Counseling course and the three-hour training offered in her counseling internship course during the Fall 2010 semester. Tammy described her personal experience with expressive arts as feeling “uncomfortable with some of the techniques” but she was comfortable with others. When discussing her participation in the research, Tammy said that using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students was what caused her to feel nervous about participating. She said she felt “apprehensive” about using expressive arts techniques, especially with male students. Tammy believed female students would be more receptive to expressive

techniques and would be more verbal. Tammy shared she was unsure why she believed there might be a difference between males and females. Her explanation was that it was a “feeling” she had, although she did not know why she held this opinion. Tammy believed males felt a general lack of interest in school and would be unresponsive to expressive arts.

For the first two techniques Tammy selected an eleventh grade female student for the drama technique and a different female student for the Rosebush Fantasy technique. The student selected for the drama technique was referred to the counseling department for academic reasons. This student was at a point where she needed to pull her grades up but didn’t know what she needed to do. Tammy helped this student role play a conversation with a teacher to ask what steps she would need to take to improve her grades. They practiced the conversation a few times; Tammy felt the experience helped the student prepare for her difficult conversation with her teacher.

Tammy’s experience with the Rosebush Fantasy technique resonated most with the primary researcher during reflection upon the research. Tammy selected a 17-year old ninth grade student whom had been referred by her teachers for counseling to help improve her motivation. This student had poor grades and showed a lack of interest in improving. Tammy described this student as being “non-verbal about her feelings and what she needs.”

The excitement behind Tammy’s words as she described what occurred during the technique was incredible. Tammy said the student spent a significant amount of time drawing her picture, paying attention to detail, and using color intentionally. When describing her drawing, the student said “the drawing is crazy and I feel my life is crazy.” The student continued her description by explaining to Tammy why she selected specific colors and placements. The description the student shared was insightful and detailed. The student

explained the black roses in her picture represented her; she felt uninteresting and lacking vibrancy. The student added colorful flowers, in reds and pinks, to represent the people in her life who are positive influences. Tammy was impressed by the verbal abilities of the student. Tammy said “I have never heard this student talk so much before. I have never seen so much emotion from her. It was great!” Tammy felt she learned a lot from the student and their connection grew tremendously.

The last two techniques Tammy used were literature and music. Tammy selected a student dealing with the loss of her mother for the literature technique. Tammy asked the student if she would be open to reading a book together; the student refused. Despite refusing to read a book the mere mention of literature led to a conversation about what the student likes (video games) and why she prefers these games over books. The conversation included elements of her family and recent personal loss. Although Tammy had intended on reading a book with this student, she felt that the experience was positive even without doing the technique as planned.

For the music technique Tammy selected the student she worked with for the Rosebush Fantasy technique. Tammy played a song for the student while the student drew pictures. The student was not verbal about her drawing; she had limited explanations for what she drew. Tammy felt, however, that the technique was well received because the student took her time drawing the picture with detail and purpose.

Tammy felt her opinion of expressive arts techniques changed throughout the process. She shared that in the beginning she was “uncertain about how older students would react” but soon gained comfort and confidence in the utility of expressive arts. Tammy shared “Expressive arts is definitely something I can add to my toolbox of techniques.”

Tammy completed her internship in a high school with little cultural diversity. However, Tammy commented that every student she worked with during this research was of a different culture than her own. She discussed her feelings about cross-cultural implications for expressive arts counseling by saying, “I do think cross-culture relationships play a role in using expressive arts with students of a different culture from your own because the counselor needs to gain an understanding of the student's comfort level or flexibility with expressive arts and how the student's culture plays a role in that.” She shared her own sensitivity to cultural needs, “I am always initially hesitant when using techniques other than talk therapy because I don’t know how accepting the student or the student’s culture would accept alternate forms of counseling.” Tammy endorsed the use of expressive for all students, but highlighted the need to be sensitive to a student’s culture related to the particular technique selected.

### **Tysh**

Tysh is a 25-year old Caucasian female from the South. Her undergraduate degree was in a business related field. Her professional experience included working for a non-profit agency and assistantship opportunities at the university where she was earning her master’s degree.

Tysh was placed in a large, middle-upper class high school for her school counseling internship. This high school was the largest of the high schools among research participants. Tysh worked with all grade level students for mostly academic reasons. During her first research interview, Tysh acknowledged that although most of her students are referred for academic reasons, there are usually underlying concerns.

Tysh’s prior experience with expressive arts was exposure to the techniques during her School Counseling practicum, in an elementary school, and participation in the three-hour training offered in her School Counseling internship course. Tysh shared that she initially did

not feel comfortable using the techniques with elementary school students. When asked how she felt about using expressive arts techniques with high school aged students, Tysh confided “I think the students will not be open to using these techniques initially.”

Tysh selected the music and drama techniques as her first two expressive arts for the process. The same sophomore female was selected for both the techniques, each utilized at a different time. For the music technique, Tysh played a song and allowed the student to write down thoughts as she listened. Tysh felt the student was hesitant to talk about what she felt while listening to the song. The student asked several questions about the song, the lyrics, and the band, but didn’t share much about personal reflections.

The drama technique went better for Tysh as she worked with the same student. The student and Tysh role-played a conversation the student wanted to have with her father about a recent discipline issue. Tysh said she personally felt comfortable doing this technique with the student and said the student “really got into it.” The student was highly engaged in the activity and seemingly allowed herself to fully experience the conversation practiced through the dramatic technique. However, Tysh still shared a sense of being uncomfortable in general with expressive arts techniques at this point in the research. She said “these techniques are different; we had never done this before and that felt uncomfortable.”

By the third and final interview Tysh shared “I feel better about expressive arts now that I have used four techniques. I was nervous before I used these techniques because I thought high school aged students might think they were reverting back to elementary school.” The final two techniques Tysh utilized were the Rosebush Fantasy technique and literature. Tysh selected a male sophomore student for the Rosebush technique. This student was anticipating a move to



live with a relative and discussed this as he described his drawing. Tysh saw similarities between how the student described his drawing and how he typically talks about life events.

The literature technique was utilized with a female sophomore. Tysh read a children's story to the student and followed up with questions relating the story to the student's current situation with peers. Tysh felt the student didn't have the developmental ability to think abstractly about the story as it could relate to her life. Tysh felt that with more experience she would be able to develop better questions.

Tysh began the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students resistant and unsure about the efficacy of these techniques with this population specifically. With experience and practice, however, Tysh felt her comfort level increase. Tysh eventually shared her belief in the use of expressive arts techniques with high school aged students. She said, "These techniques can be used with high school aged students. It may not always go as expected, but you can make it your own, and use it as a different method to counsel students."

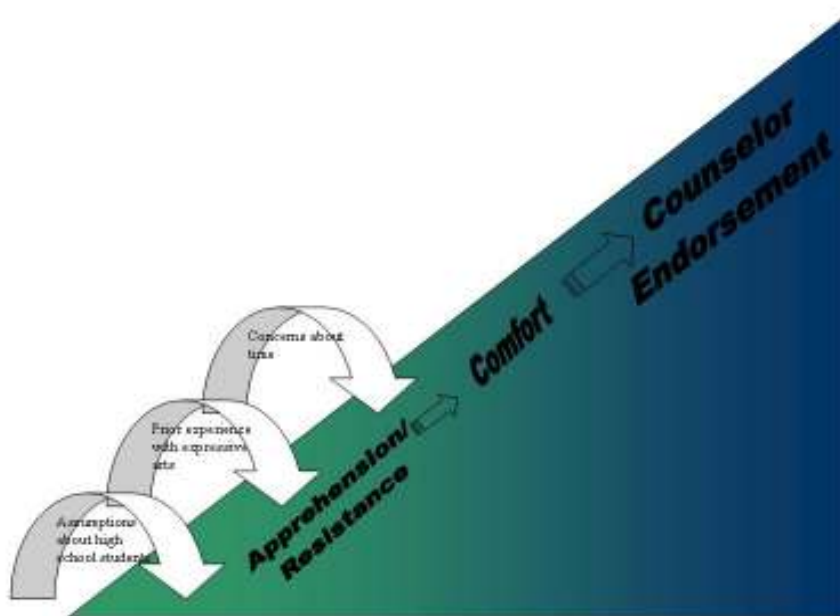
Tysh believed expressive arts techniques could be utilized with students from all cultures. She did not share any reservations about using the techniques with students from cultures different than the counselors'. Tysh noted that she felt cultural differences may affect a student's comfort not only with expressive arts but with counseling in general. When discussing cross-cultural implications she said, "I think that cultural differences may have played a role in how students accepted the expressive arts techniques." Tysh believed that some cultures have counseling in their communities, while other cultures are not as accepting of helping professions. Because of these different cultural norms, Tysh believed using expressive arts with students from different cultural backgrounds would result in different outcomes.

### Discussion of Themes and Subthemes

The purpose of this study was to understand the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students. Grounded theory methodology guided this study. Grounded theory analysis identified distinct phases in the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques, as depicted in Figure 4.3. Each participant processed through the phases and had varying influencing factors related to their transitions between phases.

*Figure 4.3*

Theory of the Use of Expressive Arts



In order to participate in the study, participants were required to be high school counseling internship students having either a) successful completion of the “Expressive Arts in Counseling” course or b) participation in the brief overview of expressive arts offered to the master’s students. Initially six females and one male volunteered. One female ceased to

continue communication with the researcher and one male declined to participate because he felt he would not be available for the required interviews. The final participant pool consisted of five female volunteers.

Findings from the data revealed three major themes, or phases, with several subthemes. The three major themes took the form of phases in the process of using expressive arts techniques with high school aged students, as it was experienced by counseling internship students. The subthemes acted as influencing factors to the phases in the process. The three phases are: a) Phase 1: Apprehension/Resistance, b) Phase 2: Comfort, and c) Phase 3: Counselor Endorsement. The “Apprehension/Resistance” phase has three subthemes: a) Assumptions About High School Students, b) Concerns About Time, and c) Prior Experience with Expressive Arts. The remaining themes, “Comfort” and “Counselor Endorsement” do not have subthemes. Table 4.2 shows the themes and their corresponding description.

*Table 4.2*

Themes Identified in the Process of Using Expressive Arts Counseling Techniques in High School

Major Theme	Subtheme	Description
Apprehension/Resistance	Assumptions about high school students	Beliefs that students would reject expressive arts techniques because the techniques are “stupid” or “silly”
	Concerns about time	Concern that techniques would take too long to perform; not enough time with each student; “someone” might say something about length of time

	Prior experience with expressive arts	Coursework; three-hour training; personal use
Comfort		Gathering materials; familiarity with technique; student selection  Use of technique went well; student perceived to enjoy it; counselor relaxed and became comfortable
Counselor Endorsement		Increased understanding of techniques via research; gathering materials; increased understanding of link between technique and student needs; participants felt expressive arts techniques are appropriate in high school

### **Apprehension/Resistance**

This phase can best be described by the presence of apprehension and resistance within the counselor trainee. This feeling was attributed to a lack of experience using the expressive arts with high school aged students. For some the lack of experience was felt in comparison to previous experience with a younger population. For others, the lack of experience was felt because expressive arts techniques had not been used prior to this research. Each participant was able to define expressive arts, so there as an understanding as to the meaning of the techniques. However, the application of these techniques with high school students seemed to be where participants became unsure and resistant. Participants expressed interest in the techniques and talked about the use of expressive arts techniques in elementary school settings. Two participants took the application further by discussing the possibility of using these techniques in middle school settings. However, when the discussion turned to using expressive arts techniques with high school aged students, participants talked about feelings of apprehension and resistance.

Through their discussions it appeared as a concern over developmental level and the appropriateness of these techniques with students in their adolescent years.

Several subthemes were identified as influencing factors in the “Apprehension/Resistance” phase. The subthemes identified in the “Apprehension/Resistance” phase were related to: a) assumptions about high school students, b) concerns about not having enough time in the schedule to utilize expressive arts techniques, and c) prior experience with expressive arts.

During the first interview, each participant described a feeling of apprehension, or what some described as “resistance,” toward using expressive arts techniques with high school aged students. For some participants the feeling of apprehension or resistance faded by the time the second interview occurred. The second interview was required after the participants completed two of the four exemplified techniques in the study.

Several participants were open to trying the techniques while others were openly doubtful of the efficacy expressive arts had with high school aged students. Kim had entered the research with a solid knowledge base of expressive arts. Kim had taken the Expressive Arts in Counseling course and had participated in the three-hour training; she was familiar with the techniques and how to use them. However, her previous experience had only included elementary school aged students. Kim simply stated “I don’t know how expressive arts will work with high school students.”

Another participant, Angela had only the three-hour training as her exposure to the expressive arts. Other than drawing with elementary students during her practicum experience, Angela had not used these techniques with any students prior to the study. Angela expressed her

feelings about the appropriateness of expressive arts techniques with high school students. She shared:

I don't see how expressive arts techniques could be useful for high school students. I don't see how it applies to older kids. I am trying to figure out how I am going to get [high school students] to read. I just don't see reading to them; that's why I'm hesitant. I can't see reading to them in a group. I could see little kids liking it, but with older kids you have to be more innovative. It would be different with high school aged students.

Tysh talked about being personally interested in the expressive arts but hesitant about high school students accepting her use of the expressive arts. Like Angela, Tysh had completed the three-hour training offered during the Fall 2010 semester. Tysh had seen expressive arts used with elementary school students during her practicum and had utilized expressive arts with elementary school aged students as well. However, Tysh was concerned about the use of these techniques with older students. Tysh stated,

I never considered expressive arts as a part of counseling before. I was resistant to using these techniques. I have used the techniques before in an elementary school but I have never done it at the high school. I don't know how the high school students will respond if I show them a children's book and I am nervous about how the students will respond to me using techniques other than just talking through something.

Tammy had completed the Expressive Arts in Counseling course and the three-hour training. However, she had only used the techniques with younger students. She was not comfortable with the techniques with high school students. Tammy conceded "I had to push myself to use these techniques because I was not comfortable with them. I have never done them in a high school."

Another participant, Brandi, displayed apprehension in a different area. Brandi had previous experience in her own life with expressive techniques. Brandi grew up using dance and music as emotional outlets. Her apprehension wasn't necessarily with the techniques but rather with her own ability to use them correctly. Brandi expressed this apprehension when she stated "I am worried that I won't know how to select the activities to use."

### **Assumptions about high school students.**

Participants discussed assumptions about high school students. This subtheme relates directly to assumptions participants made about high school students' opinion of expressive arts. Some participants were concerned the high school students wouldn't accept the expressive arts. Angela shared, "I can see how expressive arts can be helpful with younger students, but I don't see how they apply to high school students. I think high school students will think it is weird." Kim shared similar feelings about how high school students will feel about expressive arts. Kim stated, "I am wondering how resistant the kids are going to be to [expressive arts]; if they are going to think it is elementary."

Several participants felt boys might respond differently to the techniques than the girls. Tammy shared her thoughts about gender differences as they are related to the use of expressive arts. She shared,

I just don't know how the students will react and respond, especially the males. I think the girls might be more responsive or willing to try something. But, I think the guys I have seen seem very "too cool for school." It is like boys think they can sit there and not do anything other than talk.

All four of Tammy's students were female. Tammy reflected upon this and said including only females was unintentional. She further explored this by sharing that when she originally thought

of expressive arts techniques she pictured only female students, although she couldn't delineate her reasons for this opinion.

Brandi confided that when she initially thought of which students she would use for these techniques she had thought of only using girls. Her initial thought was that girls would fit with the techniques better. However, after learning more about the techniques Brandi shifted her thinking to include boys as a viable option as well. Brandi eventually selected two male and two female as her students for the four expressive arts counseling techniques.

#### **Concerns about time/schedule.**

One of the identified subthemes highlights participants' concerns about not having enough time to use expressive arts techniques with the students. The participants felt the techniques would take too long given the limited amount of time given to each student. However, every participant admitted that nobody had actually challenged the length of time spent with each student.

Angela said she struggled with the amount of time needed to perform the drama technique. She shared, "I didn't feel I had enough time. I was watching the clock while the student was working; I was worried her schedule wouldn't allow for enough time to work on the technique."

When discussing perceptions about the amount of time needed for expressive arts techniques, Tysh expressed, "[Expressive arts] is definitely time consuming. [Supervisors] would be worried because we schedule students in 15-minute blocks."

Tammy spoke about one of the techniques specifically, the Rosebush Fantasy Technique (Allan, 1988). When asked about possible barriers she might face when implementing the expressive arts techniques, Tammy stated, "Time. For instance, the Rosebush Technique, just



because that one takes so long. I would feel uncomfortable pulling students out for that long.” She also shared her concerns about this student not having enough time in her schedule to explore personal talents and interests; Tammy learned through the Rosebush Fantasy Technique that the student was artistic and might benefit from art classes at school.

Brandi expressed concern that the limited amount of time students have to spend with a counselor prevents the student from accessing deeper feelings. She stated, “[Students’] schedules are packed and they are so busy, I don’t think they even take the time to just get into feelings or to find out how something makes them feel...” Brandi believed time “could be a barrier for the Rosebush Fantasy Technique” for some students. The school Brandi was working in had block scheduling, which allowed for more time to work with students. However, Brandi acknowledged that for schools not using a block schedule finding time in the schedule to perform expressive arts counseling techniques would be a “barrier.”

#### **Prior experience with expressive arts.**

Although participants had to meet criteria related to prior experience with expressive arts in order to participate in this study, variations still existed among the participants. Some participants had completed a course in expressive arts while others had participated in the three-hour training provided prior to the study. The participants’ prior experience seemed to influence how they felt prior to using expressive arts with high school students. Participants who experienced expressive arts prior to the study were less apprehensive than participants who had exposure without experience.

Brandi had not only learned about expressive arts through college experiences but shared stories about her own personal use of expressive arts during her childhood and adolescence. Brandi expressed,

I used dance for healing; I did it all my life including in high school. It helped with just having a busy day at school; it was nice to not have to think about anything. I could just dance and be free and move. I always felt better after I danced.

Brandi's familiarity with expressive arts and positive personal experiences helped her feel receptive to the use of these techniques. She showed apprehension only when conceptualizing expressive arts techniques with high school aged students specifically. Brandi moved quickly from a) Apprehension/resistance into b) Comfort because of her prior experiences with expressive arts.

Tysh's experience with expressive arts was observing and using these techniques during her school counseling practicum in an elementary and her participation in the three-hour orientation to expressive arts. Her position was not grounded in actual use but rather in her exposure to the expressive arts. Tysh stated, "It could be more successful with students if I'm more open to it." Tysh shared that she had not considered expressive arts techniques as counseling techniques. She further explained she was apprehensive about the use of expressive arts with high school aged students because she had not been exposed to this experience prior to participating in the study. Tysh shared, "I am not sure how high school students will accept expressive arts."

### **Comfort**

This phase became evident when participants began using the word "comfortable" in their description of the experience when using expressive arts. The participants entered this phase in different manners. Some participants were quite comfortable with the techniques, but not with themselves. Brandi, for example, was comfortable with the techniques because she had

utilized them in her own life. However, she was not confident in her own ability to lead the activities and she was unsure how high school aged students would accept the techniques.

Other participants gained a sense of comfort as they gained experience. After using two of the four techniques prescribed in this study, the participants began to expand upon their comfort levels with expressive arts. Some of the participants became energized by the experience of using expressive arts with high school students. Phrases such as “I loved it!” and “It was great!” were expressed during the interviews. Brandi stated, “I am itching for more.” Previous concerns about what high school students might think about the expressive arts waned after the techniques were utilized. Kim shared, “I wasn’t sure how expressive arts could be used with high school aged students. But, now that I have used the techniques, I am more comfortable.” Tysh stated, “I will get increasingly comfortable as I practice the techniques.” Tammy said, “ I was hesitant about using these techniques because I was unsure about the students’ reaction. Now that I have used the techniques, and the students have been receptive, I feel good about using them.”

As the participants began to use and gain comfort with the expressive arts techniques preparation appeared as a factor. The participants discussed material selection and student selection as ways in which they prepared for the techniques. Preparation seemingly provided a sense of structure and confidence in what was described as a “different” way of working with students. Tammy stated, “I enjoyed using a technique that was different from typical talk therapy. Having a different technique helped the students talk about their problems in a new way.” Emails from participants were commonly related to preparation and wanting to structure the activities correctly.

Tysh approached the techniques by selecting a student and then choosing a medium which seemed to appeal to the student's interests. Having this structure and control over the expressive art technique seemed to help Tysh feel comfortable. Tysh described her use of music,

I used both [drama and music] with the same student. She is a sophomore. I've seen her before and I also see her sister, so I know about family dynamics. She has normal developmental "teenage angst" going on. Every time I meet with her the presenting problem changes. I have seen her probably every other week throughout the entire semester. I selected an Avett Brothers song for the music technique. I chose this particular song because it describes a lot of the same things she talks about. For example, the world doesn't understand what you are going through; one of the lyrics talks about freeing a bird from a cage. When I first heard the song I was thinking it was perfect for the student because it was what she described to me. I told her a little bit about the technique and that sometimes words aren't enough when you are talking about things that you are going through. I gave her a piece of paper to write down thoughts as she listened to the song. I also showed her the music video on a website. She said she liked the experience and asked several questions about the music and the song specifically.

Brandi also talked about preparing for the music technique. She was frustrated because she wasn't able to access online resources. Brandi stated, "I was irritated because my school has everything blocked, so none of the sites that play music will work. I will have to bring in a laptop, which is fine, but it is frustrating." Brandi eventually selected a song simply because she could access it via the work computers. Brandi chose the student for this technique after meeting with her several times. Brandi described the session by saying,

I did it with a girl who I meet with weekly. I have met with her before. I picked classical music because that was the only website I could open on my computer. Looking for music on sites I could access was a struggle. The classical music ended up working well.

In addition to preparation, participants' perceptions of how well the expressive arts techniques occurred appeared to influence their comfort. As participants utilized the techniques, they reflected on not only their own personal experiences but their perceptions of how the students' experience went as well. There were some instances when the technique did not work as expected. However, even in these instances the experience was seen as positive by the participants. For example, Brandi stated, "Reading the book with the student did not go as I expected. However, I ended up learning additional information about the student's experiences because she discussed her disinterest in reading to her interest in video games."

Kim, another participant, also reflected on her student's experience and how it affected her comfort. When talking about her experience with a male student and the music technique, Kim said,

He seemed comfortable listening to the song, especially since he hadn't heard the selection before; he had to listen to the lyrics and pay attention to the music with focus. He seemed responsive to music and he had told me he liked to listen to music to calm him down. The music technique was a positive experience for him and I enjoyed being a part of that.

Kim continued by describing her experience with a female student and the drama technique. The student's mother recently left to serve in the military, leaving her father to act as a single parent in the home. Kim described the session with this student as,

The drama was helpful for this student because she already talks a lot. Maybe looking at it from someone else's perspective might be a change for her. Through the drama experience, she saw her problem from a different perspective. She saw that her dad has a lot on his plate, a single parent, having to do all of the work until her mom comes back. I really like the expressive arts; I am interested in the next two [techniques] to see how it works with some of the high schoolers.

Brandi selected a male student and matched him with the bibliotherapy technique. Brandi had previously expressed some concern about how male high school students might accept expressive arts techniques. She clearly had a positive experience despite her reservations going into the technique. Brandi explained,

I did it with a student who had left our school previously but had recently returned. He is trying to get back in the right path; he is trying to clean up his act. We were talking about future goals together and how he has gotten different friends and how they motivate him, and how he wants to enlist in the military. I read to him "Oh the Places You'll Go." He had been doodling beforehand, and continued to doodle as I read the story to him. Occasionally, he would look up at the pictures, then return to his drawing. He made a few comments about the paths you can take and how right now he is trying to pick out a different path for himself and how he can finish high school. We talked about how he was doing it.

Continuing with the same student, Brandi tried the Rosebush Fantasy technique (Allan, 1988). She described it by saying,

I loved doing it! I had no idea how it was going to go. I picked a student who was really energetic and we talked about his family and other things. He has an artistic side, so I

knew he would enjoy the drawing piece. We did it, and he got into it. He worked on his rosebush for probably 15 minutes. He did an elaborate pencil drawing. And, as I was asking the questions, I wanted to make sure he finished before the bell rang, even though he probably would have continued, it took around 55 minutes because we are in the block schedule. Even as we were doing the questions he colored. I enjoyed the parallel of the questions, asking his character as the rosebush, he talked about things we hadn't talked about before. I was not necessarily diagnosing or drawing conclusions, but I could see where he was coming from and why he wanted to be alone; his rosebush didn't have any roots or anything around it; the parallels were really nice to see. He said it was all alone, no one was taking care of it, the rosebush was taking care of itself. He went into an elaborate description about how it was hard on the outside with the thorns and on the inside it is soft and playful, a protective shell on the outside. This was similar to how we had talked about his personality; people think they see him, but they do not. He doesn't want to get hurt. He liked the activity. At the end I asked him how he felt about the rosebush and how he felt about doing it, and he said it was relaxing and he liked doing it.

Some participants entered the "Comfort" phase feeling a lack of adequate preparation for the techniques and expressing detachment from the experience with the student. For example, Angela, expressed a passive level of comfort when describing her experiences with the expressive arts. Angela used a small group, a class of ten students, for the music technique. She let the teacher of the class select the music and did not individually pick the students who could participate; student participation was based upon the completion of class work. At one point during one of her interviews Angela seemed to put some responsibility on the teacher for the preparation of the music technique. She stated,

The first time I went [to the class] I played “Fifteen” by Taylor Swift and I went back a couple times to do a follow up with the boys. The teacher hasn’t been able to do it because they haven’t been able to finish the work. She had them finish what they were supposed to do. I had taken the ones who were finished their classroom assignments the first time. No one was done so they couldn’t do the song.

Tysh expressed an awareness of her need to research and practice expressive arts in order to feel comfortable with the techniques. Tysh stated,

The last two techniques (drama and The Rosebush Fantasy technique) are the ones I am not as comfortable with and I will be researching more before we go to the scripted questions of the Rosebush Fantasy Technique. I felt more comfortable with follow-up questions in things I have learned before and done before. I will be researching more about the follow up questions and where to go after we have done the assignment part, as far as our conversation about the student and how they felt and applying it in their life right now. I believe in the techniques; I haven’t had an opportunity to use them as much.

One participant appeared to feel a sense of detachment from the process. This participant, Angela, would confess she had forgotten about particular elements of activities and had forgotten details about student involvement. During one interview Angela couldn’t remember if she had read what students had written down while listening to a musical selection.

Although a sense of detachment was only seen with Angela, her shift from this detachment to the later described “Counselor Endorsement” was a phenomenon worthy of discussion. During the initial three-hour training in class Angela expressed her apprehension about the efficacy of expressive arts techniques in a high school setting. When describing her experience with the expressive arts after using them with students her language presented a



feeling of detachment from the process of using these techniques with high school aged students. However, despite her apparent detachment, the experience was still described in a positive, albeit passive, manner. Angela used phrases such as “I guess,” and “I suppose” when describing positive outcomes. For example, when talking about her experience using drama with a student, Angela said, “I guess it went well. I guess [the student] liked it.”

When reflecting upon her experiences, Angela expressed her comfort level positively. She stated,

With the music technique, I went into a class, even though it wasn't the whole class; that is what kind of made me a little nervous. But, when I went back I wasn't as nervous. And since the other ones were individual, I was okay with that. I felt funny about the rosebush just because I felt funny about saying some of the questions and phrases in the Rosebush Fantasy Technique script (i.e. “Do you have thorns?”). But, overall, I liked it; it was good.

This phase, “Comfort,” occurred after apprehension/resistance was replaced with feelings of confidence and experience. The level of comfort varied among the participants, however, each participant experienced this phase. Tammy said,

At the end of each technique I felt I learned something about the student and they learned something about themselves. The students were able to express themselves in a positive way. During the Rosebush Fantasy Technique, although the student didn't talk much, I would ask her individual questions about each element of the picture she drew. This gave me an idea into what she was thinking and feeling. That was great. I feel much better about these techniques now that I have used them.

Brandi admitted that although she was nervous about the responsiveness of the students with expressive arts techniques she shared,

I am more comfortable with these techniques because I am familiar with them now. Before using the techniques I didn't feel comfortable doing them. But, now I am comfortable and I can see how these techniques would be a good fit in counseling.

As the participants worked through the "Comfort" phase they explored the factors which helped them feel more comfortable with the techniques. Angela sent several emails to the primary researcher requesting additional information related to the techniques. This preparation seemed to help Angela prepare for the counseling sessions and gain a sense of confidence. Brandi said "The only thing I am worried about is how to introduce the techniques." For Brandi the confidence also came from preparation, specifically the introduction. Kim's sense of comfort came from experience with the techniques, learning about the students' individual needs, and pairing students with appropriate expressive arts methodologies. She said,

I think my comfort level with the techniques influenced the outcome more than any other factor. I learned what students liked, I familiarized myself with the techniques, and I tried to match the students with the techniques. I think they all enjoyed the activities.

This growing sense of comfort among the participants helped guide them toward a feeling of endorsement in the expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students.

### **Counselor Endorsement**

The last major theme, "Counselor Endorsement", was identified as a final phase in the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students. The term "buy-in" was used by several participants throughout the study, so it seemed fitting to use "endorsement" to portray the participants' words. "Buy-in" was not selected as the label for this

phase, however, because of the potential misunderstanding of its meaning as a phrase that is not common among all populations. Therefore, the word “endorsement” was selected because of its potential to be understood universally. The “Counselor Endorsement” phase was described by participants through reflections of preparation and experience using expressive arts techniques.

Participants expressed not only the need for preparation prior to using expressive arts techniques but began to find intentionality behind the preparation. Simply grabbing scripted techniques wasn’t enough for the participants to feel comfortable; participants felt they needed to try the technique, research it, and be personally comfortable with it as well. Tysh found that she appreciated the wide range of possibilities within the realm of expressive arts. The variety allowed her to customize the techniques for her comfort level and the students’ needs. When asked what helped her feel comfortable with expressive arts, Tysh explained,

The research you do in preparing for it helped me get comfortable. Picking a book that I was okay with rather than just getting some book or technique that someone said had worked before but I wasn’t really comfortable using. And that will take practice with me developing questions about the story and then going into questions that lead into the rosebush. But maybe now that I know [the student] and how he works and how he thinks about things, maybe I need to change it a little bit; I just have to be more directive.

Kim shared,

I believe being familiar with the techniques, having materials ready, and listening to musical selections ahead of time helped me prepare for my time with students. And, I believe my comfort helped students feel comfortable. I believe expressive arts are another method for approaching student concerns.

After using all four techniques required in this study participants were asked to reflect upon their experiences. Every participant had positive and affirming feelings in their personal reflections. Participants, regardless of their prior experience using expressive arts, found themselves enjoying the techniques and gaining much insight about the students with whom they worked. Tysh learned about one of her male student's family history and how his family's cultural influenced his move out of his parents' home. She said,

The Rosebush Fantasy Technique went really well with him. I learned a lot about him from his drawing; his Rosebush takes care of itself, and that is how he views his current situation. He wants to move out of his parents' house. Culturally, I believe it is acceptable to live with family members other than your parents.

While using music with a student, Brandi gained insight into her student's struggle with choices and who has control over various aspects of her life. Brandi said, "The student said while the music was playing she started thinking about things that are bad and that she could do better. I wasn't sure how the music technique would go, but it went better than I expected; I learned a lot."

One participant in particular stands out when reflecting upon the experience- Tammy. Tammy had worked with a female student on several occasions prior to using the Rosebush Fantasy technique with her. The student until this point had been very withdrawn, non-verbal, and had a flat affect. Tammy reflected upon the experience with excitement,

This is a student I met with several times. She is not verbal; she gives one word answers, and she is not doing well academically. Of the five percent economically disadvantaged students at Benjamin High School, she is one of them. She is on free and reduced lunch. Her teachers have come to me because they don't know how to get through to her to help

her get motivated and encourage her to work harder in her classes. When speaking with her she does not respond thoughtfully and cannot verbalize what she needs or reflect on her feelings. I knew she liked to draw, she doodles on her papers, so I thought maybe the Rosebush Technique would be a way for her to express herself in a nonverbal way and then we could go from there. I asked her if she would be up to doing another technique, and she said yes. When it came to the part of explaining her drawing, that was the hard part for her; I had to draw her out. While she was drawing I gave her different mediums like crayons and pastels. Afterwards, she was not able to talk about her drawing or why she drew different things. I asked her if the drawing represents her and her life and she said “Yes.” She said “Because the drawing is crazy, and I feel my life is crazy.” She drew thorns on her rosebush. She said “When I think of roses they have thorns, that’s why I drew them.” There wasn’t anything around the rosebush, no fence, or people or background or anything; I asked her about that. She said she likes wide open spaces, to be alone, which is very evident in her schoolwork because she does not like to do group work. It was interesting she drew the rosebush by itself. I thought she would draw a very black rosebush, but she drew a rosebush, and there are a couple red and pink flowers, but there are also a couple black flowers on it. She said when she thinks of roses that is what she thinks, they are red and pink. But the black ones, she said, they represent her.

The picture drawn by the student is shown in Figure 4.4.

*Figure 4.4*

Rosebush Fantasy drawing from a female high school student



Another participant, Kim, confided that when she began this research she was worried high school aged students would find the techniques to be “elementary,” or lower than their developmental level. She had completed the Expressive Arts in Counseling course, so she had experienced these techniques herself; however, she was concerned about high school aged students’ acceptance of the techniques. Kim quickly gained comfort with the techniques and moved into the “Counselor Endorsement” phase. Kim stated the following about her experience,

All of the students seemed to like and enjoy it. It was useful because it helps the kids relate to you in a different way, as opposed to you having to sit in front of them as the adult. Some students might not feel comfortable opening up. Non-verbal techniques give students a different avenue to approach whatever is going on.

Angela, was one of the participants who shared the most resistance to expressive arts use with high school aged students. Early on in the research process the primary researcher wrote memos related to Angela’s resistance and wondered how she might develop through the process. She did eventually move into the “Comfort” phase and later into the final phase of “Counselor

Endorsement.” After the interviews were completed and Angela no longer needed to participate, she still contacted the primary researcher to mail examples of the work she and her students completed together. It was interesting to see how Angela worked through the phases and experienced the process. Angela shared this about her experience,

I changed my opinion of bibliotherapy. Initially I thought the music one would be the best. Now I don't think it was the best but music is a good type of expressive art to use for high school students. High school students can relate to music and they like music and that is how they can express themselves. That is good. I like the art technique also. Bibliotherapy turned out to be better than I thought because I didn't think that would be helpful for the student.

Tysh had used expressive arts techniques with elementary school students and struggled with using these techniques with high school aged students. Most of Tysh's concerns stemmed from the feeling high school students would not accept the techniques; Tysh didn't seem to question the efficacy of the expressive arts techniques. She experienced a shift in her view of expressive arts techniques in the high school and explained it by saying,

I definitely feel better about it now that I have used all four techniques. It will take time for me to get even better at it, using the techniques and general and using them with high school aged students. I believe expressive arts give students and the counselor a different approach to a concern they will be working through. It just gives you different methods to use when talking to students about problems. I wasn't comfortable with it at the beginning because I heard a lot of people get excited about expressive arts and I thought it must not be for me because I didn't share their excitement. After I had used it with a couple of students before I began to feel comfortable. If I had known that other people

had struggled with it in the beginning, or, even if you are not comfortable with it that you can make it your own; if I had known that rather than just seeing people who were happy and “go-get-em” about expressive arts, I would have bought into it earlier.

Brandi described herself initially as being “open” to the techniques but nervous about how the process would occur. Brandi explained her experience as initially being apprehensive to the idea of using expressive arts techniques in high school but later becoming more comfortable as she gained experience. Brandi said,

Using the techniques, getting to work through them and actually experiencing them instead of anticipating them helped me gain comfort. It helped having the script for the Rosebush technique and something as a reference for the other techniques. I am more willing to use it. I pictured expressive arts in a structured plan. As I used the techniques with students it felt as though I could spontaneously do the techniques without pre-planning. I realized I could use these techniques with a group or individual. Experiencing it made me realize it doesn't always have to be planned or structured to use it.

At the beginning of the research the participants were hesitant to use expressive arts counseling techniques. For some the resistance was with the techniques themselves; Tysh shared “I never thought of expressive arts as a part of counseling.” For others the apprehension was related to the use of these techniques with high school students. Angela stated, “In the beginning I didn't see how these techniques could be used with high school aged students. I believed the students wouldn't accept the techniques. But now I believe these techniques could be used with all students.” The transition from being apprehensive to believing in the efficacy of expressive arts counseling techniques was a process each participant experienced.



### **Cross-Cultural Implications**

Data analysis revealed an absence of cross-cultural implications as an independent theme. However, participants did share their insight regarding the use of expressive arts counseling techniques in cross-cultural environments. Overall, participants felt expressive arts counseling techniques blurred cultural boundaries by reducing the need for verbalization of feelings. It is important to note, however, that the non-verbal aspect of expressive arts was also described to be a benefit for all students, not necessarily related to cultural differences. Angela shared, “I used the expressive arts techniques with a diverse group of students. I did not observe any distinct differences in how the students reacted.” Brandi stated, “I am a white female. I used these techniques with a white male, a Bi-racial male, a Hispanic male, and a Black female. I believe expressive arts can be used with students of any culture.” Brandi continued,

Using expressive arts techniques with students of a different culture than me enhanced my experience with them. I feel these techniques had a positive effect on my relationship with the students. They seemed to enjoy doing something other than talking, and it was an effective way to work with them. Expressive arts are universal and appropriate for students of all cultures.

Kim conceded that all of the students she worked with for this study were of African-American descent. Despite the cultural difference between herself and the students she worked with, Kim stated, “I did not feel our cultural differences influenced how well the activities worked. Each of the students I worked with was interested and fully engaged in the activities.” Tammy had a slightly different view of cross-cultural implications. For Tammy expressive arts offered a technique that may be more culturally accepted among particular populations.

Conversely, these techniques may not be accepted by other populations. Tammy believed the responsibility lies within the counselor to be culturally sensitive. She said,

All my experiences with expressive arts were with students of a different culture than my own. I feel I am always initially hesitant when introducing techniques other than talk therapy because I don't know the student's familiarity or openness to alternate techniques. In relation to other cultures, I don't know if expressive arts (i.e. books, art, music, etc) are part of the student's culture. I do think cross-culture relationships play a role in using expressive arts with students of a different culture from your own because the counselor needs to gain an understanding of the student's comfort level or flexibility with expressive arts.

Tysh believed counselors need to understand that certain cultures do not accept counseling in general and may not accept expressive arts techniques either. She stated, "Some communities include professional counseling while others do not. I believe student responsiveness to expressive arts would be influenced by the community they live in and their cultural norms."

### **Summary**

The purpose of the research was to understand the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques as perceived by master's level internship students in a high school setting. Five research questions guided the research:

1. How do school counselor trainees define expressive arts?
2. What are the implications for using expressive arts techniques as they are perceived by high school counselor trainees?
3. How does the process of using expressive arts techniques develop?

4. What are the developmental implications for the efficacy of expressive arts techniques?
5. How did cross cultural counseling relationships experience the use of expressive arts techniques?

Each of the participants in this study experienced the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students. A three phase process was identified. Those phases include: a) Apprehension/Resistance, b) Comfort, and c) Counselor Endorsement. Although research participation required experience with the expressive arts, participants shared various levels of prior experience with these techniques which included completion of the Expressive Arts in Counseling course and participation in a three-hour orientation to the expressive arts. Despite differences in the participants' backgrounds, all of the participants shared similar a) apprehension/resistance in the beginning, settled in with a level of b) comfort toward the middle of the research, and eventually reached c) counselor endorsement by the duration of the study. The transition to various phases of the process was influenced by several factors, as highlighted by the identified subthemes and descriptors.

It is clear from what the participants stated that although initially the participants were not sure how expressive arts counseling techniques would be accepted by high school students, that these techniques could be used effectively in a high school setting. Even when the techniques did not happen as anticipated, the outcome was one of growth and learning. The participants each found themselves comfortable using the techniques and grew to view the techniques as an appropriate and meaningful method of counseling high school students.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

“Without creativity, there would not be counseling.” (Gladding, 2008). Expressive arts counseling techniques incorporate non-verbal methods of counseling into therapeutic environments. Expressive arts present an experience that is process oriented, emotionally sensitive, socially directed, and awareness focused (Paisley & Young, 1998). Not all children are able to express themselves through verbal methods alone (Chelsey & Gilett, 2003), thus utilizing expressive arts techniques in school counseling programs offers school aged children additional opportunities for growth and development in the school environment.

The use of expressive arts activities has proven to be beneficial to students (Jackson, Muro, Lee, & DeOrnellas, 2008). Jackson et. al. looked at the relationship of supervising counselors working with school counselor internship students. The findings presented in this study built upon the available research that supports the use of expressive arts to bring what is in the unconscious to the conscious. Despite its efficacy (Gladding, 2008; Hendricks, Robins, Bradley, & Davis, 1999; Paisley & Young, 1998), a review of the literature has found a deficit in the quantity of studies related to the use of expressive arts counseling techniques in high schools. At the time of this research, not one study has explored the experience of school counselors’ use of expressive arts in a high school setting.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of school counseling internship students as they began utilizing expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students. The stories of the participants give a voice to this unexplored phenomenon. It is these stories which were contextually examined to identify themes which gave life to what became the

grounded theory of this study. Data analysis identified a three phase process of using expressive arts: (a) Apprehension/resistance, (b) Comfort, and (c) Counselor Endorsement. In this chapter, the primary researcher provides a summary of the findings and presents and discusses the conclusions, compares and contrasts current literature, and discusses limitations of the study. This will be followed by implications for the profession and recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of the Procedures**

In the Fall 2010 semester, the primary researcher offered a three-hour Expressive Arts orientation to a school counseling internship class. The class consisted of 14 cohort members, each completing his or her internship at either an elementary, middle, or high school during the 2010-2011 academic year. In this orientation, the researcher discussed and demonstrated expressive arts counseling techniques. The techniques discussed and demonstrated were The Rosebush Fantasy Technique (art), role play and script writing (drama), the use of music in counseling, and reading children's literature during a counseling session (literature). There exists a wide variety of expressive arts techniques; however, for the purposes of the orientation, the primary researcher focused on four specific areas: art, drama, music, and literature.

Research has shown a correlation between expressive arts in counseling adolescents and positive outcomes related to conflicts with peers, career exploration, and substance abuse (Veach & Gladding, 2007). The use of expressive arts, such as The Rosebush Fantasy Technique, have also been used in counseling with sexually abused adolescent girls, adolescents coping with depression, adolescents recovering from addiction, and with visually impaired adolescents (Lehtonen & Shoughnessy, 1994; Lyshak-Stelzer, Singer, St. John, & Chemtob, 2007; Skudrzyk

et. al., 2009). Examples of expressive arts techniques are finger painting, the Squiggle Drawing Game, Kinetic Family Drawing, Mask Making, and mandala creations (Synder, 1997).

### **Art**

For the art technique, the participants were given the script for the Rosebush Fantasy Technique (Allan, 1988). The Rosebush Fantasy technique has been researched in several studies (Allan, 1988; Ray, Perkins, & Oden, 2004). The image of the rosebush allows projection of thoughts and feelings in a safe manner which may facilitate deeper discussion later. This technique begins with the counselor reading a guided imagery relaxation exercise to the student. Then the student closes his or her eyes as the counselor verbally guides them through the relaxation. The counselor then reads scripted questions and statements related to imagining oneself as a rosebush. For example, the counselor would read statements such as “Imagine yourself as a rosebush. Where are you? What do you see around you?” When all the scripted questions and statements have been read, the student is then asked to open his or her eyes to begin the drawing portion of the technique. The student is given paper and drawing materials and is instructed to draw the rosebush imagined during the guided imagery portion of the exercise. After the drawing is complete, the counselor and the student discuss various components of the drawing. The counselor is careful to not impose his or her own meaning upon the drawings; the explanation of the drawing by the student is where meaning should be noted (Allan, 1988).

### **Drama**

Drama was another technique selected for this study. Through drama, students can learn to gain control of their own lives and learn new roles as well. Drama, developmentally, works on the experiential and cognitive levels (Veatch & Gladding, 2007, p. 76). School counselors

trained to offer dramatic methods in counseling can access the developmental level of the adolescent and foster a deeper sense of discovery for the student. This discovery is essential during adolescence as identity formation is continually being challenged (Veatch & Gladding, 2007).

For the drama technique in this study, the counselor works with the student to do either a role play or script writing based on a significant event in the student's life. The selected event may be something which occurred in the past or something to happen in the future. Examples include the loss of a parent, the moment he/she heard bad news, first job interview, breaking up with a boy/girlfriend, asking someone to a dance, or discussing post-high school options with a parent or guardian. The student will role play or write lines for one or more characters in the "scene." Depending upon time or preference, the student may choose to write a script or ad-lib. The student recreates the scene by playing the role of the various people. After the student is completed with the scene, the counselor will talk with the student about how he or she felt, what he or she noticed, and/or if he or she learned anything new.

### **Literature**

The use of literature as an expressive art technique has been described as "respectful and non-blaming" which centers people as experts on his or her own life (Bennett, 2008). These techniques can be used to assist in promoting cognitive and interpersonal development for adolescents (Paisley & Young, 1998). Reading literature in a focused and purposeful manner can support adolescents through their transition to adulthood. School counselors can incorporate literary techniques in counseling individually or with small groups.

The literature technique was chosen to utilize children's books and stories with high school aged students. For this expressive technique, participants read a children's book to a

student or group of students. The counselor begins by reading the selected story to the student(s). At the conclusion of the story, students are given 5-10 minutes of processing either mentally or through written words on provided paper. When it appears everyone has had sufficient time to process his or her thoughts, students are given an opportunity to voluntarily share what they thought or wrote.

### **Music**

Teenage music represents the personal conflicts which lie at the unconscious level (Lehtonen & Shaughnessy, p. 12). Through musical creation and connection, teenagers are able to access feelings and emotions which are not typically addressed at the conscious level. It is not uncommon to observe many adolescents listening to music throughout their daily activities. Adolescents bond with their peers through musical interests and the culture which is generated within musical genres. Music “activates emotions” (Lehtonen & Shaughnessy, 1994, p. 7) that can foster moments of understanding, breaking barriers for deeper conversations and meaningful interactions. School counselors can utilize music therapy as a means for expressing and listening to student experiences. High school students are often interested in song writing and may seek to express themselves in counseling sessions through lyrical expression (Veatch & Gladding, 2007, p. 72). Examples of music counseling techniques include exploring lyrics of a selected song, creating music through group member collaboration, and processing thoughts and feeling after listening to a selected piece of music.

The music technique in this study is similar in style as the literature technique. For this activity, participants used a preselected song along with writing paper and writing instruments. The song should be selected according to the individual or group members’ needs and/or requests. The participant began by playing the song for the student(s). After the song is finished



the counselor provides writing materials for each person. Students are then instructed to take 10 minutes to write down whatever is on his or her mind after listening to the selection. Then, after 10 minutes have passed, student(s) are allowed time to share what he or she wrote.

### **Summary of the Results**

After completing the expressive arts orientation, the primary researcher presented to the high school interns in the class the opportunity to participate in this study. Of the available high school interns, three students contacted me to volunteer for this study. The primary researcher wanted to increase the number of participants. So, in an effort to recruit additional participants, the participation criteria were expanded to also include participation in the brief expressive arts overview. The additional criteria yielded four additional volunteers. One male student volunteered and the remaining volunteers were all female. The one male volunteer decided participation in the study would not work well within his internship placement; no further reason was given. The remaining six volunteers signed the "Informed Consent" form; one of the six did not remain in contact after signing the consent form. The resulting participant number was five high school counseling internship students.

In order to participate in the study, the participants were required to have completed either a) the Expressive Arts and Counseling Techniques course or, b) the three-hour in-class expressive arts orientation. However, some of the participants had previous exposure and experience using the expressive arts, both personally and professionally. Two of the five participants had taken the Expressive Arts in Counseling course offered at their university. This course requires students to participate in two weekend class meetings and they must complete projects independently, separate from the classroom meetings. One participant had used dance and music as therapeutic mediums in her adolescence. Three participants had been exposed to

and had tried expressive arts techniques in their school counseling practicum experience. Despite the background differences related to the expressive arts, the participants shared similar experiences throughout the process. For example, two of the five participants had completed the Expressive Arts in Counseling course prior to participating in the study. One of the five participants acknowledged using expressive arts techniques as an adolescent. However, the backgrounds of the participants did not seem to affect the three-phase process experienced by all five participants.

At the beginning of the research, prior to using expressive arts techniques with high school aged students, each participant was interviewed. The semi-structured interview protocol for the first round of interviews included the following questions:

1. Please describe your current work setting.
2. Please describe your role as a high school counselor.
3. What was your experience with using expressive arts techniques prior to this research?
4. Tell me what it was like for you when you learned and/or used expressive arts techniques before.
5. Briefly describe your definition of expressive arts.
6. Tell me how you feel about using expressive arts techniques in the high school setting?
7. Please share your thoughts about how your cultural background may be similar or different than the students you will be working with.
8. Please share any additional thoughts you would like the researcher to hear.

Data analysis after the first round of interviews identified a theme of apprehension and resistance. This theme was identified as the first phase in the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students. The stories shared during these initial interviews clearly indicated the participants shared a level of apprehension, and in some cases

self-proclaimed resistance, to the use of expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students. The apprehension did not appear as tension related to the techniques themselves, but rather with the population of students with which the techniques were to be used. Participants shared fears of being laughed at by the students or the students just thinking the techniques were “silly.”

One participant, Angela, said “I can see how expressive arts is useful for younger kids. But, I don’t see how these techniques apply to high school students.” She went on to explain part of her apprehension, “I just don’t see reading to the students; that is why I am hesitant.” Another participant, Tysh had been exposed to expressive arts during her practicum experience in an elementary school. She shared, “I don’t think high school aged students will be open to expressive arts. I have never considered it to be a part of counseling.”

A review of the literature revealed a limited number of studies related to the processes counselors experience when utilizing unfamiliar techniques. However, a study similar to this research was conducted to explore counselor resistance to discussing spirituality with clients (Henning & Tirrell, 1982). In this study, several factors contributed to the feeling of resistance among counselor participants: a) Negative attitude, b) Lack of knowledge, c) Fear, and d) Limited spiritual choices. When counselors held a negative attitude toward spirituality there was a tendency to be resistant to discussing spirituality with clients. This phenomenon occurred when participants held similar opinions about expressive arts counseling techniques. Participants who identified their own doubt regarding the efficacy of expressive arts techniques they also tended to feel the students would have doubt as well. Some of the participants came to realize how their own feelings of apprehension were transferred to the student. Tysh, one of the

participants, said “When I am more open to using expressive arts I feel the students are more comfortable as well.”

“Lack of knowledge” in the above cited study describes how ignorance regarding spirituality and religion can affect the counselor’s resistance to discussing these issues with clients. As counselors gained knowledge their resistance subsided. This is also similar to the participants’ experience in the expressive arts research. Participants in this study shared a feeling of increased comfort as knowledge and experience increased with expressive arts.

By the second round of interviews each participant had selected and used two of the four techniques, outlined in the research: art, drama, literature, and music. Participants were instructed to use the Rosebush Fantasy Technique (Allan, 1988) specifically for the art technique. The interview protocol for the second round of interviews included the following questions:

1. Which two of the four techniques have you used so far?
2. Now that you have completed two sessions using expressive arts techniques with high school students, please briefly describe the experience.
3. Briefly describe your definition of expressive arts.
4. How did you select the students for the techniques?
5. What, if any, were the challenges you experienced?
6. What, if any, were the positive aspects you experienced?
7. When using the two techniques, how did the length of time you had with the student affect the session?
8. Tell me about any resistance you may or may not have noticed.
9. Please summarize for me one of the counseling sessions when you used expressive arts counseling techniques.

10. As you think about the final two of the four techniques, what would be helpful for you when using them with the students?
11. Tell me your perception of the students' comfort when using these techniques.
12. Previous discussions have talked about the characteristics of the student whom would benefit from these techniques. Can you talk about that a little more?
13. Please share any additional thoughts you would like the researcher to hear.

Concerns about being ridiculed had subsided and been replaced with moments of learning and growth. The participants spoke about seeing a side of the student(s) not previously seen, learning more about the student(s), and feeling more comfortable with the expressive arts techniques themselves. When discussing her use of the music technique, Angela said, "I thought the students might laugh or feel the technique was too immature for high school students. But, the students didn't laugh; they were cooperative and it felt rewarding." Another participant, Brandi, said "Using the techniques helped me feel more comfortable and confident to use them again in the future."

In 2004, a study was published which cited factors influencing counseling student self-efficacy (Tang et al., 2004). This study closely relates to the research in this paper because of the exploration of counseling student perception of his or her own self-efficacy as a school counselor. According to the study, counseling students became comfortable in his or her professional role as a counselor as time in this role increased. Through quantitative analysis, the 2004 study found that length of time in an internship and prior work experience related to the internship had the strongest positive correlation with counseling student self-efficacy. Specifically, as learning experiences within the role of counselor occurred, the counseling students became more comfortable with his or her duties and abilities. This was seen in the

current research when participants acknowledged an increase in comfort with expressive arts techniques as their time using the techniques increased.

In a similar study, Waliski (2009) found that counselor trainees reached a point of comfort with expressive arts counseling techniques after being introduced to this style of counseling. According to the researcher, participants felt increased levels of comfort as they gained more experience with the techniques. The researcher described some of this comfort as feeling a sense of being “energized” by the participants’ enthusiasm (Waliski, 2009, p. 379). Participants in Waliski’s study described a feeling of apprehension prior to using the techniques. After gaining experience, the participants shared feelings of endorsement. Participants indicated expressive arts techniques should be required in CACREP programs rather than being offered as elective courses (Waliski, 2009). The 2009 study closely resembles the current research in the process experienced by counselor-trainees and the factors which influenced counselor-trainees’ endorsement of expressive arts techniques.

After all four techniques (i.e. art, drama, literature, music) had been used by the research participants, each participant engaged in a third and final of interviews. Interview questions for the final interview included, but were not limited to:

1. Now that you have completed all four sessions for this research, briefly describe your overall experience using expressive arts techniques with high school students.
2. Briefly describe your definition of expressive arts.
3. How do you feel about using expressive arts techniques in the high school setting?
4. How do you feel developmental level may affect the use of expressive arts in a school counseling program?
5. How do you feel culture may have played a role in the use of these techniques?
6. Did you see gender as an issue, either positive or negative?

7. How do you think your comfort with the techniques influenced the process?
8. What was most helpful for you as you used these techniques?
9. Can you talk a little about how your comfort with these techniques may or may not have changed?
10. When thinking of your use of the expressive arts, how would you describe your experience over the last couple of months?
11. Please share any additional thoughts you would like the researcher to hear.

By the end of research participation the participants had reached the final phase, called “Counselor Endorsement.” Each of the participants, regardless of their previous exposure to expressive arts and their level of comfort during the intermediate stages of the research, reached a point where they believed expressive arts could be used with high school aged students. And, not only did participants feel these techniques could be used with high school aged students, but used with any student in the high school, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, and developmental level.

During her final interview, Brandi said, “I am more likely to use expressive arts techniques now that I have utilized them with high school aged students. I feel a lot more comfortable with them than I did in the beginning of the research. I believe these techniques work just as well with high school students as they do with elementary school students. I am itching for more!” Kim, another participant, stated, “In the beginning I had a positive view of expressive arts. But, now that I have used them with high school aged students I am reassured these techniques work with all ages.” Tammy, who had taken the Expressive Arts in Counseling course in addition to participating in the three-hour orientation, shared “At the beginning of the research process I was unsure how expressive arts could be used with high school aged students. I wasn’t sure how these techniques would work with males either because I had typically viewed

them as appropriate for female students. However, now I am sure I will be adding these techniques to my toolbox.”

In 2009, a dissertation was published which explored how school counselors’ attitudes can affect the use of literature in a counseling setting (Townsend, 2009). This 2009 study examined the implications of how a counselor approaches the expressive art technique of bibliotherapy and the impact this approach has on the use of literature. The researchers found that a counselor’s attitude toward the use of literature affected how and when this technique was used with students. This exploration highlights the third phase discussed in the Process of Using Expressive Arts Techniques, “Counselor Endorsement.” When counselors come to endorse a technique they are more likely to use that technique.

Similarly, Waliski (2009) a study explored counselor trainees’ introduction to expressive arts techniques. In this study counselor trainees were exposed to expressive arts counseling techniques through the required “Advanced Theories and Techniques” course in the participants’ counseling CACREP accredited program. Anecdotal responses indicated participants not only valued the expressive arts techniques, but also developed a level of counselor endorsement. One of the participants from the 2009 study stated,

I must admit that when I first signed up for this class, I wasn’t sure what I was getting myself into. But I can now say that I have thoroughly enjoyed the study of expressive therapies. I believe that this course should be a required study for both mental health and school based counselors-to-be. (Waliski, 2009, p. 379)

The identified theory explains the process of counseling interns as they utilized expressive arts techniques with high school aged students. Phase 1 showed that the use of expressive arts begins with apprehension and possibly resistance. The apprehension is not



related to the techniques themselves, but, rather to the concern that the technique will not be accepted by high school students. As the counseling intern begins to use the techniques a level of comfort is achieved which is described in Phase 2. This comfort is influenced by the amount of preparation the counseling student has accomplished prior to using the technique. Reading about the technique, practicing it, and having necessary materials accessible all contributed to feelings of comfort. Comfort is important because when the counseling intern is willing and accepting of expressive arts techniques, the techniques are more likely to be utilized and accepted by the student (Jackson, et.al., 2008). Some counseling interns may experience what has been described as a passive level of comfort. These interns may not have surrendered previous apprehensions but are moving toward a level of comfort. Finally, the counseling intern reaches Phase 3, "Counselor Endorsement," when expressive arts is seen as a useful and appropriate technique to use with high school aged students.

### **Limitations**

As with all research, although measures were taken to ensure the credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability of the findings, several limitations existed. There were several limitations related to this study. First, this study only included interviews from five participants. Although a level of saturation was met through the interviews and data analysis, increasing the number of participants could offer a more in-depth look at the experience of using expressive arts counseling techniques. The identified grounded theory presented in this study provides an understanding into the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques as it was experienced by high school counselor trainees. However, using data from a larger group of participants may have resulted in deeper understanding and identification of factors related to the process.

Another limitation of this study was that all of the participants were female. The pool of potential participants was a co-ed counseling internship cohort of 14 students with several being interns in a high school setting. However, only a select few met the criteria for research participation: completing their counseling internship in a high school setting at the time of the research and having at least participated in the three-hour orientation to expressive arts counseling techniques offered during the Fall 2010 semester. Seven internship students volunteered; six out of the seven signed the required consent forms. One female did not respond to emails after signing the consent form and one male declined participation after signing the consent form. The remaining five were all female.

Another limitation to the study is all of the participants were from the same master's cohort and from the same training program. Therefore, they had similar educational backgrounds, lived in the same vicinity during the time of the study, and had personal relationships with each other which may have affected the research. A more diverse pool of internship students and those of different sex may have resulted in different findings.

Additionally, a limitation of this study was interviews were conducted via telephone rather than in-person. In-person interviewing allows the researcher the opportunity to identify and react to non-verbal cues. Facial expressions, hand gestures, and eye contact are just a few examples of context which is lost when interviews are not performed in-person.

A final limitation is four of the five participants were Caucasian; only one participant was African-American. Although expressive arts techniques themselves have been found to cross cultural boundaries (Paisley & Young, 1998), it is unknown if cultural differences between research participants affected the findings.

## **Study Implications**

Results from this study provided an identified theory grounded in the experiences of school counselor trainees who used expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students. Therefore, implications can be made as they pertain to school counselors and counselor education programs.

### **Implications for School Counselors**

The theory identified through this research indicates school counselor trainees have the ability and interest in utilizing non-verbal techniques after they have been provided with training and experience. Specifically, school counselor trainees in high school settings gained a sense of endorsement for expressive arts techniques. School counselors and school counselor trainees can use the findings of this research to advocate for the use of expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students. Additionally, school counselors and school counselor trainees seeking an alternate to talk therapy techniques can use the findings from this research as a resource for incorporating expressive techniques into their counseling program.

### **Implications for Counselor Training Programs**

Based on the finding of this research and other similar studies, counselor educators and counselor training programs should consider infusing expressive arts counseling techniques into coursework and experiences. Currently counselor training programs do not require expressive arts courses; these courses are available as electives at some institutions. Additionally, program emphasis areas such as school counseling do not require expressive arts training. This seems like a gap in the curriculum given the cognitive, linguistic, and developmental capabilities of children and adolescents. Due to developmental differences, children and adolescents may not have the verbal ability to express their thoughts, feelings, and/or experiences (Shen, 2006; Veach &

Gladding, 2007; Yassa, 1999). According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1952) younger students have limited ability to think abstractly and generalize from specifics to greater societal environments. Expressive techniques assist students with a concrete medium to explore abstract thoughts and feelings. Offering an alternative counseling method to the traditional "talk-therapy" would only enhance the counselors' repertoire of skills.

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) is the accrediting agency for counselor education programs. Graduate schools seeking CACREP accreditation and reaccreditation align their curriculum and field experiences to meet CACREP standards. These standards, revised and effective as of July 1, 2009, outline specific programmatic requirements for universities, colleges, and various other educational institutions. Standard G.2.b states that studies aligned with CACREP components must offer students "experiential learning activities designed to foster students' understanding of self and culturally diverse clients" (2009). Findings from this research could be used by CACREP accredited programs as support for including non-verbal orientation in the expressive arts in counselor educator programs.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) published Advocacy Competencies (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2002) for counselors. These competencies outline roles and responsibilities of the counselor as they relate to advocating for the needs of clients from varying backgrounds and cultures. These competencies provide the framework from which a counselor can incorporate the use of expressive arts counseling techniques as a method of advocating for the needs of clients. With the support of the findings in this study, counselors can justify the incorporation of non-verbal techniques when working with clients. Expressive techniques offer a method of working with clients in creative expressions. Clients may be able to access what

was previously held in the subconscious through non-verbal techniques. Therefore, counselors utilizing expressive arts techniques can be reassured, with the support of the findings in this research, that they are aligned with the framework set forth by the ACA Advocacy Competencies.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There is a growing interest in creative and alternative approaches to counseling (Lumadue, Munk, & Wooten, 2005). With an increased interest there is a natural need for additional research related to the use of alternative counseling methods. Lumadue et.al. (2005) surveyed CACREP accredited programs to assess the inclusion of expressive techniques in counselor training programs. Their study resulted in a call for an increase in intentional dialogue related to these alternative approaches (Lumadue et.al., 2005).

There is a gap in research related to expressive arts counseling techniques, especially in high school settings. Therefore, the school counseling profession needs additional research and advocacy for this additional means of counseling children and adolescents. The participants in this study had positive experiences with the techniques and expressed belief that the students did as well. Additional research would not only fill a gap in the literature but would give way to advocacy for the use of expressive arts techniques. Each of the five participants indicated a sense of apprehension or resistance and each of the five reached the final phase of endorsing expressive arts counseling techniques.

Future researchers have many options for additional inquiry related to expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students. Different qualitative methodologies, such as phenomenology or case study, could be utilized to explore various aspects of the use of expressive arts counseling techniques. A phenomenological methodology would allow the

researcher to describe the meaning of several participants of the lived experience related to the use of expressive arts counseling techniques (Creswell, 2007). The purpose of this form of methodology is to reduce individual experiences related to a particular phenomenon by formulating a description of the “universal essence” (Creswell, 2007, pg. 58). Alternately, a case study would explore the bounded system, or case, over time through detailed and in-depth data collection utilizing multiple sources such as: interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports (Creswell, 2007).

Another research option could include an expansion of the diversity among the participants, such as selecting participants from more than one institution and choosing institutions from various geographical locations would also expand the scope of the original study. Participants bring life experiences and geographical context to the research; therefore, various participant locales may offer differing experiences related to the use of expressive arts techniques. Future researchers may also want to include expressive arts techniques other than the four used in this study: art, drama, literature, and music. Possible alternate techniques would be tape art (Skophammer, 2009), dance and movement (Gladding, 2006), and mandala drawings (Gladding). Further exploration into cross-cultural implications is another option for future research. Researchers may want to interview participants on a deeper level about cross-cultural counseling relationships and how these may or may not be affected by the use of expressive arts counseling techniques. Additionally, a mixed-method model of inquiry could further identify the process identified in this study. Quantitative data provides information qualitative data cannot; the reverse is true as well. Finally, qualitative findings could be gathered to develop a regional or national survey for distribution to counselors, counselor trainees, and possibly counselor educators.

### **Trustworthiness**

The primary researcher addressed the element of trustworthiness through several purposeful procedures. The primary researcher worked with the participants for a period of several months. This length of time allowed for improved rapport between the participants and the primary researcher. Additionally, the primary researcher utilized memoing procedures through the data collection and analysis process which increased the trustworthiness of the research (Charmaz, 2003, 2006; Creswell, 2007, 2009). And, through member checking, the primary researcher provided an opportunity to the participants to clarify what was said during the interview (Creswell, 2007, 2009). Finally, the primary researcher used theoretical sampling to compare identified themes to the data as a measure of representativeness (Charmaz, 2003, 2006).

### **Summary**

This chapter not only summarized the findings of the study but also related the findings to related existing literature. The identified theory described in this study closely relates to previous studies and adds to the pool of available literature. This chapter also identified and discussed research limitations as they existed within this study. Implications for the school counseling profession and school counselor training programs were also presented.

This purpose of this research was to explore and understand the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students as it was perceived by high school counseling internship students. The findings resulted in the process of using expressive arts counseling techniques with high school aged students which included the following phases: a) Apprehension/Resistance, b) Comfort, and c) Counselor Endorsement. Subthemes were identified as influencing factors to “Phase 1: Apprehension/Resistance”: a) Assumptions About High School Students, b) Concerns About Time, and c) Experience with Expressive Arts. Each

participant experienced a shift in their view of expressive arts as a counseling technique viable for use with high school aged students.



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## APPENDIX A

## High School Counselor Trainee Interview Protocol

## Interview Protocol for Interview No. 1

## High School Counselor Trainee

Researcher: Barb Smith

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Current place of employment: \_\_\_\_\_  
School name County

1. Please describe your current work setting.
2. Please describe your role as a high school counselor.
3. What was your experience with using expressive arts techniques prior to this research?
4. Tell me what it was like for you when you learned and/or used expressive arts techniques before.
5. Briefly describe your definition of expressive arts.
6. Tell me how you feel about using expressive arts techniques in the high school setting?
7. Please share your thoughts about how your cultural background may be similar or different than the students you will be working with.
8. Please share any additional thoughts you would like the researcher to hear.

## APPENDIX B

## High School Counselor Trainee Interview Protocol

## Interview Protocol for Interview No. 2

## High School Counselor Trainee

Researcher: Barb Smith

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Current place of employment: \_\_\_\_\_  
School name County

1. Which two of the four techniques have you used so far?
2. Now that you have completed two sessions using expressive arts techniques with high school students, please briefly describe the experience.
3. Briefly describe your definition of expressive arts.
4. How did you select the students for the techniques?
5. What, if any, were the challenges you experienced?
6. What, if any, were the positive aspects you experienced?
7. When using the two techniques, how did the length of time you had with the student affect the session?
8. Tell me about any resistance you may or may not have noticed.
9. Please summarize for me one of the counseling sessions when you used expressive arts counseling techniques.
10. As you think about the final two of the four techniques, what would be helpful for you when using them with the students?
11. Tell me your perception of the students' comfort when using these techniques.

12. Previous discussions have talked about the characteristics of the student whom would benefit from these techniques. Can you talk about that a little more?
13. Please share any additional thoughts you would like the researcher to hear.

## APPENDIX C

## High School Counselor Trainee Interview Protocol

## Interview Protocol for Interview No. 3

## High School Counselor Trainee

Researcher: Barb Smith

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Current place of employment: \_\_\_\_\_  
School name County

1. Now that you have completed all four sessions for this research, briefly describe your overall experience using expressive arts techniques with high school students.
2. Briefly describe your definition of expressive arts.
3. How do you feel about using expressive arts techniques in the high school setting?
4. How do you feel developmental level may affect the use of expressive arts in a school counseling program?
5. How do you feel culture may have played a role in the use of these techniques?
6. Did you see gender as an issue, either positive or negative?
7. How do you think your comfort with the techniques influenced the process?
8. What was most helpful for you as you used these techniques?
9. Can you talk a little about how your comfort with these techniques may or may not have changed?
10. When thinking of your use of the expressive arts, how would you describe your experience over the last couple of months?
11. Please share any additional thoughts you would like the researcher to hear.