ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Counselors demand effective and research-based interventions when counseling children. The present study helps meet this demand. A prop was defined as an object that a counselor and/or client transform into a metaphor that is relevant therapeutically. Phenomenological methods and grounded theory approaches were utilized to analyze 33 videotaped counseling sessions. Ten sessions came from published videotapes and 23 came from counselors currently providing counseling to children. From analyzing the sessions, two major categories emerged: process of counseling children and utilization of props with children. Each of these categories possessed themes and subthemes. The process of counseling children category illustrated that effective counseling skills are necessary for props to be utilized. This included the physical setting of the counseling environment and attributes of the counselor. Additionally, the creativity and expressiveness of counselors was a necessary component when counseling children. The utilization of props category showed how counselors and child clients introduce and work with props therapeutically. Through the manipulation of props, patterns formed that mirrored the issues that brought the child clients into counseling. Counselors then transformed the props into metaphors that related to the child clients’ lives. Counselors were enabled to design therapeutic interventions that specifically fit the needs of their child clients.
through prop usage. Counselors also attempted to generalize the gains made in counseling through the prop usage to the child clients’ home environments. A model is presented to show how props are transformed into a therapeutic intervention.
THE THERAPEUTIC USE OF PROPS WITH CHILDREN

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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BY
CHRISTINE EVE WALAWANDER

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Certification:

In accordance with departmental and Graduate School policies, this dissertation is accepted in partial fulfillment of degree requirements.

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DEDICATION

To Leonard and Matthew, with love and gratitude
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Counseling children in the 21st century has become a vital issue in the counseling profession along with discovering powerful interventions to create insights and behavior changes in these children. The lives of children have changed drastically over the past decades. Some of these changes include the increase number of blended families, increased exposure to violence both inside and outside their homes, the increased number of reported abuse cases, access to the internet, lack of extended family network and multiple nonrelated caregivers. Therefore, the issues children present when entering counseling have become multifaceted and counselors are in need of interventions that are effective and powerful.

Children’s access to mental health services has increased, with many states mandating schools to employ counselors (www.schoolcounselor.org). Currently 31 states mandate schools to employ counselors. However the stigma of receiving counseling services is still present (Corrigan, 2004; Corrigan & Penn, 1999). Chandra and Minkovitz (2006) have studied the stigma associated with using mental health services. They reported that in early adolescents there exists negative attitudes and willingness to use mental health services. It appears that the stigma relating to receiving counseling services appears even in children. However, there exist a large
number of children in need of counseling services. The National Institute of Mental
Health in their America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2005
report estimated that 2.7 million children suffer from severe emotional and behavioral
problems. These problems may interfere with family life, ability to learn and form
friendships. Therefore, counselors need powerful interventions that will engage
children utilizing their preferred mediums of expression when they are presented for
counseling services. Counselors demand interventions that can be utilized to effect
behavioral changes that promote growth and development. The use of props during
counseling sessions is such an intervention. When counselors utilize props while
providing services to children, the child clients experience a variety of resulting
benefits. Therapeutically used props aid in building rapport in facilitating the
connection between counselor and client (Angelo, 1981; Jooste & Cleaver, 1992;
Payne, 1985). Props help to generalize the events within the counseling sessions to
clients’ daily lives (Payne, 1985). Props provide clients with a concrete reminder of
the issues being addressed during counseling (Jooste & Cleaver, 1992; Payne 1985).
Each of these benefits demands that interventions using props need to be analyzed in
order to understand the process experienced counselors utilize and to determine
additional benefits.

Additionally, many individuals who utilize counseling services experience the
restrictions their insurance companies and managed care have imposed. Managed care
limits the length of treatment and rates of reimbursement. Cost along with time
restrictions demand that counselors utilize powerful and time-effective interventions. The use of props can help counselors meet the restrictions of the managed care system.

The use of props as a therapeutic intervention has been a part of the experienced child counselor’s toolbox of interventions. Counselors who work with children have utilized a variety of props. These props range from using dolls, puppets, drawings, play dough, magic, children’s stories, sand trays, workbooks, and games to action figures and medical kits (see Appendix A). Many of these props are utilized to facilitate the counseling process by overcoming resistance, enhancing communication, allowing abreaction, creating fantasy, metaphoric teaching and relationship enhancement (Schaefer, 1993). It appears that one goal of the use of props as a therapeutically powerful intervention is to make thoughts, feelings and behaviors more tangible for children (Jooste & Cleaver, 1992). Therefore, props can help work with issues on a more concrete level. This study will explore the process experienced practicing counselors utilize during prop interventions.

For the purpose of this study a prop is defined as an object that a counselor and/or child client transform into a metaphoric object that is relevant therapeutically. This definition demonstrates that a prop is used intentionally in order to make an object into a metaphoric object that leads to the development of therapeutically relevant and tailored interventions.

Props have the power to transform abstract concepts into concrete representations that are visual and tangible. To understand how this transpires, the process counselors utilize with props during counseling sessions must be explored in
depth. This process is unknown. How prop usage was generated and used are factors in determining the effectiveness of prop interventions. Another determinant of their effectiveness is behavioral change experienced by the child client. As a result, what is currently happening in relation to prop usage during counseling is unknown along with how props are being used by counselors and child clients. Therefore, the focus of this study is to analyze the process child counselors utilize when using props during counseling sessions with children.

The need for counselors to utilize effective interventions with child clients is evident by the changes occurring in the field of counseling. The establishment of the Association for Play Therapy (APT) in 1982 has been one response to this need. In 1995 there were approximately 2,500 members and in 2005 this number had increased to 4,500 (www.a4pt.org). There also has been a significant increase in the number of registered play therapists; in 1992 there were 31 registered play therapists and in 2005, there were 1,182 registered play therapists (www.a4pt.org). APT began publishing a monthly newsletter to provide its members information concerning services for children in the United States and internationally. APT also began publishing the *International Journal of Play Therapy* in 1992 to ensure its members were abreast of new developments concerning counseling child clients. The establishment of APT and its publications is one indication that a focus on counseling children has emerged and effective interventions are being demanded by counselors.

An additional change in the counseling field is evidenced by the current movements within the American Counseling Association (ACA) regarding their focus
on children and creative interventions. The ACA’s publication, the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, has always included articles related to children. In reviewing this publication it appears that an average of seven articles a year were included within this journal from 1993-2006. ACA has also responded to the needs of its members who work with children by the creation of the Children’s Counseling Interest Network. This network has attempted to provide information and networking opportunities for child counselors. This network has been created in response to counselors’ need for information and effective interventions. Therefore, ACA has begun to address these needs. This provides further evidence that counselors are searching for effective interventions when counseling children. The utilization of props is one such intervention.

As ACA members searched for creative interventions to utilize during counseling sessions, the emergence of the Association for Creative Counseling (ACC) division in 2004 has been an effort to fill this gap. ACC was created to act as a forum for counselors interested in unique and diverse approaches to counseling. One goal of ACC is to promote and understand creative approaches used by counselors. Looking at how counselors utilize props in their work aligns with the mission of ACC.

With both APT’s and ACA’s increasing interest and focus on counseling children, a research alliance was established between these two professional organizations in 2004. They just completed the first phase of a research project of identifying counselors who conduct play therapy (Lambert, LeBlanc, Mullen, Ray, Baggerly, White, & Kaplan, 2007). They received over 900 respondents and are
planning a second phase of research to assess if play therapy is effective when working with issues of aggression. The collaborative effort of APT and ACA has emerged as a response to their respective members to discover effective researched interventions for both groups to utilize.

The goal of these movements has been to provide counselors with effective interventions when counseling children. An intervention utilized by many counselors to facilitate the counseling process is the use of props. Currently it is unknown exactly how counselors are using props. Additionally, the effectiveness of their use has not been specially researched and determined. This study’s focus is to determine how practicing counselors are currently using props.

There has been an increase in the number of mental health services available to children (Power, Eiralidi, Clark, Mazzuca, & Krain, 2005). However, there has not been an equal increase of the utilization of these services. Therefore when children are presented for counseling, it is vital for counselors to have interventions that have been researched and shown to be effective. Such interventions will have the power to transform behaviors outside the counseling sessions. Many of the interventions have been developed by practicing counselors. However, there exists a gap between the practice of these interventions and the research to demonstrate their effectiveness. Therefore, this study will explore how props are used when experienced counselors work with children.
Statement of the Problem

Counselors from a variety of theoretical orientations are in search of interventions to impact the behavior of their child clients. Some have tried to adapt adult client interventions and techniques when working with children (VanVelsor, 2004). These techniques may not take into account children’s cognitive abilities, developmental issues, and their limited means of communicating (Myers, Shoffner, & Briggs, 2002). As children are connected with counseling services, it is imperative that their counselors find interventions that effectively work specifically with child clients. This study will focus on determining that utilizing props when working with children is a child-appropriate intervention.

The intervention of how props are utilized during counseling has not been previously studied. Prop usage has been referenced in the literature (Angelo, 1981; Jacobs, 1992; Jooste & Cleaver, 1992; Payne, 1985), but there has not been a formal model developed concerning their use. This study will give counselors of children an intervention built upon the expertise of current counseling practitioners who utilize props. These experienced child counselors will be videotaped during actual counseling sessions and their props interventions. When these videotaped prop interventions are analyzed, a model will be developed of how to utilize a prop intervention with child clients. The resulting model of prop intervention will inform how child counselors can effectively and successfully utilize props in their counseling practice.

Over the past years there has been an increase in the number of techniques available for child counselors to utilize during their counseling sessions. However, the
research to show the use and effectiveness of these interventions has not increased at the same pace. The same is true in regards to the use and effectiveness of prop interventions. It is evident that when counselors utilize props, a powerful intervention may be occurring (Angelo, 1981; Jacobs, 1992; Jooste & Cleaver, 1992; Payne, 1985). Therefore, it is necessary to explore the process of the prop usage with child clients. Within this study the process of utilizing props will be examined.

As previously stated, a gap exists between the interventions practicing counselors are using when counseling children and whether these interventions are research based (Whiston, 1996). There are a large number of counselors who have worked effectively with children; however this information is not generally shared within the profession. Some professionals believe that the practice of counseling should inform research (Whiston, 1996). However, when reviewing literature it appears that research should more often inform practice (Sexton & Whiston, 1996). Counselors who are working with children need a format to discover which interventions they utilize during sessions impact children along with how to share this information with the rest of the counseling profession.

Background of the Problem

The practice of counseling children has been slow in developing. It was not until the ‘60s and ‘70s that working directly with children and their mental health issues emerged (Morris & Kratochwill, 1998). A strong advocating force for addressing children’s mental health was the development of counseling within the
school system (www.schoolcounseling.org). Currently many states mandate schools to employ counselors at the elementary, junior high and high school levels to address the social, academic and career needs of their students (www.schoolcounseling.org). The concept of providing counseling services to children has had a slow beginning but recently has surged with the development of professional organizations and trainings geared toward counseling children; this has led to counselors specializing in working with children.

Prior to the 1970s there had been little mention of counseling children in the literature. The oldest reported record of a professional working with a child was in 1799 by Jean Itard. Itard worked with the wild child of Aveyron to transition him back into society after spending his formative years in the wild. The next major figure to address child needs was Sigmund Freud (1963). Freud counseled the father of Little Hans to eliminate his fears. Freud’s work with Little Hans was the earliest presentation of a child benefiting from counseling within the professional literature. Between Itard’s and Freud’s work, organizations and associations began to emerge whose concerns were the causes, nature and treatment of children’s mental health.

Not until later did counselors begin to work directly with child clients in a counseling fashion and attempt to discover ways of engaging children in the process through the use of a variety of toys as props. Anna Freud (A. Freud, Hartman, & Kris, 1949) and Melanie Klein (Mason, 2003) were among the first to use props to engage children. Anna Freud used toys to build rapport when working with children and once rapport was established the toys were put away for a more didactic discussion (A.
Freud et al., 1949). Melanie Klein was one of the first to view play as the natural medium for children to express their thoughts and concerns (Mason, 2003). She proposed playing with props to be a direct substitution for didactic counseling.

Counselors began to realize from the work of Melanie Klein that when children used toys and props located in the counseling environment something powerful was occurring. The interactions between child clients and counselors were enhanced when toy props were utilized rather than relying on verbal discussions alone. Not long after, Virginia Axline (1947) developed child-centered play therapy, which built upon Carl Rogers's work (1951) of person-centered therapy. Axline's work prompted many other counseling professionals who work with children to utilize toy props when verbal language and expressive skills were not within a child's repertoire. These counseling professionals include but are not limited to Landreth (2001), O'Connor and Schaefer (1994), and Kottman (2001, 2003). Their work prompted many other counselors to take these creative approaches even further. Jacobs (1992) is one such counselor who took the concept of utilizing props during counseling to clarify clients' behaviors and goals. Through the use of props Jacobs has been able to provide concrete representations of the issues and concerns facing his clients. This research will take his and others work into consideration in order to show the power and effectiveness of utilizing prop interventions with child clients.
Theory of Therapeutic Props

Props have been used when providing services to children by a variety of counseling professionals who hold a variety of licenses and credentials. These include, but are not limited to, play therapists, sand tray therapists, art therapists, and counselors who specialize in working with children. How props are used varies; however, the rationale behind their use is very similar. Props have been used as a tangible metaphor, which helps children resolve issues, understand themselves, create meaning out of the chaos of their lives, and promote development (Jacobs, 1992; Jooste & Cleaver, 1992).

Play therapists have utilized toy props since this credential area of specialization emerged in the 1980s. Play therapists describe their theoretical orientation on a continuum from nondirective child-centered to a more directive stance, which is reflected in how they utilize toy props in their counseling sessions. Those who consider themselves to be child-centered play therapists align with Axline's work (1947), viewing their clients' use of props as a medium for working through the issues facing them. They empower child clients to select toy props that may have meaning for them and permit them to manipulate them without input of the counselor. On the opposite end of the directive continuum are play therapists who take a more directive stance. These counselors may select specific props and activities to help their child clients work through the issues they are facing (Astramovich, 1999; Landreth, 1987). Both sides of this continuum are attempting to provide a space where growth and development can be fostered through the medium of props.
Another group of professionals who use props when counseling children are sand tray therapists. These counselors provide their child clients with the protective space of a sand tray in their offices along with miniature props. These items are geared to facilitate their clients’ ability to work through their issues and concerns. There are two distinct groups of sand tray therapists. Those who view the scenes children depict within the sand tray as a gateway to the unconscious (Rogers & Friedman, 1994) and those who used it as a therapeutic technique (Snyder, 1997). Those who view the sand tray as a representation of the unconscious practice counseling from a Jungian theoretical orientation originating from the work of Dora Kolff (Rogers & Friedman, 1994). Their goal is to use the sand tray and the miniature props placed in it to allow the unconscious to emerge in a safe and protected space. As the unconscious is depicted within the sand tray, the child client is enabled to work through their unconscious issues leading to the transformation of their thoughts and behaviors (Miller & Boe, 1990; Vinturella & James, 1987). The second group of sand tray therapists utilizes the sand tray as a therapeutic technique when counseling children. This second group is more directive and interactive using miniature props chosen by the child to recreate the issues they are facing along with potential solutions or a broader level of understanding their life circumstances (Snyder, 1997). Both groups of sand tray therapists utilize props within their counseling to facilitate the growth and development of their child clients.

The use of props is a powerful technique when used in conjunction with children’s literature during counseling sessions, otherwise known as bibliotherapy.
Children who witness similar life experiences through the characters of literature realize that they are not alone in their struggles (Myers, 1998; Nickerson, 1975) or that there are possible solutions to their problems (Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young & Money, 2005). There are two ways which bibliotherapy and props interact, through the actual book (Gladding, 1992) and by the book’s characters (Cohen, 1994). An example of utilizing children’s literature as a prop is reading a book during the session and allowing it to be taken home by the child client. For children experiencing divorce, the book *Koko It’s Not Your Fault* by Vicki Lansky (1998) is given to child clients by this researcher, allowing them to continue to process their experience outside of the counseling session. An example of how characters or items from children’s literature are used as props is through the story *The Hurt* by Teddi Doleski (1983). This story talks about hurt as a stone that keeps getting bigger and bigger when the main character doesn’t talk about his feelings. A stone is then given to the child as a reminder to share his feelings. Bibliotherapy and its use of props help to facilitate the counseling process (Heath et al., 2005) and aids in generalizing occurrences within the counseling session to children’s daily lives (Chen & Bullock, 2004).

Art therapists and child counselors who use the medium of art supplies utilize the created projects as concrete representations of abstract ideas. These props offer counselors and child clients insight into the child’s thoughts, behaviors and feelings. The variety of art supplies now available to child counselors provides unlimited possibilities for their use, such as drawing feelings (Allan, 1978), drawing problems (LeRoy & Derdeyn, 1976), self-esteem issues (Hartz, Adrian & Thick, 2005), self-
portraits (Cockle, 1994), creating parts of themselves (Oaklander, 1988) and photography to document their lives (Kenny, 1987). When the resulting creations are take home by child clients, these props act as reminders of counseling goals, concepts and progress.

Child counselors practice from a variety of theoretical orientations. These counselors have individual evidence of the power of prop interventions (Gil, 1991; Schaefer, 1993). These counselors use prop interventions to help children express themselves (Glazer, 1998), to change behavior (Cook & Sinker, 1993) and to promote insight (Joyce & Stoker, 2000). Two such theoretical orientations that utilize props in counseling are gestalt and rational emotive counseling. Gestalt counselors create metaphoric props with children for the purpose of expressing parts of themselves they may have silenced (Oaklander, 1988). Rational emotive counselors have used props to promote insight (Jacobs, 1992). For example, Jacobs has used different sizes of chairs to represent the parent, adult and child parts of the self. Therefore, prop interventions have had a place within a variety of therapeutic orientations.

Along with different therapeutic theories utilizing prop interventions, such interventions have been seen during each stage of the counseling process, the beginning, middle and end. As a child begins counseling, props can be valuable for building therapeutic relationships (Guerney, 1993; Klein & Landreth, 1993), decreasing resistance (Bow, 1993), connecting with child clients (Guerney, 1993), and creating goals and providing a safe therapeutic environment (Baron, 1991). During the middle stages of counseling, props have been employed by child counselors for the
purpose of developing a common language, working through issues (Adley, 2004; Burch, 1980), showing therapeutic progress, explaining complex concepts (Payne, 1985) and practicing new skills (Acheson, 2004; Schaefer, Jacobsen & Ghahramanlou, 2000). Props have also been utilized during the closing stage of counseling. For example, closing rituals using props solidify the work completed during counseling, help to generalize therapeutic gains (Wong, Morgan, Crowley & Baker, 1996), and sustain these gains into the future. Prop interventions can be beneficial during each step of the therapeutic process.

Props have also been used within different modes of delivering counseling services. Prop interventions have been used in counseling adults during both individual and group counseling sessions (Bruner, 2000). Family counselors have utilized props with families in order to unite members towards a common goal (Angelo, 1981; Armstrong & Simpson 2002; Botkin, 2000). Props have also found a place within the arena of multicultural counseling by creating a bridge between counselor and clients from different cultures (Chang, Ritter & Hays, 2005; Ramirez, Flores-Torres, Kranz & Lund, 2005). No matter what the form of delivery of counseling services, there is a place for prop interventions to facilitate the counseling process.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine what occurs between counselors and child clients when props are used. It will also develop a model for utilizing prop interventions to be shared with other counselors.

Significance of the Study

Counselors use a variety of interventions when counseling child clients. Experienced child counselors have been utilizing props as a therapeutic intervention when counseling children. However, how prop interventions are introduced, processed and utilized has not previously been studied. This study will fill this gap by discovering what actually occurs between child counselors and child clients when a prop is being used within a counseling session and throughout the counseling process. This will result in a model based on the expertise and experience of child counselors that other counselors can emulate.

Since the use of prop interventions has not been formally studied previously, the effectiveness of their use has not been determined. This study will discover how counselors utilize prop interventions in order to impact their child clients. Therefore, at the conclusion of this study, the field of child counseling will have an effective model of prop intervention to follow which will impact the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of their child clients.
The results of this study will influence the counseling profession on two levels. First, child counselors will have available a powerfully effective researched intervention, the therapeutic use of props. They will also have a model developed by practicing counselors of how to effectively utilize prop interventions. Second, this study will provide a framework for other counseling practitioners to conduct research concerning their own techniques and approaches in order for them to be shared with other counselors so they to can benefit from their experience and expertise.

Research Question

The research question addressed in this study is, "What occurs between counselors and child clients when props are utilized during counseling?"

Definitions

Child Client. A child between the ages of 5 and 15 years old who along with his/her parent/guardian has consented to participate in this study. Within Chapters 3 and 4, child client will be referred to as client.

Counselor Participant. A counselor who has consented to participate in this study.

Prop. An object that a counselor and/ or child client transforms into a metaphor that is relevant therapeutically.
Limitations

The limitations of this study encompass soliciting participants, the sample that elected to participate, distribution of study materials and the research design. This study is relying on a narrow definition of a therapeutic prop (an object that a counselor and/or child client transforms into a metaphor that is relevant therapeutically). When soliciting counselor participants, agreement concerning the definition of a prop must be established. Also due to the intrusiveness of this study (videotaping actual counseling sessions), the type of participating counselor may be affected. For example, school counselors may need to obtain school district permission or community agency counselors may need agency approval to have their sessions recorded and therefore may have elected not to participate. Consequently, those counselors who elected to participate in this study may be those who practice independently in private mental health counseling practices, and who do not need to acquire additional permission for participation. This may prove to be a limitation regarding the type of counselor who decided to participate in this study.

The type of counselor who decided to participate in this study may also have affected the type of child client who gave assent to participate. Counselor participants who provide counseling services within private practice environments may be limited to a sample of child clients whose parent(s)/guardian(s) are able to afford such services or have insurance to cover mental health counseling. Additionally, children who are presented to counselors in private practices may suffer from a higher degree of mental illness then those services by other mental health counselors.
Another limitation of this study is how intrusive some of the phases of this study may have been viewed, such as the videotaping of actual counseling sessions. The complexity of this study may limit the sample of participants, both counselors and child clients, or it may be affected by the personal characteristics of the sample who consented to participate. Also the presence of videotape equipment may influence the behavior of both the counselor and child client participants during the counseling sessions. They may be performing for the camera while not allowing the counseling to progress.

The research design for this study is qualitative using a combination of phenomenology research and grounded theory. Patterns and categories are analyzed along with the data driving the development of themes. The design of this study does not allow for a control group to be utilized. It is looking at the counselors and child clients' interaction around using prop interventions. This may affect the generalizability of the results.

Summary

This chapter has gone into detail concerning the value of prop interventions when counseling child clients. Scientific discovery regarding how props are actually being used during counseling sessions by practicing child counselors needs to be explored by observing actual counseling sessions. The information gained around prop usage and effectiveness will provide child counselors with a powerful invention.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Research conducted in the areas of play, metaphors, and counseling children provides a foundation for studying how props can be an effective therapeutic intervention. The following is a discussion concerning the use of play and metaphors within the counseling environment. The use of play when counseling children and the field of play therapy will be discussed. The use of metaphors within the counseling arena will also be addressed. When the areas of play and metaphor intersect, the concept of utilizing props as a therapeutic intervention is formed. Literature reflecting the intersection will also be reviewed.

Role of Play in Counseling

Play is a dynamic, active, and constructive form of behavior (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002). It has been called a child’s natural way of communicating (Ginott, 1961; Gumaer, 1984; Landreth, 1987, 1993; Oaklander, 1988). Morrison (1998) stated that “play is the process through which children learn” (p.198). It enables children to express complex meaning systems, to organize behavior, to understand themselves and others, and to make sense of their world (Torrence, 2001). Power (2000) asserts:
Children's ... play has been hypothesized to contribute to the cognitive, motor, and social development of children, including the development of perception, attention, memory, problem-solving skill, language, communication, creativity, logical operations, emotion regulation, self-regulation, social skills, gender roles, social relationships, conflict resolution, coping with stress, and so on. (p. 11)

Therefore, play contributes positively to the cognitive, social, and psychological development of a child (Johnson, Christie, & Yawkey, 1999; Saracho & Spodek, 1998; Spodek, 1993). Russ (1995) stated play is a way for child clients to communicate their inner thoughts and feelings with a counselor. According to Piaget (1962), play bridges the gap between concrete experiences and abstract concepts.

Play serves two major purposes within the counseling process: (1) It is a form of communication between the child client and counselor helping to build a therapeutic relationship, and (2) it is a vehicle of change within the counseling process. Play fulfills these purposes by functioning as a means of providing opportunities for catharsis and labeling feelings (Axline, 1947; A. Freud, 1965; Moustakas, 1953), giving an opening for corrective emotional experiences, allowing insight and working through to occur (Chethik, 1989; E. Erickson, 1963; Freedhein & Russ, 1992; Waedler, 1933), offering the chance to learn alternative problem-solving techniques and coping strategies (Knell, 1993; Singer, 1993), aiding in the development of internal structure (Gilpin, 1976; Kohut, 1977; Mahler, 1968), helping in building rapport with children (Campbell, 1993), disguising the counseling focus, reducing resistance, and providing opportunities for the development and practice of new of behaviors. Therefore, the play process helps counselors facilitate the child
client’s understanding of their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and current life situation (Gumaer, 1984).

Theories of Play in Counseling

Within the psychodynamic school of thought, play is viewed as cathartic (A. Freud et al., 1949). It is a means of acting out unpleasant experiences while minimizing the negative psychological impact of these experiences. Play during counseling is seen as a way to release emotional tension within a safe environment and in a progressive nondamaging way. The traditional psychoanalytic counselor interprets the child’s unconscious, repressed feelings which are symbolized in the play (Scarlett, 2005).

The object relations counselor uses a play setting to focus on the counseling relationship and to help child clients with difficulties experienced within their interpersonal relationships (Kaduson & Schaefer, 1997). The use of play by object relations counselors is based in attachment theory and is a relational approach. Object relations counselors look for thematic play as an avenue to correct distorted cognitions and resolve affective outcomes and earlier traumas. Thematic play encompasses a child taking on imaginary roles, relationships, and events, then acting out these consistently through play either with objects or role plays.

E. Erickson (1963) viewed play as a vehicle for satiation, taking a closer look at the function of “abreactive” play and creating the idea of “repetition compulsion.” He based this on the idea that a child has a strong inner drive to recreate their
experiences in order to assimilate them (Schaefer, 1994). Therefore, a child will recreate a traumatic experience within their play to gain ownership of an experience that was too difficult to master at the time of the event. For a child to do so provides them with the opportunity progressively to regain control and be able to cope better.

Piaget (1951) agreed with E. Erickson in that play has restorative powers. It provides a medium for children to assimilate new experiences into their existing schemes. Children's play helps them to work through past stressful experiences and allows them to prepare for future experiences. Therefore play permits them to assimilate and as a result gain control over their lives. Vygotsky (Smith & Dockrell, 1997) agreed that play is essential for development, allowing emancipation from situational constraints and eventually gaining control over them.

Within the humanistic school of thought, the child counselor observes a child’s play and mirrors the surface feelings to convey understanding and unconditional positive regard. This understanding stems from Carl Rogers’s (1942) principle that providing a corrective emotional experience through unconditional positive regard is an agent for change. Axline (1947) adapted Rogers’s principles for use with children. Axline believed that a counselor’s expression of unconditional positive regard frees a child from having to act on their negative feelings. The humanistic and psychodynamic schools both focus on a child’s feelings expressed through their play. The difference is that humanistic counselors focus on surface feeling and not those hidden in repressed conflicts.
Cognitive developmental approaches differ in their use of play because their focus is on developing a child’s thinking skills and their tools used for thinking. A significant aspect of the cognitive developmental approach with children is its emphasis on explaining what others are thinking of them, called “theory of mind” (Perner, 1995). Children who display emotional and relational problems often have underdeveloped theories about what others are thinking. Play is used by a cognitive counselor to express and interpret such feelings as well as to guide children in thinking differently.

Behavioral counselors’ focus is to decrease inappropriate and harmful behaviors. Play has had a limited involvement within behavioral counselors’ work. However, McMahn and Forehand (1981) utilized play throughout a behavioral parent training program for children with conduct disorders. The training consisted of phases and play was used as a way for parents to connect with and work with their children within each phase.

A relatively new approach to working with child clients is ecosystemic theory, developed by Kevin O’Connor and Charles Schaefer (1994). It is an integration of biological sciences and concepts, various models of child psychotherapy, and development theories. The ecosystemic model focuses on the individual’s internal and external systems. Within this model, psychopathology appears when a child cannot get his/her needs met within these systems. The goal of play therefore is to facilitate the child’s normal development promoting the ability to get his/her needs met while interfering as little as possible as others attempt to get their needs met.
Counselors have adapted play techniques to fit their particular theoretical orientations (Vinturella & James, 1987). Gestalt counselors use puppetry enactment to promote the expression of emotions. Harter (1977) utilized a cognitive developmental approach to help his child clients express conflicting feelings. Jungian counselors use a sand tray for clients to create pictures in the sand using a wide range of miniatures to express their concerns and to process their life experiences, thoughts, and feelings (Allan, 1988).

There exist common themes among all of the approaches and theories that utilize a play approach with child clients (Weiner, 1976). One theme is the reliance on both technique and the therapeutic relationship to promote growth. Counselors who utilize play in their approach support the idea of having their child clients develop awareness of both thoughts and feelings while increasing their ability to understand and control their own behavior. Play is the activity of choice for children to deal with normal stressors of development and also to overcome abnormal and intense stressors (Scarlett, 2005).

**Play Therapy Definition**

The process of play therapy occurs during counseling as child clients interact with toys, a variety of materials, and a counselor within a psychologically protected setting (Baxbaum, 1954). Toys and other materials can be referred to as play media. Through this interaction of play media, thematic material is expressed within the child client's actions and words (Bishop, 1972).
Landreth (1991) defined play therapy as

...a dynamic interpersonal relationship between a child and a therapist trained in Play Therapy procedures who provides selected play materials and facilitates in the development of a safe relationship for the child to express and explore self (feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors) through the child's natural medium of communication, play. (p.14)

He believed there are seven essential components in play therapy: creating a positive therapeutic relationship, permitting the expression of a wide range of emotions, exploring real-life experiences, testing limits, developing a positive self-image, developing self-understanding and learning self-control.

Play therapy has been the recommended treatment for children in need of counseling (Bratton, Ray, Rhine & Jones, 2005). It also has been used with a wide variety of presenting problems along with a variety of populations. Within the play therapy field, counselors usually have chosen either a directive or a nondirective orientation in their work with child clients.

Directive Versus Nondirective Play Therapy

There exists a continuum within the play therapy field concerning the role of the counselor in how counseling is provided (Tuma, 1989). One end of this continuum is a child-centered relationship orientation which is considered nondirective. The opposite end of this continuum is a structured technique orientation, considered a directive approach. Many counselors use either one or the other separate orientations. However, there is an additional group which falls within the middle range of this
continuum who utilize both directive and nondirective orientations. These counselors vary their techniques during counseling according to the needs of the child client and the goals of counseling.

Nondirective Play Therapy

Nondirective play therapy has its origins in what was considered relationship theory. Relationship theory has a therapeutic emphasis that focuses on the child client's present situation and for the child client to encounter a therapeutic relationship which is a totally new experience (Taft, 1933). This relationship focuses on listening in an attempt to understand the child client. The counselor's primary role was to be present and to interact with the child client. During this interaction counselors would make statements of recognition of what the child client was doing within the counseling environment and within their relationship with the counselor as it unfolded (Moustakas & Shalock, 1955). Relationship theory has evolved into the nondirective orientation subsequently called child-centered play therapy. Child-centered play therapy encompasses the principles of Carl Rogers's (1942) person-centered counseling theory. Virginia Axline (1947) adapted Rogers's person-centered counseling theory's assumptions for use in counseling children.

Person-centered counseling is based on the assumptions that all individuals have innate capacities for purposeful, goal-directed behavior, and, if an individual is not disadvantaged by learning conditions, he/she will develop into self-accepting socialized human beings (Rogers, 1942, 1951, 1961). Axline (1955) took these basic
assumptions and created client-centered play therapy. Axline’s adaptation included the basic premise that the counseling experience should be different from any other experience of the child client’s life. Client-centered play therapy expanded relationship theory by utilizing play as the medium of expression. Client-centered play therapy focuses on the relationship formed. This relationship is based upon empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard for the child client. A counselor’s use of reflections and clarifications within the counseling session provides the foundation of this relationship (Moustakas, 1959). On the play therapy continuum, child-centered play therapy exists on the nondirective orientation end and has been called nondirective play therapy.

Nondirective play therapy is child-centered and nonintrusive (White, 2004). The responsibility and direction of the counseling sessions is left to the child client. The child client has the opportunity to develop themes and terminate the direction or techniques at his/her own pace. The counselor observes, affirming what is seen but not giving direction to the counseling session.

Directive Play Therapy

On the opposite end of the play therapy continuum is directive play therapy. Directive play therapy has its origins in David Levy’s (1939) release therapy. Levy was among the first to describe using play as a therapeutic medium in counseling child clients along with Anna Freud (1965) and Melanie Klein. Levy formulated release therapy which is a directive play therapy approach. He preselected specific toys for the
child client to work with in order to focus the counseling sessions on specific issues which brought the child client into counseling (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2001).

Active play therapy (Solomon, 1938, 1940), otherwise known as activity therapy (Kottman, Strother, & Deniger, 1987), was the next step in the further development of a directive orientation. Activity therapy allowed child clients to express their feelings and resolve conflicts in nonverbal ways through the use of games, drama, music, art, and other creative action-oriented activities.

Hambridge (1955) developed structured play therapy. A structured play therapy approach is used once a therapeutic relationship has already been established through a nondirective means. Structured play therapy is a directive approach using planned structured activities during almost every counseling session (Jones, Casado, & Robinson, 2003). During structured play therapy, the counselor has the responsibility of choosing session topics and activities in order to lead the child client in directions that the counselor deems beneficial. The activities chosen are developmentally appropriate, address the child client’s issues, and focus on current counseling goals. Therapeutic interventions are designed and include the use of metaphors, bibliotherapy, and the use of a wide variety of media in order to direct the counseling sessions. Child clients are led in a specific direction (Kottman, 1999). Structured play therapy, now known as directive play therapy, gives the responsibility of session direction and interpretation to the counselor. The counselor structures and creates the play situation in an attempt to elicit, stimulate, and intrude on the child’s unconsciousness (White, 2004).
Integration of Nondirective and Directive Play Therapies

Many counselors who work with children endorse the idea of utilizing both nondirective and directive orientations (Knell, 1997; O'Connor & Schaefer, 1994). The concept of integrating both orientations seems to be the direction of the future in play therapy (Gil, 2006). A variety of play theories subscribe to utilizing both directive and nondirective approaches, such as Adlerian, Gestalt, and cognitive-behavioral (Knell, 1997; O'Connor & Schaefer, 1994). This suggests that many counselors use both approaches in order to meet the child’s needs. Therefore, the continuum of nondirective versus directive play therapy becomes more of an integration of approaches dependent on the child client’s needs, what literature reports, and what clinical practice dictates.

Mediums of Play

A wide range of mediums have been utilized when working with child clients in counseling, including, but not limited to, art work (Harter, 1977; Muro & Kottman, 1995; Oaklander, 1988; Sinclair, 1997; White, 2004), drama (Gladding, 1992; Irwin, 1985; Jenkins & Beckh, 1993; Muro & Kottman, 1995; Oaklander, 1988; Renard & Sockol, 1987), and games (Oaklander, 1988; Schaefer & Reid, 1986). Two mediums that are used by most child counselors are art and sand trays. Therefore, a brief discussion concerning these topics will be presented.
Art therapy is primarily based upon the field of art and psychology. It is said that the artwork of a child captures symbolically the thoughts and feelings of a child from the images portrayed to the very lines of the art work (Klepsch & Logie, 1982). The art produced suggests the inner world of the child, revealing information which may not be accessed through other mediums (Anastasi & Foley, 1941; Rubin, 1999). Art has also had a role in evaluating children’s overall development (Kellogg, 1969; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Naumburg, 1973). A child’s art productions can be viewed as symbolic communication of unconscious material in a direct, uncensored, and concrete form (Naumburg, 1973). Child counselors use a variety of art projects with clients in order to elicit information a child is unable or unwilling to communicate. Therefore, the artwork produced by child clients can be considered a prop within the counseling process.

Sand tray therapy is based off of and adapted from Margaret Lowenfeld’s World technique (Rogers & Friedman, 1994). Sand tray refers to the use of miniature figurines in a shallow tray filled with sand. Many child counselors have integrated sand trays within their work using their own theoretical framework as a therapeutic tool for self-expression and healing (Mitchell & Friedman, 1994). Within the contemporary community of sand tray counselors, there are two critical components needed to promote healing: a free and protected space created by the counselor and the use of the elements earth and water (Rogers & Friedman, 1994). The combination of these components within the contained space of a sand tray allows for playful and
creative imaginative energies to unfold naturally. The images placed within the sand tray and the sand tray itself can act as a prop throughout the counseling process.

**Play Therapy Effectiveness**

Koocher and D'Angelo (1992) state that “play-oriented therapy remains the dominant and most enduring approach to child treatment practiced by clinicians” (p. 458). Counseling services utilizing play have been provided to children with a variety of presenting concerns, including academic issues, environmental concerns, mental illness, and physical difficulties.

For children who face academic challenges the use of play therapy traditionally has been shown as an effective form of treatment. Children who have learning disabilities (Axline, 1949b; Guerney, 1983, Landreth, Jacquot, & Allen, 1969) or have been labeled with special learning needs (Johnson, McLeod & Fall, 1997), such as low achievement in reading (Bills, 1950a; Fisher, 1953), have benefited from receiving play therapy services. Children experiencing speech difficulties have also profited from its use (Axline & Rogers, 1945; Dupent, Landsmen & Valentine, 1953). When children face challenges that specifically affect their academic achievement, there typically are consequences within all areas of their schooling experience. Play therapy has been shown to be a valuable means of working with children who exhibit maladaptive school behavior (Axline, 1949b; Gaulden, 1975; Hannah, 1986; Leland, Walker & Taboada, 1959) and social maladjustment (Amplo, 1980; Cox, 1953;
Another area that may affect a child's development is the environmental factors displayed in the family. More recently, play therapy has been shown to be helpful in aiding children deal with environmental factors such as physical and sexual abuse and neglect (Allan & Lawton-Speert, 1993; Cockle & Allan, 1996; Doyle & Stoop, 1999; Gil, 1991; Griffith, 1997; Hall, 1997; Marvasti, 1993, 1994; Mills & Allan, 1992; Pelcovitz, 1999; Perez, 1987; Reams & Friedrich, 1994; Saucier, 1986; Strand, 1999; Tonnning, 1999; Van de Putte, 1995). Children who have been adopted or have been placed in the foster care system have been positively assisted by play therapy (Kottman, 1997; Van Fleet, 1994). Children who have witnessed family violence have been helped through the use of play therapy (Hammond-Newman, 1994; Nisivoccia & Lynn, 1999; Van Fleet, Lilly, & Kaduson, 1999; N. Webb, 1999). Additionally, play therapy has been shown to be effective when working with children of divorce (Berg, 1989; Cangelosi, 1997; Faust, 1993; Hellendoorn & DeVroom, 1993; Mendell, 1983; O'Connor, 1993; Price, 1991; Robinson, 1999), along with those who are experiencing grief issues (Bluestone, 1999; Carter, 1987; Le Vieux, 1990; Masur, 1991; Saravay, 1991).

Children who have suffered from physical ailments have been aided by counselors who utilize play therapy. Research has shown play therapy to be an effective process in helping children deal with hospitalization (Alger, Linn, & Beardslee, 1985; Brunskill, 1984; Ellerton, Caty, & Ritchie, 1985; Golden, 1983;
Kaplan, 1999; Shapiro, 1995; J. Webb, 1995; Wojtasik & Sanborn, 1991) and those suffering from chronic or terminal illness (Bertoia & Allan, 1988; Boley, Peterson, Miller, & Ammen, 1996; Glazer-Waldman, Zimmerman, Landreth, & Norton, 1992; Goodman, 1999; Kaplan, 1999; Landreth, 1988; Le Vieux, 1990; Van Fleet, 2000). It also has been utilized with preschoolers inflicted or affected by HIV/AIDS (Willemsen & Anscombe, 2001).

Children’s emotional development is another area that has been studied regarding play therapy. Traditionally, play therapy is the treatment of choice for emotional maladjustment (Axline, 1949a; Bills, 1950a, 1950b; Dorfman, 1958; Dulsky, 1942; Fleming & Snyder, 1947). Play therapy has also been shown to be useful in the treatment of mental health concerns in children. Children whose presenting concern was aggressive and acting out behavior (Bleck & Bleck, 1982; Dogra & Veeraraghavan, 1994; Hannah, 1986; Kottman, 1993; O’Connor, 1986, Smith & Herman, 1994) and those who present as perfectionistic (Ashby, Kottman & Martin, 2004) have benefited from play therapy. It has been an effective mode of treatment for children who have experienced posttraumatic stress disorder (Allan & Lawton-Speert, 1993; Bevin, 1999; Gil, 1991; Hall, 1997; Marvasti, 1993, 1994; Mills & Allan, 1992; Strand, 1999; Van de Putte, 1995) and sever trauma (Fornari, 1999; Hofman & Rogers, 1991; Joyner, 1991; Shelby, 1997; N. Webb, 1991, 1999; Williams-Gray, 1999). Play therapy’s use with depressive episodes (Briesmeister, 1997) and anxiety and withdrawn behavior (Barlow, Strother & Landreth, 1985; Mills & Allan, 1992) have had favorable results. It has been used with those suffering from
specific fears and phobias (Cooper & Blitz, 1985; Lyness-Richard, 1997; Milos & Reiss, 1982; Sugar, 1988). Counselors have also found play therapy to be valuable in treating dissociative disorder (Klein & Landreth, 1993) and mental disabilities (Bernhardt & Mackler, 1975; Li, 1981; Mundy, 1957; Newcomer & Thomas, 1974; Sywulak, 1984).

Play therapy has been infused into elementary school counseling programs (Campbell, 1993). It has also been shown to be an effective mode of treatment when working with adolescents (Breen & Daigneault, 1998; Markman, 1997; Wilson & Ryan, 2002) and middle school children (Kottman, 1990). Additionally, it has been used with adults and couples (Schaefer, 2003) but has not been formally studied.

Metaphors

The use of play therapy with child clients is fundamentally based upon the metaphors created within the child’s play. These metaphors appear in the themes displayed within a child client’s play (i.e., nurturance theme demonstrated by preparing food or caring for a baby doll) or through individual acts (i.e., large dinosaur puppet scaring a small mouse puppet). The metaphors created through child clients’ play and use of props provides a wealth of information regarding their thoughts and feelings. They provide counselors with fertile ground to develop therapeutic interventions. Therefore, in order to understand the use of props in play, a discussion of metaphors and how they operate within the counseling arena must be addressed.
**Metaphor Definition**

The study of metaphors originated from the Greek philosopher Aristotle. He defined metaphor as “a series of words in which a comparison is being made between two or more entities that are literally dissimilar” (Angus & Rennie, 1988, p.552). The word “metaphor” comes from the Greek *metapherein* (meta, beyond; pherein, to bring) meaning to transfer or carry across (Shibles, 1974). Kopp (1971) stated that a metaphor is when one thing is expressed in terms of another. He viewed metaphor as a thought process. This bringing together or transforming creates new meaning for that which is described. Bryant, Katz, Becvar and Becvar (1988) defined metaphor as “any verbal or concrete illustration, description or reference designed to bring about perceptual and/or behavioral change” (p. 113). Santostefano (1984) defines a metaphor as “a persistent, habitual organization (pattern) of one or more of the following interrelated behaviors: images, symbols, words, emotions, postures and physical actions” (p. 127). This organization of behavior condenses, conserves, and represents issues both past and present regarding the self, other persons, objects, or situations. Therefore, metaphors exist as representations of abstract concepts used to understand the abstract concept. In order to understand how this process occurs, one must be familiar with conceptual metaphors and how they transfer meaning.

Metaphors allow clients to understand abstract concepts and permit them to work through their experiences, feelings, and thoughts on a concrete level. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) call this referencing of abstract ideas to concrete experiences “conceptual metaphor.” Therefore, clients make sense of abstract concepts through
concrete experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999). They organize their lives metaphorically around the metaphors they have experienced (M. Johnson, 1987).

There are three parts of a conceptual metaphor: mnemonic, cross-domain mapping, and everyday language. Mnemonic is the name of a set of connected metaphors (Wickman, Daniels, White & Fesmire, 1999). It is a quick reference to a whole set of metaphors that conceptually go together: i.e., argument is war. Cross-domain mapping is when one domain (argument) is the reference for understanding the other domain called the target domain (war) resulting in a transference of meaning (Modell, 1997). Everyday language is how conceptual metaphors are applied and recognized in real life (Wickman et al., 1999). Everyday language is abundant with metaphoric concepts which represent an underlying cross-domain mapping that takes place on a concrete level. Conceptual metaphors transfer meaning through comparison/substitution, anomaly, and interaction views.

Within literature there are three different views regarding how meaning is transferred: comparison/substitution, anomaly, and interaction. The comparison/substitution views the referent (subject of the comparison - argument) and its substitute (vehicle - war) organized together and implicitly compares them on the basis of shared attributes (Berlin, Olson, Cano, & Engel, 1991; Santostefano, 1984). Therefore, a metaphor is a comparison of one thing asserted as a partial resemblance to something else (Tourangeau & Sternberg, 1978). The anomaly view, in contrast, looks at the dissimilarity rather than similarity to be central in understanding metaphors (Tourangeau & Sternberg, 1978).
The interactionist view takes the stance that while a metaphor compares meaning from one thing to another, a metaphor creates a totally new meaning beyond the comparison or substitution of similarities or dissimilarities. Metaphor from this point of view involves not only two particular things being compared and the domains to which they both belong but the new meaning created by the metaphor (Tourangeau & Sternberg, 1978). This new meaning, from the interactionist point of view, addresses both primary and secondary processes of change within a client, activating both conscious and unconscious material (Atwood & Levine, 1990). The interactionist views meaning as created within the interaction between speakers, contexts, goals, and instruments (Burke, 1945; Fish, 1989; Werner & Kaplan, 1963). Therefore, a metaphor is an essential characteristic in both language and thought, implying that metaphors have a constructive impact on cognitions (Ortony, 1979). Fantz (1983) views metaphors not merely as means of communicating but rather as an “organ of perception.”

This study uses the definition of a conceptual metaphor. In this definition metaphor is used to make an abstract concept concrete. This study is also based on an interactionist view that metaphor is a concrete illustration generated to transfer meaning from one thing to another to create a completely new meaning within the client. This concrete illustration takes the form of a prop. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a metaphor is defined as when two things, along with their domains, are altered to create new meaning which was not present previously.
Functions of Metaphor in Counseling

Metaphors have several functions that facilitate communication within counseling such as condensing facts, depicting events, and reconstructing experiences (Ortony, 1979). They also are supplying language with flexibility, expressibility, and expandability (Billow, 1977). Metaphors perform a variety of functions when used throughout the counseling process. Initially, metaphors tend to be more interesting than straight discussions (Barker, 1985). Metaphors aid in the counseling process by helping to build the therapeutic relationship (Barker, 1985; Lyddon, Clay, & Sparks, 2001) and illustrating points in a memorable way (Cirillo & Crider, 1995; Zeig, 1980). Metaphors provide structure and facilitate client-counselor communications and interactions (Berlin et al., 1991) through the use of shared language (Trad, 1993).

Metaphors have the power to access and symbolize emotions (Lyddon et al., 2001). They create awareness of these emotions and beliefs (Lyddon et al., 2001), providing a release through catharsis (Shibles, 1974). Metaphors, therefore, affect unconscious thoughts and attitudes (Barker, 1985; Dolan, 1986; Ekstein, 1983; Sledge, 1977), possibly allowing clients to achieve insight into unconscious conflicts (Berlin et al., 1991). Metaphors allow clients to experience something from a different perspective and therefore create new meaning for them (Fantz, 1983).

Metaphors uncover and confront tacit assumptions (Lyddon et al., 2001). When metaphors are used, counseling appears less confrontive by sidestepping client resistance (Barker, 1985; Ekstein, 1983; Lyddon et al., 2001; Saari, 1986; Zeig, 1980). Metaphors have the power to alter perspectives (Fox, 1989; Zeig, 1980) while
introducing alternative perspectives and possibilities (Cirillo & Crider, 1995; Dolan, 1986; Lyddon et al., 2001; Zeig, 1980) and permitting clients to recognize personal resources needed to handle current concerns (Crowley & Mills, 1986). They provide clients the opportunity to confront the difficult personal experiences while affording necessary distance from their issues (Cirillo & Crider, 1995; Romig & Gruenke, 1991; Shibles, 1974; Sledge, 1977; VanVelsor, 2004). They also have the ability to cross conventional boundaries providing more depth to personal experiences (Rose, 1980).

Bandler and Grinder (1975) developed a three-tiered linguistic theory to explain how clients experience metaphors. In the first level, the client is exposed to the surface structure of the words. As this occurs, a deeper level of meaning is activated, which is the second level. This level then activates the recovered structure of meaning that the client slowly recognizes as relevant to their own experience, the third level. M. Erickson’s (1980) view is similar regarding how metaphors function within the counseling setting. As the counselor introduces a metaphor it activates the client’s unconscious thought process, resulting in the old behaviors being interrupted by the introduction of new meaning. This new meaning can result in new behavioral responses.

Bowman (1995) suggests eight reasons for counselor to utilize therapeutic metaphors with children: (1) to increase interest level and affective richness of guidance lessons, (2) to engage the child’s sense of playfulness and encourage flexibility of expression, (3) to express empathic understanding to the child, (4) to help child clients feel safer about self-disclosure, (5) to present indirect feedback to the
child, (6) to present affirmations the child can attach personal meaning to, (7) to help reframe or redefine a problem, and (8) to enrich group counseling.

Counselors can use metaphors and metaphorical techniques as teaching tools, instruments for therapeutic communication, motivational strategies, and a means for therapeutic change (Dolan, 1986). Metaphors therefore have a place within the counseling process. It is important now to turn to the idea of how metaphors are understood and created.

Construction and Comprehension of Metaphors

The methods typically employed to study the construction and comprehension of metaphors has included by asking subjects to describe their understanding of sentences and continuation and description of stories. The review of findings regarding such studies with children are contradictory and the theory incomplete (Billow, 1977). One such contradiction is that children’s ability to appreciate and create metaphors does not appear until adolescence yet metaphors can be observed in four-year-olds (Winner, Wapner, Cicone & Gardner, 1979).

Even with this apparent contradiction, the construction and understanding of metaphors by children has been reported by researchers. Mounound (1982) found metaphors were constructed during a child’s first years of life with their roots primarily in bodily and sensory representations, receiving support from laboratory findings (Winner et al., 1979). Billow (1981) studied children’s creation of metaphors and reported that the capacity for spontaneous metaphor creation increases from age...
two to six years old as with other cognitive capabilities. Genter (1988) conducted two experiments with children 4-18 years old showing a developmental increase in the relational focus and interpretation of metaphors. Winner, Rosenstiel, and Gardner (1976) studied children 6 to 14 years old and found a developmental trend toward appropriate comprehension of metaphor. It is their belief that spontaneous production of metaphor occurs first, followed by comprehension, and then by the ability to explain the metaphor. Vodnisdou, Ortony, Reynolds, and Wilson (1984) conducted experiments with preschool, 1st, and 3rd graders. Their results supported that success or failure in comprehending metaphors depends on the difficulty of the comprehension task rather than linguistic input required for metaphorical interpretation. Therefore, it appears that children have the ability to construct and comprehend metaphors at a relatively young age.

In the construction process of a metaphor, if it is counselor generated, certain design ideas should be considered. Initially, a therapeutic metaphor should utilize a child client’s object preferences and sensory preferences, interweaving them (Crowley & Mills, 1986). Bowman (1995) suggests that metaphors interweave the three sensory modes of auditory, visual and kinesthetic. Polster (1981) recommends that a counselor’s attention to a client’s personal metaphors increases their connection to the thoughts and experiences of their clients. Therefore, a metaphor created out of the client’s language increases the counselor effectiveness (Bandler & Grinder, 1975; Dolan, 1985; Katz, 1996; Rogers, 1951; Watzlawick, 1978; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). Bandler and Grinder (1975, 1979) suggest clients have preferred modes
for talking in, storing, and recalling information based on their senses. A client's preferred modes can be determined by the descriptive words the client utilizes. When counselors try to understand their client's metaphors they have access to their client's model of their world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Once child client preferences are determined, certain steps should be considered during the process of metaphor creation. First, a metaphor should parallel the child client's life situation or pattern of interactions (Matthews & Dardeck, 1985). Then it should reflect the key elements of the child client's problem, but be different enough from the actual problem (Dolan, 1985). Next, a connection strategy must be created. Lankton and Lankton's (1983) connecting strategy has three components: (a) client gains access to resources, (b) suggestions for change through an indirect context, and (c) utilize previously used resources in the resolution of the problem. The metaphor is then created to develop new positive associations to old negative stimuli (Matthews & Dardeck, 1985).

Other suggestions regarding metaphor construction appear in the literature. Muran and DiGiuseppe (1990) adhere to specific rules for the selection of a metaphor for use in counseling, especially with children: (a) clearly define the concept necessary to communicate; (b) use client's language in an area the client understands and has mastered; (c) search for an analogue concept within the client's knowledge which includes concepts necessary to teach; and (d) if none exists, start over with a new concept which the client has knowledge of. Gordon (1978) speaks about a criterion for using metaphors with clients: well established goals, make sure there is an
isomorphism between the vehicle and the topic, include a resolution, include a connecting strategy, utilize the child client's core statements, and consistently connect the metaphor to the client's problem, reframing a previously unpleasant experience with one that is valuable and useful.

Angus and Rennie (1989) found that both client-generated and counselor-generated metaphors symbolized the client's inner experiences by providing an associative link to experiences, represented aspects of self-identity, and role relationship patterns. There are two types of client-generated metaphors (Rose, 1980). The first type is when a metaphor serves the creative purpose of connecting elements and the second type is when it is used in a representational manner. The specific words used by the client may be identical, but the difference lies in the internal psychological distancing between them. Client's often present metaphors as matter of fact because they are so familiar that they do not understand what they may be saying (Welch, 1984). It is the counselor's responsibility to choose or call attention to the client's metaphor.

Children communicate metaphors through their play (Ablon, 1996) and stories (Carlson & Arthur, 1999). Sims and Whynot (1997) call children's artistic expressions "visual metaphors" (p. 343). Counselors routinely draw parallels between metaphors experienced in counseling sessions and the child's own experiences. This produces insight and can potentially lead to change (Oaklander, 1988; Pardeck, 1990). Counselors can utilize the child client's metaphors to create powerful and meaningful interventions for therapeutic ends (Rose, 1995; VanVeslor, 2004). One such
intervention is the use of props with children, which combines the areas of using play and metaphors.

Metaphors and Counseling Theories

Milton Erickson (1980) was one of the first to use metaphors during counseling sessions. He used it by creating stories during hypnotherapy. He would first induce a trance-like experience and then used metaphors to deepen it. This was done to have the client form new associations which could lead to behavior change. Since Erickson, counselors from a variety of theoretical orientations have utilized metaphors as a therapeutic tool for change.

Counselors from a wide range of theoretical orientations have accomplished counseling goals through the use of metaphors. From a psychodynamic perspective, Gardner (1971, 1972, 1979) demonstrated their usefulness when counseling troubled youth. Metaphors have been used in conjunction with behavioral principles for weight control (Adams & Chadbourne, 1982). Gestalt counselors have reported successful outcomes using metaphors when working with sexual problems (Mosher, 1979). Cognitive counselors have used therapeutic metaphors to restructure clients' cognitive distortions (Kottman, 2003; Kottman & Ashby, 2000) and to restructure clients negative metaphors (Goncalves & Craine, 1990). The use of metaphor has been associated with second-order change within the counseling process (Watzlawick et al., 1974). Additionally, paradoxical strategies employed by family counselors can be considered synonymous with metaphors.
It has been proposed that Carl Rogers had an intuitive ability to use metaphoric frameworks (Wickman & Campbell, 2003). He did this by using clients' language and creating logical entailments of the counseling interaction while working towards forming a therapeutic alliance. Carl Jung's (1964) conception of the symbol shares similar qualities with metaphors. According to Jungians, the symbol exists in language but moves beyond it. The symbol transcends the meaning it is immediately associated with and involves an unconscious meaning similar to how the interaction theorists view metaphor.

A principle in narrative therapy is that problems do not reside in people but are active agents within their lives, recruiting and maintaining certain ways of living (White & Epston, 1990). This principle is accomplished by narrative counselors externalizing a client's problems. This externalization process encompasses the formation of a problem metaphor. Within gestalt theory, viewing the universal opposites, such as top-dog versus under-dog, is metaphoric. Adlerian counselors also have used therapeutic metaphors as a method of helping children understand their lifestyles (Kottman & Johnson, 1993).

In transactional analysis, metaphors are understood and communicated through imagery and feelings of the Child ego state (Campos, 1972). A client's self changes through the use of the metaphoric language used within the process of rewriting an unhealthy life script. For example, rewriting a life script may be when a client discontinues identifying with an unhealthy metaphor and begins utilizing healthier ones.
Counselors who practice from a variety of theoretical orientations have seen the value of metaphor use. Even though their theoretical foundations and goals differ, they have used metaphors as an effective therapeutic tool for change.

**Metaphors and Change**

Metaphoric representations are central to the change process that occurs during counseling. This change process can include building a therapeutic relationship, working through resistance, developing awareness of feelings and thoughts, and providing new alternatives and possibilities for clients (Lyddon et al., 2001). MacCormack (1985) sees metaphors as the contrasting of two seeming unrelated things “producing semantic conceptual anomaly, the symptom of which is usually emotional tension” (p.5). It is this tension that accompanies a shift in meaning for the client.

Therefore, metaphors are not just means of communicating, but they can be a way to facilitate change. Metaphors can work to produce a “shift in attitude” (Black, 1954). When a client’s thought patterns change, there is also a related change in affect and behavior (Bandler & Grinder, 1975; Bandler, Grinder & Delozier, 1977). Changes in the metaphors clients use to describe their lives and problems may parallel significant changes in counseling (Carlsen, 1996; Goncalves, 1994; Meichenbaum, 1995). Consequently, metaphors can act as a vehicle of communication but more importantly a catalyst for change in counseling (Bagarozzi & Anderson, 1989; Bandler

Metaphors may act as change agents by shaking clients out of customary ways of being and facilitating self-reflection, which is a condition of change (Evans, 1988). Watzlawick (1978) referred to metaphors as the “language of change.” Frank (1962, 1982) has described the change process as marked by “symbolic communications.” It is this symbolic communication that influences attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral changes within the client (Gordon, 1978). Metaphors act as agents of change by causing tension, providing alternative perspectives, measuring progress, and promoting self-reflection.

Effectiveness of Metaphors

The use of metaphor as an effective intervention has been documented within the literature (Bryant et al., 1988; Cirillo & Crider, 1995; Haley, 1973; Hoskins & Lesebo, 1996; Kopp, 1971; MacCormack, 1997; McMullen, 1996; Myers, 1998; Saari, 1986; Watzlawick, 1978; Watzlawick et al., 1974). Rose (1995) utilized the characters and themes from the Mighty Morphin’ Power Rangers metaphorically with a child client and reported on its effective use in producing change. Metaphors have been shown to be an effective intervention when working with adolescents (Saari, 1986). They have been used with a variety of clients individually as a means of motivation (Dolan, 1986) and with issues surrounding the grieving process (Schwartz-Borden,
Metaphors have been used as a tool by family counselors (Combs & Freedman, 1990) and with couples (Carpenter, 2000, 2002).

Goals of the Change Process with Child Clients

The change process for child clients consists of the interactions in which change occurs within the child client and within the counseling relationship formed (James, 1997). Such change can occur when trust has been built through active listening, unconditional acceptance, solicitation of the child client's help, and patience with the display of resistance (Erdman & Lampe, 1996). Within the beginning sessions, Brooks (1985) believes that certain messages and goals should be addressed with a child client to facilitate change. The existence and nature of the presenting problems should be raised. The image that the counselor can help should be reinforced. Last, the counselor suggests it is difficult to confront problems. There are four general factors to promoting change for children: (1) opportunity for catharsis, (2) expectation of change, (3) positive attention from counselor, and (4) reinforcing effects (Tuma, 1989).

Typically children are brought into counseling by a referring source that is complaining about or disturbed by their behavior (Tuma, 1989). When working with child clients, the change process involves increasing their self-understanding and changing behavior. White (2004) states children's therapeutic goals can include containing conduct problems, relieving stress, promoting positive encounters with others, increasing verbalization, and fostering the communication of needs. Children
come to counseling to improve problem-solving skills, improve decision-making abilities, develop impulse control, discover and enhance self-esteem, develop and utilize patience, and resolve dilemmas of family life (White, 2004).

When working with children, counselors have adapted theories and skills utilized with adult clients for their use with child clients (Barker, 1990; Erdman & Lampe, 1996; Hughes & Baker, 1990; Moss-Kagel, Abramovitz, & Sager, 1989; Sklansky, Silverman, & Rabichow, 1969). In order for counselors to act as an agent of change, therapeutic interventions need to be designed specifically for the child client population. Also, according to Piagetian theory (Ginsburg & Opper, 1969), children are less able to understand the abstract than adults. Therefore, a counselor needs to use concrete examples and hands-on activities when working with children (Erdman & Lampe, 1996). As a result, developing therapeutic interventions specifically for child clients that take into account their need for concreteness is necessary and the use of props aligns with this need.

Props

A prop can represent metaphorically a verbal label, an image, or an action. Props allow a child client to interact with abstract concepts by imaging, verbalizing, or acting (Santostefano, 1984). Props can be the play materials used in the counseling process as a medium for child clients to express themselves (Campbell, 1993). A prop is considered a metaphoric object. A metaphoric object is a prop “that represents something meaningful in the context of a particular person’s life” (Payne, 1985). It is
used therapeutically to signify events, situations, and relationships among and between persons and things (Watzlawick et al., 1974). A prop takes an image or concept and renders it into a tangible form so that it becomes meaningful. A prop can be touched, carried, placed strategically, and played with. A prop differs from a verbal metaphor because it does not only rely on verbalization to convey its meaning, but it can be seen and handled. Angelo (1981) reported successfully using props during family counseling sessions, and Payne (1985) successfully utilized them with individual clients. A prop can be selected and interpreted within sessions in order subtly to change communication and behavioral patterns.

Payne (1985) speaks of five ways a prop can be utilized within the counseling process: reframe, paradox, unconscious change, enhance memory, and validation of emotions. A prop reframes by illuminating a client's difficult experience, allowing them to address their situation while seeing it in a different light. As a paradox, a prop could be used to invoke an opposing response, then a task the counselor assigned. Unconsciously a prop can help to shift a client's perspective without requiring a conscious understanding of what is involved in the process. A prop can be used as a mnemonic device to keep something in the client's consciousness. Another aspect is a prop can provide a tangible image of an emotion while validating that emotion in a nonthreatening way.

Props can be selected by counselors on the basis of their ability to represent client behaviors, relationships, interactive processes, or rules in counseling (Angelo, 1981). The introduction of a prop can be facilitated by a verbal metaphor used by the
child client. With this introduction the counselor can make the child client's verbal metaphor into a prop, making it concrete. Props can also be used to emphasize interpretations, to dramatize aspects of relationships, and to understand the counseling process.

Introducing props into counseling sessions with children intersects the fields of play therapy and metaphors. Counselors working with children utilize a variety of materials to support and promote movement in the counseling process. These props are more than simply toys, books, or art supplies. As a prop they are being intentionally used to help the child client obtain insight into their thoughts, feelings, and actions. They become a device to make abstract concepts concrete. Props transform abstract concepts into metaphoric objects of change. Jacobs (1992) suggests counselors should use creative techniques to make concepts more concrete, to heighten awareness, to dramatize a point, to speed up the counseling process, and to enhance learning. Jacobs asserts that people are visual learners and that they learn through experience. He states that it is essential for the counselor's office to have a wide variety of props to facilitate the creative process.

The literature within the field of play therapy suggests that professionals are in search of information regarding how effectively to work with and address the needs of children within the counseling arena (VanVeslsor, 2004). The future of counseling children needs to encompass a systematic integration of all types of play research and clinical practice. Another focus needs to be on refining specific techniques to be used with child clients (Russ, 1995). Additionally, counseling skills need to be developed
specifically with the child in mind rather than adapting adult basic skills to child
counseling (Landreth, Baggerly, & Tyndall-Lind, 1999). Play is an effective tool used
by child counselors. It acts as a tool by being a symbolic metaphor. Play’s power
empowers child clients to integrate and organize their thoughts, feelings, behaviors,
and experiences (Ablon, 1996). More research in the area of counselors utilizing play
is necessary to show its effectiveness and efficiency as a technique. The props used by
child clients and their counselors during counseling sessions must be studied and
reported on for third-party payers to accept it as a form of treatment (Koocher &
D’Angelo, 1992).

Within the literature, examples of utilizing props in counseling have not been
thoroughly researched. There exist only three references that illustrate specifically
how props have been and can be utilized within the counseling process (Angelo, 1981;
Jacobs, 1992; Payne 1985). They are descriptive of how props have been used with
adult clients. Also, one is more instructional with ideas and examples of how to use
props creatively. Within these references and throughout the literature there is no data
concerning the effectiveness of prop use.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Counselors utilize a variety of interventions when providing counseling services to children. Some of these interventions range from using toys to art in order to aid in the therapeutic process. One such intervention is the utilization of props. This study defines a prop as an object that a counselor and/or child client transforms into a metaphor that is relevant therapeutically. How practicing child counselors actually utilize props during their sessions must be explored. Ultimately, this study takes an in-depth look at the utilization of props during counseling with children. Observing child counselors practice their craft informed the researcher on the complex interactions occurring when props are used during counseling. Within this chapter child client(s) will be referred to as both client(s) and child client(s).

Overview of Design

The design of this study was a combination of phenomenological research and grounded theory. Phenomenological research refers to a researcher discovering the fundamental nature of human experiences surrounding a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher developed categories and themes to understand the experiences of the participants. Within this study the researcher viewed actual counseling sessions
occurring between counselors and clients in order to understand how they utilized props. Grounded theory refers to when a researcher tries to develop a general theory of a process, action or interaction (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Within grounded theory the researcher builds theory from the ground up, constantly comparing the data that is discovered with materializing categories. These categories then result in the themes related to the general theory. This study looked at the process of utilizing props with children. The researcher continually compared the incidents of interactions around prop usage as each videotape was viewed, which led to the emergence of themes. Therefore, this study was a qualitative analysis utilizing phenomenological research and grounded theory in order to answer the question of how counselors use props in their work.

This study consisted of four phases. The first phase involved locating practicing counselors who work with children and utilize props according to this researcher’s definition of a prop. A prop was defined as an object that a counselor and/or client transform into a metaphor that is relevant therapeutically. The second phase was composed of the distribution and completion of informational packets containing consents and assents. The third phase entailed videotaping the counseling sessions of counselor and client dyads that who consented and assented to participate in this study. The videotapes were of actual counseling sessions focusing on the prop interventions used by counselors. The fourth phase consisted of viewing professionally published videotapes of actual counseling sessions in which props were utilized.

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Sample

The sample consisted of actual counseling sessions between counselors and child clients that contained prop usage. A total of 33 videotaped counseling sessions were viewed. Following are descriptions of the videotapes utilized along with the counselors and child clients who appeared on the videotapes.

Videotape Demographics

Both professionally published and unpublished videotapes were utilized. The published videos were chosen when they contained actual counseling sessions with child clients and the utilization of props. Within searching published videotapes, nine such published videos were obtained and viewed, which totaled ten counseling sessions. The majority of these sessions were one-time sessions for both the counselor and the client. If follow-up sessions were deemed necessary, appropriate referrals were made to local mental health providers. The original purpose of the published videotapes was as educational tools for mental health professionals in training. The theoretic orientations of these counselors were paramount in the tapes being published for viewing. The counselors who appeared on the published videotapes were known as leading experts in the field of counseling children. These counselors were also known for their association with the theories they practiced, such as Terry Kottman with Adlerian play therapy, Violet Oaklander with gestalt therapy and David Espton with narrative therapy. For this study, ten published counseling sessions were included. Of
these ten, four were of counselors who contributed one videotaped session (Terry Kottman, David Scharff, Gerald Koocher and David Espton). Michael Bernard contributed two counseling sessions with two different child clients. Violet Oaklander contributed four published videotaped sessions. Two of her sessions were with one child client and two with two different child clients. Refer to Table 1 for the names of the published counselors and their clients. Permission was obtained from the publishing houses of the published videotapes for inclusions in this study. A published videotape was included in this study if it contained an actual counseling session with a child client and if props were utilized during the session.

Table 1

Published Counselors and Child Clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Counselor</th>
<th>Child Client</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Therapy with the Experts: Adlerian Play Therapy with Terry Kottman</td>
<td>Terry Kottman</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Therapy with the Experts: Object Relations Child Therapy with David Scharff</td>
<td>David Scharff</td>
<td>Jeff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Therapy with the Experts: Medical Child Therapy with Gerald P. Koocher</td>
<td>Gerald Koocher</td>
<td>Leah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Therapy with a Young Boy</td>
<td>David Epston</td>
<td>Sebastian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational-Emotive Therapy with Children and Adolescents</td>
<td>Michael Bernard</td>
<td>Shannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Therapy Process in Action: A Session with Carlos</td>
<td>Violet Oaklander</td>
<td>Carlos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Therapy with the Experts: Gestalt Therapy with Children with Violet Oaklander</td>
<td>Violet Oaklander</td>
<td>Blake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Boy and His Anger: A Therapy Session</td>
<td>Violet Oaklander</td>
<td>Abrum*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Atypical Sand tray Session: With a 13-Year-Old Boy</td>
<td>Violet Oaklander</td>
<td>Abrum*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Same child client
In Chapter 4 and 5, the published counselors’ full names will be used when they are initially referred to. After they are initially referred to, only their first names are utilized with the exception of David Scharff and David Espton who are referred to as David S. and David E. respectively. The published videotaped child clients are referred to by their first names.

The unpublished videotapes were of mental health professionals who are currently providing mental health counseling services for children. There were 11 counselors who contributed videotapes, resulting in 23 counseling sessions. Six of these sessions were one-time events. Two videotapes were of single sessions that occurred in the middle stage of the counseling process. Five child clients participated in multiple sessions, which resulted in 15 videotaped sessions. Refer to Table 2 for the unpublished counselor and client dyads along with the number of sessions contributed. The names of the unpublished counselors and their child clients were changed for confidentiality. First names were assigned to the unpublished counselors and child clients. From this point on within Chapter 3, 4, and 5, child client(s) will be referred to as child client(s) and/or client(s).

In summary, a total of 33 sessions were viewed and analyzed for themes related to the use of props. Ten of these were professionally published counseling sessions and 23 were of unpublished counseling sessions. Of the unpublished videotapes, four counselors had multiple counseling sessions with the same child clients. Of the published videotapes one counselor had multiple sessions with the same child client.
Table 2

Unpublished Counselors and Child Clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselor Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Child Client Pseudonyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Trevor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>Kyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laci</td>
<td>Crystal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>Christy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sage</td>
<td>Calie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Candace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carley</td>
<td>Holly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Ryan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Robin</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Becky</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jill</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Child Client and Counselor Demographics

The sample for this study was 33 videotaped counseling sessions which consisted of 22 counselor and client dyads containing 17 counselors and 22 clients. Of the 33 videotaped counseling sessions, ten were obtained from published counselors and 23 from unpublished counselors. The 33 videotaped sessions contained 16 child clients participating in single videotaped sessions and six child clients participating in multiple videotaped sessions, ranging from two sessions to five sessions.

A total of 22 clients were viewed receiving counseling services. Thirteen clients were from unpublished videotaped sessions and nine from published videotaped sessions. The age of the clients ranged from 5 years old to 15 years old with a mean of 10.22 years old. Table 3 displays the gender and ethnicity of the child clients. Eleven were male and 11 were female. Eighteen were classified as Caucasian,
one as African American, one as Latino, one as Swedish and one as South American. Due to confidentiality constraints, the presenting issues that led their parent(s)/guardian(s) to initiate counseling services was unknown.

Table 3

Child Clients' Gender and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 11 unpublished counselors participated in this study. One of the counselors held a doctorate degree, nine held master's degrees and one held a bachelor's degree. Four of the master-level counselors were pursuing doctorate degrees at the time of this study. Six of the unpublished counselors were licensed as professional counselors, three as Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors, one as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, two as Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, one as an Accredited Clinical Supervisor, one as a Registered Play Therapist and one as a Registered Nurse. One counselor had not received her license by the time of this study. Many of the unpublished counselors held multiple licenses. The range of years
of experience was 1 year to 19 years with a mean of 6.05 years of experience. All of these professionals practiced in the Midwest of the United States. The arena in which they counseled were seven in private practice, two in a university setting, one within a community agency and one in a school environment. Table 4 indicates the degrees, licenses and years of experience for each participating counselor.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Highest Degree Obtained</th>
<th>Licenses Held</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laci</td>
<td>MSEd</td>
<td>LPC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>LPC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>LCSW, RPT</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>LCPC</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>MSEd</td>
<td>LPC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>LPC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sage</td>
<td>MSEd</td>
<td>LCPC, RN</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>LPC, LMFT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>EdD</td>
<td>LMFT, LCPC, ACS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carley</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>LPC</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These unpublished counselors distributed informational packets to the parent(s)/guardian(s), then to their clients, who had been participating in counseling services. Each of the unpublished counselors had voluntarily consented to participate in this study and consented to having their sessions videotaped. Their reason for participation was to show how they worked with children. Their primary incentive was
to further the research regarding providing mental health counseling services for children.

A total of 17 counselors were observed providing counseling services. Six were published counselors and 11 unpublished counselors. Table 5 displays the gender and ethnicity of the counselors. Eleven were female and six were male. Fourteen of them classified themselves as Caucasian, one as African American, one as Australian and one as Asian.

Table 5
Counselors' Gender and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instruments

Within this study the main mode of investigation involved the qualitative method of observation. The researcher acted as a complete observer. A complete observer is a researcher who observes without participating (Creswell, 2002). This was conducted by directly observing counseling sessions through the use of videotape.
equipment. The researcher became the primary instrument in data collection as it is with qualitative research (Merriam, 1998).

Two research assistants were utilized within this study. They were first-semester doctoral students who were participating in a research class at Northern Illinois University. They were African American and did not possess experience in the field of counseling children. Both were trained in isolating incidents of prop usage and in coding. Research assistants were utilized to triangulate the data and to ensure interrater reliability. Table 6 reports the percentage of agreement between research assistants and researcher for three of the videotaped counseling sessions.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Videotape #1</th>
<th>Videotape #2</th>
<th>Videotape #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Assistant #1</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>84.38%</td>
<td>82.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Assistant #2</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>83.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>85.75</td>
<td>85.94</td>
<td>83.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total mean including both research assistants and the three videotapes was 84.93. Therefore, interrater reliability was obtained. The researcher then proceeded to view and code all videotaped sessions. Themes emerged throughout this process and are reported in Chapter 4 with rich descriptions.
Procedures

Phase 1 – Soliciting Counselor Participants

The first phase involved soliciting counselor participants. Three avenues were utilized for obtaining counselor participants and the clients they serve. Initially, the network of counselors that this researcher had regular contact with was communicated with via phone and in person to elicit their participation in this study. These counselors provided counseling services in the state of Illinois as private practice counselors, school counselors or community agency counselors. When these colleagues did not provide counseling services directly to children they provided their referral list of child counselors. Once contact was made and it was verified that they utilized props according to this researcher’s definition of a prop, consent for participation and videotaping was obtained.

The second avenue for soliciting counselor participants was to make contact with counselors who attended training workshops. Flyers of invitation to participate in this study (Appendix B) were distributed to workshop attendees. The third avenue used to recruit counselor participants was to contact members of the Association of Play Therapy through e-mail to solicit their participation. Therefore, three different avenues for obtaining counselor participants were utilized: the researcher’s network connections, workshop attendees and the APT member list.

When a counselor demonstrated an interest to participate in this study, a Counselor Informed Consent (Appendix C) form was forwarded to them to review and sign along with the researcher’s contact information. A copy of their signed consent
was returned to them. The counselor also signed the Counselor Consent to Videotape (Appendix D) form. Once consent was obtained from counselor participants, the second phase of this study commenced.

Phase 2 – Soliciting Client Participants

The second phase of this study began with providing counselor participants Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Informational Packets and Child Client Informational Packets. Within the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Informational Packets were a Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Letter of Introduction Letter (Appendix E), a Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Informed Consent (Appendix F) and a Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Consent for Videotaping (Appendix G).

These Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Informational Packets were distributed by the counselor participants to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their clients who had initiated or had been receiving counseling services. Parent(s)/guardian(s) were asked by their participating counselor to review the items in their packet and determine if they wished to participate in the study.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) decided to participate or not to participate within this study. Dependent on the parent(s)/guardian(s)' determination regarding participation, they completed the appropriate items within their packet and returned it to their participating counselor.

When a parent/guardian consented to participate in the study, the counselor participant reviewed the Child Client Information Packet with his or her client during their session. Included in the Child Client Information Packet were a Child Client
Informed Assent (Appendix H) and a Child Assent for Videotaping (Appendix I). The participating counselor who provided the counseling services explained the information contained in the Child Client Information Packet with his or her client. Once the forms were reviewed and the child gave assent, he/she was asked to sign the provided forms. The parent(s)/guardian(s) were provided with copies of the forms they and their child signed. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and clients who wished to withdraw their consent or assent could do so at any point during this study.

**Phase 3 - Videotaping**

The third phase of this study commenced once the consents and assents for videotaping were given. The counselor participants and clients' counseling sessions were videotaped focusing on the interventions utilized by the counselor participants. These counselor participant and client dyads were videotaped for one to five sessions, determined by the counselor. The resulting videotapes were used to isolate portions that showed incidents of prop interventions for analysis. These portions of the videotapes were analyzed to provide information concerning how a counselor introduced the use of props along with how they are utilized. The resulting information was used in the development of a model for the use of therapeutic props.

**Phase 4 – Published Videotapes**

Published videotapes were ordered and viewed by the researcher. Videotapes that contained actual counseling sessions and utilized props were included in this
study. The publishing houses of the published videotapes were contacted and permission was granted regarding their use in this study.

Procedures for Videotaping

Professionally published and unpublished videotaped counseling sessions were employed to discover significant themes of how counselors and child clients interact with props during counseling. In order to use the published videotapes of actual counseling sessions, written permission was obtained from the publishing houses of Max Sound, Brief Family Therapy Center, Microtraining Associates, Guilford Press, Pearson Longman and Insight Media. Each publisher gave written permission for their videotape(s)' inclusion in this study.

The unpublished counselors were obtained through a variety of sources. Counselors belonging to professional organizations such as the Association for Play Therapy were solicited to participate. Counselors who were continuing their academic pursuits at Northern Illinois University were asked to participate. Colleagues of this researcher were also contacted and when appropriate asked to participate. These colleagues were also asked to identify their child counseling referral sources. Snowball sampling was used to obtain additional mental health professionals who were then contacted in order to solicit their participation.

Once the unpublished counselors consented to participate and be videotaped, they connected with the parents and/or guardians to request their participation. Once consent was obtained, child clients were asked to give assent to participate. This
resulted in child client participants who were compliant towards the counseling process. Due to confidentiality constraints the only information concerning the child clients given to this researcher was their age. However, in viewing their sessions certain issues presented themselves which may have led their parents and/or guardians to pursue counseling services for their children. The issues brought up during the counseling sessions included but were not limited to death, anger, self-control, behavioral problems, divorce, depression, anxiety, attachment and transitions.

The counseling sessions of the unpublished videotapes entailed both one-time events and multiple sessions. Four of the unpublished counselors provided videotapes of more than one session with the same child client. These multiple-session tapes were not necessarily consecutive counseling sessions. Within the published counseling sessions, one counselor was viewed working with three different child clients and another counselor with two different child clients. Ten counseling sessions came from published videotapes and 23 sessions from unpublished videotapes.

There were moments when other individuals were invited into the counseling sessions of both the published and unpublished videos. Within the video “Narrative Therapy with a Young Boy” conducted by David Espton, a translator was present during the counseling session. The presence of the translator was necessary because the child client’s first language was Swedish. Also in the unpublished videotapes of counselor Dennis, the parents of the client Toby were invited into the sessions to aid in the counseling process.
For both the published and unpublished videotapes the videotaping equipment was either present in the counseling room or behind a one-way mirror. Some of the published videotapes had been edited to control their length due to the teaching value of the presentation or because of translation from a language other than English. Additionally, most of the published videotapes were of higher quality. The quality of the unpublished videotapes was dependent on the video equipment utilized. This resulted in some portions of the videotapes containing only picture or only audio sound. The portions of these videotapes that did have picture and sound were utilized. The counselors in the unpublished tapes were responsible for the videotaping equipment setup.

Data Analysis

The data of this study was obtained and analyzed by qualitative methods utilizing a phenomenological approach and grounded theory. The qualitative data originated from the observation of videotaped client-counselor participant dyads’ counseling sessions in order to isolate prop interventions. Two research assistants were trained regarding the qualitative methods utilized. Interrater reliability was calculated and obtained between the research assistants and the researcher.

All the videotapes were viewed by the researcher four times. The first viewing was to get acquainted with the counselor and client. The second viewing was done in order to record and label the incidents that transpired between the counselor and client specifically regarding prop usage. The third viewing consisted of counting the
frequency of the labeled incidents. The fourth viewing was to confirm the labels and frequencies. These incidents were then examined by coding and contextualized strategies. Coding refers to breaking data into categories within and between data. Contextualized strategies attempt to understand the data within its context. Once all 33 sessions had been completely viewed and reviewed, the labeled occurrences were examined. Through the constant comparative method (Bogdan, & Biklen, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) themes emerged concerning the labeled occurrences. These themes naturally divided into two categories, the process of counseling children and the utilization of props with children. The data analysis therefore examined the incidents of interactions between counselor and client, broke them down into descriptive categories, and as patterns emerged, themes materialized.

Data reported in Chapter 4 was organized on the basis of frequencies regarding the discovered themes, using Hill, Thompson, Hess, Knox, Nutt Williams and Ladany’s (2005) labels to describe the data. These labels include general, typical, variant and rare. The unit of analysis described is the counseling session. Therefore, general refers to the theme being present in all or all but one of the sessions. Typical refers to the theme being present in more than half of the videotapes to the general cut-off. Variant refers to the theme being present in at least two or three of the sessions to the typical cut-off. Last, rare refers to the theme appearing in one session.

Descriptive statistics were used to report on the characteristics of the participating counselors and clients. Client demographics included gender, ethnicity and age. Counselor demographics were reported concerning gender, ethnicity, licenses
held and length of experience. Additionally the percentages of counselors contributing to the developed themes were calculated. The data analysis involved within this study was used to develop a model of how counselors utilized props with clients.

Research Question

The research question addressed in this study is: “What occurs between counselors and child clients when props are utilized during counseling?”
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine how counselors and child clients utilize props during counseling. Specifically incidents of when props were used to make abstract concepts concrete were searched for. In order to find evidence, a total of 33 videotaped counseling sessions which contained props usage were used. Of these, 10 of the sessions came from professionally published videotapes and 23 were from unpublished videotapes. All the counseling sessions were analyzed for themes. Themes will first be reported in total, and then the differences between the published and unpublished videotaped themes that existed will be explained. Some of the observed themes related to the general process of counseling children and other themes related directly to the use of props. Therefore, the themes have been divided into two major categories: Process of Counseling Children and Utilizing Props with Children. Table 7 lists the major categories along with their resulting themes and the frequency of these themes appearing in the sessions. Themes will be described discretely, but are overlapping. The findings show that the themes related to the process of counseling children set the stage for counselors to utilize props within their counseling sessions. Regarding the frequencies, general refers to the theme being present in all or all but one of the sessions. Typical refers to the theme being present in
Table 7

**Resulting Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category 1 Process of Counseling Children</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theme 1 Counseling Session Dynamics</strong></td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2 Counseling Skills</strong></td>
<td>Subtheme (a) Building Rapport</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (b) Linking Sessions</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (c) Probing</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (d) Reflecting</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (e) Teaching</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3 Working with Children</strong></td>
<td>Subtheme (a) Physical Setting</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (b) Counselor Attributes</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (c) Language</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (d) Tracking</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (e) Engaging</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (f) Client’s Perception</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category 2 Utilizing Props with Children</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theme 1 Introduction of Props</strong></td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (a) Client Generated</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (b) Counselor Generated</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2 Working the Prop</strong></td>
<td>Subtheme (a) Manipulation</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (b) Self as Prop</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (c) Expansion</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3 Anthropomorphism</strong></td>
<td>Subtheme (a) Giving Voice and Sound Effects</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (b) Prop Feelings</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (c) Speaking Metaphorically</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 4 Relating Prop to Life</strong></td>
<td>Subtheme (a) Giving Voice and Sound Effects</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 5 Generalizing</strong></td>
<td>Subtheme (b) Prop Feelings</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (c) Speaking Metaphorically</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (a) Given Voice and Sound Effects</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (b) Prop Feelings</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtheme (c) Speaking Metaphorically</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
more than half of the videotapes to the general cut-off. Variant refers to the theme being present in at least two or three of the sessions to the typical cut-off. Last rare refers to the theme appearing in one session.

Emerging Session Category Themes

Two major categories of themes appeared when viewing the counseling session videotapes: Category 1 - Process of Counseling Children and Category 2 - Utilizing Props with Children. Within the process of counseling children category three themes emerged: (1) counseling session dynamics, (2) counselor skills and (3) working with children. The second major category was the Utilization of Props with Children. Within this category five additional themes emerged: (1) introduction of props, (2) working the prop, (3) relating to props, (4) relating the props to life, and (5) generalizing.

Category One – Process of Counseling Children

In analyzing the counseling sessions, it appeared that when working with children the counselors adapted the counseling process. There emerged three areas in which this adaptation occurred: (1) counseling session dynamics, (2) counselor skills and (3) working with children. This process of adaptation was reflected in themes about working with children in general but always in the context of prop use. As a result, these themes provide the context in which specific prop themes are embedded.
Theme One – Counseling Session Dynamics

Counseling session dynamics consisted of providing a safe and comfortable environment, establishing rapport, explaining potential distractions, promoting playfulness and presenting a nonjudgmental atmosphere. Of the six published counselors, 83.33% spoke to their clients about the counseling session dynamics and how the counseling session would unfold. Of the unpublished counselors, 100% spoke to their clients about this topic throughout their sessions. The frequency of the counseling session dynamics was typical. Prior to participating in their counseling sessions, clients may have been told what to expect concerning the counseling process. Confidentiality was addressed prior to or during the taping. It had been attended to especially concerning the use of the videotapes. Regarding the unpublished sessions, some of the clients had previous counseling experiences in which relationships had been developed with their counselors. How the counseling process would proceed was explained throughout the counseling process by counselors when appropriate. At times these explanations occurred at the start of the counseling sessions when contact was initially made.

The counseling session dynamics were expressed throughout the counseling process. The counselors attempted to provide a safe and comfortable environment both verbally and nonverbally. Counselors used words designed to comfort their clients and establish rapport. They also explained aspects of the counseling session that the client might find distracting or confusing. The counselors promoted a sense of playfulness within the counseling session. The counselors also provided reassurance to their
clients that they would be nonjudgmental. The counselors reassured their clients that they could express their thoughts, feelings and behaviors freely during their time together.

The counselors provided their clients with a safe and inviting space to express themselves. Counselors promoted the counseling session as a safe place to share thoughts and feelings. Counselors presented themselves as concerned about their client’s safety and comfort level. They communicated that they would listen to their client’s concerns and take action if appropriate. An example of such contact was when counselor Laci and client Crystal re-established their counseling relationship:

Laci: Are you okay with this 'cause if for some reason you start to feel uncomfortable, or you don’t want the digital camera on, we can turn it off. I want you to feel safe and comfortable. Okay? And you can talk about whatever you want to talk about ... and if there’s a question or something you don’t want to talk about, that’s okay, you don’t have to. Do you have any questions?

Counselor Laci verbally showed her concern for her client Crystal through her choice of words, soft tone of voice and quietly excited mannerisms. Counselor Laci also displayed her concern nonverbally with her open posture and facial expressions.

The counselors also addressed any issues which could have become distracting for their clients. By addressing such issues the counselors set the stage for play to occur. Counselor Violet Oaklander provided an example of this. She had been asked to demonstrate her techniques with a client, Carlos, at a sexual abuse agency as counselors watched behind a one-way mirror:
Violet: You’re probably wondering what we’re going to do here and you know that I just came here, like for a little, I’m doing a class and they asked me to come in and work with you just for a little session to see how I do it ... and you’re aware of that their watching, you know that some of them are watching us because they want to see how we work, we work, how I might work with you.

Carlos: How are they watching?

Violet: They’re watching behind that mirror there, there, like they can see through but we can’t see though but they can see us, I don’t know...

Carlos: Can they see us?

Violet: ... if they can see us standing over here.

Most of the counselors realized that the videotaping procedure and equipment could be a distraction to the counseling process. Therefore they addressed it at the beginning of their sessions. After this interchange, counselor Violet introduced her client Carlos to the prop of clay. She told him that she had brought it in special for their session to work with. Counselor Violet’s manipulation of the clay prop displayed that their time together would possess an element of playfulness.

A sense of playfulness was encouraged by the counselors. This playfulness came in the form of the counselors’ verbal comments, their excitement at being with their clients, the props located in the counseling space and permission to explore this new environment. Counselor Terry Kottman upon meeting her client Joshua concisely explained how they would spend their time together:

Terry: Joshua, this is our play place and we can do most of the things we want to in here and we are going to play (in a soft and excited tone of voice).
Counselor Terry’s introduction to their counseling space relayed to her client Joshua that during their time together they would be playing. Counselor Terry encouraged him to explore the props located in the room which consisted of puppets, a doll house, fantasy toys and art supplies.

Counselor Laci encouraged a sense of playfulness as her client Crystal asked to play in a sand tray located in the counseling office. Crystal had begun tentatively looking around the counseling office for miniature figurine props to place in the sand tray. Counselor Laci aided in the search by showing Crystal the different props she had found. Crystal was provided with the opportunity to explore the counseling environment. She had begun searching the array of baskets in order to find miniature figurines props to create a sand tray scene. Counselor Laci encouraged this exploration and offered assistance if it was needed:

Crystal: I need some more things.
Laci: Some more things hu... Is there something specific you are looking for?
Crystal: Sponge Bob crew [referring to the cartoon of Sponge Bob Square Pants].

The counselors also presented themselves in a nonjudgmental way through their words and actions. They appeared to provide a reassuring environment for their clients. This nonjudgmental stance seemed to relay that nothing which occurred during their time together would be viewed as wrong. Many counselors promoted an environment where no right or wrong answers existed by using accepting words with their clients. Counselor Terry provided her client Joshua such an accepting
environment. Joshua had chosen to work with the prop of Mardi Gras necklaces. He had begun placing every prop necklace over his head and around his neck. Joshua had then come across smaller Mardi Gras necklaces. He had tried to get them over his head like he had done with the longer ones. As he attempted to get one of the smaller necklaces over his head, the necklace had broken. Counselor Terry observed the apparent distress on Joshua’s face. She reassured him that the necklace breaking was okay:

Joshua: Utoh (with a worried expression).
Terry: Ut oh, sometimes those break, it’s not a big deal, sometimes they kind of fall apart and it’s no deal, stuff just breaks (with a very even tone of voice).

Client Joshua’s face displayed a sense of relief as he continued working with the necklace props.

Summary of Theme – One Counseling Session Dynamics

The explanation of the counseling session’s dynamics by the counselors to their clients set the stage for the use of props to occur. The counselors invited their clients into a safe and comfortable environment in which they could explore. The counselors addressed any potential distractions to their clients. They encouraged the element of playfulness during their interactions. The counselors provided a nonjudgmental atmosphere for their clients to explore and express themselves. These elements created specific dynamics which seemed to create a welcoming environment in which clients could feel safe to begin to play with the available props.
Theme Two – Counseling Skills

Within the process of counseling children, the theme of counseling skills emerged. These skills seemed to be necessary to lay the foundation for utilizing props. The counseling skills displayed by the counselors included (a) building rapport, (b) linking sessions, (c) probing, (d) reflecting, (e) teaching, (f) tracking, (g) engaging and (h) gaining client perspective. These skills were viewed throughout the counseling sessions. They appeared to promote the relationship that developed between the counselors and their clients as they interacted with props.

Theme Two – Subtheme (a) Building Rapport. For 14 of the sessions, the contact between the counselor and client was their first and only time of contact. Therefore, building rapport appeared to be an essential aspect of the session and was established rapidly. In analyzing the sessions, it appeared that building rapport by the counselors occurred with subtle comments, gestures and glances. This theme was often demonstrated through the counselors’ nonverbal behaviors. However, there were also observable moments within the sessions when counselors chose specific tones of voice, such as character voices, low soft tones or excited tones, and words to build rapport with their clients. One hundred percent of the counselors viewed worked towards building rapport with their clients. The frequency of the subtheme building rapport was general.

The nonverbal behaviors that the counselors utilized consisted of maintaining eye contact, positioning themselves at their clients’ eye level, mirroring their clients’ motions and mannerisms and expressing excitement through their body language.
Counselor Sage demonstrated these characteristics with her client Calie. When their session began, counselor Sage was sitting on the edge of her chair leaning towards Calie, who sat on a couch across from her. Counselor Sage maintained eye contact with Calie and only broke it when it appeared she wanted to demonstrate that she was thinking intensely. Counselor George also maintained eye contact with his client Christy. He had moved from a sitting position to a standing position as Christy moved in order to remain at her eye level. The counselors sat at the same level as their clients to stay at their eye level. Counselor Terry sat on the floor with her client Joshua. Counselor Susan did the same when she counseled her clients.

The counselors also copied and mirrored the mannerisms of their clients. Counselor Sage tilted her head in the same direction when her client Calie tilted her head. Counselor Ann in her work with client Trevor duplicated his start and stops of working with props in the sand tray. Counselor Elizabeth sat in the same relaxed fashion that her client Candace sat in. Counselor George mirrored the hand motions of his client Christy. Another form of copying their clients came in mirroring their clients' excitement. As counselor Terry observed her client Joshua's voice become more animated as he hid a key to the handcuffs, she replicated his excitement through her mannerisms and voice. When the clients giggled or laughed, their counselors giggled and laughed with them.

The counselors also appeared to verbally build rapport through their comments and interventions. These verbalized attempts included giving clients choices, using
their clients’ words, using different tones of voice, displaying empathy and showing
their clients respect.

When the observed clients were given choices of what to do first or what props
to work with, it was verbally displayed to them that their decisions were important.
The counselors appeared to encourage their clients to make their own decisions as an
aspect of rapport. Counselor Susan built rapport with her client Robin throughout their
counseling session. Counselor Susan gave Robin the opportunity to make decisions for
herself, which was prompted by her counselor providing choices. One example of how
counselor Susan did this was when Robin had won a prize when she completed a
game. She was given the choice of when to choose it:

Susan: We have about 10 more minutes, would you like to pick out
your prize and then play or play and then pick out your prize?
Robin: Pick out prize first.

Counselor Sage continually used her tone of voice to build rapport. One way in
which she did this was by changing the tone of her voice and making up voices for the
props they worked with. When counselor Sage brought up the issue of client Calie’s
treatment from her cousin Tim, counselor Sage softened and lowered her tone of
voice. Also when counselor Sage was manipulating a prop such as turtle puppets and
stuffed animal monster she gave them a voice which matched the essence of the prop.
For the prop of the turtle puppet who hides in her shell, counselor Sage used a small
quiet voice that was difficult to hear. When counselor Sage spoke as the prop of the
monster stuffed animal, she utilized a rough, demanding, loud voice. The change of
voice counselor Sage displayed appeared to hook her client Calie into the counseling process. It also appeared to encourage Calie to open up further about her concerns.

This rapport was evidenced by Calie talking more, making additional eye contact and playing more intensely with the props.

The counselors were also observed verbally building rapport through displays of feeling words and respect. Counselor Sage empathized with her client Calie’s situation concerning a bullying cousin:

Sage: One of the things I noticed about you, because I pay attention, is that I think you struggle with feeling good about who you are.
Calie: (shakes head no)
Sage: No? You feel good about who you are?
Calie: (shakes head yes)
Sage: (soft tone and slow voice) One of the reasons I wondered if you did was I noticed with your cousin, that, um Tim, is that he’s kind of mean to you (complete eye contact, expressive raised eyebrows and big expressive eyes).
Calie: (shakes head yes)
Sage: (shakes head yes) Yea and you kind of take it.
Calie: (smiles and shakes head yes)
Sage: Almost like it’s okay.
Calie: Sometimes.

This conversation occurred in the beginning of their counseling session.

Counselor Sage expressed her concern for her client Calie displaying it both verbally and nonverbally. Counselor Sage continued to empathize with her Calie:

Sage: So you get in trouble more than him? (referring to her cousin Tim)
Calie: (shakes head yes)
Sage: What do you think about that?
Calie: It’s not fair.
Sage: No, it’s not fair.
Counselor Sage's verbal comments displayed to her client Calie that she was being understood. It appeared that this empathizing was connected to rapport building because Calie answered Sage's questions and stayed attentive. Calie's attentiveness demonstrated that rapport had been established.

The counselors also built rapport with their clients by showing them respect. One example of a counselor displaying respect occurred between counselor Ann and client Trevor. It appeared that Trevor was referred to counselor Ann to work through some of the grief he was experiencing as a result of the death of his younger sister. In their work together Trevor worked in a sand tray with miniature figurine props. Within the sand tray Trevor had many of the props dying. Counselor Ann began prompting her client to speak about death and how people react. From Trevor's behavior and comments, counselor Ann deduced that he was not ready to speak about the death of his sister at this point in their counseling session. Counselor Ann respected Trevor's wishes and permitted him to determine the pace of their counseling session.

Building rapport was observed throughout the counseling sessions. It was displayed nonverbally and verbally. Nonverbally the counselors built rapport by maintaining eye contact, staying at eye level, mirroring behaviors, displaying open body language and expressing excitement. The counselors became the prop for the purpose of building rapport. Verbally rapport was observed being built through providing choices, using clients' language, and speaking tone and being nonjudgmental. Prop usage to build rapport utilized the medium that clients were familiar with, which enhanced the counselors' efforts to built rapport.
Theme Two – Subtheme (b) Linking Sessions. There were five counselors who had multiple counseling sessions with the same clients. Of the unpublished counselors, 100% linked the work within their current counseling session to previous ones. The frequency of the subtheme linking sessions was variant. The counselors who linked counseling sessions did so by intentionally making connections between sessions and utilizing the same prop in several sessions.

Making connections between sessions was displayed through the use of props by counselor Dennis and his client Toby. A review of their previous session was conducted during their second session. Counselor Dennis was able to elicit from Toby what he remembered from their previous counseling session. Counselor Dennis did this by connecting the memory of previous activities by what prop they had been working with, i.e., the movie Narnia and a wolf puppet:

Dennis: Gosh, it’s been a whole week since we’ve been together. Do you remember what we did last time?
Toby: a hu
Dennis: What did we do?
Toby: We watched TV.
Dennis: We watched TV. Actually we watched it on my computer. There’s my computer over there. Last week we had it over here, last time. Do you remember what we watched?
Toby: Narnia.
Dennis: Yeah and what was your favorite scene in Narnia?
Toby: When he died.
Dennis: Yeah when Aslan died. Yeah and what happened after he died?
Toby: He came back to life.
Dennis: He came back to life.
Toby: Mommy watched it yesterday last night after yesterday.
Dennis: Mommy did? Did you watch it with her?
Toby: No it was time for my bedtime.
Dennis: It was after your bedtime?
Toby: It was the war.
Dennis: Oh, the war part was coming on.

Counselor Dennis also reviewed with client Toby the concepts of “imaginary” and “real.” In their previous session Dennis introduced a life-like wolf puppet in order to discuss these concepts. During their current session counselor Dennis asked about the prop of the wolf puppet from their last session together. Counselor Dennis appeared to be trying to determine if Toby was now able to distinguish between “imaginary” and “real.” Toby was able to explain the difference utilizing the wolf puppet. Toby had expanded his explanation to his “bad dreams”, reporting them as imaginary. This understanding was important to their work together. Toby had been adopted from a South American country where he reported “bad men” do “bad things.” Toby had expressed a continuing concern that these “bad men” were coming to his new home in America. He had been experiencing nightmares of the “bad men” coming to get him. Through the use of the wolf puppet prop Toby began seeing these dreams as “imaginary.” The prop was used to link the same concepts from session to session. This linking process appeared to be facilitated by asking questions that connected sessions.

Another form of linking counseling sessions was observed when counselors utilized the same props from session to session. Counselor Dennis introduced the prop of a scrapbook to his client Toby. Toby’s father had given counselor Dennis some pictures of Toby when he lived in South America. The prop of the scrapbook and pictures permitted Toby to speak about what his life was like prior to his adoption and
move to America. Counselor Dennis prompted Toby to work on the scrapbook between sessions with his parents and to bring the scrapbook back to their next sessions. Toby brought the scrapbook to each of the following sessions to show it to counselor Dennis. The following sessions revolved around what pictures had been added to the scrapbook along with the stories that accompanied these pictures.

Counselor Jill also linked sessions by utilizing the same prop across sessions. Counselor Jill and client Kay had built a prop of a play dough house. Kay wanted only herself to live in this log cabin. She then created a play dough person to represent herself. Counselor Jill prompted Kay to add other play dough people, but Kay was adamant about being in the cabin alone. Together counselor Jill and child Kay added props of play dough items to their creation, i.e., a play dough television and play dough popcorn. At the end of this session, counselor Jill asked Kay if they should save the log cabin prop. Client Kay replied that they should save the play dough log cabin. When counselor Jill and Kay had their next counseling session together, Kay asked for the play dough log cabin to be brought out. Their conversation appeared to pick up where it left off from their previous session through using the same prop, as if there was no time between sessions.

Two characteristics of linking sessions included intentionally asking questions to link the sessions and using the same props across sessions. The counselors’ ability to link sessions appeared to give them the opportunity to determine if their previous sessions’ interactions were memorable. Counselors and clients were observed to use linking characteristics as a way to review and reinforce concepts introduced
previously. Linking sessions also appeared to give counselors information regarding whether or not props should be used to explore any additional work in specific areas.

**Theme Two – Subtheme (c) Probing.** Probing was viewed as intentionally asking specific questions. Probing was a skill utilized by 94.12% of the counselors. All of the unpublished counselors used probing and 83.33% of the published counselors did. The frequency of the subtheme probing was general. The probes often occurred while the client was manipulating a prop. Therefore the probes seemed to be prop connected. It appeared that probes were utilized by the counselors to build rapport, to gather information, to verify understanding of comments and to expand client comments.

For the majority of counselors, this initial session was the only contact they had with their clients. Building rapport with their clients was a goal during their counseling session. Counselors utilized probes to begin the building rapport process. Their probes initially were closed questions such as “How old are you?” “What grade are you in?” and “Who do you live with?”

An example of attempting to build rapport with a client regarding her likes and dislikes occurred with counselor Laci. Her client Crystal was placing miniature figurines props within a sand tray. Counselor Laci watched as Crystal placed the miniature figurine of “Fred” from the cartoon show “Scooby Doo” into the sand tray:

Laci: Do you like movies?
Crystal: Yes.
Laci: What's your favorite movie?
Crystal: Material Girls with Hilary Duff.

In this way, the use of a particular prop on the part of the client generated a probe that sought information to get to know the client better. Once some basic information was gathered, counselors asked closed questions which appeared to contain more depth, such as “Are you nervous being here?” “Did your mother explain why you are here?” and “What do you want to talk about?” Clients’ comfort level appeared to increase as they answered questions with more than a single word or grunt. It also was displayed as they began selecting props as well as manipulating them. The probes utilized by counselors then turned into more open-ended questions. Examples of these open-ended questions were “Tell me more about that” and “What do you like about...?”

Probes were used to gather information concerning the clients. Counselors obtained basic information prior to initiating counseling concerning their client from the referral source. This information was also confirmed or denied by clients when asked. The counselors probed to gather information in order to form the interventions they would use during their counseling session. An example of gathering information was when counselor Violet asked her client Blake who he lived with and who was in his family. Blake gave the names of each of his family members and where they lived. Counselor Violet then proceeded to use props of clay figures to represent each of Blake’s family members. Counselor Violet continued using the clay figure props. She encouraged client Blake to answer the questions of what he liked the best about each
family member and what he disliked about them. Blake’s answers guided counselor Violet’s choices of prop-related activities as the session progressed.

Probing was done by the counselors when they did not understand what their clients were referring to. Probing was used to verify that the counselors understood their clients. Client Calie had relayed to her counselor Sage that it was okay when her cousin was mean towards her. Counselor Sage’s confusion with this statement was apparent in her facial expression as she lowered and scrunched her eyebrows together. To clarify her confusion, counselor Sage asked the following question:

Sage: Sometimes it’s okay for him to be mean to you? Okay. Why is it okay for him to be mean to you?
Calie: Because I can be mean back.
Sage: Oh, I see, that’s the deal.

The counselors utilized probes to expand on the comments made by their clients. Many of the statements made by clients as they started handling props seemed to be at a surface level. The counselors then probed in an attempt to deepen their clients’ statements.

Counselor David E. used probes in order to expand the use of a metaphor created by his client Sebastian. Sebastian’s metaphor was of anger taking the form of a cactus. Sebastian had pictorially depicted the prop of a cactus to represent his “bad guy” side and a prop of a heart to represent his “good guy” side. Counselor David E. had conducted this counseling session in Sweden at a child guidance clinic. His client Sebastian’s first language was Swedish. Therefore a translator, Dr. Djerf, was present during their counseling session.
David E.: Do you think cactus irritates your heart?
[Sebastian and Dr. Djerf speak. Dr. Djerf translates.]
Sebastian: Yes.
David E.: Does it make you sad thinking about that?
[Sebastian and Dr. Djerf speak. Dr. Djerf translates.]
Sebastian: (shakes his head yes) Not a good thing.
David E.: Not a good thing. Not a good thing.
Dr. Djerf: Not a good thing.
David E.: Um.

Counselor David E. probed regarding the cactus of anger’s effects on his client Sebastian’s life. This probe furthered their discussion of how anger had influenced Sebastian’s life in a negative way. The probe used with the cactus laid a foundation for attempting to discuss how Sebastian would combat the anger he possessed.

In analyzing the sessions, the counselors strategically utilized probes for a variety of reasons. For example, the counselors’ intentions at times were very apparent in the direct questions such as “How old are you?” and “Who do you live with?” Direct probes were also used to gather demographic information from their clients. The uses of probes for building rapport or for the client to gain insight were also utilized. Therefore counselors utilized probes for building rapport, gathering information, verifying understanding and expanding clients’ comments. Probes were used to question the use of a prop and props were used to expand or clarify probes; either way, probes and props often occurred together.
Theme Two – Subtheme (d) Reflecting. Reflecting referred to observing and mirroring the verbal and nonverbal aspects of the clients’ interactions with props and then relaying this information back to them. Upon analyzing the counseling sessions, reflections occurred during the counseling process when the counselor listened intently to what the client was saying both verbally and nonverbally. The counselors then paraphrased what they heard and what they saw coming from the client. Reflecting appeared to give the counselors an opportunity to promote their clients’ insights into their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. One hundred percent of the counselors utilized this skill. The frequency of the subtheme reflecting was typical. The characteristics of reflecting took the form of reflecting the feelings of the clients and reflecting the content of the clients’ comments.

Counselor David E. gave an example of reflecting the feelings of his client Sebastian. Counselor David E. and Sebastian were working with a prop created by Sebastian of his anger being represented by a cactus. Sebastian had depicted this cactus pictorially and relayed that it represented his “bad guy” side, which housed his angry emotions. Sebastian utilized a prop of a heart to represent his “good guy” side. The discussion between counselor David E. and Sebastian then centered on how “cactus” had hurt Sebastian’s “heart.” Counselor David E. observed his client’s facial expression, posture and tone of voice and deduced that this brought sadness to Sebastian:

David E.: Does it make you sad thinking about that?
[Dr. Djerf and Sebastian speak. Dr. Djerf translates.]
Dr. Djerf: (translated) Not a good thing.

This reflection showed client Sebastian that he was being understood by counselor David E. It also made Sebastian understand that counselor David E. realized how tough it had been for him to deal with his anger. The prop may have helped David E. to clarify exactly what Sebastian was feeling.

Counselor Sage also reflected the feelings of her client Calie as they discussed the treatment of her by her bullying cousin. Counselor Sage had introduced the props of two turtle puppet props to Calie. Counselor Sage went on to reflect how just like the turtle puppet prop Calie hides in her shell when she is unsure of what to do or when she is afraid. Calie confirmed this during their discussion. Counselor Sage also reflected that when the turtle is hiding in its shell that she is lonely. Calie agreed that she got lonely when she withdrew into her own shell. Thus, the prop expanded the depth of the skill of reflection.

Reflecting content was also observed in the sessions. The counselors took their clients' words and concisely repeated back the assumptions made by their clients. Counselor Laci reflected the content of client Crystal's actions and words as she placed miniature figurines props into a sand tray. Crystal placed a variety of miniature figurines props in her sand tray. She reported that she was setting the stage for a big battle to occur. Crystal had placed a queen figurine prop in one corner of the sand tray along with bottle miniature calling it "wine." She had placed the miniature figurines of a bride and a groom on the side of the sand tray near the queen. Counselor Laci asked
if everyone was going to fight or just a couple of the miniature figurine props. Crystal stated that the bride and groom “couldn’t fight because they were married”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laci:</th>
<th>So is the queen drinking the wine here?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crystal:</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laci:</td>
<td>So it’s just kind of sitting there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal:</td>
<td>She can’t fight because she is the queen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laci:</td>
<td>Oh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal:</td>
<td>She’s watching things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laci:</td>
<td>So she’s watching it and these two can’t fight because they’re married.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Counselor Laci reflected the placement of the miniature figurines props: bottle of “wine,” queen, bride and groom. Client Crystal reported later in the session that the queen represented her mother. This was significant because Crystal expressed that her mother does drink alcohol, which contradicted her depiction of the queen not drinking the wine. Also, when counselor Laci reflected that “these two don’t fight,” referring to miniature figurines of the groom and bride props, it reflected how Crystal viewed marriage. Crystal reported that her parents fought and separated when she was a baby. She also relayed that they don’t fight now because in her words “married people don’t fight.” This comment provided counselor Laci the opportunity to speak about how in relationships people may “fight,” but that doesn’t not mean the relationship must end. The sand tray props were used to support Laci’s reflection.

An additional example of reflecting content occurred when counselor Dennis reflected the words and actions of his client Toby. The issue of safety was paramount for this adopted young boy. During a session when Toby’s adoptive mother was present, counselor Dennis asked them to create a world in the sand tray. Toby created
a world separate from his adoptive mother’s world creation. Toby arranged miniature figurine props in the sand tray hidden beneath the sand. When asked to describe their worlds, Toby reported that his world was located under the sand in order to remain safe. Also Toby believed that his unseen world would protect his adopted mother’s world creation. He believed this to be true because he could surprise attack if the “bad guys” came. Counselor Dennis reflected the content of Toby’s sand tray creation:

Dennis: Guarding Mommy’s world, protecting Mommy.

The role of protector was what client Toby was attempting to take on within his new family. Toby’s mother was present at this reflection and stated that she didn’t need his protection. The sand tray was used to demonstrate Toby’s role as protector and counselor Dennis used the skill of reflection to clarify that role.

Reflection was displayed by the counselors through the reflection of clients’ feelings and content of their work with props. Reflection of a client’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors appeared to allow the child to hear him or herself through the counselor’s reflection. It may have permitted them the opportunity to view themselves through the eyes of another. The prop usage provided opportunities for counselors to reflect the clients’ feelings. Reflection of feelings and content within the sessions showed clients that their counselors understood them. It also provided a mirror for them to begin understanding themselves.
Theme Two – Subtheme (e) Teaching. Teaching as a part of the counseling process referred to the transfer of information and the development of skills. Teaching was utilized by 54.44% of the unpublished counselors and 40% of the published counselors. The frequency of the subtheme teaching was typical. One way teaching was observed in the sessions was when counselors defined words. Another form of teaching occurred when the counselors participated in a “teachable moment” with their clients. A teachable moment within the analyzed sessions referred to a moment when what the client was experiencing in his or her life was deemed inappropriate by the counselor. These teachable moments occurred when counselors used examples of inappropriate events in their clients’ lives to teach them new skills. Teachable moments occurred at random times within the counseling sessions. Again, props were used to facilitate or expand the use of the teaching skill.

An example of teaching occurred when counselor Susan worked with her client Ryan within the sand tray. Ryan was asked by counselor Susan to select miniature figurines props that represented each member of his family, including himself. Ryan selected three props to represent himself: a scary black-cloaked figurine with a sword, an outer space figure hiding behind two pieces of wood and small animal on a rock. Ryan chose props to represent his other family members. When Ryan completed placing these props within his sand tray, counselor Susan prompted a discussion concerning his choices. Counselor Susan then asked which part of him, represented by the figures he chose, came out when he interacted with his father. Ryan went on to describe his father’s behavior as “assertive.” Counselor Susan observed that Ryan
believed that the concepts of “assertive” and “aggressive” meant the same thing. This confusion led counselor Susan to teach the differences between someone acting assertively and acting aggressively:

Ryan: He’s more assertive sometimes so I can be that one (pointed to the scary fighting figurine) or that one (pointed to the outer space figurine).
Susan: He’s more assertive, that’s a fancy word. Tell me what that means.
Ryan: He’s more like that guy (pointing to the scary fighting figurine which Ryan later refers to it as the bully part of himself). He’s excitable that’s where I get it from.
Susan: It’s going to be my way! and I don’t care who gets in the way!

This teaching moment gave counselor Susan the opportunity to differentiate between the terms “assertiveness” and “aggressiveness” to ensure that client Ryan was using them appropriately. It provided a different term to label his father’s and his own behavior. Ryan’s choice of props helped counselor Susan create the teachable moment.

Teachable moments occurred throughout the sessions. It was these moments when counselors took some of the counseling time to explain abstract concepts to their clients. Counselor Michael with his clients David and Shannon taught them to use a “catastrophe scale” to determine how bad things in their lives realistically were. Counselor Violet instructed her clients Blake and Carlos how to release angry emotions in appropriate ways. Props may have been used in the context of teaching to make these abstract concepts more concrete.
Counselor Sage interacted with her client Calie and learned that she was unable to determine if the way others treated her was appropriate or not. During their counseling session counselor Sage taught Calie that how her cousin was interacting with her was "abusive." She also stressed that "we teach others how to treat us." Counselor Sage instructed Calie in confrontation skills that she could use with her cousin and others in her life. Sometimes, this instruction took place without the direct use of props, but it was still important to create the counseling context in which the props were used.

Teaching was displayed by the transfer of information and the development of skills. Teaching was a part of some of the viewed counselors' repertoire of skills. Within the sessions, counselors had the opportunity to utilize the teachable moments which presented themselves. During these moments counselors taught their clients the meaning of words which related to people in their lives. These counselors also instructed them in the meaning of abstract concepts along with any social skills related to these concepts. The counselors also gave them an opportunity to practice these new skills. Within this study sometimes, but not always, props were directly connected to teaching.

Summary of Theme Two – Counseling Skills

In analyzing the counseling sessions the use of certain counseling skills became apparent. These skills were building rapport, linking counseling sessions, probing, reflecting and teaching. Of the array of skills a counselor possesses, these are
more apparently observable and therefore easier to detect within these counseling sessions. They were also the counseling skills most directly connected to the use of props. Each skill’s purpose was enhanced through the use of props.

Theme Three – Working with Children

Counselors who specialize in working with children take some additional steps in preparing their environment and themselves prior to beginning their counseling sessions. This preparation includes the arrangement of their counseling space and taking note of their attire in order to present themselves and their environment as child friendly. Within the counseling sessions, this presentation began with how the counseling room was set up, including where the props were placed, and continued with the counselors’ attributes and behaviors. The counselors also used the technique of tracking their clients’ behaviors to show their attention and interest in what their clients were doing. When working with clients, the counselors adjusted their language to an age-appropriate level and to the inclusion of appropriate slang. What also appeared important during the sessions was the counselors’ ability to engage their clients in the counseling process. These counselors believed that it was important to solicit their clients’ perceptions of their world. Props were aspects of the counselors’ solicitation of the clients’ world. However, these subthemes only indirectly dealt with props. They more directly reflected the working environment on which the therapeutic use of props is built. The subthemes of the theme working with children displayed in
the sessions included: (a) physical setting, (b) counselor attributes, (c) language, (d) tracking, (e) engaging and (f) client perception.

**Theme Three – Subtheme (a) Physical Setting.** The counselor’s office setup was an important element to welcoming clients into the counseling environment. All of the unpublished counselors arranged their counseling space as child friendly. Sixty percent of the published counselors took their physical setting into consideration when working with children. The frequency of the subtheme physical setting was typical. In all of the sessions, the counseling office had the typical counseling space, for example, two chairs and someplace to place a beverage. However, within the counselors’ offices there was a welcoming atmosphere which was readily apparent. For example, counselor Jill utilized bean bag chairs with her client. Counselor Michael had pictures of children’s drawings posted on the walls. In counselors George’s, Laci’s and Susan’s offices there was shelving attached to the walls that contained a variety of miniature figurine props. Many of the offices also contained dry erase boards or other mediums to write on attached to the walls. The clients appeared to like the spaces that were specifically created for them.

Beyond the physical structure of the room, the counselors had a variety of items not typically found in a counseling office set up for an adult. For example, counselors Susan, Laci, George, Dennis and Ann had sand trays set up in their office space. Other props were present in this space such as puppets, stuffed animals, doll houses, tree houses, bop bags, costumes and games. Located in the viewed counseling
offices there appeared to be a space set up for more creative artistic props. Counselors Terry and Sage had areas that housed crayons, markers and other drawing supplies. In counselors Sage’s and George’s offices, a snack and a drink were offered.

Counselor Sage had live props to work with, gerbils. This surprised her client Calie:

Calie: What’s that cage?
Sage: That’s my gerbils.
Calie: You have gerbils!? (inquisitive look expressed on her face)
Sage: Yeah, come over and see it, it’s the girls. (referring to the gerbils)
(Calie and Sage stand up and go over to the gerbils’ cage.)
Sage: (with a little squeaky voice) Hey ladies, it’s time to wake up, say hi.
Calie: Hi. (said tentatively)
(Sage takes one gerbil out of the cage and holds it for Calie to pet.)
Sage: (in a squeaky voice) Hi. (The other gerbils scurry around the cage.)
Calie: They’re not too happy.
Sage: No, they’re not out too much. This one is social.

Another aspect of the counseling environment was the counselors themselves. Most of the counselors wore casual attire when counseling their clients. It appeared that the preferred outfit of these counselors was jeans and a shirt. Counselor David E. wore a t-shirt and jeans when he met with his client Sebastian. Counselor Terry had on overalls with “When the Grinch Stole Christmas” socks. Counselors Carley and Susan removed their shoes during their counseling sessions. The more relaxed attire appeared to make their clients feel more relaxed. It looked as if dressing more relaxed seemed to show their clients that they were different from other adults in their lives.
In setting up the physical setting of the counseling space, counselors took into consideration the population they were working with. Counselors adapted the physical structure of the counseling environment to reflect a child friendly atmosphere and to make room for all the props they would need to use. They also took note of how they presented themselves through their choice of attire.

Theme Three – Subtheme (b) Counselor Attributes. From the analyzed videotapes there appeared to be particular attributes a counselor who works with children possesses. The characteristics included body language, movement, expressiveness and modeling appropriate behaviors. Of the unpublished counselors 90.90% displayed these attributes along with 80% of the published counselors. The frequency of the subtheme counselor attributes was general. These attributes seemed to provide the opportunity for counselors to connect with their clients, encouraging them to participate in the counseling process, and to set the stage for prop use.

The counselors presented themselves as open and welcoming through the use of their body language. The counselors' body language relayed their own comfort level in working with clients. Counselor Terry provided an example of how body language promoted her connection with her client Joshua. Counselor Terry sat on the floor and maintained eye contact with her client. Counselor Terry's posture was open and she crawled on the floor with her client Joshua. Counselor Terry's body language reflected Joshua's body language. Joshua sat cross-legged and counselor Terry sat
cross-legged. There were some physical limitations of counselors, but it appeared when possible the counselors mirrored the clients' body language.

Movement also occurred in the counseling sessions. In viewing the videotapes, counselors got out of their chairs frequently along with their clients. Counselor Mary moved the chairs she and her client Becky were using closer together as they started one of their sessions. Counselor Mary also left her chair to write on a dry erase board and encouraged Becky to do the same. Counselor George maintained eye level by standing up and sitting down as his client Christy stood up and sat down. Counselor George mirrored Christy's movements during their counseling session.

David E. incorporated movement in his client Sebastian's counseling session. David E. used a paper board to record Sebastian's comments and continuously referred to it by pointing toward it, which empowered Sebastian to do the same.

Counselor David E. also got out of his chair and wrote on a paper board Sebastian's comments, such as "good guy" and "bad guy." Both counselor David E. and Sebastian referenced the paper board when speaking of these parts of Sebastian. Realizing that moving during their counseling session was appropriate, Sebastian displayed comfort in leaving his chair and going to the paper board to write and draw.

David E.: If anger was like a person and you could paint a picture of it, what would anger look like? How would it look? (Sebastian gets up and approaches the board and draws a thorned plant)
Dr. Djerf: It's like thorns.
David E.: Hurt! Irritate. Cactus! Like a cactus.

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The movement of both counselor and client appeared to heighten their interactions. It also seemed to reveal to both counselor and client that they were on the same page even when there was a language barrier.

The counselors included in this study were very expressive individuals both verbally and nonverbally. Their mannerisms and excitement for their work was contagious. There were moments within counselor Terry's work when both her and her client giggled and smiled at each other. Counselor David Scharff and his client Jeff both laughed out loud after he was asked to draw a picture. Client Jeff drew a police car:

David S.: What do you like about what cops do?  
Jeff: The car chases. (laugher of agreement)

The laughter seemed to show a connectedness between the counselor and client.

Counselor Susan was expressive during her sessions with her clients. During one session counselor Susan was playing the game “Caught Being Good” with her client Robin. Robin had to answer the question, “What is a rule in your house?” Robin reported that in her house you had to “be good.” Counselor Susan proceeded to ask Robin what “being good” means. Robin put her arms out to her side and said, “It means being good.” Counselor Susan in an expressive manner copied Robin’s arm movements. She also added a facial expression that depicted she had no comprehension of what “being good” meant. This made client have to come up with concrete examples of what “being good” meant:
Susan: What’s an important rule in your house?
Robin: Being good.
Susan: What does being good mean?
Robin: Being nice... being good. (She puts her hands out to the side emphasizing that “being good” is something everyone knows.)
Susan: (imitates client’s gestures as if she still has no idea what “being good” means with a smile on her face) What does being good mean?

Counselor Sage gave a variety of examples of her expressiveness. Counselor Sage changed her voice, she moved around the counseling office and her facial expressions reflected the discussion occurring. Counselor Sage changed her voice when she spoke to or spoke through the props utilized in the counseling session. She stood up and demonstrated how to “loosen up” by shaking her body. Counselor Sage also demonstrated what a serious face looked like, which made her client Calie giggle.

An additional attribute of the counselors was they acted as role models of behavior for their clients. They role modeled the behaviors that their clients needed to learn. As counselor Susan and her client Robin were playing the game “Caught Being Good,” counselor Susan played the game by the rules. Counselor Susan drew a card as part of the game and answered the question on it regarding house rules:

Susan: (spins and claps because landed on star)
Robin: (read the card but unable to hear her)
Susan: In my house an important rule is we look at each other when we talk, we don’t walk away from each other, or yell from room to room.

Counselor Susan by sharing the house rules in her family displayed that every family has rules. She was sure to mention those rules her client Robin had difficulty with in her own home.
The counselors viewed for this study had distinct attributes that were assets in counseling children. They encompassed a sense of playfulness in their work. The counselors’ body language and movement appeared to increase the level of connectedness between counselor and client. The counselors’ expressiveness encouraged their clients to participate in the counseling process. At the same time, the counselors appeared in tune to their own behaviors, ensuring that they were modeling appropriate behaviors. Perhaps these common attributes reflected the counselors’ openness to prop use.

Theme Three – Subtheme (c) Language. The counselors took into account the developmental age of their clients as they communicated with them. Of the unpublished counselors 63.64% took into account the language of their clients and 20% of the published counselors did the same. The frequency of the subtheme language was a variant. The use of age-appropriate language may have suggested that the counselors assessed the development and language abilities of their clients. The counselors also utilized the words that their clients used to describe the props they worked with. This included the use of the slang some of the clients spoke.

The counselors’ language reflected the developmental age of their clients. An example of this occurred during one of counselor Jill’s sessions with client Kay. Counselor Jill had in previous sessions realized that ending on time was a difficult thing for Kay to do. Counselor Jill changed the way she told Kay what time their counseling session was to end. Counselor Jill reported what the numbers on the digital
clock would say when they were done (5:25) instead of transforming them into the actual telling of time (5:25).

Another way language was adapted by the counselors towards their clients was when specific words stated by the clients were repeated by their counselors. There were incidents during the counseling sessions when the client referred to a prop by the wrong name. For example, client Crystal referred to a miniature figurine prop of a champagne bottle as “wine.” Her counselor Laci, instead of correcting her proceeded to call that prop “wine.” Counselor George’s client Christy called a miniature figurine prop of a princess a “fairy.” Counselor George utilized the label “fairy” whenever he referred to this prop. Both counselor Laci and counselor Terry repeated the slang words their clients used. With counselor Laci, her client Crystal was working in the sand tray when she found a second miniature hat. Crystal began searching in the sand tray to find the miniature figurine that she had placed the first hat upon. Crystal referred to this first miniature prop as “dude.” Counselor Laci continued utilizing this label:

Laci: Was that the dude you meant?

Counselor Terry’s client Joshua had handcuffed her during their previous counseling session. Joshua then utilized another set of prop handcuffs and handcuffed one of his own wrists. When Joshua attempted to removed the handcuff, counselor Terry saw that he was having a difficult time undoing the handcuffs. Joshua gave up
on the task and kept the handcuff on his wrist. In Joshua’s frustration the following brief interchange took place:

Joshua: What the heck!
Terry: What the heck!

The words repeated back and forth from counselor to client reflected the client’s frustration in his own words and connected it to the handcuff prop.

The counselors adapted their language in relation to the chronological and developmental age of their clients. The counselors also utilized the words that their clients used during their sessions. They used the same words to label the props and connect them to their client’s experiences. By using the language of their clients, including their slang, counselors appeared to connect with their clients while specifically identifying a label for each prop.

Theme Three – Subtheme (d) Tracking. Tracking occurred when a counselor narrated the behaviors that a client performed during their counseling session. Tracking was utilized by 45.45% of the unpublished counselors and 60% of the published counselors. The frequency of the subtheme tracking was variant. When counselors tracked their clients’ behaviors, they seemed to be showing interest in their work and that they were paying attention to what was occurring. The counselors tracked their clients’ overt behaviors and their nonverbal behaviors as they interacted with the props during their counseling sessions.
As counselors tracked overt behaviors, they narrated the behaviors clients were participating in. Counselor Terry tracked her client Joshua’s behavior as he tentatively explored the areas he was sitting in and the props near him. Within their counseling environment there were a variety of props available to work with. At one point during their session Joshua found two different swords and counselor Terry tracked his interactions with the sword props:

Terry: It looks like that one feels a little bit tougher.  
(Joshua throws the sword down, picks up play phone and starts pushing buttons.)

Terry: Now you found a phone.  
(Joshua keeps pushing buttons.)

Terry: You’re going to call somebody up, you know somebody’s number?  
(Joshua closes the phone.)

Terry: Whose number is it?  
Joshua: I don’t know.  
Terry: (imitates phone ringing) ring ring ring ring  
(Joshua opens phone and the play phone makes music.)

Terry: [Music] Hello Joshua are you there?  
(Joshua throws the phone down.)

Terry: No one answered. Joshua doesn’t want to talk to me right now.  
(Joshua reaches for the sword again and phone keeps ringing. Joshua tries to hit it with the two swords he picked up.)

Terry: But you figured it out, you figured out how to get it to stop.  
(Joshua tosses swords to the side as the phone’s music continues to play.)

Terry: You didn’t get it to close the way you wanted to.  
(Joshua closes the phone again.)

Terry: You got it closed but it didn’t stay closed. Now you figured out how to get it closed.

Tracking seemed to be used to narrate the interaction between the child and the prop and, for counselor Terry, to give the prop sounds and a voice.
Another way the counselors tracked was watching intently the nonverbal behaviors a client displayed and reporting what they saw. Counselor Susan had asked her client Ryan to construct a sand tray that depicted each of his family members. Ryan was having a difficult time in selecting miniature figurine props to represent his parents. Counselor Susan was aware of Ryan's nonverbal behavior such as biting his nails, tapping his foot and squishing his face together as he was putting miniature figurine props into his sand tray:

Ryan: I'm being difficult.
Susan: You seem to be distracted a lot.

Counselor Susan relayed to her client Ryan through the tracking of his nonverbal behaviors that she was in tune with the difficult time he had in making his choices regarding which props to use.

The tracking that was conducted by the counselors provided their clients with the knowledge that their counselors were interested in them by reporting on their behaviors and responding to their nonverbal behaviors. The characteristics of tracking included relaying both overt behaviors and nonverbal behaviors to their clients. Tracking was used to narrate the way in which the child interacted with the prop and documented prop choices.
Theme Three – Subtheme (e) Engaging. Engaging refers to how the counselors hooked their clients into the counseling process. All of the counselors tried to engage their clients. The frequency of the subtheme engaging was typical. The way these counselors attempted to engage their clients was to share their own stories, to share their own feelings, to be encouraging and to get their clients to focus on the props before them.

The counselor participants shared some personal information about their own lives in an attempt to engage their clients. This disclosing formed a personal connection between counselor and client. During the counseling session between counselor David E. and his client Sebastian, playing the game of soccer had come up in their discussion. Sebastian shared that he played soccer, which led counselor David E. to report that he had also played the game when he was Sebastian’s age. Counselor David E. also told Sebastian how much he loved the game along with his favorite players. This led Sebastian to share his thoughts about his favorite soccer player, Tomas Brolin. The discussion then focused on creating the prop of a letter to Tomas Brolin that stated what Sebastian had gone through and his goal of leaving residential treatment. The sharing of counselor David E.’s own story led to the therapeutic intervention of using the prop of a letter.

Counselor Sage also shared with her client Calie some aspects about her own life. Calie mentioned that she was an only child. Counselor Sage relayed that she too was an only child. Counselor Sage mentioned the positives and negatives she had experienced with no having siblings. Counselor Sage’s disclosure began to develop a
common bond between counselor and client. This bond was later displayed through the use of turtle puppet props. Counselor Sage utilized a large turtle puppet and Calie used a smaller turtle puppet. The props used appeared to continue demonstrating the similarities between counselor Sage and Calie.

Counselor Elizabeth shared a story she had been told as a little girl that correlated to what she and her client Candace had been discussing. Counselor Elizabeth and Candace discussed how Candace wished she could control certain people in her life. Candace wanted to control the people in her life negatively in order to get them to do what she wanted. As they spoke about trying to control other people’s behaviors, counselor Elizabeth shared a story she was told as a little girl about riding a tiger in order to engage Candace. Counselor Elizabeth referred to a poster of a tiger as a prop during their discussion and throughout their counseling session:

Elizabeth: The problem about having people, problem with people is you can’t always control them. There’s an old saying they had when I was a kid and still around. It said, “If you plan to ride a tiger be careful when you get off.”
Candace: Uh.
Elizabeth: A hu.
Candace: I have no idea what you’re saying.
Elizabeth: I had no idea at first until I saw a tiger. Basically they mean if you plan to do something, like the Bunny of Dume, that will help you, that’s fine but once you decide to quit you can’t always control them. So that’s why they say when you plan to ride a tiger be careful when you get off, because you might be in control of the tiger but once you get off be careful.
Candace: Because they’ll be in control of you.
Elizabeth: That’s exactly right. I didn’t understand what it meant when I was a kid either. I finally understood when somebody took it and made it into a poem instead. They’ve remade it into a poem.
from Niger. It goes, “There once was a young lady from Niger. Who smiled when she rode on a tiger. They returned from the ride with the lady inside and a smile on the face of the tiger.”

The sharing of this story by counselor Elizabeth provided an opportunity to engage client Candace to continue with their discussion. It also gave them a way to readdress the concept of controlling others by referring to the tiger story by saying “be careful when you start riding that tiger.”

Another way the counselors attempted to engage their clients was to share their own feelings. This appeared to communicate to clients that it was appropriate to speak about feelings and that even their counselors experienced emotions. An example of a counselor sharing her feelings occurred during counselor Carley’s work with client Holly. Counselor Carley shared how she felt with her client Holly as they used the prop of the game “Connect Four”:

Carley: I’m so nervous (as she drops a checker) I can’t even get it in.
Holly: (giggles)

Counselor Carley also observed how her client Holly was beginning to get frustrated by losing at the game. This observation prompted a discussion of having a strategy in regards to the prop. Counselor Carley shared how she has gotten frustrated at herself in the past when she didn’t follow her own strategy:

Carley: Thinking first is a good strategy. Sometimes I do things without thinking and I’m like “grrr” when I could have won (she takes her move).
Another form of engaging occurred when counselors encouraged their clients in order to involve them in the use of a prop. Encouraging their clients took the form of counselors positively prompting them to participate in the activities with a prop occurring within the counseling session. Counselor Sage attempted to have her client release her anger towards a bullying cousin by encouraging her to hit a pillow with a blow-up plastic bat called a “stress buster bat.” As her client Calie hit a pillow that represented her cousin with the prop, counselor Sage gave her words to aid in the release of emotions. The props used aided in this release:

Sage: You don’t deserve that. You don’t deserve to be looked down on by Tim.

Counselor Sage also encouraged client Calie to continue hitting the pillow with the prop bat along with saying how she felt towards her bullying cousin. When client Calie finished hitting the pillow she reported how she felt:

Calie: I feel good (face glowing with a big smile).
Sage: Yeah that feels good. How does your face feel?

Counselor Sage also encouraged her client Calie by pointing out Calie’s positive characteristics, which she hides from others. Counselor Sage used the prop of turtle puppets to demonstrate the similarities between Calie and the turtle prop she was holding:

Sage: I think you’re pretty strong. I’m just not sure you show it all the time.
Calie: (shakes head no, meaning she doesn’t show her strength)
Sage: You keep your strength in.
Counselor Sage attempted to engage her client Calie by encouraging Calie to participate in the activities through the use of props occurring during their counseling session. Counselor Sage also encouraged her by pointing out her positive characteristics. As counselor Sage encouraged Calie they both handled the turtle puppet props. The props appeared to empower Calie to accept these compliments.

Counselor Terry also engaged her client Joshua through encouragement. Joshua was placing Mardi Gras necklaces around his neck when he came across some small necklaces that would not fit over his head. Counselor Terry taught Joshua how those necklaces worked. When Joshua came across another little necklace he was able to figure it out without help:
Terry: You figured out that one did the very same thing. I noticed something about you, Joshua, that when you figure something out you can use what you know about it in other situations.

In order to engage clients, there were times when the counselors attempted to get their clients to focus on their work during their counseling session. These counselors verbally prompted their clients to continue working with the props they had been manipulating. Client Crystal had been placing a wide variety of miniature figurine props into a sand tray. She reported that the figurines were going to fight among themselves. Counselor Laci was able to focus Crystal from placing the miniature figurines in the sand tray to begin storying about her creation:

Laci: So what do you think all of these characters and people are fighting about?
Crystal: Well they started the fight because they were fighting over who gets what and their taxes too much.
Laci: Okay when you say they fighting over who gets what, what do you mean?
Crystal: If they should stop taxing them.
Laci: Are they fighting with words or with weapons?
Crystal: Weapons because these are the weapons they can take.

Counselor Dennis also focused his client by engaging his client Toby to create a world in a sand tray out of miniature figurine props. Toby had arranged the figurines into “good guys” and “bad guys” on separated ends of the sand tray. Counselor Dennis attempted to engage Toby to speak about how each miniature figurine participated in the battles that were occurring between the good and bad guys. As they spoke, Toby manipulated the miniature figurine prop that represented Toby’s brother Leo. Toby kept moving the Leo figurine into the “bad” side of the sand tray. Counselor Dennis
attempted to focus Toby beyond the battles occurring by asking what the other family members were doing as they occurred:

Toby: Leo keeps on running by the bad guys then this is the bad guy this is the shield, then he made a shield, that I
Dennis: What does the family do when Leo is on the bad side, what does the family do?
Toby: The family just thinks about him. (Toby picked the wizard and flew him over to the bad side of the sand tray and then back to the family to report on Leo.) Flew and saw and said he was trapped by the bad side.

Counselor Laci at the end of her session with client Crystal attempted to engage her into speaking about the time they had spent together. Crystal did not want their time together to end and moved towards a doll house which she began playing with:

Laci: (begins to sit down) Can we take a couple of minutes and sit down and talk before we go?
Crystal: No. (points towards the doll house)
Laci: Okay, well we can stand up and talk.

Counselor Laci continued to prompt her client Crystal while standing at the doll house in order to focus their closing discussion. Counselor Laci attempted to engage Crystal in the counseling process by encouraging her to comment on their work. Counselor Laci additionally tried to guide the session along towards its conclusion by verbally engaging Crystal to discuss what had occurred during their time together by referring to the props they used.

Engaging clients in the counseling process was displayed by the counselors in the counseling sessions. The counselors’ attempts included sharing their own stories.
and feelings with their clients as they spoke and manipulated props. These stories and feelings correlated to their discussion and the props they were working with. Counselors encouraged their clients personally and in order to enlist their participation. The counselors also engaged their clients by verbally prompting them in order to focus their discussion concerning their use of props. Therefore, the characteristics of engaging included counselors sharing their stories and feelings, encouraging their clients and focusing them on prop use.

Theme Three – Subtheme (f) Client’s Perception. In analyzing the counseling sessions, there were incidents when the counselor asked the client for his or her perception. The counselors attempted to tap into clients’ perceptions, which would inform them about how the clients were thinking. Of the unpublished counselors 100% asked their clients for their perceptions. Thirty percent of the published counselors requested their clients’ perceptions. The frequency of the subtheme client’s perception was typical. Counselors solicited their clients’ perceptions about the props they used and/or the creations they made. They also wanted their clients’ perceptions regarding the impact of the work they did during their counseling sessions.

Soliciting the clients’ perceptions concerning the props they used and the creations they made was conducted by the counselors. Clients were asked to reflect on their use of the props. An example of this was when counselor Violet had introduced the prop of clay to her client Blake. Counselor Violet had demonstrated and manipulated the clay while Blake imitated her manipulation of the prop. Counselor
Violet introduced every possible way to work with clay. Then she asked Blake which he liked the best and the worst. Blake reported that he liked making the snake the best. He also reported that he disliked poking his finger through the mound of clay because his finger wasn’t strong. Counselor Violet explored Blake’s perception of both the props he used and himself using the props.

Counselor David E. also requested his client Sebastian’s perception of the prop of writing a letter to his favorite soccer player, Tomas Brolin. Sebastian liked the idea. They then used a part of their session to construct the letter. So the client’s perception was used to determine whether or not the prop was a good idea to use.

In the sessions, clients were asked to comment on parts of their creations and/or their entire creations. Their perceptions were solicited in order to discover information concerning the prop they were using. Counselor Ann had been working with client Trevor in a sand tray. Client Trevor had used a shade of purple sand to construct a bridge from a main land structure to an island in the sand. Counselor Ann attempted to determine if the choice of purple sand was significant to Trevor. Therefore, she asked for his perception:

\begin{verbatim}
Ann: Now does the purple sand mean anything in particular?
Trevor: The purple sand is just land.
Ann: Okay and this is the island.
Trevor: And this blue stuff is the water and they have to build a bridge to get to the island.
\end{verbatim}

Later in their session together, client Trevor was building a tower on the island. Counselor Ann asked about his perceptions of the tower:
Ann: Are bigger buildings necessarily stronger?
Trevor: They’re weaker.
Ann: How come?
Trevor: Littler buildings, they put more materials inside taller buildings, like this (hand gesture), they can wobble.
Ann: Because of the wind.
Trevor: That’s what happened in the Discovery Channel the wind was so strong, um, that a building wobbled and just fell down.

This client’s sister had died the previous year. He reported that he had to be strong for the adults in his life. This appeared to be reflected in the idea that smaller buildings are stronger than tall buildings. Again, the client’s perception of the prop was used for evaluation purposes or to create insight.

Counselor Mary had asked her client Becky’s perception of what it would take to change her feelings of sadness to feelings of happiness. Counselor Mary had used the prop of a piece of paper separated into three sections. In the first section, counselor Mary drew a picture of Becky’s face with a sad expression. In the last section of the paper, counselor Mary drew another picture of Becky’s face with a happy expression. She then proceeded to solicit Becky’s perception of what it would take to bridge the first picture to the third picture. Counselor Mary handed the paper to Becky to complete the drawing.

Another form of requesting clients’ perceptions from the sessions was when counselors asked for their clients’ perceptions of the impact of their work together. Counselor Ann attempted to get client Trevor’s perception of the work they had done within the sand tray:

Ann: What do you think we accomplished here today?
Trevor: A big battle.

Counselor Jill solicited from client Kay to describe pictorially her perception of the time they had spent together. Kay drew a picture which contained a rainbow, mountains, and lake but no people. Kay was asked by counselor Jill to title the picture. Kay titled her picture “Paradise.” This was Kay’s personal perception of the time she had spent in counseling “paradise.” The use of the picture prop demonstrated the impact counseling had on her.

Counselor Laci at the end of her session with client Crystal requested Crystal to sit down for a minute to talk about what they had done together. Crystal did not want the counseling session to end and refused to sit down. Counselor Laci stood with Crystal and reflected that Crystal did not want their time together to end. Crystal’s perception of the prop activities in their counseling session was that it was “good” and that she felt “great.”

Counselors who solicited the perspective and perceptions of their clients appeared to respect the children’s evaluations of their lives and the world around them. Counselors who asked their clients what they thought, empowered them to become active participants in the counseling process. When counselors asked for their clients’ perceptions, they asked about the props and their creations along with their thoughts regarding their counseling experience.
Summary of Theme Three – Working with Children

This theme represented the unique ways counselors prepared themselves and their environments to work with children. This preparation included creating a place for props as part of the physical setting in which they conducted counseling, their counseling style and attributes that encouraged children in therapeutic props use, and using language and special attempts at client engagement. This theme also included using the client’s perception of the props.

Summary of Category One – Process of Counseling Children

In analyzing the counseling sessions it was observed that counselors adapted the counseling environment, utilized specific skills and changed their personal presentation when counseling children in the context of working with props. Category One included observations about the ways in which the counselors worked with their clients. Table 8 shows the themes and subthemes which were demonstrated in the process of counseling children.

These themes and subthemes appeared to display that good counseling skills are necessary when working with children. It also demonstrated that possessing good solid child counseling skills is vital when utilizing props. The themes and subthemes of Category One show that counselors cannot utilize props unless they possess good counseling skills. These skills lay the foundation for prop usage.
Table 8

Category One – Process of Counseling Children’s Themes and Subthemes

| Category 1 Process of Counseling Children
| Theme 1 Counseling Session Dynamics
| Theme 2 Counseling Skills
| Subtheme (a) Building Rapport
| Subtheme (b) Linking Sessions
| Subtheme (c) Probing
| Subtheme (d) Reflecting
| Subtheme (e) Teaching
| Theme 3 Working with Children
| Subtheme (a) Physical Setting
| Subtheme (b) Counselor Attributes
| Subtheme (c) Language
| Subtheme (d) Tracking
| Subtheme (e) Engaging
| Subtheme (f) Client’s Perception

Each theme in this category describes a general child counseling process but emphasizes the role of props in each of the themes. The counseling session dynamics appeared to have clients feel welcomed into the counseling space that was set up specifically for them. Counselor Jill had bean bags instead of chairs. Counselors George, Ann, and Susan used sand trays. A variety of props were available for clients to work with. The counselors seemed to possess a high level of skills and confidence in counseling children. This confidence was apparent as they adapted the counseling process to work with children. The counselors demonstrated confidence and skills in counseling children through the adaptation of the counseling process to children. This adaptation also entailed utilizing props. The presentation of the counselor, their enthusiasm and their ability to engage their clients into the counseling process was a
necessary condition when using props. These themes suggest that counselors who use props to counsel children also demonstrate basic child counseling skills.

While these themes appear to be about counseling children in general, they represent the context and foundation in which specific props use is built. Counselor Sage’s possession of good solid counseling skills promoted the use of props which correlated to her client’s experiences and personal characters of acting like a timid turtle. Counselor Dennis’s skills allowed him to utilize props that unveiled the issues relevant to client Toby’s adjustment to life in America. Counselor Violet’s expertise in working with children allowed her clients to discuss their concerns through working with clay props. Counselor Laci’s specialization in working with children emerged as she engaged her client Crystal in the counseling process by utilizing props. Therefore, it is necessary for counselors to possess solid child counseling skills in order to utilize props in their work with children. These skills may set the stage for props to be used in the counseling process. The themes and subthemes laid the foundation to build upon in order to use props.

It has been illustrated that props can’t be utilized unless a counselor possesses effective child counseling skills. Also these skills may set the foundation for prop use. Once the foundation of working with children has been laid, the next step is to analyze how the counselors actually work with props as they counsel. The themes of Category Two investigate how props are introduced and worked with when counseling children.
Category Two – Utilizing Props with Children

Counselors who work with clients utilize a variety of props throughout the counseling process. The props used within the counseling sessions ranged from sand tray miniatures, art work, paper boards, and movies to games and toys to name a few. Using these props allowed counselors to speak about concepts which their clients may not have a complete grasp of. When the counselors utilized props within the child counseling process it appeared to permit them to enter into the client’s world. The use of props was evident throughout the whole counseling process. Props were used uniquely to match the client’s developmental level and problems. Within this category five themes presented themselves: (1) introduction of props, (2) working the prop, (3) anthropomorphism, (4) relating the prop to life, and (5) generalizing.

Theme One – Introduction of Props

There are two ways that props were introduced within the counseling sessions: client generated and counselor generated. Most of the videotapes contained occurrences when the use of props was initiated by both the counselor and the client. The counselors who seemed more nondirective demonstrated permission and encouragement to let their clients choose the props they wished to work with. The counselors who seemed more directive introduced the props themselves. While there were two distinct subthemes to the introduction of props theme, the counselors did tend to move back and forth between directive and nondirective styles within each
subtheme. In observing the counseling sessions, it appeared that a combination of directive and nondirective styles was utilized. Therefore, in the majority of the counseling sessions both the counselors and their clients generated the selection, introduction and use of props. It also appeared that depending on the goals of the session and whether the counselor could utilize the client-generated prop determined how directive the counselor became in terms of prop introduction.

Theme One — Subtheme (a) Client Generated. When a client generated the choice and use of props, it appeared that the counselor took a more nondirective approach. In analyzing the sessions when the prop usage was client generated, the counselor used a nondirective style. This nondirective approach encouraged clients to take the lead in how props would be chosen and manipulated. Of the unpublished counselors, 90.90% permitted their clients to generate prop usage. Fifty percent of the published counselors encouraged client-generated use of props. The frequency of the subtheme client generated was typical. The counselors also asked their clients for direction on how they should manipulate the client-generated props. Counselors additionally transformed their clients’ comments regarding the props used into verbal metaphors. The counselors then utilized these verbal metaphors throughout their counseling session. Within the sessions, three of the clients brought in props from home to work with. Therefore, when the introduction of a prop was client-generated, the counseling was more nondirective, counselors asked for direction, verbal metaphors were created and clients were given the freedom to bring their own props into their counseling sessions.
Prop introduction was considered child generated when counselors prompted their clients to choose their own props. Counselor Terry, in working with her client Joshua at the beginning of their session together, gave him the opportunity to choose the props he wanted to use. Joshua went from using Mardi Gras necklaces, to swords, to a play phone, back to the necklaces, to a butterfly puppet and then to handcuffs. Counselor Terry tracked Joshua’s behavior and spoke in a way that seemed to empower him. Joshua chose to initiate a game of hiding the handcuff keys and having counselor Terry hide the keys from him. Joshua instructed counselor Terry where he wanted her to hide the keys:

Joshua: This time hide it in the puppets.

Client Joshua was empowered to be in control of this part of his counseling session. Joshua’s introduction and use of the handcuff keys offered the appearance of empowered behavior within the session.

Another example of the client generating the use of props was when counselor Jill and client Kay began making a log cabin prop out of play dough. It was Kay’s idea to build a prop of a log cabin. Kay’s family was currently adding an addition to their own house because of lack of room. Counselor Jill encouraged Kay to lead in her prop usage by giving her choices:

Jill: Do you want to keep playing clay or do you want to play something else?
Client Kay decided to continue manipulating the play dough props. Kay then began to make circular tubes out of the play dough:

Kay: Now we need to make a bunch of tubes.
Jill: Alright, what are these, what are the tubes for?
Kay: Logs for a log cabin.

During this time the counselor permitted the client to generate the choice of what props would be used and how they would be manipulated. Counselor Susan at the start of her counseling session with client Robin also encouraged her to take the lead in what props would be worked with during their time together.

Susan: Is there anything special you want to do today? (silence while Robin looked at the miniature figurines displayed on the wall) I want you to pick.

This was another illustration of the connection between nondirection on the part of the counselor and client-generated prop choice.

At the start of counselor Ann and client Trevor’s counseling session, Ann asked Trevor what he wanted to work on during their time together. Counselor Ann empowered Trevor to take the lead in generating what props he wished to work with. Trevor chose the prop of the sand tray and began constructing a scene:

Ann: So what do you want to work on today?
Trevor: These army people are going to find footsteps, then they’re going to follow these footsteps to an island and they’re going to build a house on that island and see if any of the dinosaurs come back.
Ann: Okay, so we’re still on the dinosaurs.
Trevor: Yeah.
Ann: So where do you want to begin?
Counselors Terry, Jill, Susan and Ann were all nondirective, offering their clients the choice which resulted in their clients introducing the prop.

As the clients generated the props they wanted to work with during their sessions, the counselors asked them for direction. This appeared to show the clients that they were in charge of how the props would be manipulated. Counselor Terry's session with client Joshua showed how a counselor takes her lead from the client. In this example, Joshua asked counselor Terry to hide the key to the handcuffs from him:

Terry: You're going to handcuff yourself, don't make it too tight because I don't want it to hurt, and I get to hide the key?
Joshua: Yep.
Terry: Do I tell you where I hide it or do I keep it a secret?
Joshua: Keep it a secret.
Terry: Woo, you are really trusting me. (Joshua keeps playing with his handcuffs)
Joshua: Woo.
Terry: I see what the problem is.
Joshua: What?
Terry: You're trying to make it go around the outside. (Joshua found the hidden key and tells Terry to hide it again)
Terry: Should I make it about that easy or should I make it harder this time?
Joshua: A little bit harder.

Throughout Counselor Terry and client Joshua's session together, Terry continued to allow Joshua to lead their interactions around the props by asking him for direction. Counselor Terry would ask Joshua, "What should I say?" in response to his questions.
Counselor Jill also displayed asking her client Kay for direction. Kay had decided to make play dough prop dinosaurs and enlisted her counselor Jill to do the same:

Jill: Should I make baby dinosaurs?

They worked parallel in making the prop of a play dough megalosaurus. Counselor Jill asked her client for direction concerning what parts of the dinosaurs she should make:

Jill: Which part should I work on?
Kay: The legs.
Jill: The legs, should I make two legs or two short ones and two long ones?

Counselor Jill continued to ask her client Kay for further directions as they manipulated the prop of a play dough dinosaur:

Jill: What color should I make the body?

Counselor Jill and client Kay continued to work on their prop of a megalosaurus. Counselor Jill encouraged Kay to keep leading their interactions. She also solicited help from Kay regarding how she should proceed:

Jill: Tell me how I should make the body because I don’t know what a megalosaurus looks like, so you’re going to have to help me.

Throughout these interchanges the client provided direction for the counselor. The counselor then attempted to turn their interaction into a therapeutic intervention using the prop that the client chose.
Another way in which clients generated the introduction of a prop into their counseling session was through the use of verbal metaphors they created. An example of this occurred between counselor Dennis and client Toby. Counselor Dennis referenced the sweatshirt that his client was wearing. The sweatshirt contained pictures of different superheroes. Toby’s sweatshirt became the prop of discussion:

Dennis: So you have a lot of superheroes on your sweat shirt. I see Spiderman and Superman. Oh and Superman! Who’s your favorite superhero?
Toby: Flash.
Dennis: Flash. What does he do?
Toby: He runs real fast. If anyone falls down he, he just turns himself into a wind, a wind tunnel, he can make the wind goes up and down real slow.
Dennis: Wow!
Toby: I’m real fast.
Dennis: You’re like Flash then.
Toby: No one ever catches me, like three people tried to catch me but they didn’t.

The metaphor of being like “Flash” was utilized later in their sessions together. Client Toby introduced the metaphor and counselor Dennis utilized the metaphor to relay the similarities between Toby and “Flash.” Counselor Dennis continued using the metaphor during their session. Counselor Dennis referred to it as Toby spoke of running away from bad guys in his dreams. The prop generated the verbal metaphor.

There were three counseling sessions in which the clients brought in props from home. The clients generated this prop usage by selecting to bring an outside element into the counseling process. These sessions were when the same client participated in multiple sessions. Counselor Jill during a session with her client Kay
observed that Kay had brought in her favorite stuffed animal, a kola bear named Manchu. The prop of Manchu initiated the discussion of how Kay chose favorites. The prop of Manchu prompted Kay to create a Lego home for him. In this Lego home counselor Jill attempted to have additional prop animals placed with Manchu. Kay agreed. Kay brought Manchu from home and counselor Jill used the prop to reflect Kay’s growth. Previously, Kay had not allowed additional people to be added to any of the props she had previously created.

The second example of a client bringing a prop into their counseling session occurred between counselor Dennis and client Toby. During one of their sessions counselor Dennis and Toby began working on a scrapbook of his life. The scrapbook included his life before being adopted, moving to the United States and after his adoption. Toby brought the scrapbook back to his next session to show his work on it. The discussion that transpired afterwards entailed how Toby could honor his first part of life and how it has changed since his adoption. It appeared that Toby’s choice to bring the scrapbook to the session provided counselor Dennis with insight and fertile ground for exploration.

Client-generated prop usage allowed counselors to work within the child-selected medium. The counselors sought ways to utilize these props therapeutically. Examples included the client needing to feel in charge (Joshua being in charge of the handcuff keys), replicating their world (Kay building a big enough house), acknowledging their past experiences (Toby creating a scrapbook of his life), describing themselves (Toby being Flash) and their need to feel big and powerful (Kay
creating dinosaurs). When the prop was generated by the client, the counselors used the props to focus on areas of adjustment for the child and, perhaps, why they initiated counseling. Client-generated prop choice and usage gave the counseling sessions a more nondirective feel. The nondirective feel was demonstrated by clients generating prop usage by choosing and initiating prop usage, counselors asking for direction, verbal metaphors of the props utilized throughout the sessions and clients bringing in their own props to work with.

**Theme One – Subtheme (b) Counselor Generated.** There were three characteristics associated with counselor-generated prop introduction: building rapport, handling props during discussions and prop activities. Of the unpublished counselors, 81.82% of the prop usage was counselor generated and 100% of the published counselors introduced props. The frequency of the subtheme counselor generated was typical. Some of the counselors introduced props as a way to build rapport with their clients. Others permitted the props to be handled and manipulated during their conversations. Last, counselors used props by directing their clients to participate in specific activities regarding the prop that the counselor chose. The three characteristics associated with counselor-generated introduction of props were rapport building, handling props during discussions and assigning specific prop activities.

For the majority of the counseling sessions, building rapport was the goal of the counseling session(s). When a prop was used to build rapport, the counselor introduced the prop and demonstrated how to manipulate it.
Counselor Violet showed her client Blake how to work with the prop of clay she had brought into their session. This gave Blake the opportunity to manipulate the prop of clay before being asked to make specific creations:

Violet: Blake, you know I have this clay and you know um it’s kind of hard that’s why I asked them to bring me some water (handed Blake piece of clay to work and she has a piece also) and some paper towels in case you want to get (hand gesture), if you need it. You know what I thought we would do with it?

Blake: Uh.

Violet: I’d like to do a little exercise but before that I’d like to do something else that kind of shows all the different things you can do with clay.

Blake: Okay.

Violet: In the past you’ve worked, you had in the past (Blake shakes his head yes) what did you do with it do you remember?

Blake: Um I drew, oh, not drew.

Violet: Made.

Blake: Made people.

Violet: People.

Blake: Trees.

Violet: Right, this is kind of fun. So I’m going to tell you to do something. I’m going to do them, you’re going to do them, and I’m going to see what you like doing and what you don’t like doing, okay?

Blake: Okay.

Violet: So first and you might think of some things too. First we’re going to pinch the clay, let’s just pinch it like if someone came up to you and pinched your cheeks, like you’re pinching them back. We’re going to pinch the clay.

Blake: Right.

Violet: Now we’re going to poke holes in the clay, like this, just poke the clay, poke the clay, it makes all of these interesting marks. (Blake complies)

Violet: Now tear the clay, tear it apart, just rip it apart, big pieces and little pieces, just rip it apart. Alright now, the thing that is so great about clay is you can rip it apart but you can...

Blake: Put it back together.

Violet: Exactly right.
Counselor Violet continued to demonstrate the variety of things you can do with clay such as throwing it down, smoothing it, patting it, slapping it, squeezing it, making a snake or a ball, boring a hole in it and punching it. Client Blake smiled as he imitated counselor Violet’s actions. Counselor Violet introduced the prop of clay and set the stage for manipulating it during their session.

Counselor Terry’s session demonstrated her building rapport with her client Joshua through the use of props. At the start of their session counselor Terry tracked Joshua’s behavior as he utilized the prop of Mardi Gras necklaces. Joshua had placed these necklaces over his head and around his neck. There were some necklaces Joshua was unable to manipulate because they were smaller than the circumference of his head. It appeared that Joshua was going to discard these smaller necklaces. Counselor Terry reflected this and reintroduced the smaller necklaces, offering to work as a team to figure out how these smaller necklaces worked:

Joshua: How do you open this? (referring to the smaller necklaces)
Terry: How do you open it, let’s work together as a team and open it hands on, hands to pull it apart ... grab it, one, two, three, it breaks open.
Joshua: Cool.
Terry: We worked together as a team to do it.

As counselor Terry built rapport with her client Joshua she relayed to him how they could work together as a team if he decided to. Counselor Terry appeared to demonstrate confidence in Joshua’s ability to be part of the solution they discovered. Counselor Terry’s reintroduction of the prop helped generate this awareness.
Counselor David S. also utilized a prop in order to build rapport with his client Jeff. Counselor David had been asking many questions and the answers that Jeff was giving were short and shallow. Counselor David S. therefore decided to utilize the prop of drawings to help collect information. Counselor David S. directed Jeff to participate in drawing activities:

David S.: Okay, well I probably have more questions for you but how about we do a little drawing okay?
Jeff: Okay.
David S.: Wanna draw, are there things you like to draw?
Jeff: Let’s see, what do I want to draw?

Counselor David S. ’s client Jeff complied with the drawing request and therefore it was used again. The props were the drawings that Jeff created. Counselor David S. then asked Jeff to draw a person. Jeff had drawn a picture of his grandmother who had passed away within the last year and was a significant loss in his life. This prop picture provided Jeff an avenue to address the grief he was experiencing. The finished art work was the prop that appeared to build rapport. The art work prop also furthered their discussion into areas that seemed to be difficult for Jeff to talk about.

The counselors also generated the use of props by having their clients manipulate props during their discussions. It was observed that when the clients were working with the props that a stream of unguarded thoughts seemed to flow from them. Counselor Laci had introduced play dough into their session after the completion of a sand tray. The prop of play dough along with play dough tools were placed before her client Crystal. Counselor Laci did not request Crystal to create
specific things. Crystal was allowed to manipulate the play dough how she deemed appropriate. As both counselor Laci and Crystal began handling the prop of play dough, a discussion about friendships ensued:

Crystal: Like my friend treated well, we think she is spreading a rumors but...
Laci: um hum
Crystal: but we’re not for sure because she hasn’t usually tell me because she doesn’t want me to feel bad.
Laci: Oh she spreads rumors about herself.
Crystal: No, about me.
Laci: Wow, so she’s your friend...
Crystal: I don’t think she’s my friend if she would do that.

Counselor Laci and client Crystal continued to talk as they both handled the prop of play dough. They spoke about Crystal’s friends. Earlier in their session together Crystal had reported having many friends. While she handled the prop she contradicted this earlier statement by saying she only had a few friends. Other topics emerged as they handled and manipulated the play dough prop. Crystal spoke of friendships, having to move many times and of extended family. It appeared from their session that more accurate information was revealed as the client’s hands were active.

Another characteristic associated with counselor-directed introduction of props was instructing clients to participate in counselor-chosen activities with props. The activities were mostly chosen by the counselors. As the counselors introduced the props, they directed their clients to interact with the props in a specific manner.

Counselor Violet had introduced the prop of clay to her client Blake. She had demonstrated how to use the clay and encouraged Blake to manipulate the clay...
himself. Once Blake was comfortable with the clay, counselor Violet proceeded to
instruct him in a prop activity:

Violet: So what I want you to do, with your eyes closed at first, start
making something with the clay. It could just be a shape or you
could imagine your making an animal or person you know, you
could think you’re making and it won’t turn out to be that way
because your eyes are closed or it might turn out to be a shape
or a thing, just let your fingers move the clay. Sometimes the
clay tells you where it wants to go and you’ll be surprised
because your eyes are closed.

Client Blake created the prop of a whale out of the clay. Counselor Violet
processed this creation by directing Blake to speak as if he were the whale. After the
processing was completed, counselor Violet directed him again regarding what she
wanted him to make with the clay:

Violet: What I’d like you to make, your family out of clay, like people,
your mother, your sister, your grandmother and your father,
because he is a part of your family.

Client Blake complied with the requests of his counselor Violet. As he worked
with his props, certain information began to unfold. Blake doesn’t see his father
because he lives “too far away,” when in fact he lives 20 minutes from Blake. The
interactions which occurred between Blake and the props used through directed
activities seemed to shed additional light on his thoughts and feelings.

Counselor Dennis introduced and directed the activities that occurred in his
counseling sessions with client Toby. An example of this was when counselor Dennis
had brought out a sand tray for Toby to work in. Counselor Dennis directed Toby to
create a world of his family in the sand tray utilizing props of miniature figurines:
Dennis: Well I got the sand tray out today and it's got a lot of sand in there. So far all it has is sand, and over here I got all of these different figures and I'm just going to dump them on the ground here and, see, there's a bunch.

Toby: (referring to the sand design in the empty sand tray) This is like the snake all around.

Dennis: Yeah. What I would like for you to do today is create a world today, a world of your family. So who's in your family?

Toby: Leo and Mia.

Dennis: You, Leo, Mia... who else?

Toby: And Daddy and Mommy.

Dennis: And Daddy and Mommy. Okay, so I would like you to use anything in there you want and you can work in the sand and I want you to create a world and when you're done you can tell me about it. So you can take your time and work on that.

Client Toby complied with this request and began putting miniature figurine props into the sand tray. Counselor Dennis then directed Toby to speak about the creation he had made in the sand tray. Counselor Dennis seemed to learn about Toby's issues such as the idea of being a big brother to his siblings, "bad guys" attacking his family and taking on the role of family protector. During another session with Toby, counselor Dennis directed him to create his world in the sand tray. When Toby completed it, counselor Dennis asked him to tell the story of his creation:

Dennis: Toby, do you want to tell me about your world?

Toby: Alright. This is my land and my country and no one ever sees me because it's all because I live underground.

Dennis: It's an underground world, so it can't be seen. Why does it want to stay underground?

Toby: Because if anyone comes and fights it will stay underground and stay safe.

This interchange highlighted the issue of client Toby's adjustment to his new home in America. Toby was brought to America from South America but still
remained cautious about his new environment. Counselor Dennis used instruction to introduce the props and explore issues with Toby.

Another example of a counselor-generated use of a prop was when counselor Susan chose and introduced the game “Caught Being Good” to her client Robin:

Susan: You get, to pick what color you like and you start over here and what were going to do is spin the spinner to get colors. Start here and go all around the board and end here.
Robin: Time out?
Susan: You see the time out on the spinner.
Robin: Stars.
Susan: The start give you a chance to be good. When you land on a star you pick a card and I read the back and it tells you what to do. (picks up a star card and reads it) Playing quietly now it asks you a question, “Name a time when you played quietly.”

As counselor Susan and client Robin began using the prop of the game, it provided the opportunity to supply concrete examples of what certain abstract concepts mean. The concepts, “how does someone feel loved?” “what does being good mean?” and “how to show appreciation?” permitted counselor Susan the chance to provide Robin concrete examples for her to build upon. As the game drew to an end, counselor Susan began to preselect “star” cards that specifically addressed issues that client Robin needed to work on.

Counselor Sage introduced the props of turtle puppets with her client Calie. The prop puppets were chosen by counselor Sage specifically because they reflected the behavior of Calie:

Sage: Is your self pretty?
Calie: (shakes yes)
Sage: Is your self good?
Calie: (shakes head yes)
Sage: But you feel you, you kind of have to hide it.
Calie: (shakes head yes)
Sage: Interesting.
(Sage stands up to get two turtle puppets. One turtle puppet is larger than the other. Sage keeps the larger turtle puppet and hands Calie the littler turtle puppet.)
Sage: Here’s what I think about what you do and you tell me if I am right or wrong. This is you, you hide. You hide who you are (Sage pulls her turtle’s head into its shell.)

Calie:
Sage: What does it feel like in the shell?
Calie: It is hard.
Sage: Is it lonely?
Calie: Yes.
Sage: Who do you come out of the shell for?
Calie: My friends.
Sage: Tell me about your friends. What’s their names?
Calie: Crystal, Bree, Caitlyn.
Sage: Crystal, Bree and Caitlin. And how do they get you out of your shell?

Counselor Sage utilized the prop of turtle puppets to reflect how client Calie hides her good qualities. Their discussion about how Calie’s behavior is similar to the prop turtle continued. This characteristic of counselor-generated activities and discussions as a way of introducing props seems to suggest counselors’ intentional actions as ways of moving therapeutic props use along.

When a counselor is directive and the client does not comply with the direction, it provides the counselor with information that may not have been gathered any other way. An example of this occurred during counselor Jill’s session with her client Kay. Counselor Jill and Kay had been creating a play dough prop of a log cabin. The only play dough person in the log cabin was of Kay. At this point counselor Jill
directed Kay to create additional play dough people to put in her prop of a play dough log cabin:

Jill: Why don’t we make you and Beth [Kay’s sister]? Can we make you and Beth?
Kay: I don’t want Beth.
Jill: You don’t want Beth to be in the house?
Kay: Nope.
Jill: What about you? Can we make you?
Kay: This is me.
Jill: That is you. You said it was a lazy bum.
Kay: I know. I always sit here watching TV.
Jill: Oh.
Kay: We need to build a TV.
Jill: We need to build a TV. Can we build more people to go in there with you?
Kay: Nope.

Client Kay clearly did not want to share her space with anyone else in her family, especially her siblings. This interaction allowed counselor Jill to gain insight into client Kay’s desires. It provided information that could be focused on within their counseling session, such as Kay’s role in her family and how she communicates with her family members.

When counselors generated the choice and usage of props, a more directive approach to counseling emerged. Utilizing a directive approach with clients permitted counselors to gather information, to work with issues and to reinforce concepts at a quicker pace. The characteristics of counselor-generated prop usage entailed using props to build rapport, and to handle during discussion and specific counselor-directed activities.
**Summary of Theme One – Introduction of Props**

Within the sessions the use of props was generated by both clients and counselors. Counselors who utilized a more nondirective approach with their clients permitted the clients to be in charge of the selection and utilization of props. Within a nondirective approach the client also selected the pace of the counseling session. When the counselors were directive in their approach, they chose props and orchestrated how the clients were to interact with these props. The combination of directive and nondirective approaches by the counselors appeared to be the best fit for the clients in the videotapes. Overall, the introduction of props seemed to be used to learn more about the client and facilitate engagement.

**Theme Two – Working the Prop**

Once a prop had been chosen and introduced, the client began to work with the prop by physically manipulating it. Working the prop refers to when clients and/or counselors manually manipulated a prop. The props consisted of clay, play dough, sand, miniature figurines, drawings and puppets, to name a few. This theme may represent the core of prop use: when the prop is transformed into a metaphor and used to symbolically represent a psychological struggle for the child. There were many aspects of manipulation demonstrated on the tapes. For example, there were incidents within the sessions when the counselors and/or the clients physically became the prop that was being manipulated. This was done through the use of hand gestures and
movement. Counselors engaged their clients to continue manipulating props through verbal prompts. They additionally attempted to engage their clients by prompting them to expand their comments regarding the props used. Working the prop produced subthemes of manipulation, self as prop and expansion.

Theme Two – Subtheme (a) Manipulation. Manipulation referred to the physical handling of a prop that changed its meaning from a stationary object into a creation that possessed a storyline or an alternative meaning. One hundred percent of the unpublished sessions observed contained manipulation and 66.67% of the published sessions. The frequency of the subtheme manipulation was general. Examples include when a mound of clay was turned into a whale by client Blake and a miniature figurine of a soldier was turned into a captain fighting for an island by client Trevor. There were moments in the sessions when the clients manipulated the props used. There were additional segments when the client and the counselor worked parallel with the same prop. The characteristics of manipulation included client manipulating the prop and client and counselor working parallel.

Clients manipulated props both spontaneously and when prompted by their counselors. Either way the manipulation began, the client physically handled the prop and gave it additional meanings. Counselor Ann’s client Trevor had created in a sand tray a mainland and an island. Trevor spontaneously changed a portion of the sand and turned it into a bridge for soldiers to cross over to get to the island for safety. Later in Trevor’s sand tray, he placed miniature figurines of dinasours. These dinasours started
to be defeated by soldiers. Counselor Ann encouraged Trevor’s manipulation of the props when the dinosaurs were beginning to lose the battle:

Ann: Now the dinosaur’s stuck there. What’s he going to do? He can’t live in this time zone.
Trevor: (making shooting noises) Oh no! He’s shot in the eye! (Makes screaming noises just before one of the dinosaurs dies) This guy got whacked by his tail and then he went over there (dinosaur groans noise), so he’s a one-eyed dinosaur.

Client Trevor proceeded to make a prop of a portal so that the hurt dinosaurs could retreat to the safety of their own time. Throughout this scene Trevor manipulated the props he created in his sand tray. Counselor Ann observed the action along with prompting him to continue his manipulation of props and storyline. The storyline contained patterns of the props searching for safety. The manipulation of props led to this pattern developing.

During counselor Susan and client Calie’s session, Calie spontaneously began working in a sand tray. Calie searched through the shelves of miniature figurines looking for specific props. She had found a container of miniature babies which she selected to work with. In the sand tray, Calie placed 12 miniature figurines of babies spread out in the sand tray. Calie returned to the shelves of miniature figurines again searching for additional props. She proceeded to find only one miniature baby bottle and threw it onto the floor. Counselor Susan’s response was, “You decided nobody gets a bottle.” This response depicted how unfairly Calie felt during her parent’s separation not getting her nurturing needs met. Calie’s manipulation of props told of the struggles she was currently facing.
Throughout the videotapes the props within the counseling space were being manipulated by the clients as their counselors observed. However, there were occurrences when the counselor and client worked parallel. Counselor Jill’s client Kay made a dinosaur out of play dough. While counselor Jill was observing Kay, counselor Jill picked up some play dough and also began creating a dinosaur. Their separate creations were not meeting their expectations and counselor Jill suggested they should make one big dinosaur together, which Kay agreed with. Counselor Jill seized this opportunity to work together. The play dough they had previously worked with separately was placed together in order to make a megalosaurus. Counselor Jill and Kay worked parallel. Utilizing the prop and working as a team appeared to reinforce the goal of learning to work with others.

Another example when a counselor and client worked parallel was during counselor Violet and client Blake’s session. Counselor Violet chose actively to participate in the manipulation process instead of being an observing figure. Counselor Violet prompted Blake to create props of his family out of clay. Blake complied and counselor Violet offered to help:

Violet: Would you like me to help you? I’d be glad to help you if you want me to.
Blake: Yes, that would be fine.
Violet: So who would you like me to make?
Blake: My mother.
This allowed Counselor Violet to create a clay prop of client Blake’s mother. Counselor Violet commented on her own work to show that the clay props need not be perfect:

Violet: Your people look better than mine but we’re not going to compare.

This comparison allowed Blake the freedom to have his created clay props to look anyway he wanted and that there was not a right or wrong way to complete this prop activity or any activity during their session together.

An additional example of a counselor and client working together viewed from the videotapes occurred between counselor Susan and client Corrine. Corrine had found the sand tools located underneath the sand tray. Corrine took out a large shovel and began picking up sand and having it fall into the sand tray like a waterfall. Counselor Susan then selected a prop of a small shovel from the sand tools and began catching the sand as it fell out of Corrine’s larger shovel. They continued this activity for about five minutes with Counselor Susan saying, “I’ll catch what you can’t hold.” As they continued creating a waterfall of sand, counselor Susan began to let the sand fall into the sand tray each time Corrine scooped up another shovel of sand.

Each of these examples illustrates a counselor and client working together to create the meaningfulness of the prop. Counselors used these parallel play experiences to acknowledge their clients’ work. Creating props together gave counselors an opportunity to demonstrate how they could help clients complete their creations.
One aspect of working with the prop was the actual manipulation of props available to clients. Manipulating referred to when clients handled props which transformed their meaning into something new. Manipulating occurred when the client handled the props and when the client and the counselor worked parallel with the props. As clients manipulated the props, specific patterns to this manipulation began to occur. How the props were worked with described the concerns and issues the clients were facing. The utilization of props also aided in determining goals for counseling and reinforced concepts clients were struggling with.

**Theme Two – Subtheme (b) Self as Prop.** Self as prop refers to when a counselor utilized hand gestures and movement as a way to provide a visual example of the concepts being discussed during their counseling session. Of the unpublished counselors, 18.18% of them had themselves or their clients become the prop to be manipulated. Thirty-three percent of the published counselors also utilized the idea of the self being a prop. The frequency of the subtheme self as prop was variant. Self as prop occurred when the counselor and/or the client became the prop. One example was when a counselor used her hand gestures as a form of measurement to help her client evaluate her own behavior. Counselor Susan’s client Corrine was working in the sand tray making designs in the sand with her hands. Counselor Susan had asked Corrine how her behavior had been lately: better, same or worse. Corrine refused to answer verbally and looked down at the designs she was creating in the sand. The second time counselor Susan asked the same question regarding her behavior she added hand gestures to the question. Counselor Susan made a fist with her thumb
straight up in the air to represent “better.” She then opened her fist, placing her hand straight flat horizontally to represent “same.” She then closed her fist again with her thumb pointing down to represent “worse.” Corrine closed her fist with her thumb pointing straight up indicating that her behavior was better. These hand gestures acted as a prop and permitted the client to respond even as she resisted verbally answering.

Another example of the counselor and client utilizing gestures in order to become a prop occurred with counselor Michael Bernard and client Shannon. Counselor Michael was attempting to have his client understand that her reaction to being teased at school was out of proportion. Counselor Michael had displayed and asked Shannon to spread her hands apart in order to measure how bad being teased at school was. Shannon spread her hands apart beyond shoulder width. Counselor Michael then asked her what some of the worst possible things that could happen to her might be. Shannon reported that it would be the death of a family member. Counselor Michael asked her to stretch her hands apart to represent how bad a death would be. Shannon stretched her hands as far apart as possible. Counselor Michael then asked her what else she thought would be really bad. Shannon said a fire. Counselor Michael asked her to again stretch her hands out for how bad a fire that no one got hurt in would be. Shannon complied and pulled her hands together a little showing the difference of “badness” between a death and a fire. Counselor Michael then asked, “What about if you broke your leg?” Shannon moved her hands closer together representing that breaking a leg would not be as bad as a fire. Counselor Michael then asked Shannon to measure with her hands how bad being teased at
school was and she moved her hands even closer together. The discussion that ensued revolved around how bad was being teased at school was realistically. Counselor Michael was able to demonstrate the “badness” of Shannon’s situation by enlisting her to become the prop to measure things by.

Counselor Sage also utilized herself as a prop through the use of hand gestures. Counselor Sage was discussing with her client Calie the differences Calie sees between herself and her cousin Tim. Calie had expressed earlier in their session that she believed that Tim was better than her:

Sage: Do you think you and Tim are equals?
Calie: (shakes head no) He’s more spoiled than I am.
Sage: (shakes head yes in agreement) So, if this is Tim (places left hand out in front of her at chest level) and this is you (referring to her right hand), you are here. (places right hand out in front of her lower than her left hand)
Calie: A lot farther than that. (Sage expands the distance between her two hands.) Yeah, more like that.
Sage: So because he’s up here (referring to her left hand), does he look down on you?

Counselor Sage utilized herself as a prop in order to give a visual representation of the discrepancy her client Calie sees between herself and her cousin.

In each of these examples the counselor or the client became the prop to be manipulated. This provided an easy way to visually see and measure the topics which emerged during their counseling session.

Theme Two – Subtheme (c) Expansion. Expansion refers to when a counselor probes and/or prompts the client to expand on their statements regarding their use of props. Expansion promotes the client to communicate at a deeper level and focuses the
communication into necessary or unexplored areas. All of the unpublished and published counselors attempted to expand the ideas expressed by the props. The frequency of the subtheme expansion was general.

Counselor David E. attempted to expand his client Sebastian’s line of thought regarding being a “good guy” and a “bad guy” by utilizing a poster board to visually record their discussion. Sebastian was prompted to speak of the differences between these two parts of himself. Through counselor David E.’s probes Sebastian began to understand how he was being influenced by these parts:

David E.: 50% “good guy” (standing at the board and recording what Sebastian is describing), 50% “bad guy.” Which guy do you like best?
Sebastian: Left.
Dr. Djerf: Left.
David E.: The “good guy.” This is your preference (referring to the “good guy” side of the board)
Sebastian: Yes.
David E.: (moving towards his chair) Why (sitting down), why, um, what do you like about your “good guy”? [Sebastian and Dr. Djerf speak in Swedish]
Dr. Djerf: (translates) It’s a very good one to have. [Sebastian and Dr Djerf speak in Swedish.]
Dr. Djerf: (translates) If he’s the good guy, he can have support and he can be comforted even if he’s angry.
David E.: I see. And when does the “bad guy” rob goodness from the “good guy”? (referring to the poster board) [Sebastian and Dr. Djerf speak in Swedish]
Dr. Djerf: (translates) When he got angry.
David E.: So, is goodness robbed by anger? [Sebastian and Dr. Djerf speak]
Dr. Djerf: (translates) Yes.
David E.: Is that fair? [Sebastian and Dr. Djerf speak]
Sebastian: No.
The discussion between Counselor David E. and client Sebastian was furthered by David E.’s probing about the two parts of Sebastian. Counselor David E. learned that the “good guy” was able to deal with anger more positively and began searching for ways to support this part of Sebastian.

Counselor Jill provided another example of expansion with the prop in order to extend their work. Counselor Jill and client Kay were working together making play dough dinosaurs when this interchange occurred:

Jill: What made you pick the T-Rex? (referring to what she is making out of play dough) Is that your favorite dinosaur?
Kay: No.
Jill: It’s not. Which one is your favorite?
Kay: It’s the dinosaur bigger than the T-Rex.
Jill: What is that one called?
Kay: A megalosaurus.
Jill: A megalosaurus... what makes those your favorite? What do you like about them the best?
Kay: They’re big.
Jill: They’re big.
Kay: Humongous, gigantic.

Client Kay is the youngest and smallest in her family. Counselor Jill continued to probe around matching the dinosaurs they had made out of play dough to represent individuals in Kay’s family:

Jill: Who would this one be, out of anyone you know, who would be the megalosaurus?
Kay: My dad.
Jill: Oh wow!
Kay: The megalosaurus is really strong and so is my dad and he loves it when I say he’s really strong.
Counselor Jill attempted to continue this line of questioning regarding the play dough props of dinosaurs in order to engage her client further:

Jill: Who would your mom be if she was a dinosaur?
Kay: I have no idea.

The physical size of the dinosaurs props was expanded to create awareness for Kay about the role of size in her family dynamics.

Expansion also provided counselors the opportunity to focus their clients into specific areas of discussion. Expanding their client focus into unexplored areas armed counselors with information that they used during their counseling sessions.

Counselor Laci became aware of a topic that needed further exploration with her client Crystal. The topic was fighting between married people. Crystal earlier had been using miniature figurine props in a sand tray. Crystal had placed a groom and a bride miniature figurine in the sand tray before the fighting had commenced:

Laci: Everybody's fighting everybody. So nobody's on the same team. So this person is going to fight this person and this person is going to fight this person.
Crystal: Well, these two can't fight because they're married.
Laci: So people who are married don't fight?
Crystal: Yeah.

The conversation that followed permitted counselor Laci to explore client Crystal's views on how married couples interact. As a part of this discussion Crystal revealed that her parents had separated when she was a baby because "they were fighting." Counselor Laci explored this topic further. She discovered that Crystal gets scared anytime her parents argue because she believes that they will separate again.
Without the use of the bride and groom props, this concern may not have been shared. It also provided counselor Laci the opportunity to expand the concept of fighting so that it did not always dictate an end to every relationship.

Another example of expanding the prop metaphor was done by Counselor Dennis. Counselor Dennis had requested that his client Toby create his family in a sand tray utilizing miniature figurines as props. Toby complied and began placing the props in the sand tray. Toby then began storying about how a battle between his family and some “bad guys” took place. Toby continued having a battle rage on within the sand tray. Counselor Dennis attempted to focus Toby by exploring different interactions that could occur within his family in the sand tray. Counselor Dennis explored with Toby what his family does when they are not fighting “bad guys”:

Dennis: The family is all good and they all work together to fight the bad ones wow. What is it like to be in the good family?
Toby: Leo coming, after me, Leo and Mia.
Dennis: So there’s always something coming under the ground coming after you. What does the family do when they’re not fighting?
Toby: They have to pick up one of these things and they have to turn them over. If they mess up these that’s bad if they touch me I die. All these shoot, but if I block with the shield, the crown power will fight it back.
Dennis: What does this family do for fun?
Toby: They play and give each other power being invisible.
Dennis: What kind of games do they play in this world?
Toby: They ride on animals.

The discussion which then unfolds was prompted by Counselor Dennis’s attempts to engage his client to focus on another area of family life. Counselor Dennis explored how the family in the “safe world” part of the sand tray had fun and how they
treated each other. Counselor Dennis also explored with Toby what the "bad guys" do when he and his family are in the "safe world" part of the sand tray. He also questioned how this story ended. The fighting miniature props were expanded to include exploration of fun and positive engagement.

Expansion was performed by the counselors in an attempt to deepen the discussions. Expansion allowed counselors to naturally bring out topics that the props prompted. It also provided additional information concerning what the clients’ thoughts were pertaining to their work with the props. Through expansion, counselors focused their discussions of the props on specific issues in order to narrow and/or broaden the meaning of the props used.

Summary of Theme Two – Working the Prop

Working the prop was demonstrated when the client and/or the counselor began to physically handle the props within the session. By working the prop the meaning of the prop was changed from a literal representation to a new created meaning. This new meaning was created by the client and/or the counselor in relation to the experiences of the client. This transformation could also include the counselor and client as they also became a prop to be manipulated. As these transformations occurred, counselors engaged their clients to expand their work by prompting, probing, focusing and exploring areas which evolved during their sessions. Expansion prompted clients to extend both their work with props and their comments regarding them.
Theme Three – Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism refers to “the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to a god, animal, or object” (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, rev. 10th ed.). Within this study anthropomorphism refers to having props take on human characteristics with voices, thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Anthropomorphizing the prop brought it to life and allowed the counselor to continue to use the prop throughout the counseling process. How counselors and clients manipulated their props anthropomorphically was by giving them voices, sound effects, feelings and allowing them to speak metaphorically, which represents the subthemes of this theme. Once the anthropomorphic transformation occurred, the metaphor created was utilized throughout the counseling session.

Theme Three – Subtheme (a) Giving Voice and Sound Effects. Giving a voice means that the counselor or the client anthropomorphized a prop, transforming it into something which can speak and/or be spoken to. Client also were observed giving props sound effects. Of the unpublished counselors, 63.64% gave voice to the props being manipulated and 16.67% of the published counselors gave voice to the props. The frequency of the subtheme giving voice and sound effects was variant. There were instances when clients spontaneously took on the voice of the props being manipulated. Some segments showed the counselors prompting the clients to speak towards the props as if the props had been transformed anthropomorphically. This anthropomorphic transformation was done by both the counselor and the client. There were moments when the counselor initiated giving voice to a prop in order to
encourage the client to imitate them. Therefore, the ways in which props were given a voice were through spontaneous projections, speaking towards a prop and giving a prop a voice of its own.

Spontaneous responses by clients occurred as they manipulated the props they were working with. An example of giving voice to the props spontaneously happened by client Trevor as his counselor Ann worked with him. Trevor had chosen to work in the sand tray and created a story using miniature figurine props. Counselor Ann prompted Trevor’s storytelling by asking questions concerning his creation. At many points in Trevor’s story he spontaneously produced sound effects and voices for the props he was working with:

Ann: How do they know where to go?
Trevor: Well, one person swam and he stayed in the middle and saw the Indians, so he swam back and said, “I know where some land is but we have to defeat some Indians first.”
Ann: Okay, so he’s leading the troops?

Client Trevor continued spontaneously to give voice to the miniature figurine props of army men and dinosaurs. It appeared that as Trevor continued telling the story that was unfolding in the sand tray, the rest of the world vanished for him. His focus intensified and the props became anthropomorphized:

Trevor: Right now these guys are telling them to stay back because the tide is coming over the bridge!
Ann: Yeah look at that, don’t they look like waves, so these guys are going to stay back.
Trevor: Yeap.
Ann: Okay.
Trevor: But all of a sudden they hear a roar “ROAR!!” “Okay everybody come over here now!” (moves figures towards island)

The island created by client Trevor within the sand tray was a place of safety for the army figurine props. As Trevor’s focus intensified it began to mimic “real” play. The voices Trevor assigned to the props in the sand tray were an expression of his need to “roar” and be in charge.

Another characteristic of the giving voice subtheme was when either the counselor or client spoke toward a prop which had been transformed into something new. When counselor Violet worked with her client Blake, she prompted Blake to create images of his family out of clay. Blake complied with this request and allowed counselor Violet to aid in his creations. Once the clay was transformed into his immediate family, counselor Violet encouraged this transformation by prompting Blake to speak towards each of his clay family members. Counselor Violet asked Blake to speak towards each of these clay family members by saying one thing he liked and disliked about each of them. Counselor Violet role modeled how to speak towards the props and then prompted Blake to do the same:

Violet: If you could talk to them and tell them one thing you like and one thing you don’t like about each one, who do you want to go first? Who do you want to start? I’ll move them or do you want?
Blake: No, you can move him.
Violet: One thing I like about you (moving the clay figure of Blake in front of the clay figure of his sister)...
Blake: One thing I like about her is she spends time with me when I go over to her house.
Violet: (Repeats this statement having the clay Blake say it to the clay sister) You spend time with me when I go over to your house.
Blake: And one thing I don’t like about her… she sort of treats me like I am younger. She does this weird thing when I have a birthday and says that I’m not 13, I’m seven and treats me like I’m younger sometimes.

Violet: Yeah, did you hear that, because it’s a lot to repeat? You treated me younger sometimes and I don’t like that. Who do you want to do next?

Blake: My mother.

Violet: Mom. You just say one thing I like about you as if you’re talking to this. (referring to the mother clay figure)

Blake: (speaking towards the mother clay figure) Mom, one thing I like about you is you take me places.

Client Blake proceeded to speak to the props of his clay grandmother and father. During this interchange, counselor Violet role modeled what she had asked her client to do, which appeared to make it easier for him to do himself. Speaking towards the props allowed Blake to practice the communication skills counselor Violet was trying to teach him.

Counselor Sage gave an additional example of speaking towards the props she utilized with her client Calie. During their session together, counselor Sage had brought out two turtle puppets as props to be manipulated by herself and client Calie. The puppet turtles began to be anthropomorphized as counselor Sage started to speak to these props:

Sage: What if I said (speaking towards Calie’s turtle puppet), “Little turtle you don’t deserve to be hurt like this. You don’t deserve to be sad. No one has the right to hurt you like that.”

Client Calie smiled and shook her head in agreement as her counselor Sage spoke to her turtle puppet. Counselor Sage continued to speak towards Calie’s turtle puppet along with the turtle puppet she held:
You know you don’t have to hide. (speaking towards both the turtle puppets)

Counselor Sage continued to speak towards the turtle puppets giving them qualities beyond their stitches and stuffing. Counselor Sage said things to the puppets that Calie may have had difficulty saying to the adults in her life. In this way, counselor Sage also modeled how to speak towards others.

Counselors also took on the actual voice of the prop as if it were able to speak itself and spoke to the prop. Counselor Violet within each of her sessions enlisted giving this aspect of voice with all of her clients. In Violet’s work with her client Blake she had asked him to create something out of clay with his eyes closed. Blake created a whale. Counselor Violet then asked him to describe the whale he had created. Counselor Violet prompted Blake to describe the whale as if he were the whale. In order to do this Blake had to become the whale’s voice:

Violet: Tell me about yourself as this piece of clay.
Blake: I don’t know really how to describe, this is supposed to be a whale.
Violet: I’m a whale.
Blake: And whales swim, and um…
Violet: Okay, here is what I want you to do, you’re the clay, so you have to say, “I’m a whale and I like to swim. I like to go under water and go really deep and I eat fish.” That’s about it. So, um, do you get a lot of fish to eat?
Blake: Yes.
Violet: And are you a younger whale or an older whale?
Blake: An old whale.

Client Blake, when prompted by counselor Violet to speak directly to the whale prop, went on to say that he, the whale, had a family, it was disabled and
independent. Counselor Violet then asked if his description of his whale fit him and his life. Blake replied that his description of the whale did fit him, which led to discussing how the whale’s characteristics fit.

During counselor Laci and client Crystal’s session the concept of giving voice through speaking as the prop occurred. Counselor Laci and Crystal were discussing the miniature figurine props placed in the sand tray Crystal had created. Crystal had placed the miniature figurines of Sponge Bob and Patrick from the cartoon show *Sponge Bob Square Pants* into her sand tray. As their discussion began to center on how friends act, counselor Laci asked what Patrick would do if Sponge Bob hit him with the butterfly net he carried:

Laci: What would Patrick do?
Crystal: He would not tell Sponge Bob that he didn’t want to be his friend anymore.
Laci: He wouldn’t tell Sponge Bob.
Crystal: He would tell because he was being rude to him.
Laci: Do you think Patrick could say to, you know, Sponge Bob, “I like being with you but when you’re mean like that I don’t like to be with you, you need to stop.”
Crystal: Or I guess I cannot be your friend.

Within this example both counselor Laci and client Crystal took on the voice of Patrick. Crystal gave the miniature figurine prop of Patrick a voice, saying that their friendship would end. This appeared to be what she wanted to be able to say to some of her own friends when they hurt her. Speaking in the voice of the prop seemed to make the prop more real to the client and also seemed to facilitate using the prop to create insight.
Giving voice was a large aspect of anthropomorphizing the props. Giving voice entailed the client and/or the counselor speaking to the props along with speaking for the props. Giving voice also included the change in voice tones, loudness, tempo and level when counselors and clients spoke as the props. Another aspect was when clients attached sound effects to the props. Giving voice made the props come to life within the counseling session. What had been said by the props appeared to be a reflection of the clients’ thoughts and feelings. Therefore, giving voice also facilitated the creation of insight for the clients. In giving voice to the props utilized it also gave a voice to the client that they may not have experienced previously. Moments were observed when giving voice occurred spontaneously as clients became deeply engaged in the therapeutic moment. It appeared that as the clients gave voice, their focus intensified on their use of props and mirrored the powerful feelings associated with play. Giving voice additionally provided clients the opportunity to practice communicating.

Theme Three – Subtheme (b) Prop Feelings. As another aspect of anthropomorphizing the props, clients were encouraged to give the props they worked with feelings. Prop feelings referred to when either clients or counselors stated the perceived emotions experienced by the props they worked with. One hundred percent of the counselors encouraged projecting feelings onto the props. The frequency of the subtheme prop feelings was variant. This projection permitted clients to discuss difficult feelings as they related to the props. Counselors were given the opportunity to validate and work with difficult feelings by attaching them to the props being used.
The characteristics of the subtheme prop feelings included the client projecting feelings on the props along with the client and the counselor sharing their own feelings as they worked with the props.

There were incidents when clients assigned feelings to the props they were working with. This occurred when prompted. Counselor Laci prompted her client Crystal to report on the feelings being experienced by the figurine props of the Sponge Bob cartoon. Counselor Laci watched as Crystal started a war in the sand tray she had created. Crystal had placed a variety of miniature figurine props within her sand tray. Crystal began to speak about which prop was going to fight which prop. As they fought, Crystal removed both fighting figurine props from the sand tray. The sand tray had only a few miniature figurine props left, which included the characters from the cartoon *Sponge Bob Square Pants* when the following interchange occurred:

Crystal: Sponge Bob and Patrick and Mr. Crabs and Squigward, they don’t have Platen or Pearl.

Laci: Are Sponge and Patrick and these guys, are they going to fight each other?

Crystal: Yes, they have to fight.

Laci: They don’t have a choice? How do you think they feel about being friends right...

Crystal: Well, these two are, but Sponge Bob and Mr. Crabs aren’t, and Squidward hates Sponge Bob.

Laci: How do you think Sponge Bob and Patrick feel about having to fight each other?

Crystal: Well they can talk to the king about not fighting each other, but that’s not going to work because the king may not like them. Because he is pretty strict, then he can come here and Lilo is her little sister. (referring the prop of a queen)

Laci: So Lilo is her little sister.

Crystal: Yes.

Laci: So Patrick and Sponge Bob talk to the king about not having to fight.
Counselor Laci prompted her client Crystal to share how Sponge Bob and Patrick would feel about fighting each other. Instead of sharing their possible feelings, Crystal said that the plan not to fight each other was “hopeless.” The use of the Sponge Bob props laid the groundwork for counselor Laci to address potential similarities in Crystal’s life. This led counselor Laci to address how the adults in Crystal’s life don’t listen to her because they think her concerns aren’t important. The use of props to reflect feelings allowed specific client issues to be brought up within the counseling process.

Another example of assigning feelings to props occurred later in counselor Laci and client Crystal’s session. Crystal was still working in the sand tray when she began talking about how the “king” would not allow the princess to become a queen. Counselor Laci prompted Crystal to speak about how the prop of the miniature princess figurine felt about not becoming a queen:

Crystal: She’ll be the princess instead of the queen because her dad’s getting married and she doesn’t want him to.
Laci: Oh.
Crystal: Cause she wants to be the queen instead of the princess.
Laci: How do you think she feels about that?
Crystal: She’s feeling very unhappy.
Laci: And she’s feeling unhappy because…
Crystal: Because she doesn’t get to be the queen anymore.
Laci: What’s that mean, that she won’t be the queen anymore? How does that change her life?
Crystal: She’d be the normal girl she was before her dad married her mom.
It appeared during their session that client Crystal wanted to be treated by her parents more like an adult than a child. During her session, Crystal at times took on a more immature voice when she spoke about her parents. Crystal reported that her parents treat her like a “baby.” She relayed that this was okay some of the time because her parents gave her things, but it wasn’t okay all the time because she couldn’t do some things. It appeared that Crystal was struggling with the transition from childhood to preadolescent. The props of the princess and the queen prompted the discussion of growing up. The princess’s feelings mirror the experiences of the client’s life that are current struggles.

Allowing the client a chance to share his own feelings occurred when counselor David S. asked his client Jeff to complete some drawings. The prop being used was the picture Jeff constructed. Counselor David S. had prompted Jeff to draw a picture of a person. Jeff decided to draw a picture of his grandmother who had died during the past year. Jeff took his time to create this prop drawing and choosing specific colors for the picture as he remembered his grandmother. Counselor David S. asked Jeff about his picture of a person:

Jeff: This is a picture of my grandma, the one that died.
David S.: This is your grandma.
Jeff: The one that died.
David S.: Right.
Jeff: This was one of her shirts with hearts, spades, diamonds and clubs. (referring to his picture)
David S.: She had a shirt like that?
Jeff: With hearts, spades, diamonds and clubs.
David: Anything else you can tell me about her in the picture?
Jeff: She was happy.
David: Was she happy most of the time?
Jeff: She’s an angel.

Client Jeff’s grandmother was an important figure in his life. It appeared during the counseling session that Jeff hadn’t gotten the opportunity to speak about his deceased grandmother after her death because it made his mother upset to hear about her. Jeff relayed that his grandmother was in heaven and not in any pain. Jeff believed that his grandmother was happy but he still missed her tremendously. The prop of the drawing facilitated communication between the counselor and client. Prop usage allowed clients to speak about their own feelings.

As clients worked with props they began sharing their own feelings. The majority of these occurrences occurred when prompted by their counselors. The props acted as a springboard for the sharing of personal feelings. Such an example occurred between counselor George and client Christy. Counselor George had prompted Christy to choose miniature figurine props to represent people in her life. After Christy had made her selections, counselor George then asked questions regarding her selection and placement of the props. Counselor George additionally prompted Christy to have the miniature figurine props speak to each other:

George: I am wondering what would fairy Christy (fairy princess chosen to represent herself) say to wrestling dad (large wrestler figure to represent her father)?
(Crystal moves the miniature figurine props)
George: Why did you just change them?
Crystal: Because Rocky (a dog figurine to represent her dog) is the most important in my family.
George: Why is he so important?
Crystal: Because he is there whenever I get hurt or feel sad.
George: Um hum. What about queen (representing her mother) and wrestler guy?
Crystal: They’re annoying sometimes and they don’t do anything about it.
George: When you get hurt or sad? But rocky does?
Crystal: Uh hum.
George: What does Rocky do?
Crystal: He comforts me.

In this example, client Crystal was able to share her feelings towards those in her life. She shared her feelings by her selection of the props used to represent different individuals and also by her placement of the props selected. Those she felt close to were placed closer to the miniature figurine prop of a fairy princess which represented herself. Crystal additionally shared how she felt towards each of the selected props when prompted by counselor George. The usage of props appeared to facilitate the expression of personal emotions. This facilitation occurred through the selection of props and how they were manipulated.

Another example of a client expressing their own feelings in relation to the props they used was with counselor Susan and client Ryan. They had been discussing the miniature figurines props Ryan had chosen to represent his family. The following discussion transpired as Ryan spoke about the miniature props he had chosen to represent himself: an alien standing on the edge of the sand tray protected by two pieces of wood, a scary black-cloaked figurine with a sword and a small animal on a rock:

Susan: This guy here looks really protected and guarded. (referring to the alien prop)
Ryan: I don't he didn't. (Ryan moves the pieces of wood that surround the alien prop)
Susan: Either that or he's waiting to pounce.
Ryan: Yeah, I was trying to make him ready to pounce. (Ryan picked up the alien prop and then placed it back on the edge of the sand tray)
Susan: So who pounced, he pounce on?
Ryan: Who?
Susan: This part of Ryan, who is he ready to pounce on?

Client Ryan shared his feelings about his immediate family by the selection of miniature figurine props and their placement in his sand tray. Ryan proceeded to share his feelings about himself through selection and placement of props he had chosen to represent himself. Ryan reported that the alien and animal figures were how his felt “inside.” The alien prop was chosen because at times he reported feeling different from everyone else and needing to protect himself from getting hurt. The small animal on a rock prop was selected because there are times when he had felt small and unseen. The choice of the scary black figurine prop was how he acts towards those around him. This part of himself felt “revved up” and ready to attack. They continued to discuss where part of himself comes from and how it is triggered. Ryan also expressed that the “scary” part of himself gangs up on the other parts of himself. The selection of props translated how the client felt about himself and gave visual representations which facilitated self-understanding.

Another characteristic of prop feelings was when the counselors expressed their feelings regarding the props and how they were being used. The props permitted counselors to express their own feelings that would have a therapeutic benefit. Counselor Laci’s client Crystal had placed a variety of miniature figurine props in her
sand tray. Crystal had said that the props were going to be fighting each other in the sand tray. Counselor Laci expressed her concern when Crystal placed a prop of a tiny baby in her sand tray:

Crystal: Now this is her son.
Laci: So the queen has a baby.
Crystal: Well, it's her brother, I think.
Laci: Okay, is anyone watching over the baby and protecting the baby?
Crystal: No, because no one's going after him. (Crystal placed a prop of a miniature bear in front of the baby) Except for the bear's going to watch him.
Laci: I felt kind of scared when no one was protecting the baby.
Crystal: Yeah, the baby has to be protected.

The expression of emotion by counselor Laci prompted client Crystal to address the miniature figurine prop that appeared more vulnerable towards the impending fight. Counselor Laci's expression of her feelings communicated her concern for those not responsible for the chaos occurring in the sand tray.

Anthropomorphizing the prop by expressing fear allowed the counselor an opportunity to express her own fear in an indirect manner.

The subtheme of prop feelings occurred when feelings were projected on the props. This happened as clients were prompted to assign feelings to the props they were working with. It also transpired when the props promoted clients and counselors to share their own personal feelings. The projection of feelings onto the props mirrored the feelings being experienced by the clients. Prop usage facilitated the communication of feelings through their selection and how they were worked with. They also provided a visual representation for the client and counselor to build upon.
The use of props permitted difficult feelings to be addressed in an indirect manner. Props promoted the overall expression of feelings within the counseling process.

**Theme Three — Subtheme (c) Speaking Metaphorically.** The last aspect of anthropomorphizing observed in the videotapes was speaking metaphorically. Speaking metaphorically referred to when clients expressed which props they wished they could be transformed into. This transformation became a metaphor that was utilized throughout their counseling session. The wish to be transformed into the prop occurred spontaneously when prompted by their counselors. Speaking metaphorically also referred to when counselors utilized the metaphors created by their clients. These metaphors originated from the props being used. There were also moments when prop use bore from a spoken metaphor. Of the unpublished counselors, 72.73% spoke metaphorically along with 50% of the published counselors. The frequency of the subtheme speaking metaphorically was typical. Speaking metaphorically consisted of clients choosing what prop they wished to become and utilizing the metaphors associated with the props.

The sessions displayed examples of clients wishing to become the props they were creating and working with. As the clients worked with props, their counselors prompted them to choose which prop they wished they could become. This choice of prop provided information to the counselors about both the children’s characteristics and the characteristics they wished they possessed.

An example of a client being prompted to decide which prop he/she wanted to become occurred during the session between counselor Ann and client Trevor. Trevor
had chosen to work within a sand tray. He depicted a “safe” island with a bridge crossing water from a main piece of land to an island. On the main land Trevor reported that there were dinosaurs searching for meat. Further into their session Trevor created a portal in his sand tray that led to the “dinosaur age.” As Trevor made the dinosaurs travel back to their own time, the following conversation transpired:

Ann: If you could be any kind of dinosaur which one would you be?
Trevor: Carnotaurus.
Ann: Carnotaurus. What kind of dinosaur is that?
Trevor: It has horns on it, it is red and it has horns and it’s better than a T-Rex.
Ann: Where are its horns?
Trevor: (motions to side of his head)
Ann: So they stick out of the sides of its head and they’re fat?
Trevor: Yeah.
Ann: And what else?
Trevor: They’re bigger than T-Rexes.
Ann: Bigger than T-Rexes.
Trevor: And better than T-Rexes
Ann: Better, why are they better?
Trevor: Because they’re stronger and they’re faster.
Ann: Stronger and faster.
Trevor: Yeah.
Ann: Okay.

Client Trevor wanted to be a carnotaurus. He wished he could be strong and fast. Counselor Ann later related this wish to how he dealt with the adults in his life after the death of his sister. During that time in Trevor’s life he had felt small and powerless. Trevor wished he were big and powerful like the carnotaurus dinosaur. The use of props can provide insight into the qualities a client feels deficient in. Using props as metaphors for the actual client permits counselors to utilize perceptions and reframe them to show clients a more accurate account.
Another example of a counselor asking what prop the client would like to become was during counselor Jill’s work with client Kay. The props they had worked with during each of their counseling sessions were play dough creations. The following example occurred within their third session together. Kay had spontaneously begun making dinosaurs out of play dough. They were working with dinosaurs props when counselor Jill asked the following questions:

Jill: If you could be a dinosaur, which one would you be?
Kay: I would be the velociraptor.
Jill: Why do you say that?
Kay: Because I like steak and meat and they like meat.

Later during the same session client Kay stated she wanted to be a tyrannosaurus and then a megalosaurus dinosaur. Counselor Jill took these comments to mean that Kay was still forming her identity. Also the choices regarding the different dinosaurs meant that Kay had a wish to be larger and stronger than she was, as she kept choosing larger dinasours. Kay is the youngest in her family and at times felt ignored unless she “roars like a dinosaur.” The props used created a metaphor concerning the Kay’s feelings. They provided information concerning the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of the client.

There were also incidents in the sessions when a client spontaneously stated a wish to be the prop he/she was working with. An example of such an expression occurred when client Crystal completed her “fighting” of the miniature figurine props she had placed in her sand tray. The only miniature figurine props that remained were a queen, a princess, a king, a bride and a groom.
Client Crystal had spontaneously expressed her wish to be the prop of the princess. During her counseling session Crystal had repeatedly spoken about money. She had reported that her family did not have a lot of money, but they were not poor because “you’re poor when you live in a box on the street.” Crystal seemed to believe there was a link between personal possessions and popularity in her 5th-grade class. She voiced her wishes to be the princess who was rich and therefore would have many friends. The prop chosen by the client relayed to the counselor the underlying wishes of acceptance and friendship. Prop usage metaphorically provided information regarding the needs of the client.

The second characteristic associated with the speaking metaphorically theme was through the use of metaphors associated with props. There were moments when counselors spoke metaphorically as their clients verbally stated an idea and the counselor continued the metaphor throughout their session. The metaphor created was prompted by a prop. Counselor Dennis was observed speaking metaphorically in his sessions with client Toby. Counselor Dennis utilized the prop of Toby’s sweatshirt. He had observed that Toby was wearing a sweatshirt that had superheroes on it. Counselor Dennis referred to the sweatshirt when the following discussion unfolded:
Dennis: So you have a lot of superheroes on your sweatshirt. I see Spiderman and…
Toby: And Superman.
Dennis: Oh, and Superman. Who's your favorite superhero?
Toby: Flash.
Dennis: Flash. What does he do?
Toby: He runs real fast. If anyone falls down he, he just turns himself into a wind, a wind tunnel, he can make the wind go up and down real slow.
Dennis: Wow!
Toby: I'm real fast.
Dennis: You're like Flash then.
Toby: No one ever caught me, like three people tried to catch me but they didn't.

Counselor Dennis utilized the prop of his client Toby's sweatshirt to gather information that could be used as an intervention later in their session. Toby had reported an incident that occurred when he was living in South America. The incident was when some men had attempted to grab his leg, which had frightened him. After the story of this incident was told, Counselor Dennis used the metaphor again of Toby becoming like "Flash":

Toby: They were trying to get me, but I just keep on running, I keep on running.
Dennis: Wow! So you were kind of like Flash.
Toby: They keep coming but I keep on running real fast.
Dennis: So you were like Flash, the superhero.

Their conversation proceeded as Toby spoke of the nightmares he had while moving to America. The nightmares entailed these men still trying to catch him. Counselor Dennis utilized the Flash superhero metaphor to help Toby deal with the nightmares he was experiencing. The prop of the image on Toby's sweatshirt created a metaphor that his counselor utilized therapeutically. Prop usage aided in creating
metaphors that counselors use to increase their clients’ coping skills. Props also prompted the creation of metaphors that were used as therapeutic interventions.

Another example of speaking metaphorically was when counselor David E. worked with his client Sebastian. Within this example the creation of a metaphor led to increased prop use. Sebastian had created the metaphor of a “good guy” and a “bad guy” within himself. It was created when Counselor David E. asked Sebastian how he thought Dr. Djerf, the administrator of the facility he was in, would answer the question, “What do you respect most about Sebastian?”

David E.: I wonder what you think he would have answered to this question.
Dr. Djerf: [translates]
David E.: The question I asked him was, What do you respect most about Sebastian? What do you think he said? (referring to the translator, administrator of the facilitator) What do you think? It is a hard question, take your time.
[Dr. Djerf and Sebastian speak in Swedish to each other]
Dr. Djerf: That you’re talking much. He thinks that I enjoy that he talks to me more than the other boys. He can imagine that he talks to me.
David E.: Um... No. That wasn’t what he said. I’m not saying... he doesn’t, but that’s not what he said, number one. Take another guess. Is this hard? Yes. Take your time. (silence) Just take a guess. It doesn’t need to be right or wrong.
[Dr. Djerf and Sebastian speak]
Dr. Djerf: He thinks I am a “good guy.”
David E.: Why do you think that he might think you are a “good guy”? What’s good about you?
[Dr. Djerf and Sebastian speak]
Dr. Djerf: He thinks because I care about him. I told you that I was running after him the other day.
David E.: Oh yes.
Dr. Djerf: The meaning of that was that I was caring about him. I have to think he is a “good guy.”
David E.: Otherwise you wouldn’t have.
Dr. Djerf: I wouldn’t have cared about him.
David E.: And you think you’re a “good guy.”
Sebastian: Yeah.
David E.: Why do you think you’re a “good guy”?
[Sebastian speaks in Swedish]
Dr. Djerf: If he wants to be a “good guy” he knows he can handle it. If he
doesn’t want to be a “good guy”, he won’t be it.
David E.: Oh, um what are you doing now, is this “good guy” behavior?
Sebastian: Yeah.
David E.: And how long do you think you will continue to be a “good
guy”?

Counselor David E. and client Sebastian utilized the prop of poster board to
write on. Sebastian then pictorially displayed what his “good guy” and his “bad guy”
looked like, a heart and a cactus respectively. Both counselor and client continued to
refer to these metaphors and the pictorial props throughout their counseling session.
Counselor David E. used the props of heart and cactus to explain how Sebastian’s
anger operates. Within this example, a metaphor sparked the use of props. The props
then facilitated communication and understanding between counselor and client by
becoming a condensed version of the concepts being discussed.

Speaking metaphorically occurred in two ways through prop usage. First
speaking metaphorically occurred when clients reported what prop they wanted to be
transformed into. Second, sometimes props became a metaphor or a metaphor became
a prop. When clients spoke of their wishes to become a prop it provided important
information to their counselors. The answer to the counselors’ question of “which
one…” or “what kind of…” provided insight into what their clients considered either
important characteristics or characteristics they thought they lacked. The clients’
choice represented abstract concepts that needed to be worked through, such as being
a big dinosaur because “I feel small” or being “good enough” to be a princess or
queen. This enabled counselors to reframe their clients’ faulty perceptions. The prop
choice provided counselors with information concerning their clients’ thoughts,
feelings, behaviors and needs. The props used also created metaphors to enhance their
clients’ coping skills. As counselors transformed props into metaphors and metaphors
into props they developed interventions to be used in their counseling sessions. The
metaphors created by the props were then used throughout the counseling sessions.
The metaphoric props facilitated communication and understanding between
counselor and client by providing them a kind of shorthand when communicating. The
metaphors attributed human characteristics to the props, which may have enhanced
their usefulness. This attribution of human characteristics accounts for the placement
of this subtheme within the anthropomorphism theme.

Summary of Theme Three – Anthropomorphism

When utilizing props with children, the props become anthropomorphized by
being transformed from an inanimate object. Anthropomorphism of props occurred
when props were given voices, sound effects and feelings. It also happened as props
were spoken metaphorically about, which transformed them with new and alternate
meanings.

The transformation that occurred through anthropomorphizing began with an
object and ended with a metaphoric prop. The prop usage then facilitated
communication between counselors and clients. It provided information that mirrored
the clients' experiences, thoughts, feeling, behaviors and needs. This information was transmitted through the selection of props and the anthropomorphizing process. The props provided an indirect way to address issues. The prop usage then acted as a springboard to begin discussing the clients' issues. Counselors utilized the props therapeutically to address these issues. Anthropomorphism of props therefore continued the transformation that occurred as counselors created therapeutic interventions utilizing props.

**Theme Four – Relating Props to Life**

Within each videotape, there existed moments when counselors utilized the props and linked them to their clients' lives. Therefore, relating props to life refers to creating a connection between the prop and the clients' experiences, thoughts, feelings and behaviors. All of the unpublished counselors and 83.33% of the published counselors related the props to their clients' lives. The frequency of the theme relating props to life was general. The communication surrounding the props indirectly addressed client issues. Counselors then tied this indirect communication to the clients' lives by verbally making connections between the props and the clients. Three characteristics were associated with relating props to life. First was when counselors linked the prop usage to the clients' presenting problems and to the issues in their lives. Second was when counselors empowered their clients to release negative emotions in appropriate ways, which were different from how they had in their pasts. Last was when a relationship had been drawn between their prop usage and personal
growth. Each characteristic of how props were related to clients’ lives were used to help increase their insights.

By relating props to life, counselors were able to address the presenting issues facing their clients in a nonconfrontive manner. Counselor Susan related the props to her client Robin’s presenting problem. It appeared that Robin was originally brought into counseling to work through her regressed behaviors after a parental separation. One of her regressive behaviors was acting helpless and needing others to do things for her that she could do for herself. Therefore solving her own problems was an issue to be addressed. Counselor Susan reflected to Robin that she was capable of solving problems for herself. Counselor Susan made this comment when Robin had figured out how to use the water spray bottle in the sand tray:

Susan: You figured it out. I think Robin is a pretty good problem solver.

Counselor Susan was able to reflect client Robin’s ability to solve problems. Counselor Susan took the concept of solving problems and provided a concrete example of Robin’s ability to solve her own problems. The prop of the water bottle gave counselor Susan a chance to discuss how Robin can solve her own problems. She used the props without shaming Robin for her past behaviors.

Counselor Dennis related the props to his client Toby’s presenting issues during a session when his adoptive mother was present. Toby was brought to counseling because of the adjustment problems associated with being adopted from a Third World country. The presenting problem was his behaviors within his new
family. Counselor Dennis prompted Toby and his adoptive mother to create a “world in the sand tray.” Toby and his adoptive mother created two very separate worlds for each of themselves in the sand tray instead of a world that encompassed both of them. Toby’s world existed underneath the sand and contained props of a more destructive nature. His adoptive mother’s world contained props of plant life, gems and animals.

Dennis: Now what I noticed is that your worlds are different.
Toby: A hum.
Dennis: How is your world different from your mom’s?
Toby: My world I can come up or under, I don’t like the sun, I can hide.
Dennis: So your worlds are different in that your world is underneath and doesn’t come up until night time. What do you notice that is different between your world (speaking towards his adoptive mother) and his world?
Mother: His world is kind of hiding.
Dennis: How does your world try to get his world to come out?
Mother: I tried to make my world a safe and fun place.
Dennis: You try to make it fun and safe place.
Toby: And I’m guarding Mommy’s thing and if any bad things come like the dragon, the dragon didn’t know there was something guarding this, if Mommy, the bad people come we can protect.
Dennis: Your world kind of protects Mom’s world. It’s not like you are staying away from Mom. You’re guarding Mom, Mom’s world. Sometimes Mom pulls you up to her world.

From their created worlds counselor Dennis brought up how their two separate worlds exist in the real world. The concept of family and how to bring these two distinct worlds together into one family was discussed. They brainstormed ideas of how to bring these two worlds together into one family. The concept of what family means to Toby was addressed. Prop usage enhanced communication by transmitting the thoughts of clients and providing an explanation of their past behaviors. Props
were used to connect the child’s presenting concerns to new insights that may promote behavior change.

Counselor Ann also provided an example of relating the use of props to present concerns. Client Trevor was referred to counselor Ann after the death of his sister. Trevor had been withdrawing and had been displaying aggressive behaviors at school. During a session with counselor Ann, Trevor had decided to work in a sand tray. His work entailed the death of many of the miniature figurine props that he place in his sand tray. Death was a major theme with these props. The following discussion occurred:

Ann: You were just saying it’s not fair when good people are taken away from other good people because there are so many bad people out there who are still around.
Trevor: I did?
Ann: Well, you tell me. What did you say?
Trevor: I said if good people are dying then bad people have more of a chance of winning.
Ann: What about just in life? When good people are taken, how do people deal with that?
Trevor: They cry and get mad at people they shouldn’t.
Ann: How do you deal with it?
Trevor: I have a journal I write in when I am sad.

A discussion of the concepts of death and grief were prompted by client Trevor’s work in the sand tray. The idea of grief was explained through the use of props and the scenes Trevor had previously made. Each time Trevor made a scene in the sand tray it would be different, even when the same props were being used. This brought up the issue of change. Counselor Ann explained that changes are a part of life and unable to be avoided. As they continued their discussion, ideas of how to
handle these changes and the emotions that accompany the changes emerged. The props used during their session paved the way for discussing things relevant to client Trevor’s life. Prop usage as it was related to the client’s life gave him concrete examples of the concepts change and grief. The concepts of grief and change were immediately relevant to Trevor’s aggressive behaviors and counselor Ann’s use of the sand tray props focused her explanation on these issues.

Counselor Ann also used props to focus on client Trevor’s current experiences. Trevor worked within the sand tray for their entire sessions together. As Trevor constructed his sand scenes they discussed issues that his prop creation prompted. Trevor had built a prop of an island where his miniature figurine props could go for safety. Counselor Ann brought up how Trevor had also created a safe place for himself to keep his thoughts and feelings, his journal. Counselor Ann linked the idea of a safe place back to his work in the sand tray:

Trevor: My journal is hidden somewhere.
Ann: In a safe place?
Trevor: (shakes his head yes) Yes.
Ann: Kind of like the safe place we are going to build on this island.
Trevor: Umha.

Counselor Ann’s linking of client Trevor’s work in his sand tray to his real world provided him with a concrete example of safety. They went on to discuss who in his life he would feel safe sharing his journal with. Counselor Ann encouraged Trevor to begin sharing his journal with these individuals, which up to this point he

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had not done. The use of the props within the sand tray provided an avenue for Trevor to communicate his concerns nonverbally.

As counselor Ann prompted client Trevor to share his journal, the concepts of “second chances” and “trust” emerged. Trevor felt when he needed to depend on the adults in his life for strength and nurturance, after the death of his sister, they had let him down. As Trevor manipulated the props within his sand tray, the importance of second chances developed:

Ann: So he came back to life just one last time.
Trevor: Yeap, he needed some meat to live. He didn’t get any so he died.
Ann: It’s almost like he got a second chance.
Trevor: He did... then they squashed.
Ann: What do you think about second chances?
Trevor: Good.
Ann: Good thing. How come?
Trevor: Um, because people are trusting you one more time.
Ann: Trust is pretty big with you, huh?
Trevor: Yeah.
Ann: Yeah.

The sand tray provided a means for topics to be addressed that were important to client Trevor. Counselor Ann utilized these topics as they emerged within Trevor’s work. The concept of giving and receiving second chances was made into a visual representation through the use of the sand tray props. This laid the foundation for discussing the concept of trust. Trust had been an important issue for Trevor. He had difficulty trusting that the adults in his life would meet his emotional needs and that they would not leave him like his sister had done through her death. The concept of trust was made concrete through the props by discussing the prop soldiers. These prop
soldiers knew when they could leave the island and when they could let others join them on the island. Counselor Ann linked these concepts to Trevor's current life situation. The prop usage provided the client with an avenue to express himself and his concerns indirectly. The counselor was then able to take this indirect form of communication and begin a discussion surrounding trust and the current trust issues in Trevor's life.

Relating props to clients' lives was also done through the release of the emotions they were feeling. Many of the clients experienced frustration and anger in their lives. Their counseling goals were often about appropriate emotional expression. Utilizing props to aid in the releasing of these emotions increased clients' opportunities to learn alternative emotional expression. Using props to encourage emotional release was another way counselors linked their use of props to their clients' lives.

Counselor Violet had prompted clients to release emotions that appeared destructive for them. Counselor Violet in her work with client Blake observed him suppressing his anger towards his family. Counselor Violet asked Blake to use a clay mallet to hit the clay prop to release his frustrations and anger. This appeared to be a difficult task for Blake:

Violet: How do you express when you don't like something? Do you feel mad?
Blake: Frustrated.
Violet: Yeah. What I'd like you to do is show me a little bit about how you feel frustrated. Let's say you could hit this clay in a frustrated way. What's that like for you to hit clay frustrated?
Blake: I don't want to hit the table.
Violet: It’s a pretty sturdy table. I don’t think it will it, if you want I’ll take these off. I’ll put these over here (moving cups off of the table) and I’ll hold it and we’ll add a little bit more clay, that might help, can I add your whale? (made previously out of clay)

Blake: Okay.

Violet: Cause that might help frustrated.

(Blake hits clay gently)

Violet: Now do you ever get mad at anything?

Blake: Um, the only thing I get mad about is when I really need to do something and important people don’t take me seriously or, um, my mother doesn’t take me seriously.

Violet: Yeah, your mother doesn’t take you seriously, that kind of thing makes you mad.

Blake: Yeah.

Violet: I want you to hit the clay like you’re mad. (Blake hits the clay with the same level of force as his frustrated hitting of the clay.)

Violet: Keep hitting it, cause when your mad you have to hit it more than...

(Blake hits the clay with the mallet a few more times.)

Violet: Great. Maybe you could imagine this is your mother and while you’re hitting it say, “I want you to take me seriously.”

Blake: I want you to take me seriously. (hitting the clay)

Violet: A couple more times.

Violet: Is it hard for you to say when you’re mad?

Blake: No.

Counselor Violet observed client Blake’s difficulties in releasing his emotions. Blake talked about how he “takes out” his anger on his mother. This expression of angry feelings toward his mother seemed to occur when Blake was actually angry at his dad’s limited involvement with him. Counselor Violet continued to focus on Blake’s unexpressed anger. They together constructed a list of things he can do instead of “taking it out” on his mother. As this list was created, counselor Violet explained how to release his feelings in an appropriate manner. They discussed how holding in angry feelings had hurt his relationship with his mother. Counselor Violet was able to connect Blake’s feelings to a plan of action in order to safeguard his relationship with
both his mother and absent father. This was one example of how props are used to
release emotions that may be blocked in children.

Counselor Sage provided another example of helping her client release
emotions. Counselor Sage had introduced a blow-up plastic bat to her client Calie.
Calie had been discussing how she is treated differently from her cousin Tim by her
immediate and extended family. Counselor Sage observed that Calie was attempting to
hide how much this bothered her. Calie was handed the bat and prompted to hit a
pillow with it. Counselor Sage also gave her words to say as she struck the pillow. At
first Calie tentatively hit the pillow, then utilizing the props she began striking it with
all of her might. Calie additionally used the bat later in her session when a stuffed
animal representing her cousin was introduced, which she hit with the bat. Utilizing
the props provided Calie the opportunity to release the emotions she was experiencing
towards her cousin. The props also provided a springboard for discussing how to
appropriately express her emotions in her life.

Linking the use of props to the client’s life was also done through the
expression of growth that has been experienced. This growth was reported by
counselors and clients. Counselor Terry provided an example of relaying the growth
she had observed in her client Joshua. Joshua had chosen to handcuff her and himself
throughout their session together. Counselor Terry at the beginning of their session
had taught Joshua how the handcuffs worked. She then reflected the growth she had
observed during their short time together:

Joshua:    Now this one’s stuck onto my hand. (referring to the handcuffs)
Terry: Now you have a handcuff and I have a handcuff and you took yours off.
Terry: You’re in charge of who gets handcuffed and who doesn’t.
Joshua: Woo. (manipulating handcuff)
Terry: You have figured out how to use them. You know, when you first came in here you didn’t know how to use them at all and since then you have figured out how not just to use them but to use them really really fast.
Joshua: Now we both have handcuffs on.
Terry: Now we both have handcuffs on.

Counselor Terry was able to show client Joshua his own growth in their time together. It reinforced the concept that Joshua was capable of learning from his experiences and that he could figure things out on his own. The use of props provided a means for clients to demonstrate their abilities. The handcuffs were used to reinforce the growth Joshua had experienced during counseling.

Clients also were empowered to analyze their own behaviors and report changes that were occurring. Counselor Susan’s client Ryan was able to report his own growth. Counselor Susan had asked Ryan how things were within his family currently. Ryan was able to report that the “bullying” side of him was coming out less, especially at school. The “bullying” side of Ryan had been represented by a miniature figurine prop. Counselor Susan’s client Corrine had also reported that her behaviors had improved as she worked in the sand tray. Counselor Susan reflected this growth with her clients and discovered how her clients were able to make these changes for themselves in their lives. The props were used as reference points for their behavior. The props provided a means of measuring the growth that had occurred.
Summary of Theme Four – Relating Prop to Life

In utilizing props with children, moments arose when counselors connected the props to their clients’ lives. Relating props to life refers to the connection made between the prop and the clients’ issues. This connection took the form of linking the props to the clients’ presenting problems, releasing emotions and demonstrating growth. The props facilitated the communication occurring between the client and counselor. Through the use of props, difficult issues were addressed in a nonconfrontational manner. The props expressed the concerns of clients and acted as visual representations of the issues in their lives. The props enabled the client and counselor to define current concepts by providing concrete examples. How the props were manipulated demonstrated the clients’ life abilities and became a component in setting current life goals. Prop usage also was used to display how to express emotions appropriately, which was a problem in many clients’ lives. The counselors skillfully took the props their clients were working with and maneuvered them into therapeutic interventions by relating them to the clients’ lives.

Theme Five – Generalizing

Counselors used props to generalize beyond the immediate counseling session. Generalizing refers to having the counseling session’s gains, such as changes regarding thoughts, feelings and behaviors, expanded beyond the counseling environment. There were 90.91% of the unpublished counselors and 83.33% of the
published counselors who generalized through the use of props. The frequency of the theme generalizing was typical. These counselors generalized by helping their clients organize their thoughts and practice new skills. These counseling goals were attached to props in order to reinforce a client's memory. For example, lists to be posted or verbal cues created during their session reinforce memory and help to generalize. Together counselors and clients also made plans to use these new thoughts and skills so they could be called upon when needed. Plans were established to help clients during difficult times in their futures. Additionally, a group of counselors had given clients props to take home. These props would act as reminders of the work they completed together. Therefore the characteristics of generalizing include organizing thoughts, planning for the future, practicing new skills and sending visual reminders home with clients.

Generalizing was observed as counselors tried to help their clients organize their thoughts through the use of props. The props utilized were pens, paper or dry erase boards. Ideas were recorded and the counselor organized them visually for ease of understanding. An example of a counselor helping to organize the client's thoughts occurred towards the end of the session between counselor Violet and client Blake. Counselor Violet and Blake had brainstromed ideas that he could do when he was feeling frustrated or angry. Counselor Violet chose the prop of a list to record alternative behaviors for releasing his angry emotions:

Violet: So I'm wondering if you could think of something you could do privately for yourself to get that mad feeling out. Maybe I could write, want me to write them down?
Blake: Sure.
Violet: I have a pad here, I'll put...
Blake: Playing basketball could ease the anger.
Violet: The thing that's important in this when your playing it, you have to be in touch with that feeling, you know, it isn't like you're playing basketball so you forget it, because then your pushing it down...

After the list was completed, counselor Violet suggested to Blake to post it in his bedroom at home. Posting the list seemed to make the list available to Blake when he needed it. Blake agreed that this was a good idea because when he began to feel frustrated he had been unsure what to do. The prop was transformed into a visual cue to generalize the management of emotions and organize them for future reference.

Counselor Michael also helped to organize the thoughts of his client David. Counselor Michael used the prop of a dry erase board throughout his session with David in order to visually record the concepts discussed in their sessions:

Michael: What I'd like to do is go to the board and summarize where we are at and then we can look at some of the reasons you get so angry. So why don't you move your chair, I'll try to summarize where we are at. (Michael writes on the board: happening, feelings, reactions, in columns and begins writing under the happening column) At the moment, Gavin taunts and teases you.
David: Yes.
Michael: (writes under feelings column) And you get about, if we are just going to talk about angry, you get about 9 out of 10.
David: (shakes head yes)
Michael: And then you withdraw. (writes under reaction column)
David: Yes I do. I stay away from everybody.
Michael: And you agree that a goal would be rather than 9 out of 10... (referring to feeling scale drawn under the feelings column)
David: A 4 or 5.
Michael: A 4 or 5 out of 10, if you were that angry, 4 or 5 out of 10. (records this under feelings column) How do you think that
would affect your relationship with others, would you do what you’re doing now?

David: No, I would stay with a friend for support. I wouldn’t treat them as badly.

Counselor Michael recorded client David’s old thoughts along with possible new thoughts and reactions to his situation. They together came up with a list of new thoughts which David could use the next time he was confronted by his bully. The list included “I’m in control,” “I can deal with this,” “What he says doesn’t matter,” “I can survive,” “Things could be worse” and “I’m somebody.” The prop of the dry erase board visually displayed how David had previously dealt unsatisfactorily with his bully along with new more appropriate thoughts and reactions. The prop was used as a recording device to analyze the session and plan for future events.

Counselor David E.’s work with client Sebastian provides another example of attempting to generalize the gains made during their counseling session by organizing thoughts. During their counseling session they had discussed how Sebastian’s “good guy” side of him was “playing” to defeat his “bad guy” side. The idea of playing soccer was brought up. Counselor David E. and Sebastian proceeded to discuss the different international soccer teams, such as favorite teams, favorite players and how their favorites were doing. Sebastian reported that his favorite player was Tomas Brolin. Counselor David E. suggested that Sebastian construct his own team to fight against anger. This team would consist of his resources. Sebastian was asked if Tomas Brolin would play on Sebastian’s team to defeat the “cactus of anger.” Sebastian said he was unsure. Counselor David E. suggested writing a letter to this famous soccer player.
player. This prop letter would inform Tomas Brolin about what Sebastian was working towards along with requesting him to be a part of his “defeating anger team”:

David E.: Do you think Tomas Brolin would feel proud of himself if he knew that Sebastian was his teammate?

[Dr. Djerf and Sebastian speak. Dr. Djerf translates]

Dr. Djerf: (translates) I don’t know.

David E.: Do you think we should write him a letter?

Sebastian: Yes.

David E.: Should we do that now?

Sebastian: Yes.

David E.: (takes note pad and pen) Well, maybe I’ll write it in English and we’ll… (begins to write) Dear Tomas, do you want to tell him about how this anger has been doing things to your life?

[Dr. Djerf and Sebastian speak]

Dr. Djerf: Destroyed.

David E.: My anger has destroyed my heart. For how long?

Counselor David E. and client Sebastian continued to write their letter to Tomas Brolin. The letter spoke about Sebastian wanting to go to ordinary school and how he is trying to fight his “cactus of anger.” The letter also asked if Tomas Brolin ever had any problems with anger. Their conversation continued around what else would be placed in their letter:

David E.: Do you think that you would be willing, later on, to coach other young people whose lives are being destroyed by anger?

[Dr. Djerf translates]

Sebastian: Yes.

David E.: Can I tell Tomas that?

Sebastian: Yes.

Counselor David E. and client Sebastian continued to add to the letter addressed to Tomas Brolin. The prop reflected on the gains made during the
counseling sessions. It also acted as a means to extend their work beyond their single session.

Another form of generalizing occurred when the counselor and client constructed a plan to prepare for future events. This planning took the form of utilizing props to continue contact and prepare for upcoming events. Counselor David E. constructed a plan to remain in contact with client Sebastian to find out how his fight for his “good guy” side was proceeding:

David E.: Could you ask Sebastian that if it would be alright when this happens in the future, if it’s okay for him to write me a letter and let me know so I can write back?
[Dr. Djerf translates]
Sebastian: Yes.
David E.: Oh, good.

Counselor David E. generalized by utilizing the letter in order to reinforce the concepts discussed during his time with client Sebastian. Additionally, counselor David E.’s request to remain in contact with Sebastian represented a plan to generalize Sebastian’s counseling gains. The prop provided the groundwork for continued contact between counselor and client. This continued contact was a plan to generalize counseling goals reinforced by the letter.

Counselor Ann provided an example of generalizing by planning for upcoming events for her client Trevor. Counselor Ann and Trevor developed a plan that encompassed utilizing props of the past projects they created. They had begun to brainstorm ideas for preparing for the upcoming birthday of his dead sister. They planned together for this future event in hopes that it would make it go smoother:
Ann: So how are we going to prepare for April 10th, because that’s right around the corner.

Trevor: Yeah, um, I just have fun and I have fun so when it comes to April 10th I get out my journal every April 10th, I just write everyday 24 hours, only time I stop is when it’s dinner, lunch, and breakfast. Well, I’ll have to stop. Isn’t April 10th a school day, yeah. I have to stop and, um, I can’t write in the after school, that stinks.

Ann: What can we do here to help you get through your day, what could we do here at school?

Trevor: Um… let me think, I don’t know.

Ann: Now, can you think back to any of our projects and what we’ve done so far?

Trevor: We probably can do our book.

Ann: Which book is that?

Trevor: The green book.

Ann: Maybe we could do something to celebrate that day.

Generalizing in the form of planning would provide client Trevor the opportunity to utilize ideas and props developed in earlier sessions for future events. Utilizing the props created by the client re-establishes the counseling work done which can be used later to manage difficult times. The props acted as resources that the client could utilize as needed.

Generalizing also included giving clients the opportunity to try the new skills they learned during the counseling process. Practicing skills from the sessions was demonstrated through role playing. The props used during the counseling sessions became visual reminders to be utilized while practicing new skills. Counselor Michael and client David had earlier in their counseling session created a list of new thoughts for him to utilize when confronted by his bully, Gavin:

Michael: Do you think it is easy to think these kinds of thoughts, these more rational thoughts?
Can't be too easy.

Let's have a practice, okay?

Okay.

I want you to go over by the door.

Alright.

And you're going to be Gavin and I'm going to be David and when he gets stuck into you, you tend to be upset. So I want you to be him and this is what I am going to do, I am going to think these kinds of thoughts (referring to the new thoughts) and then I'll give up a chance.

Counselor Michael took on the role of client David to demonstrate how to use the new thought patterns they had developed and constantly referred to the prop of the list. Counselor Michael then switched roles and played the bully and David played himself. Practicing the new thought patterns provided David the opportunity to rehearse how it would feel to utilize them when he was approach by his bully. The prop became a visual cue as the client practiced new skills. In this example, role playing allowed for the skill to be practiced and the list served as a reminder of the generalized skills.

Counselor Sage also generalized by practicing the skill of confrontation with her client Calie. The need to learn the skill of confrontation was demonstrated while using turtle puppets during their session. The role play consisted of confronting her cousin who had treated her badly. Counselor Sage utilized the props they had been working with, turtle puppets, to practice this confrontation. She had also introduced an additional prop of a monster stuffed animal to represent her bullying cousin:

Sage: (giving voice to the turtle puppet she was holding) When he's mean to me I don't know what to do, so I hide. So what do you think the turtle could do not to hide?
Calie: Tell him to stop.
Sage: How would you say that?
Calie: Stop. (hiding her turtle puppet’s head)

The role play continued with counselor Sage demonstrating and providing the words for client Calie to use herself. Calie used her turtle puppet prop to confront a stuffed animal monster prop which represented her bullying cousin:

Sage: Are you afraid to stand up to Tim?
Calie: Yes. (turtle speaks) I’m afraid.
Sage: (takes out a scary-looking stuffed animal monster) Let’s take the monster and the little turtle can tell him what he wants and what he needs to say.
Calie: (has her turtle puppet speak towards the monster) You are a bully! Leave me alone or I am going to tell your parents!
Sage: (taking on a rough monster voice) You tell your parents and I’m going to beat you up.
Calie: Watch me, just watch me.
Sage: What if big turtle said, I’m not going to allow you to hurt me anymore?
Calie: Yeah!
Sage: I’m not going to let you be mean to me.
Calie: Yeah!
Sage: (using a rough monster voice) I’ll do whatever I want.
Calie: Good luck on that one! Ahhh. (laughing)
Sage: When turtle’s hiding you can’t see how cute and wonderful turtle is. What if turtle just let herself out of the shell?

Counselor Sage continued to provide client Calie the opportunity to practice confronting her bullying cousin. Counselor Sage used herself as the prop in order to provide a concrete example of how to appropriately confront someone. The props used gave the client the opportunity to practice the new skills:

Sage: Let’s practice that. Stand up. Put your feet about shoulders width part. I want you with all your power. Big and tall. Shoulders back. I want you to make your face look like mine
(serious face) and I want you to say, “Tim, I won’t allow you to abuse me anymore.”

Calie: Tim, I won’t allow you to abuse me anymore. (twirls around giggling)

Sage: You’re starting to laugh and you know what else? You got afraid.

Counselor Sage reframed client Calie’s hiding. She transforms the little turtle into a “tough ninja turtle” that can handle confrontations. This allowed Calie to practice the skill of confrontation with strength instead of timidness. They continued to practice together how to confront appropriately. The props were used to generalize and practice new skills. They provided a safe means of becoming acquainted with uncomfortable skills. Reframing how the prop was viewed by the client (timid turtle to ninja turtle) gave the client a way to alter how she viewed herself.

Counselors sent props home with their clients. This was the final way they used a prop to generalize counseling gains. Counselor David E. had given the poster paper that they had both written on to client Sebastian in order to remind him of what they had discussed. Counselor Violet gave client Abram some of the clay they were working with as a reminder of what they did together.

Counselor Susan’s client Robin had won a prize for completing a game. The prize prop was selected from a prize chest and would act as a reminder of their counseling session:

Susan: Here is the prize chest.
Robin: We get to pick out a prize before [playing].
Susan: Yes.
Robin: I already have this thing. (referring to one of the prizes)
Susan: Oh, a bug.
Robin: A spider. What’s in the other one, I want to see all the bugs. (referring to the prizes of a bug in a box)
Susan: You’re going to look at all the bugs.
Robin: Eh, there must be a lot.
Susan: There’s a bunch of bugs in here, oh, that bug fell out.
Robin: It feels real, same one.
Susan: Are you finding any that you like? (Robin open and kisses bug)
Susan: You like these don’t you? (goes through chest)
Susan: You’re checking everything out before you choose.
Robin: Jack in the box. This will scare my family.
Susan: It could.
Robin: I’ll have the jack in the box.

Counselor Sage also gave a prop to her client in order to remind her of the concepts they spoke about and to provide comfort to her outside the counseling environment. The prop was a symbol so she would not forget their time together. The props sent home with clients acted as a visual clue of the counseling work and as a source of comfort that would generalize beyond their time together.

Summary of Theme Five – Generalizing.

As counselors utilized props within their counseling sessions, they looked for ways to expand their work beyond their time allotment. Generalizing referred to the way counselors promoted the counseling gains outside of the counseling environment. Generalizing was demonstrated by counselors through organizing their clients’ thoughts, planning for future events, practicing new skills and having clients walk away from their sessions with a reminder of their time together. The use of props facilitated each of these characteristics of generalizing. The props provided a way to
review and analyze the work done during the counseling sessions. They acted as visual reminders of the new ways to act and think. Props allowed clients to plan for the future and gave clients the opportunity to practice new skills and try on new personas. Props also became reminders to be called upon during difficult times. Each client that took a prop away appeared happy to leave with a part of his/her counseling session. This was expressed verbally and nonverbally through their facial expressions. The counselors used props to ensure that their clients could stay in touch with the gains they had made. In this way, all these characteristics were associated with generalizing as a way to use props in counseling children.

Summary Category Two – Utilizing Props with Children

Through analyzing the counseling sessions, certain patterns developed concerning how counselors utilized props with clients. The patterns were developed into the themes and subthemes of Category Two – Utilizing Props with Children. Table 9 displays the themes and subthemes discovered when utilizing props with children.

In examining these themes and subthemes, four conclusions have been drawn. First props provide the opportunity for counselors to enter clients’ worlds on their level. Second, props are a catalyst for counseling movement. Third, counselors who utilize props are able to tailor therapeutic interventions to meet the needs of their clients. Last, it is through the expressive nature and creativity of the counselor that props are utilized within the counseling process.
As counselors attempted to build rapport it appeared that the use of props allowed counselors to enter into their clients' worlds. The props made available to clients seemed to invite them to be active participants in the counseling process. The props selected were the medium used to communicate the clients' thoughts, feelings and concerns. As props were manipulated, the focus of the clients intensified. This appeared to mimic the essence of real play but went even further by having the props come to life through the child's interaction with them. As the props transformed and the clients' focus intensified, the stream of thoughts spoken appeared to be non-filtered. Therefore, when the clients' hands were active, their thoughts flowed more freely and unguarded.
The use of props acted as a catalyst to the counseling process. Prop usage appeared to facilitate communication and the expression of feelings. Clients seemed to develop insight and self-awareness due to the props they manipulated. The props used reflected the clients' thoughts and feelings, which permitted the counselors to work on the issues that emerged. Prop usage allowed counselors to explore difficult and specific issues with clients. The props became the words that were difficult for clients to speak. Therefore, the use of props promoted movement within the counseling process.

Counselors who utilize props tailored their therapeutic interventions to meet the specific needs of their clients. They appear to do this through an indirect and nonconfrontational manner by utilizing props. They observe the props their clients choose and how they manipulate them. As clients work with the props, the way they are manipulated appeared to mirror the issues facing them. Patterns developed in the way the props were being worked with. As the manipulation intensified, a transformation occurred turning the prop into a metaphor of the client's life. Counselors watched this transformation happen. Counselors then tailored their therapeutic interventions around the transformed props.

The counselors who utilized props in their work with children possessed a high level of creativity. Perhaps it is their creativity that opened them to utilizing props in their work. These counselors utilized their entire personalities in their work. They were masters of theatrics by using their movements and voices to bring the props to life and to fuel their transformation into metaphors.
It has been concluded that utilizing props with children promotes movement in the process of counseling children. Also, using props allow counselors to tailor their interventions to specific clients' issues. Counselors who use props possess the ability to theatrically present themselves and the props they utilize. The following section investigates any differences that may exist between the published and unpublished videotaped counseling sessions.

Comparison of Published Versus Unpublished Counseling Sessions

Published and unpublished videotaped counseling sessions were viewed. Differences between these two sources have been examined. The differences looked at included setting, counselors, props and themes.

Setting

A major difference between the published and unpublished counseling sessions was the location that the sessions occurred in. For the unpublished counselors, their sessions took place in their own counseling offices. This permitted them to utilize all the props located within their own office space. For the published counseling sessions, the majority of the sessions took place in a location not considered their "home" counseling office. The choice of location for the published counselors was due to the videotaping arrangements made by the producers of the videotapes. Also, location choice for the published counselors was because the counselor was requested to
perform in a specific agency. Perhaps additional published videotapes would have been used if the counselors were videoed in their own counseling offices, which would have made available their own props to work with.

Another aspect of the setting was the audience that the videotape was made for. Regarding the unpublished sessions, this researcher was the only person viewing the videotape. The published videotapes were made as teaching tools. Their audience was mental health professionals who were furthering their studies. The intended audience of the videotapes perhaps influenced the counseling sessions. The unpublished videotapes were for private viewing and the published videotapes were for professional mass viewing. The audience appeared to influence the counselors' attire to some point. The majority of the unpublished counselors' appearance was very relaxed. The majority of the published counselors' appearance was more professional, such as jacket and tie or dress.

Counselor

There were many similarities between the skills of the published and unpublished counselors. All the counselors attempted to build rapport with their clients. They engaged their clients in the counseling process. They also all utilized the skill of reflection regarding the clients and the props they manipulated.

An apparent difference between the published and unpublished counselors was their level of creativity. The unpublished counselors possessed a high level of expressiveness and creativity with their clients, whereas the published counselors
appeared to have a goal of showing their counseling theory to their audience, which may have limited expression of their creativity. Many published videotapes were viewed and some were not included within this study because they did not contain the use of props. It appeared from some of these unused published videotapes that the theory being displayed did not lend itself to the utilization of props. However, this belief ended when two published narrative theory videotapes were compared. One of these videos was used for this study, David E. performing counseling. The other one was not due to the lack of prop usage. In comparing these two videos the main difference was the level of creativity employed by the counselors. David E. utilized a high level of creativity in his work along with all of the resources available to him in the counseling space provided for him.

An additional difference between the counselors was that the published counseling sessions were conducted by doctorate-level counselors. The majority of the unpublished counselors held master’s degrees. The published counselors appeared to be older than the unpublished counselors, which may account for the difference in the degrees held and potentially the years of clinical experience.

**Props**

There was a difference between the props used within the published and unpublished videotapes. Since the unpublished counseling sessions occurred within the actual office of the counselor, there existed a larger variety of props at their disposal to utilize. They had sand trays, an array of miniature figurine props, puppets,
doll houses and art media to name a few. Many of the published counselors had to bring their own supplies to their counseling demonstrations. This therefore limited their use of props. Most of these counselors used portable props, perhaps due to traveling.

Themes

Table 10 displays the percentage of counselors participating in the theme/subtheme. There existed 100% usage between published and unpublished counselors regarding the subthemes of building rapport, reflecting, engaging clients, expansion and expressions of prop feelings. Within Category One – Process of Counseling Children there were similarities between the two sets of counselors. One difference between the counselors was within the subtheme of linking counseling session. The majority of the published counselors only saw their clients for one session for the purpose of demonstrating their skills. Therefore the opportunity to link sessions was not available.

All of themes in Category Two – Utilizing Props with Children were utilized by both sets of counselors. Utilizing Props with Children Theme 1 – Introduction of Props showed a difference between if the counselor or client generated the use of props. It appeared that the published counselors generated the use of props more often than permitting their clients to generate their usage. Additionally the unpublished counselors displayed anthropomorphism of props more than the viewed published counselors.
Table 10

Percentage of Counselors Participating in the Theme/Subtheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Subtheme</th>
<th>Unpublished Counselors</th>
<th>Published Counselors</th>
<th>Total Counselors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category - Process of Counseling Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling Session Dynamics</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>94.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Rapport</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking Sessions</td>
<td>80%*</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>94.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>54.44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Setting</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor Attributes</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>63.64%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client’s Perception</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category - Utilizing Props with Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of Props</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Generated</td>
<td>90.90%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor Generated</td>
<td>81.82%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>88.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working the Prop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>88.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self as Prop</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropomorphism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Voice</td>
<td>63.64%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>47.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prop Feelings</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Metaphorically</td>
<td>72.73%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>64.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating Prop to Life</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>94.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizing</td>
<td>90.91%</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>88.24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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In analyzing the counseling sessions and development of themes, there existed much overlap in the cluster of categories. When collapsing the incidents that occurred during the sessions of the unpublished videos, they engulfed the published incidents. There did exist some incidents which did not become apart of the themes developed because they were very theory driven. Such an example was externalizing the problem, which is a technique specific to narrative theory. Otherwise, there were no differences that appeared between the development of themes for the published and unpublished counseling sessions.

Table 11 displays a ranking of the top five themes when analyzing the actual number of incidents which were observed of the counselors.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Five Themes When Utilizing the Actual Number of Incidents Within Published and Unpublished Counselors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unpublished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1 - Counseling Skills: Reflecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 - Working the prop: Expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 - Counseling Skills: Probing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 - Counseling Skills: Building Rapport Attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 - Working with children: Counselor Attributes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appeared that the skills of probing and reflecting occurred most frequently between the published and unpublished counseling sessions. This reinforces the
conclusion that good counseling skills are necessary for props to be used when counseling children.

Conclusion

For this study, a total of 33 videotaped counseling sessions in which props were used were obtained and analyzed. Ten of these sessions came from published videotapes and 23 from unpublished videotapes. Some of the videotapes were of multiple sessions with the same counselor and client. A total of 22 clients and 17 counselors were viewed.

In analyzing the counseling sessions for themes, two major categories developed: (1) process of counseling children and (2) utilizing props with children. These categories and their accompanying themes and subthemes are discussed at length in Chapter 5. The themes within the process of counseling children were counseling session dynamics, counseling skills and working with children. The themes related to utilizing props with children were introduction of props, working the prop, anthropomorphism, relating prop to life and generalizing.

The themes within the process of counseling children demonstrated the fact that the counselor needs to possess good counseling skills in order to utilize props. These counseling skills laid the groundwork for prop usage and represented the context and foundation for prop usage. Additionally, when working with children, counselors adapted their skills, their environment and themselves in order to present a
child-friendly atmosphere. Through this adaptation counselors were able to enthusiastically engage their clients in the counseling process.

Once the counselors possessed the necessary counseling skills, they then had the opportunity to utilize props with children. The themes of utilizing props with children investigated how props were introduced and worked with when counseling children. By using props counselors were able to enter their clients’ worlds at their level. The props acted as a catalyst for movement within the counseling process. They facilitated rapport building, communication, expression of feelings, exploration, self-understanding and growth.

Counselors who utilized props created specific and unique therapeutic interventions tailored to their clients. They used props and transformed them into metaphors around their clients’ specific issues. Counselors who used props possessed a high level of expressiveness and creativity. Perhaps it is because of their expressiveness and creativity that they were open to utilizing props in their work with children.

After examining the counseling sessions and analyzing them for themes, the findings were discussed within this chapter. Now a further discussion of these findings, their implications and areas of future research will be addressed in Chapter 5.
A total of 33 counseling sessions were viewed and analyzed in order to discover themes related to the use of props with child clients. The resulting themes and subthemes, including their characteristics, are displayed in Table 12 and Table 13. Two major categories appeared when observing the sessions. The first major category related to the process of counseling children. The second major category related to the utilization of props with children who are receiving counseling services. These findings will be discussed along with how they relate to the literature. Models are presented to demonstrate how the discovered themes work together. Additionally how the findings of this study contribute to the field of counseling children along with potential areas of future research will be addressed.

### Findings Regarding the Process of Counseling Children

Table 12 displays the themes and the subthemes of Category One – Process of Counseling children, along with their characteristics. Three important overall findings
were discovered when examining the themes related to the process of counseling children. First the counselors' level of expressiveness and inherent creativity was an important component in the process of working with child clients. Second, counselors needed to possess basic counseling skills in order to work effectively with child clients, and last, it was necessary for counselors to possess effective counseling skills in order to utilize props in their work.

Table 12

Themes, Subthemes and Characteristics of Category One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1 Process of Counseling Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1  Counseling Session Dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing a safe and comfortable environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explaining potential distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promoting playfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presenting a nonjudgmental atmosphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2  Counseling Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme (a) Building Rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nonverbal behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintaining eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Positioning themselves at their child clients’ eye level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mirroring their child clients’ motions and mannerisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expressing excitement through their body language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verbal comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giving child clients choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using their child clients’ words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using different tones of voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Displaying empathy and showing their child clients respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme (b) Linking Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making connections between sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Utilizing the same prop in several sessions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued on next page)
Table 12 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme (c) Probing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Building rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gathering information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verifying understanding of comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expanding child client comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme (d) Reflecting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Reflecting the feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflecting the content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme (e) Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Transfer of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development of skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 3 Working with Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme (a) Physical Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Physical structure of the counseling environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme (b) Counselor Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Playfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Body language and movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expressiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Modeling appropriate behaviors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme (c) Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Developmental age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Client’s words and labels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme (d) Tracking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Overt behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nonverbal behaviors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme (e) Engaging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Counselors sharing their own stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselors sharing their own feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encouragement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Focusing</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme (f) Client’s Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Props and their creations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Counseling experience</td>
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</table>
There was a high level of expressiveness displayed by many of the counselors observed. This was expressed through demonstrations of playfulness. This demonstration was apparent in how the counseling environment was arranged and the mannerisms of the counselors. Counseling offices contained a variety of props. These props included items such as puppets, art supplies, books and toys. These props are items which young clients are already familiar with. The expressions and mannerisms of the counselors seemed to create a welcoming environment in which the client felt free to begin playing with the available props. The counselors appeared to use all aspects of their personalities when interacting with their clients and the props.

Counselors' energy levels were displayed as they moved around, created different voices, and exaggerated facial expressions. The counselors varied their energy levels and seemed to know when it was appropriate to be extremely expressive and when it was necessary to appear more relaxed.

As a result of the counselors' expressiveness, the introduction of prop usage appeared to emerge naturally. The clients' reactions to this expressiveness resulted in them playing more intensely with props, staying focused and being attentive. This expressiveness allowed the child clients to answer questions more freely and at a deeper level as they manipulated the props before them. The interactions and expressiveness which occurred around the props facilitated the counseling process. Perhaps the inherent expressiveness of these counselors' personalities encouraged them to utilize props in their work with children.
The observed counselors were masters of effective counseling skills. Solid counseling skills are necessary when working with child clients. These skills were demonstrated by the observed counselors. It appeared that particular counseling skills were enhanced when props were utilized. For example, the props gave the counselors fertile information to explore and reflect upon. Additionally, it appeared that when the clients’ hands were active with the props, more accurate and deeper interactions occurred. As a result, the counselors were able to question and reflect at more meaningful levels.

The effective counseling skills which these counselors possessed were necessary in order to utilize props. It appeared that having effective counseling skills set the stage for props to be used with child clients. These skills were a vital foundation on which prop usage was built. These counseling skills were directly connected to the use of props. The category of the process of counseling children contains themes relevant to the general process of counseling. However, these themes represent the context and foundation that props usage was built upon. Therefore it is concluded that props can’t be utilized unless a counselor possesses effective counseling skills. These skills are a necessary component to set the foundation of prop use.

Findings Regarding the Utilization of Props

Table 13 displays the themes and subthemes for Category Two – Utilization of Props with Children, along with their characteristics. Four important overall findings
emerged when analyzing the themes related to the utilization of props. First, props provided counselors the opportunity to enter the clients' worlds on their level instead of forcing them to adapt to an adult situation. Second, props were a catalyst for movement to occur in the counseling process. Third, props empowered counselors to develop specifically tailored interventions for each of their child clients. Last, the creativity and expressiveness of the counselors aided in the transformation of the prop to a metaphor that occurs as props were used.

Table 13

Themes, Subthemes and Characteristics of Category Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 2 Utilizing Props with Children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1  Introduction of Props</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtheme (a) Client Generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nondirective</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Counselors asked for direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Creation of verbal metaphors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Props from home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtheme (b) Counselor Generated</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Building rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Handling props during discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prop activities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2  Working the Prop</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme (a) Manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child client manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working parallel</td>
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(continued on next page)
The variety of props made available to child clients relayed to them on an unspoken level that the environment they were entering was created specifically for them. The counselors' sense of playfulness invited child clients into the process of counseling from a child's perspective. The mediums utilized consisted of props that child clients were familiar with, which engaged them into the counseling process. Counselors empowered their child clients to utilize the props with freedom by allowing them to choose which prop to manipulate and at times allowing them to
choose how to manipulate the props. As child clients were invited to become active participants in the counseling process they were able to select a more child-friendly process of communication. As this occurred, their manipulation of props appeared to mimic the essence of real play. Child clients' focus intensified and their streams of spoken thoughts appeared to be nonfiltered. Therefore, permitting child clients to work with props appeared to let their thoughts and feelings flow more freely and created a counseling process focused on a child's world.

The props utilized within the counseling sessions appeared to act as a catalyst for movement in the counseling process. Props facilitated this movement by providing a means of communicating concerns and expressing feelings. Child clients were able to communicate their concerns through how they manipulated the props. The props provided an indirect nonconfrontational way for discussions to begin. How child clients selected and manipulated props mirrored their experiences, thoughts, feelings, behaviors and needs. Therefore, the props acted as a catalyst to move from addressing the child's concerns to relating the prop to the child's life to generalizing beyond the counseling session itself.

Props allowed counselors to develop tailored interventions for each specific child. The basic process of using the prop to develop a specifically tailored intervention was the same in each session and represents a summary of themes in this category. The development of detailed interventions began with the child client interacting with a prop either chosen by themselves or their counselors. As the client manipulated the props, patterns appeared to emerge. These prop patterns included the
selection of props as well as their manipulation. As clients interacted with props, patterns developed and appeared to mirror the issues facing the child client, which enabled counselors to explore the issues embedded within these patterns and allowed them to focus their child clients on their specific issues. As this occurred the props become anthropomorphized as well as transformed from a prop to a metaphoric object. This metaphoric object contained new meaning for the child client. Verbal metaphors were created regarding this new meaning. Counselors took the transformed prop and designed interventions to the metaphors created. They related the new meanings established to the child clients’ lives along with attempting to generalize beyond the counseling environment. Figure 1 visually displays how counselors tailored their therapeutic interventions by utilizing props.

Expressiveness and creativity were also directly connected to prop use. Counselors’ use of theatrics engaged their child clients in the counseling process. They used their movements and voices to bring the props to life and to fuel their transformation into metaphors. They used the props and the metaphors created by them as shorthand when referring to specific concerns or lessons learned. The props provided a visual tangible reminder of the topics discussed. The counselors utilized their voices, gestures and demeanors as a way of communicating with their child clients. In a sense, the counselors utilized themselves as props to build rapport, to engage child clients and to heighten the interactions during the counseling process.
Figure 1. How Props Are Turned into Therapeutic Interventions.
Discussion

The following is a general discussion of the findings. It contains a discussion of how these findings connect to the overall play, play therapy and metaphor literature. This section will also include a model that depicts how props are utilized in counseling children.

The literature suggests professionals are in search of information regarding how effectively to work and address the needs of children within the counseling arena (VanVeslsor, 2004). This arena needs to encompass a systematic integration of all types of research and clinical practice. It includes refining specific techniques used with child clients (Russ, 1995). This study has focused on refining the use of props with child clients. It has provided a foundation for prop usage and for continued research into the use of props.

Counseling skills need to be developed specially with the child client in mind rather than adapting adult basic skills to child counseling (Landreth et al., 1999). Because children are less able to understand abstract concepts than adults (Ginsburg & Opper, 1969), counselors need to use concrete examples and hands-on activities when working with children (Erdman & Lampe, 1996). Utilizing props with child clients allows the counselor to explain abstract concepts by using concrete and hands-on examples. Therefore, developing therapeutic interventions specifically designed for child clients takes into account their need for concreteness. The study and use of props have aligned with this need.
Managed care and third-party payers have also demanded accountability, requiring the interventions utilized by counselors to be researched and proven effective (Ackley, 1997). For the use of props to be accepted as a technique to be used in counseling children, the first step includes researching how counselors have utilized props in their work. This study has completed this first step.

The themes that emerged during this study have been previously described in detail. A discussion related to the generalities of some of these themes will highlight the importance of specific themes and their value to the utilization of props. First, a discussion about Category One’s, the process of counseling children, themes will commence. Then the discussion concerning some of the themes in Category Two, utilization of props, will begin.

Within Category One, the process of counseling children, the themes of counseling session dynamics and counselor attributes will be addressed. Also the subtheme of linking sessions will be touched upon. Another aspect which deserves mentioning is the relationship that is built between the counselor and client that occurred throughout the entire counseling process.

The counseling session dynamics, specifically the physical setting of the counseling environment, was an important component in creating an inviting and child-friendly atmosphere. The counseling environments viewed were designed specifically for children. The furniture was of a smaller scale and child friendly, i.e., bean bag chairs. The walls were decorated with drawings. There were a variety of props made available. Many of the child clients commented on never being is a room.
that was made with them in mind. Providing such an atmosphere is vital when working with child clients. One significant contribution of this study was the connection between the physical presence of the props and how this helped in creating a child-friendly environment.

The theme of counselors' attributes was another important component to working effectively with clients. The counselors were extremely mindful and present when working with their child clients. This was apparent as the counselors worked with the metaphors created out of their child clients' manipulation of props. The awareness displayed by these counselors was evident as they were able to transform the props utilized into metaphors to be used therapeutically. This awareness enabled them to tailor their interventions in order to address their child clients' specific needs. This use of immediacy connected all the process of counseling children themes but was also an important underlying factor in the prop use itself. Props allowed counselors full connection to their clients' needs, thoughts and feelings. The props facilitated the development of this connection.

Additionally, counselors became props themselves through their use of nonverbal behaviors and their voices to enhance the counseling process. They utilized themselves to aid in building rapport and inviting child clients into the counseling process. The participating counselors used their nonverbal skills to persuade child clients to become active participants in the counseling process. These counselors also used their voices in order to entice participation through using character voices as the props were being handled. Additionally the excitement displayed in the counselors'
voices invited child clients into the counseling process. An additional way counselors became props was when they used movement and their bodies to introduce or reinforce concepts. The intentionality around these displays is how counselors transformed themselves into props in order to enhance the counseling experience for their clients.

Some of the counselor/child client dyads met for more than one session. These counselors through the theme of linking sessions were able to continue their work from previous sessions. The linking of sessions through prop usage allowed counselors to remain at a deeper level of interchange with their child clients. It may have permitted child clients to view their previous prop usage for a different perception due to the time lapse between sessions. Props were used to create continuity between sessions and may have expanded this continuity to generalizing to real life.

The relationship formed between the counselor and child client along with its importance was displayed by the reported themes. The reported themes of the first category of the process of counseling children all played a role in building rapport and a therapeutic relationship. This relationship was a necessary component for the successful utilization of props in counseling. The concept of building rapport was repeated throughout the observed interactions. Establishing rapport was a part of the counseling session dynamics and was the underlying reason for creating a child-friendly environment. The connection between building rapport and prop usage was displayed through counselors’ probes, reflections, engaging, prop introduction and
expansion themes. The participating counselors had a knack for building rapport and the resulting therapeutic relationship with their child clients in a natural and rapid way.

Within Category Two, utilization of props with children, the discussion areas to be explored are the counselors' awareness, prop choice, anthropomorphism and generalization. Counselors within this study were extremely aware of the metaphors that emerged as their child clients manipulated props. As counselors used props, they had to remain extremely present in the counseling process in order not to miss the metaphors the clients created from the prop usage. Therefore prop usage enhanced counselors' awareness, presence and immediacy.

Choosing props was the first step in the introduction of the utilization of props. The significance of prop choice is another significant contribution of this study. Most of the child clients' choice of props consisted of toy props, i.e., handcuffs, dolls, etc., which perhaps reflected their desire to engage in play. The counselors' majority of prop choices consisted of recording props, i.e., paper, scales, etc. Observations from this study revealed that counselors used props as an attempt to organize the thoughts, feelings and behaviors revealed by their child clients. Then they visually reflected these back to their child clients through recording props. Most of the counselors and child clients utilized sand trays, miniature figurines and clay or play dough during their sessions. These props appeared to generate more metaphors and therefore were used more frequently.

The process of anthropomorphism was demonstrated as props were utilized during the counseling sessions. This theme was connected to speaking about feelings
and creating metaphors. Anthropomorphism appeared to promote potential changes in the child clients’ thoughts, feelings and behaviors. The insights spoken about as props anthropomorphized promoted movement in the counseling process. These insights were also promoted as counselors expanded on the child clients’ prop usage along with the child clients’ comments. Through the use of voices and sound effects counselors were enabled to deepen the level of discussion that was occurring and the props being manipulated. This study appears to link the concept of anthropomorphism not just to play, but to a direct method to explore feelings in the child client and facilitate the metaphoric process.

The theme of generalizing was a component of the counselors’ utilization of props. The props that were linked to the child clients’ lives at times were sent home to reinforce counseling discussions. The theme of connecting the prop usage to the clients’ lives appeared to allow the client to gain insights into their own thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Child clients were able to view themselves through the props manipulated and potentially make necessary changes within their own lives. Then when the props handled during counseling were sent home with child clients, these props may have been transformed into concepts. The props therefore became a visually tangible representation of the abstract concepts addressed during counseling. When the props were sent home, they may have served as tangible concrete reminders of these abstract concepts.

This discussion highlights the connections within themes to many important components when working with props and child clients. All of these components
demonstrated special aspects of working with props and child clients. The counselor must be aware of the special needs of their child clients. Managing these aspects allows for a therapeutic relationship to develop in which props can be utilized. As props are manipulated, the counselors are able to deepen the level of discussion occurring along with potentially generalizing counseling gains to other environments.

**Literature Discussion**

In order to discuss the use of props one must first look to the literature that reviews providing mental health counseling services to children. Prop usage intersects three areas that literature has addressed: play, play therapy and metaphors. Revisiting the areas of play, play therapy and metaphors and how the discovered themes of prop usage are connected follows.

**Play Connection**

The use of props during play appeared to act as a catalyst for communication and insight to occur during counseling. Counselors used props to play, and play has been denoted as a child’s' natural way to communicate (Ginott, 1961; Gumaer, 1984; Landreth, 1987; Oaklander, 1988; Russ, 1995). Play also empowers children to gain understanding and insight (Chethik, 1989; Erickson, 1963; Freedheim & Russ, 1992; Gumaer, 1984; Oaklander 1988; Waedler, 1933). Therefore the use of props observed empowers communication and insight.
Props used during play aids in the expression of thought and feeling. Within Category One, the process of counseling children, counselors reflected the feelings and content of the play being displayed. The reflections made reinforced the concept that play with props facilitates communication. Additionally, the subtheme of gaining the child clients' perceptions of the props and their counseling experience promoted communication within the dyads. The themes in Category Two, utilizing props with children, demonstrated how the use of props aid in the communication process. Client-generated prop usage enables child clients to communicate their thoughts and feelings, which was displayed through the subtheme of manipulation of props. Counselors encouraged communication by expansion of the child clients' prop usage and verbal comments. Communication was furthered through the theme of anthropomorphism by the prop being given voices, sound effects and feelings. Therefore, prop usage through play has been shown to have a strong communicative value. This finding aligns with the literature that states play is a form of communication allowing thoughts (Axline, 1947; Gumaer, 1984; Russ, 1995) and feelings (Axline, 1947; Gumaer, 1984; Harter, 1977; Oaklander, 1988; Russ, 1995; Scarlett, 2005) to be expressed.

Props were observed being used by clients to attempt to make sense of their world along with working through difficult situations. When child clients manipulate props, patterns developed that mirrored their life situations. Once props began to be anthropomorphized, it provided child clients the opportunity to communicate their thoughts and feelings, allowing the counselor to begin tailoring therapeutic interventions for them. As counselors then related the prop usage to the child clients'
lives, the chance arose for the clients to perceive themselves and their world differently. The literature concerning play reports that it is a communication device that allows the acting out of difficult situations that child clients attempt to make sense of (Torrence, 2001), assimilate (Erickson, 1963; Schaefer, 1994), work through (Chethik, 1989; Erickson, 1963; Freedheim & Russ 1992; Waedler, 1933) and gain control over (Schaefer, 1994; Smith & Dockrell, 1997). When clients played with props it confirmed what the literature has reported regarding play.

The anthropomorphism of props provided a structured way for emotions to be released. This occurred as child clients identified props with individuals within their lives and addressed them verbally and nonverbally. Play has also been said to aid in the releasing of negative emotions (A. Freud et al., 1949).

Play with props enabled clients to gain understanding and insight. Through the working of a prop along with anthropomorphism, props aided child clients in understanding their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Play is said to be the process in which children learn (Morrison, 1998). Learning is associated with understanding and gaining insight. Play helps children to understand themselves (Gumaer, 1984; Torrence, 2001), others (Torrence, 2001), their world, their thoughts (Gumaer, 1984), their feelings (Gumaer, 1984) and their behaviors (Gumaer, 1984). Play can also aid in understanding abstract concepts (Piaget, 1962; Torrence, 2001). Therefore, the use of props through play promotes understanding and insight.

Props aid in the building of rapport with child clients. Rapport building has been expressed in both Categories One and Two. Play has been reported to help in
building rapport with child clients (Campbell, 1993). Therefore, props and play are rapport-building techniques.

Because of play’s functions such as a facilitator of communication and understanding, it has been a part of counselors’ techniques when counseling child clients. Play with props has also been shown to possess the functions of facilitating communication and understanding. Therefore props are necessary for play to occur.

**Play Therapy Connection**

The themes reported in Category One, the process of counseling children, are used to build a therapeutic relationship between counselor and child client by utilizing props that are played with. Play therapy has been the recommended (Bratton, Ray, Rhine & Jones, 2005), dominant and most enduring form of treatment when working with child clients (Koocher & D’Angelo, 1992). The relationship established during play therapy is a vital component of treatment with children. This relationship is created in a safe environment, allowing the expression and exploration of themselves (Landreth, 1991). It is this relationship that the themes in Category One supported. Within this developed therapeutic relationship, patterns of play with props are expressed. It is this expression of patterns which the counselor attaches to in order to design and tailor their therapeutic interventions. The thematic patterns are captured through play and are expressed in words and actions (Bishop, 1972).

Landreth (1991) believed there are seven essential components involved in play therapy: creating a positive therapeutic relationship, permitting the expression of
a wide range of emotions, exploring real-life experiences, limit testing, developing a positive self-image, developing self-understanding and learning self-control.

Landreth’s components can be viewed within the categories of this study. Developing a positive therapeutic relationship is encompassed within Category One, the process of counseling children. The themes of counseling session dynamics, counseling skills and working with children all appeared to aid in the development of a positive therapeutic relationship. Landreth’s second component of permitting the expressions of a wide range of emotions has been reflected in the counseling skills subtheme of reflection of feelings. It is also displayed within Category Two’s theme of anthropomorphism regarding the expression of prop feelings. Therefore, the use of props encourages feelings to be expressed. Landreth’s third component is exploring real-life experiences. The patterns that emerged out of the manipulation of props within this study mirrored the child clients’ live experiences. Also Category Two’s theme of relating props to the child clients’ lives allowed for the exploration of real-life experiences. Landreth’s third component of play therapy, limit testing, was not observed in the videotaped counseling sessions. However, this could be due to the fact that the majority of the sessions were the first session between the child client and the counselor.

Landreth’s fourth component, developing a positive self-image, and fifth component, developing self-understanding, were also reflected within the themes of this study. A positive self-image was exhibited in Category One’s themes of rapport building, reflection, tracking and obtaining the child clients’ perceptions. It was also
shown within Category Two’s theme of client-generated prop usage. How this was exhibited was through the interest displayed by the counselor in the activities their child client participated in and allowing the child client to lead the counseling session when appropriate. The development of self-understanding was created out of Category Two, prop utilization with children. As props anthropomorphized, child clients appeared to begin understanding their own thoughts, feelings and behaviors. This understanding was expressed through their comments and behaviors. Landreth’s last component of learning, self-control, was echoed by developing a connection between the prop usage as well as generalizing it. Landreth’s components of play therapy have been observed within the themes of this study. Therefore prop usage is an intervention that aligns with the proponents of play therapy.

Play therapy has been divided into two different approaches, nondirective and directive. Within the nondirective approach counselors attempt to provide an experience that is different from anything else the child client has experienced previously (Axline, 1955). The themes within Category One of the process of counseling children sets up such an experience. This experience includes the development of a positive therapeutic relationship (Landreth, 1991; Moustakas & Shalock, 1955) that entails unconditional positive regard (Axline 1955) and empathic understanding (Axline, 1955). This study has demonstrated that a therapeutic relationship is developed from the themes within Category One. The nondirective approach views this relationship as created from statements of recognition (Axline, 1955) and the use of reflections. “Statements of recognition” is another name for
tracking, which was a subtheme displayed within this study. Also, reflection appeared as a theme within the process of counseling children category.

Counselors who take a directive approach of play therapy may preselect specific toys to focus their child client on specific issues (Frost, Wortham & Reifel, 2001). This was also viewed in the theme of counselor-generated prop usage. A directive approach leads the child client in specific directions (Kottman, 1999; White 2004). Within Category Two, the utilization of props with children, there are a variety of themes that correspond with the idea of leading the child client. When counselors introduce and generate prop usage they are taking a directive approach. The theme of expansion takes a directive approach by counselors focusing on specific areas when expanding child clients' prop usage and comments. Direction by the counselors was also reflected in the theme of anthropomorphism as child clients were prompted to give voice, sound effects and feelings to the props they were manipulating.

The themes within this study have demonstrated the integration of both directive and nondirective approaches. The future of play therapy appears to be taking an integrative stance also incorporating both the directive and nondirective approaches (Gil, 2006; Knell, 1997; O'Connor & Schaefer, 1994).

The most frequently used props within this study were sand trays and artistic props. The mediums utilized by play therapists consisted of these among other materials. Perhaps these mediums lend themselves more for the metaphoric transformation associated with prop usage to occur.
The child clients within this study ranged from 5 to 15 years old. The use of props appeared to be an appropriate technique for a wide range of years. Additionally, the reported use of play therapy has been used with elementary (Campbell, 1993) and middle school-aged clients (Kottman, 1990). Play therapy has also been used with adolescents (Breen & Daigneault, 1998; Markman, 1997; Wilson & Ryan, 2002). Therefore props and play can be utilized in counseling with young children to adolescents.

Play therapy has been shown to be an effective form of treatment for children. It has been demonstrated that the technique of prop usage aligns with the premises proposed by play therapy. Prop usage also encompasses the integrative approach of directive and nondirective styles that is the future of play therapy.

**Metaphor Connection**

The props utilized within this study illustrated abstract concepts for child clients and contained new meaning. The concept of conceptual metaphors was utilized within this study. Conceptual metaphors are used to make abstract concepts concrete (Wickman, Daniels, White & Fesmire, 1999). At the same time an interactionist view of metaphors was utilized. An interactionist view refers to metaphors as a concrete illustration generated in order to transfer meaning from one thing to another to create a completely new meaning (Tourangeau & Sternberg, 1978). The props within this study were observed being illustrative and transformed.
All of the themes in Category One, process of counseling children, are ways in which the participating counselors attempted to build the foundation of a therapeutic relationship in order to utilize props. In building this foundation the observed counselors used props to aid in achieving the goals within Category One. Metaphors have been used to form therapeutic relationships (Lyddon, Clay & Sparks, 2001; Wickman & Campbell, 2003). The initial goal of prop utilization, Category Two, was to facilitate communication verbally and nonverbally through prop manipulation. Metaphors have also been shown to function as a facilitator of communication (Bagarozzi & Anderson, 1989; Bandler & Grinder, 1979; Combs & Freedman, 1990; Gordan, 1978; Grinder & Bandler, 1975; Haley 1976; Muran & DiGiuseppe, 1990; Watzlawick et al., 1974). The function of communication allowed metaphors to aid in reconstructing experiences, thoughts and feelings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lyddon, Clay & Sparks, 2001; Ortony, 1979) therefore creating awareness (Berlin et al., 1991; Lyddon, Clay & Sparks, 2001). As child client participants manipulated props they were reconstructing their experiences, thoughts and feelings through the patterns developed out of handling the props. The theme of teaching also appeared with prop usage. Metaphors have been reported to function as a teaching aid (Dolan, 1986).

The utilization of props within this study was an indirect way to work on child clients' presenting issues, decreasing any resistance that may have occurred. Metaphors have also been demonstrated to address issues in less confrontive ways, decreasing resistance (Barker, 1985; Cirillo & Crider, 1995; Crowley & Mills, 1986; Ekstein, 1983; Lyddon, Clay & Sparks, 2001; Romig & Gruenke, 1991; Saari, 1986;
Shibles, 1974; Sledge, 1977; VanVelsor, 2004; Zeig, 1980). Props acted as the metaphors that made the abstract concrete. Props also potentially provided a way to make a visual and tangible illustration of client discussions in memorable ways. Metaphors have been used to make abstract concepts more concrete (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Santostefano, 1984). Metaphors also have been shown to illustrate discussions in memorable ways (Cirillo & Crider, 1995; Zeig, 1980). All of the functions stated for using metaphors can be said for prop usage. Therefore, both props and the metaphors they created act as a catalyst for change within the counseling process.

Within the construction of metaphors it has been reported that counselor constructed metaphors should contain the client’s object preferences (Crowley & Mills, 1986), all their sensory modes (Bowman, 1995) and replicate their use of language (Bandler & Grinder, 1975; Dolan, 1985; Katz, 1996; Rogers, 1951; Watzlawick, 1978; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). The counselor participants within this study utilized props in their counseling that adhered to these construction principles. The theme of child client-generated props permitted the counselor to utilize their clients’ object preferences. Props usage entailed the three sensory modes of visual, kinesthetic and auditory. The auditory aspect was a part of the theme anthropomorphism. It had been suggested that the construction of metaphors by counselors should parallel clients’ experiences as well as provide a connection strategy to the client’s life. The counselors in this study used props that their child clients constructed and tailored them to parallel the child client’s experiences. The counselors
also connected the prop usage to their child clients' lives within the theme relating prop to life.

Regarding the comprehension of metaphors, there has existed some debate concerning children's ability to comprehend metaphors (Billow, 1977). The metaphors created from the use of props in this study demonstrated that children are able to understand metaphors. The researcher believed that perhaps the features of props, being visual and tangible, promoted the child clients' understanding of the metaphors created.

Bandler and Grinder (1975) developed a three-tiered linguistic theory to explain how metaphors are experiences. The first tier occurs when a client is exposed to the surface structure of the words. The second tier happens as a deeper level of understanding is activated. The third tier is when the client recognizes the metaphor as relevant to their own experiences. Bandler and Grinder's model can help to explain how props are experienced. First, the child client was exposed to the prop being utilized. Second, the props used appeared to provide awareness of a deeper level of understanding. Last, the counselor was the agent that then connected the prop usage to the child client's life. Therefore how props are experienced is similar to the process of how metaphors are experienced.

Bowman (1995) suggested eight reasons for the utilization of metaphors with children: (1) increase interest level and affective richness, (2) encourage playfulness and expression, (3) counselor empathy, (4) indirect feedback, (5) increase client self-disclosure, (6) client affirmation, (7) redefine problems and (8) enrich counseling.
Prop usage aligns with these reasons as displayed in this study. The interest level of the child clients was increased as they worked with props. This was demonstrated by the intensity with which child clients manipulated the props and how attentive they were during the manipulation. Playfulness was displayed by the participating counselors. The playfulness was shown through the counselors’ expressiveness, creativity and expressiveness. Also, as counselors built rapport throughout their sessions, they displayed both respect and empathy towards their child clients through their verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Counselors and child clients’ use of props allowed them to access and provide feedback concerning issues in an indirect manner. As the child client manipulated props, their stream of communicated thoughts appeared to flow more freely, leading to more client self-disclosure. Props also provided counselors with information regarding their child clients’ strengths, permitting counselors to acknowledge these strengths and affirm them. As this occurred and counselors connected the prop usage to the child clients’ lives, it led to reframing and redefining problems. Last, the props used within this study appeared to enrich the counseling process for child clients. This was demonstrated by the child clients’ comments regarding their counseling process. Bowman’s reasons for including metaphors within programming for child clients can be expanded to the reasons counselors should utilize props in their work with children.

Prop usage in counseling is built off of the premise that props are visual and tangible metaphors. The props therefore become metaphoric objects which provide counselors with a means of connecting and providing counseling services to children.
Counselors can use metaphors to create powerful and meaningful interventions for therapeutic ends (Rose, 1995; VanVeslor, 2004) through the use of props.

**Prop Connection**

There have only been three articles and one book which mention the use of props specifically. Angelo (1981) utilized props with family counseling sessions to represent client behaviors, relationships, interactive processes and rules in counseling. Jooste and Cleaver (1992) discussed using props which they referred to as metaphoric objects within their work with adults and concluded that props are a useful therapeutic aid. Payne (1985) used props with adults and wrote about the instances when he utilized them with his clients. Jacobs (1992) wrote about utilizing props creatively with clients through an illustrated guide. However, none of these authors conducted research on how practicing counselors are actually utilizing props in their work with children. They also have not developed a model for use by other counselors. This study has explored in depth how practicing counselors utilize props and proposes a model in order to utilize props with child clients therapeutically.

Angelo’s (1981) use of props within family counseling sessions was utilized to represent clients’ behaviors, their relationships, their interactions and their rules. Within this study, the uses of props with child clients also represent this aspect and more. The patterns which emerged within the prop usage represented their behaviors, relationships and interactions. As these patterns emerged counselors were provided with insight into their child clients’ lives.
Payne (1985) used props with his adult clients to reframe perceptions, create paradoxes, promote change, enhance memory and validate emotions. The counselors within this study utilized the props to reframe child client issues along with creating paradoxes. The props also were used to validate emotions through reflections made by the counselors. The props sent home by counselors were attempts to enhance child clients' memories in their home environments.

Jacobs (1992) suggests the use of creative techniques with clients. One such technique is the use of props. Jacobs believes that props make concepts more concrete, increase awareness, dramatize points, speed up the counseling process and enhance learning. The props utilized within this study illustrated Jacobs's beliefs.

Therapeutically used props aid in building rapport with adult clients (Angelo, 1981; Jooste & Cleaver, 1992; Payne, 1985). This study has demonstrated that props also aid in building rapport with child clients. Payne (1985) reported that props help to generalize the events within sessions to clients' daily lives. This study illustrated that props help to generalize counseling gains beyond the counseling environment for child clients. Props do this by acting as concrete reminders of the issues addressed during counseling (Jooste & Cleaver, 1992; Payne, 1985). The use of props has been demonstrated as a powerful intervention to make thoughts, feelings and behaviors more tangible with adults (Jooste & Cleaver, 1992). It has been concluded through this study that the power of props aids in making thoughts, behaviors and feelings more tangible and concrete for children.
Literature Discussion Summary

Three areas of prop use have been indirectly reported on: play, play therapy and metaphors. The use of props has been born out in these areas. It appears that the utilization of props in working with child clients is both logical and a natural progression from the intersection of these areas. The use of props therefore combines the areas of play, play therapy and metaphors.

Model

The process that counselors utilize when props are introduced into counseling has not been studied. In order to understand how counselors utilize props with children, this process needed to be explored in depth. Therefore this study has examined how counselors utilize props by analyzing actual counseling sessions. A formal model is now proposed on how this process occurs. For props to be used, some specific counseling process characteristics first must be addressed. These characteristics are represented within the themes in Category One – Process of Counseling Children. Counseling session dynamics, counseling skills, and working with children are necessary prior to the utilization of props, as illustrated in Figure 2. These themes may suggest that if these conditions are not met then counselors should refrain from prop usage. When these themes exist cohesively they intersect, allowing the use of props to be a part of the counseling process. Figure 2 demonstrates this intersection.
Figure 2. Foundational Elements on Which Prop Utilization Is Built.
Once the counseling session dynamics, counseling skills, and working with children areas have been addressed, the opportunity to utilize props with child clients can begin. Figure 3 provides the model concerning how props are utilized with child clients. The introduction and selection of props is the initial step in this process. It does not matter if the counselor or the child client introduces or selects what props will be manipulated. As props are introduced or selected the child client begins to manipulate the props. The introduction/selection and manipulation of props cycle continues until patterns emerge. Counselors observe this emergence of patterns that relate to the child clients' issues. The props are transformed into metaphor objects. There were multiple methods used to encourage this transformation. These methods include the theme of anthropomorphism. The theme of assigning voices and sound effects began the process of bringing the props to life and being transformed beyond their physical stature. As counselors and clients began speaking through the props, feelings of the props were elicited and shared, and the props were transformed into aspects of the child clients' lives. The counselor then prompts the transformation of the props by having the props. As this process occurs the counselor connects the transformed prop to the child client's life and then generalizes it to life beyond the counseling session. The process is illustrated by Figure 3.
Summary of Discussion

The counseling field has and will continue searching for researched therapeutic interventions for working with children. Prop usage is one such intervention. The literature behind prop utilization intersects the areas of play, play therapy and metaphors. Literature has minimal references for the utilization of props with clients and none specifically for child clients. Within this study, the themes discovered when observing actual counseling sessions have been reported. These themes were utilized in developing a model for the utilization of props which other counselors can emulate.
Implications to Counseling

Several implications regarding the therapeutic use of props with children have emerged during this study. Six of these implications will now be discussed: (1) integrated style, (2) training needs, (3) metaphoric understanding, (4) counselor skills, (5) not adapting adult counseling skills and (6) counselor creativity. Each of these implications will impact the field of providing mental health counseling to children.

One implication of this study is to the use of directive and nondirective counseling styles when working with children. Counselors may need to utilize an integrated approach of directive and nondirective counseling styles. This approach may most effectively meet the needs of child clients initiating counseling. It appears that a nondirective style is utilized initially to aid in building rapport. Then when appropriate, a switch to a more directive style can focus and help to move the counseling process forward. As counselors respond to the needs of their child clients they may need to be flexible in their style, allowing them to move back and forth between directive and nondirective. The use of props is an intervention which fits both counseling styles.

As working with children becomes a specialty within the counseling field, counselors need training in how to utilize props effectively with child clients. The resulting model of this study provides an outline concerning the use of props while maintaining flexibility necessary when working with children. Therefore, counselors who work with children need to be trained in interventions including how to utilize props effectively. The training of school counselors is centered in a developmental
model. The flexibility of prop interventions has the ability to enhance the delivery of counseling curricula for school counselors. Within the area of community counseling in agencies and residential programs, the use of prop interventions has the ability to have specifically designed interventions for the complexity of their clientele’s mental health needs. This study’s findings suggest props can be used for a wide variety of concerns from school adjustment to sexual abuse. Training programs should be encouraged to increase emphasis on counseling child curricula. The content of the curricula needs to contain the intervention of prop usage in relation to providing counseling services to children.

There has existed some debate if young children can appreciate and comprehend metaphors which arise in counseling. This study has demonstrated that young children can participate in the metaphors that emerge as they manipulate props. The metaphors that are created out of the child clients’ work with props provided them with visual and tangible metaphors. Perhaps it is through the prop usage that these metaphors are comprehended.

When counselors work with children there are certain counseling skills necessary for them to master in order to be effective. This study has shown that a certain skill level is present when working with children. Theories or interventions alone are not enough to dictate counseling effectiveness, but it is effective basic counseling skills which are necessary. Counselors must understand that counseling skills and prop usage are integrated processes.
The skills of counseling were developed out of working with adult clients. These skills cannot simply be adapted to child clients. Specific skills are shown to be necessary when working with this specialized population. These skills sprang from watching skilled child counselors work. This study has displayed that the techniques used when working with children can’t be adapted from adult clients. The techniques of creativity and playfulness are two such skills. Therefore the themes discovered are not an adaptation of adult counseling skills but are new skills.

The last implication is the creativity of counselors who work with child clients. It has been demonstrated through this study repeatedly that for counselors to be effective with child clients they must possess a high level of creativity. The skill of creativity was demonstrated by counselors becoming theatrical as they worked. These counselors used their movements, tone of voice and expressions to reinforce the concepts being worked on. Therefore counselors must open themselves up to the theatrics of counseling along with increasing their level of creativity.

The implications from studying the therapeutic use of props with children will have a large impact on the field of counseling children. Counselors must be trained in effective basic counseling skills specifically geared towards working with child clients, not just mirroring their work with adults. They also must continue to develop their own creativity when counseling. They need to be trained in intervention models that are flexible enough to meet the needs of their clients’ issues. Last, child counselors must take an integrated approach in their style and interventions in order to tailor their interactions to their child clients.
Limitations

- The generalizability of these findings is limited. This limitation results from not having the counselor participants review the developed themes and report their level of agreement regarding the findings. Additionally, reporting the themes and model to those counselors who participated within this study and interviewing them concerning their agreement with the findings would also lend additional generalizability regarding the results.

- The sample of unpublished counselor participants was a sample of convenience. This relays the limitation that the counselor participants may not be representative of counselors who work with children utilizing props nationwide.

- The participants within this study had provided consent and assent. The complexity that existed limited the sample pool of participants. Therefore, those who consented and assented to participate may have compliance characteristics that may influence the findings.

- The ethnic backgrounds of the participants were not varied. Therefore the generalizability of the findings may not be valid for all ethnic groups.
Future Research

Qualitative Questions

Counselor-Related Questions

- The generation and introduction of props during counseling was a theme which emerged from this study. It appeared that both child clients and counselors introduced props. Therefore, the question that surfaces is whether there is a difference in how props are used therapeutically when introduced by the counselor or the child client. Also, does child client-introduced props hold more power when a therapeutic intervention is designed around it than counselor-introduced props? In order to answer these questions it would be necessary to perform structured interviews of the counselor and child client immediately after their counseling session to elicit the meaning behind the choice of props. The relationship between child-introduced and counselor-introduced props to overall therapeutic impact could be explored.

- This study focused on the use of props with child clients. It is now necessary to determine if similar themes would appear when utilizing props with adult clients. Therefore, a replication of this study with adult clients is needed. Taking a phenomenological approach would determine what themes exist when counselors naturally utilize props with their adult clients. Also, a comparison of the resulting themes of adult clients and child clients would
shed light on the differences when using props with different populations and age levels.

- Utilizing props when providing counseling services to both child clients and adult clients during family counseling poses additional questions. When counselors work with families, do they utilize props within their work? This question could be answered by surveying counselors who provide family counseling services. If props are utilized by family counselors, how are they chosen and introduced when working with multiple individuals during a session? Therefore, videotaping actual family counseling sessions and examining the interactions around prop usage would provide important data. This data would provide information on how counselors adapt prop usage to family interventions along with how the family system might be impacted. A replication of this study with family counselors is needed.

- Group counseling also provides an avenue for prop usage. Initially it would be necessary to determine if group counselors utilize props when working with groups. Also, are counselors more prone to prop usage when the counseling group consists of only child clients? This could be determined by surveying group counselors to find out if they include props within their group work. If props are being utilized in group work it would be interesting to learn what particular props are generated and introduced along with how they are incorporated into group work. In order to address these questions videotaped group counseling sessions would need to be analyzed around the interactions
of prop usage. By analyzing the videotaped group sessions, observed themes would appear for prop usage that would provide a model for group counselors to emulate. Again, this idea suggests a replication of this study with groups.

- Within this study a variety of theoretical orientations were utilized by the participating counselors, i.e., Adlerian, object relations, narrative and cognitive. Many published videotaped counseling sessions were viewed. Only those published tapes which contained prop usage were included in this study. Those not included possessed moments when prop usage was appropriate. However, these counselors chose not to utilize props. This poses a question, Is there a relationship between theoretical orientation and prop usage? Many of the major theories have national organizations whose members practice each of these theories. Surveying each of these organizations' members concerning their prop usage would inform the profession if prop usage is more theory driven or counselor driven. Additionally it would be interesting to discover whether there is a relationship between types of prop used and specific theoretical orientation.

- Some of the counselors within this study chose to send a particular prop home with their child client. It would be informative to learn how a counselor made the decision to send a prop home. Also these counselors utilized a variety of props but chose to send a specific prop home with their child clients. Interviewing counselors who do send props home with their child clients would shed light on the decisions surrounding these choices. Additionally,
interviewing the child clients who were sent home with props once counseling had concluded would inform how much of an impact this gesture entailed. This could be compared to the motivation of the counselor to discover the relationship between counselor intention and child client impact.

- The field of counselor supervision has utilized many of the techniques and skills of counseling. Additionally, supervision is used to help counselors learn techniques and skills. The relationship between supervision and props could be explored. Do supervisors utilize props during their supervision of counselors? A survey of the members of the American Counseling Association could be conducted in order to learn which counselors provide supervision services along with those who include prop usage during supervision. When props are being utilized by supervisors, it could be examined how these props are introduced and worked with during supervision. This would entail videotaping supervision sessions of supervisors who utilize props. Additionally, interviewing the supervisees would also be informative to discover if prop usage enhanced the supervision they received. Last, it would be interesting to learn if these supervisees became more open to utilizing props with their caseload when props were used throughout their supervision. This would be important information for training novice counselors. What supervision techniques supervisors use when supervising play therapy and prop usage could also be explored.
This study was conducted to determine what occurs between counselors and child clients when props are used during actual counseling sessions. Literature within the arena of prop usage is minimal and has consisted mainly of reporting on how these authors utilized props within their own counseling work. This study focused on how props were being utilized by counselors when they worked with child clients. The resulting themes were a product of the viewed videotapes. In order to lend additional generalizability to the themes of this study and the resulting model replication, this study is necessary with more counselors. Such a replicated study would involve different counselors who utilize props.

The counselor participants of this study possessed a high level of expressiveness, creativity and theatrics. Possessing these qualities appeared to lend them more freely to the utilization of props within their work with child clients. How the participating counselors view their own creativity in their own work may provide information regarding the development of these skills. Therefore, interviewing counselors would reveal how they obtained these skills. Additionally, an examination of counselor education programs could be conducted to determine if creativity is a part of any of the curriculums. With the development of the Association for Creativity in Counseling it appears that an interest in creativity within the counseling field is emerging. It is assumed that the members of this association embrace the concept of creativity in counseling. Surveying these members concerning their own development of creativity...
creativity and theatrics would inform counselor educators about what needs to be added to training programs that would promote counselor creativity.

- Some of the counselor participants in this study had expanded their use of props to include themselves as a prop. Interviewing these counselors to determine how they choose to utilize themselves as a prop could be conducted. Techniques associated with “self as prop” could be explored as well as the impact of these techniques on the child client.

Child Client-Related Questions

- The focus in this study was the interactions which occurred around prop usage. How child clients are impacted when props are utilized needs to be determined. Therefore, interviewing child clients concerning their counseling experiences specifically when props were used would begin to answer this question. Interview questions would be related to prop usage and whether it reinforced the memory of the counseling discussions that occurred. Additionally, whether child clients may be more or less resistant to counseling services in the future could also be a part of the interview.

- Attempting to determine the thought processes child clients experience during metaphoric transformation with props needs to be conducted. This would be accomplished by interviewing child clients regarding the thought process experienced when props were utilized during their counseling sessions.
Qualitative analysis techniques such as interpersonal process recall (IPR) could be used to explore this area.

- Throughout this study the parent(s)/guardian(s) were peripheral components to the counseling process. Determining how they perceived the counseling services provided to their children when props were used could be determined by interviewing them. Additionally, a quantitative feature could be to implement pre- and postassessments to help determine the effectiveness of prop usage for their children. Parent(s)/guardian(s) many times are involved in the counseling process of their children, either acting as consultants or participating in family sessions. Tying them into the counseling process and interventions appears to aid in the generalization of counseling gains. Examining the relationship between prop usage and techniques to increase parent involvement could be explored.

Prop-Related Questions

- Within this study the majority of counselors and child clients were Caucasian. The relationship between prop usage and ethnically diverse children needs to be explored. Also, would counselors with different ethnic backgrounds utilize props differently in their work with child clients? Additionally, would different props be utilized when the participants in the counseling process are non-Caucasian? Surveying counselors from a variety of ethnic backgrounds who utilize props would answer some of these questions. Then surveying and
interviewing counselors whose caseload is mainly non-Caucasian would inform the profession about culturally sensitive props and multicultural interventions.

- The presenting problems of the participating child client were not revealed to this researcher. Some could be determined from the content of the counseling sessions. The relationship between prop usage and presenting problem in child clients needs to be explored. Prop-using counselors could be identified and surveyed to discover their specialties, i.e., child sexual abuse, aggression or academic concerns. By interviewing these counselors it could be determined if certain props are utilized more with specific presenting problems.

- This study focused mostly on single sessions of counselors and child clients. It would be important to examine if there were moments during the counseling process when props were utilized more frequently, i.e., beginning, middle or ending stages of the counseling process. This could be determined by viewing counseling sessions with the same client throughout their counseling experience. While viewing it could be noted which props are introduced by the child client and counselor, how these props are utilized, and the frequency of their utilization.

- It appeared that specific props were used more often during this study’s counseling sessions. Sand trays, miniature figurines, play dough and drawings were the most utilized props. Were these used more during sessions because they were made available to the child clients or do these props lend themselves
more to the therapeutic needs of child clients? Answering this question would provide information to counselors regarding what props are necessary when working with child clients. It seems unclear whether the specific props were more frequently used because of common literature utilized on training and supervision or because these props are more effective.

Quantitative Questions

- The effectiveness of the utilization of props with child client needs to be determined. When props are utilized, is there a resulting change in children’s behaviors, feelings and thoughts? This would be determined quantitatively by using an assessment such as the Behavior Assessment Scales for Children (BASC). This assessment would be administered at the beginning of the counseling process and again after a predetermined number of sessions or time elapsed as a postassessment. Conducting $t$ tests would determine if change occurred and if the resulting change supported the concept that prop usage promotes positive changes for child clients.

- Once the therapeutic use of props is determined as an effective technique with child clients it would be important to examine if the resulting changes were long lasting. Therefore, an examination of long-term behavior changes at the one-year and three-year postcounseling point would show the long-term effects of prop usage.
The idea that children can comprehend and appreciate metaphors also needs to be explored. It appeared within this study that children as young as five years old were able to understand visual metaphors and relate them to their own experiences. Developing an instrument that incorporates the use of visual metaphors in order to determine the age at which a child can comprehend the metaphoric transformation is necessary.

Conclusion

The presence of prop usage in the viewed videotapes has answered the research question, “What occurs between counselors and child clients when props are utilized during counseling?” It has also shed light on the general counseling process of working with children. A model has been proposed regarding the utilization of props when working with children. The following are the significant contributions this study has contributed to the counseling field:

- A significant contribution to the field of counseling children is the research of prop interventions. The intervention of prop usage can be tailored to meet child clients’ needs. The model presented of prop intervention makes it available to be emulated by counselors who work with children.

- When the areas of counseling session dynamics, counseling skills and working with children intersect, a foundation is laid for effective counseling to occur. This foundation provides the opportunity for the prop intervention model to be implemented with child clients.
The development and utilization of the prop intervention model permits counselors to tailor inventions for each specific child client. The model is circular, implying that the process of utilization is a continuous process that occurs within sessions, between sessions and in the child client's home environment.

Counselors need to possess effective basic counseling skills in order to work with child clients. When effective basic counseling skills are possessed, counselors are able to effectively implement prop interventions.

The environment for counseling to occur with children needs to be altered to be child friendly and playful. This environment refers to the physical structure of the counseling office along with how the counselor presents him/herself. The counselor's personal presentation refers to the possessing characteristics of playfulness, expressiveness and creativity. The utilization of props is a component of providing such an inviting environment.

A noteworthy component of the counselors' presentation is when they utilize themselves as a prop. Counselors who work with children intentionally use their voices, gestures, body movements and expressions in their counseling. This adds to counselors' effectiveness in working with children.

There is a relationship between counselors' ability to be expressive and creative to their ability to be effective when counseling children.

The utilization of props is connected to the building of rapport resulting in the development of a therapeutic relationship. Therefore, prop usage is an intervention that builds rapport and the therapeutic relationship.
- The use of props contributes to the counselor's mindfulness, presence and immediacy when counseling. The interactive process that occurs as props are utilized demands that counselors remain mindful, present and immediate.

- The process of anthropomorphism encourages the child's expression of thoughts and feelings. Therefore the anthropomorphism of props facilitates communication and the metaphoric transformation encompassed by prop usage.

- Prop usage allows for continuity to be developed between sessions and between counseling session and home environment.

- The choices of props differ between counselors and child clients. Counselors introduce props with values of expressiveness and recording devices. Clients introduce props that are more play oriented.

Counselors who are working with children have demanded effective and researched techniques. This demand has been reflected in the development of APT and ACA's Children Interest Network. These organizations have sponsored significant research initiatives in the areas of children and play therapy. Counselors are not just looking for the adaptation of adult counseling skills, but are looking for evidence-based practices to work with children. This study begins to address this demand. It has focused on the use of props, but it also has demonstrated the need for particular counseling skills when working with children.

The alliance which has been created between APT and ACA regarding their joint research projects demonstrates that counselors are endorsing researched endeavors. Therefore, when children are presented for counseling, it is vital for
counselors to have interventions that have been researched and shown to be effective. These interventions need to come from experienced and currently practicing counselors. Such an intervention is utilizing props. There has been an increase in the number of techniques available for counselors working with children. However, the research to show the use and effectiveness of these interventions has not increased at the same pace. Practicing counselors have utilized props when counseling children; however, a gap has existed between practice and research to support it. Counselors who have utilized props in their work with child clients have attested to their effectiveness and power. However, how they actually utilize props had not been formally studied. This study has attempted to fill this gap. This study has explored how props are used when experienced counselors work with children and has developed a model for other counselors to emulate.
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APPENDICES
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APPENDIX B

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY
LET ME LEARN FROM YOU

You are invited to participate in a research study concerning working with children.

Hello, my name is Christine Walawander and I am a doctoral candidate at Northern Illinois University. I am currently looking at discovering how mental health professionals provide services to children and adolescents. I would like to have the opportunity to learn from your expertise as you work with children and adolescents. Participating in this research is also a way for you to share your skills and abilities within the mental health profession allowing others to learn from your experiences and expertise.

This research involves videotaping counseling sessions to learn how you work with children and adolescents in order to get a deep understanding of your methods and techniques. All video equipment will be provided.

I am excited to have this opportunity to learn from you. Please contact me, Christine Walawander, at (815) 762-0610 or christinewalawander@yahoo.com to discuss your participation further.

Thank you.
APPENDIX C

COUNSELOR CONSENT FORM
Counselor Consent Form

I agree to participate in the research titled "The Therapeutic Use of Props" being conducted by Christine Walawander, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to understand how "Props" are used in therapy with children and how their use may increase impact behavior.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following: (1) distribute to child client parent(s)/guardian(s) and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Informational Packet, (2) to review the contents of a Child Client Packet with the child client, (3) when video tape permission is given to videotape one or more counseling sessions and (4) continue with your counseling relationship as deemed necessary by the child client's parent(s)/guardian(s) and yourself as their primary counselor.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Christine Walawander, researcher, at (815) 762-0610 or Dr. Fran Giordano, dissertation chair, at (815) 753-9308. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I understand that the intended benefits of this study include a model being developed based on your work for the use of props when counseling children for other counselors to utilize.

I have been informed that potential risks and/or discomforts I could experience during this study are minimal such as addressing questions from clients and their parent(s)/guardian(s). I understand that all information gathered during this experience will be kept confidential. Yours and your child clients' names will not be revealed. Also, completed assessments will be returned to you along with their results and any videotaped sessions will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study.

I understand that my consent to participate in this study does not constitute a waiver of any legal or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

__________________________________________  _______________________
Signature of Counselor Participant Date

_________________________________________
Counselor Participant’s Phone Number

_________________________________________
Counselor Participant’s E-mail Address
APPENDIX D

COUNSELOR CONSENT TO VIDEOTAPE
Counselor Consent for Videotaping

The study you have agreed to participate in entails looking at what techniques counselors use with children. In order to develop this understanding it is important to see what actually happens when counselors provide counseling services to children.

In order to develop an understanding of the techniques used in counseling it is necessary to videotape actual counseling sessions. These videotapes will focus on the techniques used during counseling. The researcher and two research assistants will view the tapes. These videotapes will not be used for any other purposes except for this study. They will be destroyed upon completion of this study. Please check the appropriate space below to provide or decline consent for videotaping. If you do not wish to have your counseling sessions videotaped you can still be apart of this research by having your child clients' parent(s)/guardian(s) complete the assessments provided by this researcher when they have provided consent to participate. There will be no consequences associated with not permitting sessions to be videotaped.

_____ Yes, I give consent for my counseling sessions to be videotaped for the purpose of conducting this study.

_____ No, I do not give consent for my counseling sessions to be videotaped.

__________________________
Counselor’s Printed Name

__________________________  __________
Counselor’s Signature        Date

Any questions about the study should be addressed to Christine Walawander, researcher, at (815) 762-0610 or Dr. Fran Giordano, dissertation chair, at (815) 753-9308. If you wish further information regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.
APPENDIX E

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO PARENTS
Letter of Introduction to Potential Parent/Guardian and Child Participants

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

My name is Christine Walawander and I am a student at Northern Illinois University. The counselor you will be meeting with has agreed to participate in a study I am conducting concerning the use of props when counseling children.

What is being asked of you is the following:

- Review the information included in this packet.
- Consent for your child to participate in this study. Once you give consent, your child will also be asked to participate by their counselor.
- In order to learn what techniques your child’s counselor uses, permission to videotape sessions is requested. To participate in the study, on the enclosed form for videotaping, indicate if you decide to allow or not allow videotaping of sessions to occur.

A benefit of participating in this study informing the counseling profession about how counselors work with children.

Upon completion of this study, any videotapes made will be destroyed. Only general demographic information will be used in any written reports. No names will be used.

For your child to become part of this study please sign the enclosed consent form and return it to your counselor. I look forward to learning from your and your child’s counseling experience.

Sincerely,

Christine Walawander, MSEd, NCC, LCPC, Doctorial Candidate

Any questions about the study should be addressed to Christine Walawander, researcher, at (815) 762-0610 or Dr. Fran Giordano, dissertation chair, at (815) 753-9308. If you wish further information regarding your or your child’s rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.
APPENDIX F

PARENT CONSENT FORM
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Consent Form

Your child is invited to be a part of a research study titled “The Therapeutic Use of Props” being conducted by Christine Walawander, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University.

The purpose of this study is to understand how “Props” are use in counseling with children and whether their use changes behavior.

Your child’s participation will last one or several counseling sessions.

There are minimal risks and/or discomforts your child could potentially experience during this study: Child participants will have their counseling sessions videotaped upon obtaining consent from you. This may influence their behavior during the counseling process. If their counselor feels this is occurring videotaping will be stopped.

The benefits your child may receive from participating in this study are (1) to feel that the counseling profession will be learning from them about how to counsel children, and (2) which may potentially reinforce the skills addressed during in their counseling experience, strengthening the counseling results.

The results obtained from this study may become published or presented, but any information that could identify your child will be kept strictly confidential. You, your child and counselor’s name will not be revealed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate, as well as his/her assent to participate, will not negatively affect the counseling services provided. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Any questions about the study should be addressed to Christine Walawander, researcher, at (815) 762-0610 or Dr. Fran Giordano, dissertation chair, at (815) 753-9308.

If you wish further information regarding your rights or your child’s rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I agree to allow my child to participate in this research study and acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Consent for Videotaping

The study you have agreed to participate in entails looking at what techniques counselors use with children. In order to develop this understanding it is important to see what actually happens when counselors provide counseling services to children.

In order to develop an understanding of the techniques used in counseling it is necessary to videotape actual counseling sessions. These videotapes will focus on the techniques used during counseling. The researcher and two research assistants will view the tapes. These videotapes will not be used for any other purposes except for this study. They will be destroyed upon completion of this study. Please check the appropriate space below to provide or decline consent for videotaping. If you do not wish to have your child’s counseling sessions videotaped you can still be apart of this research by completing the assessments provided by your counselor. There will be no consequences associated with not permitting sessions to be videotaped.

____ Yes, I give consent for my son/daughter’s counseling sessions to be videotaped for the purpose of conducting this study.

____ No, I do not give consent for my son/daughter’s counseling sessions to be videotaped.

_________________________  ____________________________
Parent/Guardian Printed Name       Child’s Name

_________________________  ____________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature       Date

Any questions about the study should be addressed to Christine Walawander, researcher, at (815) 762-0610 or Dr. Fran Giordano, dissertation chair, at (815) 753-9308. If you wish further information regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.
APPENDIX H

CLIENT ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE
Hi, my name is Chris Walawander and I am in school just like you. My school’s name is Northern Illinois University. An assignment I have is figuring out what happens between kids and counselors.

It takes a lot of courage to start counseling. I would like to learn about how your counselor works with you. What I would need from you would be to participate in the discussions or activities which your counselor does with you.

If you want to be a part of my assignment, all you have to do is sign your name below. If you don’t want to that’s okay and I wish you success in counseling.

Thanks, for thinking about being a part of my assignment!

_____ Yes, I want to help with your assignment.

_____ No, I don’t want to help with your assignment

Client’s Printed Name

Client’s Signature

Date

Any questions about the study should be addressed to Christine Walawander, researcher, at (815) 762-0610 or Dr. Fran Giordano, dissertation chair, at (815) 753-9308. If you wish further information regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.
APPENDIX I

CLIENT ASSENT TO VIDEOTAPE
You decided to help me learn more about what happens with kids in counseling. Thank you!

To learn about what your counselor does with you, I need to videotape them.

I need your permission to videotape. The videotape will focus on your counselor, not you.

The only people who will see the videotapes are me and two helpers. When done, I promise to destroy the videotapes.

Whatever you decide is okay and I hope you enjoy your time with your counselor.

_____ Yes, you can videotape.

_____ No, don’t videotape.

________________________________________
Client’s Printed Name

________________________________________
Client’s Signature

________________________________________
Date