A Phenomenological Exploration of the Experiences of Master’s Level Counselor Trainees in Expressive Arts Group Supervision.

by

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Dedication

Dedicated to Tom, sweet husband, who cheered for me all the way to the end!
Curriculum Vitae

The author was born at Brooklyn Naval Hospital on September 17, 1947. She attended SUNY Oswego from 1965 to 1969 and received a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science. She attended workshops and classes in expressive arts therapy, and discovered a passion for using the arts in counseling. She attended the Vermont College Graduate Program and received a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology in May 1994. Her master’s thesis was on the use of expressive arts with women’s groups to promote healing. After graduation, the author pursued training in expressive arts therapy at Glass Lake Studio in Albany, NY and at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland studying with leaders in the field. She continued to develop her use of expressive arts in counseling and counselor training at SUNY Oswego, a substance abuse facility, and in private practice. She entered the University of Rochester’s Margaret Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development in 2007 to pursue a doctorate in counseling and counselor education. She conducted research in the use of expressive arts in counselor trainee supervision under the direction of Dr. Karen Mackie.
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Expressive arts group supervision is the use of music, stories, movement, poetry or prose, role-play or psychodrama, art, guided imagery, or play to help trainees develop reflective skills (Wilkins, 1995), express thoughts and feelings (Knill, Levine & Levine, 2005; Lahad, 2000), develop new perspectives (Gladding, 2005), increase communication between trainees and supervisors (Fall & Sutton, 2003), create success and cohesion (Neswald-McCalip, Sather, Strati, & Dineen, 2003), develop self-understanding (Lett, 1993, 1995), and foster creative skills (Lahad, 2000). Its use in counselor trainee supervision is relatively recent, and the research that explores its use with master’s level trainees is limited. This study explored, through a phenomenological study, the in-depth experiences of master’s level trainees in expressive arts group supervision to gain a better understanding of their feelings, thoughts, attitudes, understandings, and process through their rich, thick descriptions.

These descriptions were obtained through reflection papers, observations, and individual interviews. The data was analyzed through Moustakas’s (1994) phenomenological method, and the themes of expressive arts group supervision were explicated. The findings indicate that expressive arts group supervision is a holistic reflective process that occurs in four phases (a) initial reaction, (b) arts engagement, (c) reflection, and (d) transformation. Trainees experienced expressive arts group supervision as contributing to their personal and professional growth.
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Chapter One. Introduction

This chapter introduces the rationale for this study through an exploration of three theoretical areas: counselor trainee supervision, experiential learning approaches in supervision, and expressive arts group supervision. This chapter will include a statement of the research problem, the purpose of the research, and the research question. An overview of the research methodology will be followed by my pre-study assumptions about the findings of this study. The background and experience that I bring to the study will be illuminated as a way to position myself in the study.

Background and Context

Counselor Trainee Supervision

Counselor trainee supervision has been identified as an important part of counselor education (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Shulman & Safyer, 2005; Watkins, 1995, 1997), and it is recognized as essential to counselor training across multiple disciplines such as psychology, social work, psychiatric nursing, marriage and family counseling, and mental health counseling (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Borders & Leddick, 1987; Watkins, 1995). The supervision process has been defined as:

An intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s), monitoring quality of professional services offered to the client(s), she, he, or they see(s), and serving as a gatekeeper of those who are to enter the particular profession. (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, p. 6)
Supervision in counselor training allows for the transfer of professional skills, attitudes, and values. It encourages cognitive development that is congruent with the professional thinking in the counselor field (Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003; Holloway & Wolleat, 1994; O’Bryne & Rosenberg, 1998). Counselor trainee supervision addresses the personal and professional developmental needs of students (Bowman, 2003) while addressing the goals of counselor trainee supervision such as the development of (a) case conceptualization skills, (b) theoretical orientation, and (c) counseling skills (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004).

The body of literature in counselor trainee supervision has delineated other specific personal goals such as differentiation, emotional growth (Montgomery, Hendricks & Bradley, 2001), self-knowledge and self-awareness (Auxier et al. 2003; Edwards & Bess, 1998; Ekstein & Wallerstein, 1972; Guiffrida, 2005; Ronnestadt & Skovholt, 2003). It also has suggested professional goals such as understanding the counseling process, strategies for working through difficulties with clients (Hackney & Goodyear, 1984), and the development of multicultural counseling competencies (Pederson, 1997; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Stadler, Suh, & Cobia, 2006; Torres-Rivera, Phan, Maddux, Wilbur, & Garrett, 2001). Identifying methods to achieve these goals is important to the success of counselor trainee supervision.

Supervision in counselor education is a distinct field, with its own plethora of models and methods (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Bradley & Gould, 1991; Frayn, 1991; Guiffrida, 2005; Leddick & Bernard, 1980). Although there have been numerous descriptions of supervision models over the last 40 years, less attention has been paid to developing effective methods for use with specific models. Traditional counselor trainee
supervision methods have included didactic presentations, feedback and evaluation, group discussion of cases and issues, observation of the supervisor as a model, and peer observation (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). Experiential methods have also been used in counselor trainee supervision and have included simulations, role-play, reflective journaling, and simulated group therapy (Gladding, 2005). Although a significant body of literature has been created concerning the models of counselor trainee supervision and the importance of clinical supervision in training, there is little evidence to support the efficacy of any one model or method (Ellis & Ladeny, 1997; Holloway, 1987; Ladany, Muse-Burke, & Marotta, 2001; Morgan & Spenke, 2005). The lack of strong data supporting any one model has opened the way for continued development of models and methods designed to improve counselor trainee supervision.

Experiential approaches in counselor supervision have been derived from Kolb and Fry’s (1975) theory of experiential learning. In supervision, experiential approaches facilitate the intuitive and cognitive resources of the trainees (Bowman, 2003; Dean, 2001). One experiential method that is beginning to be used in counselor trainee supervision is expressive arts group supervision, and the next section will explore the rationale for the use of expressive arts in counselor trainee supervision.

Rationale for Expressive Arts Group Supervision in Counselor Training

Some contemporary theorists have promoted the use of the arts in supervision for its ability to advance supervision goals (Bowman, 2003; Gladding, 2005; Knill et al., 2005; Lahad, 2000; Lett, 1995; Neswald-McCalip et al., 2003). Fall and Sutton (2003) suggested that symbolic expression could increase the communication between supervisee and supervisor. Expressive arts group supervision can stimulate a self-
reflective process that has been found to be important to counselor trainee trainees in developing counseling relationships, gaining theoretical orientations, coping with counter-transference, and developing effective multi-cultural counseling abilities (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, Edwards & Bess, 1998, Guiffrida, 2005).

Trainees who experience expressive arts supervision can develop expressive arts skills to use with clients (Dye & Borders, 1990; White & Russell, 1995). These skills can be an important resource when working with clients. The use of expressive arts in counseling has been shown to be effective with a variety of client populations: elders (Hanna & Perlstein, 2008), children (Cameron, Juszcak, & Wallace, 1984), and adolescents (Kahn, 1999) have all shown a reduction in symptoms with issues such as eating disorders (Frisch, Franko & Herzog, 2006) and physical pain and infection (Staler, 2003).

Expressive arts have been used for strength building, developing self-awareness (Morin, 1998), increasing wellness (Herring, 1997), supporting students (Pearson, 2003), and for empowering vulnerable and diverse students (Smith & Bush, 2001). The use of expressive arts group supervision has received much anecdotal support as an intervention that can be an experiential approach to training trainees in its use in counseling, and to enhance the supervision process (Bowman, 2003; Laughlin, 2000; Neswald-McCalip et al., 2003). However, there is a need for more research in this area that supplements the anecdotal support.

Limited research suggests it may be helpful and effective in creating cohesiveness in the supervision group with master’s level trainees (Neswald-McCalip et al, 2003), enhancing master’s level group supervision (Bowman, 2003), producing success with
practicum students using sand-tray supervision (Markos et al., 2008), developing self-understanding in recently graduated psychologists (Lett, 1993, 1995), and developing creative skills in doctoral students (Laughlin, 2000). However, there is no research that looks to understand the, in-depth experiences of master’s level trainees during expressive arts supervision.

**Problem Statement**

Previous research has not determined that any one model or method of counselor trainee supervision is effective with all students (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). Changes in U.S. demographics have resulted in a need for experiential methods to reach a more diverse student population and prepare students to work in an increasingly multicultural setting. Experiential supervision methods, such as expressive arts group supervision, have shown promise in a small body of research (Bowman, 2003; Laughlin, 2000; Neswald-McCalip et al., 2003), but there is a need to have a better understanding about the experiences of trainees in expressive arts group supervision.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the in-depth experiences of master’s level counseling trainees in expressive arts group supervision.

**Research Question**

One research question guided this study; What do master’s level counselor trainees experience in expressive arts group supervision?

**Research Approach**

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this study for its appropriateness in answering subjective questions in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998). To take a close look
at the in-depth experiences of trainees in expressive arts group supervision, a phenomenological methodology was used. This approach was chosen for its ability to look at the deeper meaning of trainees’ experiences through their perspectives and meaning-making (Aspers, 2009). Data collection methods included the use of reflection papers, researcher bracketing and observation memos, and individual in-depth interviews. Data explication occurred as data was collected and followed Moustakas’s (1994) approach to phenomenological analysis.

**Researcher’s Assumptions**

Based on this researcher’s experience of using the arts in counseling and in teaching expressive arts therapy classes with undergraduate and graduate students, I have formed preconceptions and biases concerning the use of expressive arts in counseling and with students. These assumptions were explored through an interview conducted by the co-teacher, Margie McCarty, who is familiar with the proposed study, and with the phenomenological research methodology. The interview was audio taped, transcribed, and used to begin the epoche process.

When the study began, I used research memos to bracket new assumptions and thoughts as they occurred about the research process and the participants as they occurred. I developed working hypothesis, and bracketed these hypothesis to view the more clearly what the trainees were describing. Bracketing is the process of setting aside one’s own previously held thoughts, assumptions, and feelings, as well as the ones that emerge during the study. My pre-study assumptions included: (a) the use of expressive arts group supervision would generate a reflective process that would facilitate student personal and professional growth, (b) not all trainees would be comfortable with using
the arts, and (c) this would cause some resistance to the use of the arts process. Another bias was that many, but not all, trainees would enjoy expressive arts group supervision, and find it useful to their work with clients.

**The Researcher**

As a doctoral student in counseling and counselor education, my interest is in contributing to pedagogical practices that improve learning for counseling students. In my experience, expressive arts have provided a universal language for clients’ and students’ expression of thoughts and feelings, encouraged a reflective stance among trainees, uncovered personal experiences, and promoted a sense of community while creating new perspectives on self and personal and professional issues. My personal and professional training in expressive arts has resulted in a belief in the ability of the arts processes to transform learning for students. I wanted to understand students’ in depth experiences of expressive arts group supervision to explore the use of expressive arts in counselor trainee supervision. I understood that my strong belief in the value of the arts as a counseling and educational intervention created a bias at the outset of this study. I worked to mitigate that bias through efforts to bracket my own thoughts, feelings, biases, assumptions, and experiences at the beginning and throughout the research study.

**Significance of the Study**

Counselor trainee supervision is an important component of counselor education (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Shulman & Safyer, 2005; Watkins, 1995, 1998). In a field where client wellness is of primary importance, any method that improves the supervision of mental health counselors, and helps train better counselors is deemed significant (Bowman, 2003). Although this study focused on students in the counseling
profession, the implications of the results are useful in all mental health clinical supervision environments.

Because expressive arts group supervision is a relatively new constructivist experiential approach to counselor trainee supervision more information was needed about trainees’ experiences of this pedagogical approach. The literature in counselor trainee supervision suggested using trainees’ experiences as a way to study constructivist approaches to supervision (Bowman, 2003; Guiffrida, 2005; Neswald-McCalip et al., 2003). Exploring the in-depth experiences of master’s level trainees in expressive arts group supervision gave a voice to trainees in a relatively new supervision method, contributed to the understanding of trainees’ perceptions of expressive arts group supervision, and set the stage for more research into this promising pedagogical approach.
Chapter Two. Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical review of the literature that is relevant to the study of counselor trainee trainees’ experiences of expressive arts group supervision during a Master’s level internship class. This chapter will explore the field of counselor supervision, the history and development of the models and methods used in counselor trainee supervision, the research that explores the effectiveness of the models, and the current needs and trends in counselor trainee supervision that have pointed the way to this study. This chapter will then explore the use of experiential methods in counselor trainee supervision. Finally, the focus of this review will concentrate on the history, development, and use of the expressive arts in counselor trainee supervision.

The available studies that have contributed to the body of literature concerning the use of expressive arts methods in counselor trainee supervision will be critically reviewed. The literature reviewed for this study resulted from an extensive search of professional journals, dissertation abstracts, books, and Internet resources. Through this review, contributions and gaps in the literature will be explored that have led to the need for this study.

Counselor Trainee Supervision

Counselor trainee supervision is recognized as essential to counselor training across multiple disciplines such as psychology, social work, psychiatric nursing, marriage and family counseling and mental health counseling (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, Watkins, 1995, 1998). Supervision is a process “in which an experienced person (supervisor) with appropriate training and experience mentors and teaches a subordinate (supervisee) (Bradley & Ladeny, 2001). Supervision is also described as a process that
focuses on the supervisee’s relationships with clients, supervisors, colleagues, and others (Bradley & Gould, 2001). Gladding (2005) defines it as an experience within a developmental relationship that uses both didactic and experiential methods to facilitate growth. It is the experiential component that is the focus of this proposal’s exploration of the literature.

The supervision process is evaluative and serves as a gate-keeping function in the profession (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, 2009; Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Bradley & Ladany, 2001). Supervision in counselor training allows for the transfer of professional skills, attitudes, values, and encourages cognitive development that is congruent with the professional thinking in the counseling field (Auxier et al., 2003; Holloway & Wolleat, 1994, O’Bryne & Rosenberg, 1998).

Bradley (1989) identified the goals of counselor supervision as: (a) to assist the trainee in developing a personal and professional self, (b) to develop counseling skills, and (c) to promote accountability. Other conceptual articles delineated more specific goals for supervision trainees such as becoming differentiated, experiencing emotional growth (Montgomery et al, 2001), gaining self-knowledge, developing an understanding of the counseling process, finding strategies for working through difficulties with the clients (Hackney & Goodyear, 1984), developing supervisee strengths (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004), attaining self/other awareness (Auxier et al., 2003, Edwards & Bess, 1998, Ekstein & Wallerstein, 1972, Ronnestadt & Skovholt, 2003), and gaining multicultural counseling competency (Pederson, 1997; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Stadler et al., 2006; Torres-Rivers et al., 2001).
Theories and Models

The earliest models of counselor supervision developed from counseling theories, and were an adaptation of counseling techniques into supervision practice (Eckstein & Wallerstein, 1958; Holloway, 1987, Leddick & Bernard, 1980. In the 1960s and 1970s, new models were developed that were not based on psychotherapy practices, but more on counselor development (Boyd, 1979). This was a move from a replication of the counseling practice in supervision to a development of a unique field of counseling supervision.

In both forms of supervision, the focus was on the supervisee’s individual needs, and these needs were assessed through either counseling assessments or a developmental assessment of supervisee’s learning needs. The importance of understanding individual supervisee’s learning needs has been recognized from the beginning of counselor trainee supervision as a necessary step in providing effective supervision (citation). This review will now provide an overview of the models and methods that have shaped the field of counselor trainee supervision and then review current supervision models that use experiential or expressive arts methods.

Psychotherapy-based models of supervision. The psychotherapy-based supervision models were the first models developed for training counselors and psychotherapists. They are a group of supervision models that are based on psychotherapy counseling theories. Two of the earliest psychotherapy-based supervision models were based on Carl Roger’s person-centered counseling theory and on behavioral therapy (Bradley & Gould, 2001). As new psychotherapy-based theories of counseling have developed, these new theories have become the theoretical orientation for new
counselor supervision models (Binder, 1993b, Boyd, 1978, Edwards & Bess, 1998). Psychotherapy-based supervision methods that use experiential approaches have developed from art therapy, narrative therapy, psychodrama, expressive arts, and movement therapy (Gladding, 2005; Lahad, 2003; Hervey, 2000). They show promise for reaching a diverse student and client population, and for promoting the development of self-reflection. Self-reflective approaches can result in the development of theoretical orientation, an integration of the personal and professional selves, an ability to make clinical decisions about self-disclosure, and an ability to cope with counter-transference (Edwards & Bess, 1998; Guiffrida, 2005; Imel, 1998). This chapter will now review the developmental, social role, and constructivist models of counselor trainee supervision.

**The developmental models of supervision.** The developmental models of supervision emerged in the 1980s and still provide a framework for counselor trainee supervision in many training programs (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). Developmental models focus on the process of growth in counselor trainees from the beginning of training and beyond graduation. They are grounded in two major premises: (a) Counselor trainees must move through a series of stages to become competent, and (b) The different stages require different supervisory foci (Chagnon & Russell, 1995).

Ronnestad and Skovholt’s (2003) method came from a grounded theory qualitative study that looked at the themes and phases in counselor development. One hundred therapist and counselors, from counselor trainees to experienced counselors with over 40 years of experience, were interviewed over 5 years. The study was conducted on mostly white (96%) participants. In Ronnestad and Skovholt’s study, 14 themes emerged that characterized professional development across the lifespan. Some of these themes
indicated areas of focus for counselor trainee supervision such as: personal life influences, interpersonal sources of influence, experience with suffering, seeing clients as teachers, coping with anxiety, developing an internal orientation to counseling, continuous reflection, and an understanding that becoming an effective counselor is a process that continues after school is finished. Ronnestadt and Skovholt (2003) created six stages of counselor development that conceptualizes counselor trainee growth. Students during counselor trainee supervision are in one of the first three stages: the lay helper stage, the beginning student stage, or the advanced student stage. In Ronnestad and Skovholt’s model, counselor trainee supervision must meet the needs of the students in that stage. In Stage 1, counselor trainee supervision sessions may consist of small group discussions that consist of sharing of personal revelations, participating in introspective activities, supporting personal beliefs, identifying personal beliefs, and recognizing and accepting the orientations of other students. In Stage 2, clarifying and integrating theories and reviewing personal beliefs are the goals of counselor trainee supervision. Stage 3 trainees often have the opportunity to integrate their learning through supervising other students in peer groups.

Ronnestadt and Skovholt’s (2003) model discussed the use of introspective activities in Stage One as a method to meet the needs of individual trainees. This could indicate the use of experiential methods for this stage. However, this researcher did not discover any suggestions for specific experiential methods that could be used with this theoretical supervision approach.

In 1981, Stoltenberg developed a model of counselor trainee supervision that he called the complexity model, and has been renamed the integrated developmental model
after collaboration with other researchers. Stoltenberg conceived of counselor
development as progressing through four levels. At each level, trainees have certain
characteristics and certain supervision needs (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1988). Level 1
trainees are often dependent on the supervisor due to inexperience and anxiety about the
counseling process. They need structure and positive feedback from the supervisor with
very little confrontation (Bernard & Goodyear, 1994). At Level 2, methods must be
flexible because students are moving between autonomy and dependence on the
supervisor. At Level 3, supervision can become collegial and collaborative (Bernard &
Goodyear, 1994). Stoltenberg’s developmental model focuses on the stages that trainees
experience, and does not include a description of appropriate methods for each stage.
Including appropriate methods to help trainees move through the stages could strengthen
Stoltenberg’s model.

The Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth model (1982) model conceptualizes
development as a cyclical process whereby students and counselors move through three
stages: stagnation, confusion, and integration. They repeatedly address eight
developmental issues as they integrate their professional and personal selves. These
stages were adapted from college student development and are: supervisory relationship,
competence, emotional awareness, purpose and direction, autonomy, personal blind
spots, respect for individual differences, professional ethics, motivation, and identity.
Sanbury (1982) developed a hierarchy for this model. This model is complex and
conceptualizes counselor trainee supervision as a process that weaves new learning into
existing understanding through the three stages (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, Bradley &
Ladany, 2001). Like Stoltenberg’s (1981) model, the Loganbill, Hardy & Delworth
model does not include supervision methods for use in each stage, and could be strengthened by inclusion of didactic and experiential methods.

The research on the effectiveness of developmental models seems inconclusive to this researcher. In a study of Loganbill et al.’s (1982) developmental model, Ellis (1991) studied the critical incidents in counselor supervision of nine psychology doctoral students. He found support for Sanbury’s hierarchal view of Loganbill’s supervision issues, but confirmed that relationship and personal issues that affect supervision are not adequately addressed in Loganbill’s model. Ellis & Ladeny (1997) found the research on developmental models to have methodological problems, and determined that the body of research on developmental models was inconclusive as to their effectiveness. Fisher’s earlier study (1989) had also determined that there was no support for the effectiveness of developmental models. Holloway (1987) and Borders (1989) challenged the developmental theories for their focus on stages in counselor development. These theorists conceptualized counselor trainee growth as grounded in the experiences of counselor trainees.

However, two theorists supported developmental supervision models. A study by Worthington (1987) concluded that there is support for developmental theories. Stoltenberg (1995) later confirmed Worthington’s study and concluded that there is sufficient evidence to validate developmental levels. This conflicting evidence on the effectiveness of developmental models leads this researcher to conclude that the results of the studies of developmental supervision are inconclusive, and that there is a need for additional studies that explore the experiences of counselor trainee trainees in developmental and other models.
Social role models of counselor trainee supervision. Social role models are not generally theoretical models (Luke, 2008). They focused on the functions and tasks of supervision and on the evolving counselor needs of trainees in supervision. After developing an awareness of the supervisee’s needs, the supervisor directs the attention of the counselor trainee to various parts of the counseling and supervision process. The following are descriptions of three prominent social role models.

Bernard (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004) developed a social role model in the 1970s, called the discrimination model, as a teaching model for supervisors. Supervision in the discrimination model focuses on intervention skills, conceptualization skills, and personalization skills. The supervisor first evaluates the supervisee’s needs, and takes the roles of teacher, counselor, or consultant in response to the supervisee’s learning needs. During a supervision session, the supervisor may shift roles multiple times providing direction, support, and collaboration.

The discrimination model is one of the most researched of all social role models. The model was supported by numerous studies in the 1980s (Ellis & Dell, 1986, Glidden & Tracy, 1989; Goodyear, Abadie, & Efros, 1984). In two of the studies (Goodyear et. al, 1984: Stenack & Dye, 1982), support was found for the teacher and counselor role, but participants were somewhat ambivalent about their experience and ability to identify their supervisor’s use of the consultant role. The discrimination model is a theoretical conceptualization of supervision and does not include specific methods that can be used to achieve its goals. Bernard confirmed that suggestions for supervision interventions in the model are “scant and scattered” (as cited in Neufeldt, 2007, p. xii).
Koltz (2008) suggested the use of creative approaches with the discrimination model. She suggested that integrating creative activities into supervision would result in “increased understanding in the areas of intervention, conceptualization, and personalization by the supervisee” (p. 419). The arts in supervision can allow trainees to “move beyond logical reasoning and utilize their intuition and creativity” (p. 420). Koltz reported that students have mixed reactions to the use of the arts in supervision. Students who are more creative in their personal and professional lives have been excited about the use of the arts, whereas other students seem to prefer a more didactic, logical approach. Koltz’s (2008) article recognized both the value of using creative methods in counselor trainee supervision, and the varying needs of students. However, there are gaps in this article that may be filled through this proposed study. This dissertation study intends to extend the understanding of students’ experiences of creative methods in supervision to gain a broader and more in-depth understanding of individual experiences.

Another social role model was developed by Hawkins and Shohet (1989). It is an integrative model that involves collaboration between counselor trainee and supervisor (Shuman & Safyer, 2005). The model describes the roles and functions that the supervisor and counselor trainee play in meeting the tasks of supervision. Hawkins & Shohet’s model focuses on (a) the content of the therapy session, (b) strategies and interventions, (c) the therapy relationship, (d) the therapist’s process, (e) the supervisory relationship, (f) the supervisor’s own process, (g) the supervisor/client relationship, and (h) the wider context (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). Supervisors move between the roles of counselor, educator, evaluator, and manager of the academic requirements. In these roles, supervisors facilitate an environment that is
supportive and able to hold the counselor trainee’s expression of feelings (Hawkins &
Shohet, 1989). Like other early theoretical models, there is no description of methods
that can be used to achieve its goals or to assist in the facilitation of supervisor roles.

Holloway’s (1995) social role model of supervision focuses on the roles and tasks
of supervision. This comprehensive model described the following factors of the
supervision process: (a) the supervisory relationship, (b) supervisor, trainee, and client
characteristics, and (c) the characteristics of the setting for supervision. The goals of the
Holloway systems model are to develop counseling skills, case conceptualization skills,
professional identity, emotional awareness, and self-evaluation skills (Bernard &
Goodyear, 2004). Holloway acknowledged that her model “does not contain a list of
supervision techniques, and to some this will be disappointing” (p. 180). Holloway asked
supervisors to reflect on their supervisory practice, and to develop appropriate strategies
for individual trainees. This lack of specific supervisory strategies for Holloway and
other models creates a gap in the literature that is beginning to be filled by more current
constructivist models.

This review of the literature indicates that there is a need for models that include
individualized methods that are effective with a variety of trainees, as well as ways to
determine which methods might be most helpful with different learners. The research on
early psychotherapy-based and developmental models is inconclusive, but the
discrimination model has some support in the research literature. Koltz’s (2008) article
on the inclusion of creative methods in the discrimination supervision model
demonstrates how expressive arts methods can be used with existing models. Other
researchers are currently suggesting creative methods that fit with a more constructivist,
holistic approach to counselor trainee supervision (Guiffrida et al., 2007; Neswald-McCalip et al., 2003). This paper will now explore the constructivist theory based supervision models and experiential learning theory that provides context for the use of expressive arts interventions in counselor trainee supervision.

**Constructivist theory in supervision.** Epistemological changes in scientific thinking have resulted in the development of a post-modernist constructivist theory that has influenced the counselor trainee supervision field (Guiffrida, 2005; Guiffrida et al., 2007; Lett, 1995; Markos et al., 2008; Neswald-McCalip et al., 2003; Newsome, Henderson & Veach, 2005; Scholl & Smith-Adcock, 2007). Constructivist theory is based on the belief that “knowledge cannot be imparted from teacher to student” (Bruner as cited in Guiffrida, 2005, p. 203). In constructivist theory, knowledge is not an objective truth residing outside the self, but a subjective reality that is embedded in the context of space, time, language, relationships, class, religion, ethnicity and race, sexual orientation, and sexual and gender identity. Individuals develop knowledge by ascribing meaning to interpersonal events and relationships (Sexton & Griffin, 1997).

Constructivist theory espouses certain principles: (a) Development is contextual, (b) Individuals are producers of their own development, and (c) Cognition is an active relating of events, (d) Meaning-making is self-evolution, (e) Reality is multiform, and (f) Language constitutes reality (Sexton & Griffin, 1997).

Neufeldt (2007) proposed four principles of applying constructivist theory to counselor trainee supervision. The first is context, and acknowledges the importance of culture to the therapeutic and supervisory relationships. The second principle is that knowledge in supervision is co-created through a process of mutual collaboration. The
third principle describes learning as a process based on previous and current knowledge, both personal and professional. The fourth principle is that knowledge can be tested in practical settings, and reflection on the results can lead to new learning. This practical principle supports the idea of educational research that tests assumptions in real situations, and gets feedback from students to improve practice (Neufeldt, 2007).

Constructivist supervision focuses on reflective journaling, case analysis, and discourse analysis (Winslade, Monk & Drewery, 1997), and may include the use of arts-based approaches (Guiffrida et al., 2007). In this proposed study, trainees will construct knowledge by participating in expressive arts group supervision classes, reflecting on their experiences, engaging in class discussions, and giving feedback to this researcher.

Experiential Learning

Confucius said “Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. Involve me and I will understand” (as cited in Bradley & Ladany, 2001, p. 28). These wise words remind us of the power of experiential learning in counselor trainee supervision through its use of direct involvement, variety in teaching tools and methods, and observation and reflection that leads to increased effectiveness (Rogers, 1957).

Experiential learning in counselor supervision derives from Kolb and Fry’s (1975) model of experiential learning. Their model described experiential learning as a direct encounter with the phenomena being studied (Kolb & Fry, 1975). Experiential education uses a planned experience, individually tailored, to facilitate student learning (Miller, 1982). Experiential learning is based on the belief that people learn best by doing. Kolb’s (1984) identification of four stages of learning provides a template through which to look at the process of experiential education. Kolb has viewed experiential learning as
a four-step process: concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. For the learning to occur, the student must engage in an experience, and then reflect upon it. Reflection as part of the learning process has been a valued component of counselor trainee supervision (Guiffrida, 2005).

Existing educational data supports experiential learning as an effective teaching tool (Anderson & Adams, 1992, Johnson & Parkinson, 1999; Proudman, 1992). Experiential learning has a long history of use in counselor education (McAuliffe & Ericson as cited in Guiffrida, 2005). Studies have shown that experiential education, as reported by trainees, to be effective and necessary (Anderson & Price, 2001, Bratton, Ceballos & Sheely, 2008, Chickering & Gamson, 1987, Johnson & Parkinson, 1999), yet not always comfortable (Anderson & Price, 2001). This proposed study hopes to provide a more complete understanding of trainees’ in-depth experiences and the meaning they make of expressive arts group supervision.

In the counseling and counselor training literature, there is also an increased recognition of the need to meet the learning needs of all students. As our population continues to reflect increased diversity, there is an increased need for pedagogical approaches that reach students from a variety of cultural backgrounds and orientations (Kim & Lyons, 2003). The counselor trainee supervision literature has recognized the need for individual supervisee’s learning needs to be met, but little research has been done to further understanding of how different experiential approaches are experienced by individual trainees. This chapter will now look at the available literature in the use of experiential and expressive arts methods in counselor trainee supervision.
Experiential Methods in Counselor Training Supervision

Zorga (1997) suggested that in counselor trainee supervision, students learn best in a constructivist experiential environment where they can learn in their own way. The use of experiential methods in counselor trainee supervision can increase group cohesion (Neswald-McCalip et al, 2003), foster supervisee growth and development, facilitate case conceptualization skills, and help students to better understand the process of becoming a counselor (Guiffrida et al, 2007). Experiential methods in counselor trainee supervision are increasingly present in the counseling supervision literature (Gladding, 2005; Lahad, 2000; Knill et al., 2005). This chapter will now explore the use of experiential learning in counselor trainee supervision through a review of the body of literature in the field. It will then narrow its focus to one experiential method, expressive arts, and explore the development of expressive arts in counselor trainee supervision.

Role-play is an experiential method that has been used in counselor trainee supervision for the last 20 years (Benson, 1989). Role-play is used to help trainees practice new or difficult counseling skills, simulate counseling sessions, and gain perspective on clients’ experiences by acting out various client roles and situations. Role-play can be used in individual or group supervision. In group counselor trainee supervision, role-play can increase students’ engagement, develop group cohesion, enhance self and other awareness, and increase the group’s ability to solve problems (Benson, 1987).

The use of metaphor in counselor trainee supervision is an effective tool that has been adapted from counseling (Guiffrida et al, 2007). It is used to facilitate the expression of thoughts and feelings, and promote growth and development (Guiffrida et
al., 2007). The use of metaphor allows trainees to conceptualize their client’s problems, their own relationships with clients and supervisors, and their transference and counter transference experiences. Activities that can enhance the use of metaphor in counselor trainee supervision involve the use of stories, poetry, drawing, and Greek mythology (Guiffrida et al, 2007; Sommer & Cox, 2003; Ward & Sommer, 2006). These experiential pedagogical approaches allow supervision trainees and supervisors to create a shared language to conceptualize cases while allowing students to develop internal resources.

Drewes & Mullen (2008) proposed that including play and experiential interventions in counselor trainee supervision might lead to a deeper reflective process that is more creative than traditional approaches and is conducive to appropriate risk taking. The use of games and exercises can also help build group cohesion through enhancing group communication. Play as an experiential method helps build self/other awareness (Drewes & Mullen, 2008).

The use of films in counselor trainee supervision has been used to increase multicultural awareness and sensitivity (Villalba & Redmond, 2008). In this experiential method, students are shown films that immerse them in a different cultural experience. Through viewing and reflecting, they are then able to develop a better understanding of themselves and others’ worldviews. Films can be used to generate group discussion, which can contribute to positive communication between counselor trainees and supervisors about difficult issues (Villalba & Redmond, 2008).

The use of technology in counselor trainee supervision is expanding, and can be used to develop more experiential interventions. Vaccaro and Lambie (2007) explored
the use of computers to conduct counselor supervision. They reviewed the ethical and practical implications for counselor trainees and supervisors. As technology and culture change, counselor trainee supervision is affected. New computer technologies can create online learning communities that meet the needs of students with busy schedules, multiple responsibilities, distance learning objectives, disabilities, and different learning styles. Trainees and supervisors can stay connected through correspondence and sharing of writing through blogs, emails, and Facebook, Twitter, and university communication services. Students can be encouraged to ask questions, to answer questions, and to write reflective and academic papers. Trainees and supervisors can share pictures, videos, and articles, watch films, write joint papers, and participate in experiential learning activities through involvement in online communities.

Research in the use of experiential approaches in counselor trainee supervision is limited. The following studies are critically reviewed as a way to explore the use of experiential approaches in the field of counselor trainee supervision. Research has shown that when therapists are asked about the most important learning practices they received in training, they validated experiential learning as an important educational approach (Grant, 2006).

In a study conducted by Willow (2009), the construction of a spiritual genogram was used as an experiential approach in counselor supervision with 32 advanced and post-graduate students. Through a qualitative narrative assessment, students verified the benefits of using the spiritual genogram as a constructivist, experiential learning approach. In another qualitative study conducted by Shurts (2006), eight marriage and family counseling students used the genogram as an experiential approach in learning to
work with couples in counseling. This phenomenological study looked at the experiences of these students through interviews and a survey, and determined that this experiential approach resulted in personal and professional growth, and transformations in the students’ relationships with their families of origin. The students felt that the genogram was a powerful experiential approach in trainee supervision. Both of the genogram studies use a qualitative approach and did not address students’ discomfort as a component of using the genogram, but did report student benefits.

A mixed methods comparison study (Rubin, 1988) of traditional supervision and experiential supervision indicated that experiential methods are a viable alternative to traditional methods. This early dissertation study compared two self-selected groups of group practicum students. The intention of this study was to compare both approaches as methods to train trainees in leading groups. In both groups, trainees had different reactions to both methods. This study did not attempt to understand these different responses to either traditional or experiential supervision. A better understanding of these individual supervisee responses would show which method was a better fit for individual students. This dissertation study illuminated the common and disparate themes among student descriptions of expressive arts group supervision through an in-depth phenomenological study of their experiences, perceptions and meaning making.

**Expressive Arts Supervision**

Various theorists have promoted the use of the arts in supervision (Gladding, 2005; Lahad, 2000; Lett, 1995; Newsome et al, 2005). Beginning research on the use of the arts in counselor trainee supervision suggests that it is effective, but the body of the research is small (Atkins & Williams, 2007; Bowman, 2003; Lett, 1995; Neswald-
McCalip et al., 2003). Fall and Sutton (2003) suggested that symbolic expression can increase the communication between supervisee and supervisor. Bratten et al. (2008) proposed:

…that just as play therapy and other forms of expressive therapies can enhance the therapeutic process for clients, the use of expressive arts with trainees can enhance the supervisee experience by fostering self-awareness, enhancing case conceptualizations, and encouraging exploration and clarity of supervisee’s theoretical framework. (p. 211)

Supervisors often model the counseling skills they use in counseling during supervision sessions (Dye & Borders, 1990, White & Russell, 1995). Supervisors who use expressive arts with clients can use the arts with counselor trainees in supervision to facilitate the expression of feelings and thoughts about themselves, the supervisory and counseling relationships, and their clients’ issues (Bratten et al., 2008). Trainees are often interested in using expressive techniques with clients, but have difficulty transferring the theoretical learning into practice (O’Brien, 2006-2007). Trainees who experience experiential methods, including expressive arts can adapt these methods to their counseling work with clients.

Wilkins (1995) provided strong support for the use of the arts in counselor trainee supervision as methods to increase self-reflection and develop intuition. Lahad (2000) posited that the use of the arts in supervision allowed counselor trainees to use the right hemisphere of the brain, engaging their creativity, and allowing them to express their feelings and gain new perspectives. He suggested that the use of arts in counselor trainee supervision would achieve the following goals: developing an understanding of the
counseling process, increasing self and other awareness, and increasing supervisee/client understanding.

Expressive arts group supervision can provide a way for trainees to use metaphor, images, fantasy, and symbols as means to conceptualize their clients, themselves, and the counseling and supervision process (Lahad, 2000). In this way, they can create concrete expressions of their inner and outer worlds, and their perceptions of their clients’ worlds (Lahad, 2000). Expressive arts group supervision may use music, stories, movement, poetry or writing, role-play or psychodrama, art, guided imagery or play. Newsome et al. (2005) proposes the use of the arts in counselor trainee supervision when the supervisee feels stuck.

**Models of Expressive Arts Group Supervision**

Expressive arts group supervision is constructivist in epistemology and in design. It is humanistic and strives to facilitate individual exploration of self and others that leads to new perspectives on self and others, and on the issues and relationships of counseling practice. It allows for emotional connection, and is a holistic approach to counselor trainee supervision. The following will be an exploration of three models of counselor supervision and a critical review of the small body of literature that addresses the use of expressive arts in counselor trainee supervision.

Levine (as cited in Knill et al., 2005) was one of the first to write about using the arts in the training of expressive arts therapists. Her model is derived from her expressive art therapy practice. She stated that:

A major goal of supervision is to encourage students to continue to tune themselves as instruments for therapeutic practice. The challenge for the
supervisor is to dance with the student in such a way that determining who is leading and who is following is almost impossible. (as cited in Knill et al., 2005, p. 238).

This speaks to the gentle constructivist process of collaborating by using the arts in a way that meets the goals of supervision. Levine (as cited in Knill et al., 2005) suggested that the elements of expressive arts group supervision are to (a) create perspective, (b) provide a space for reflection, (c) allow for de-centering, (d) propose different possibilities for intervention, (e) develop curiosity, (f) encourages counselor trainee resources, (g) create a forum for dialogue, moral support and connection, (h) keep art at the center, (i) create a space for imagination, and (j) personal exploration.

Levine (as cited in Knill et al., 2005) proposed using the expressive arts as a supervision approach with her students in expressive arts training. She often has used drawing to make students more comfortable in beginning supervision classes. In supervision, she continues to use the arts, but combines them with student case presentations. This approach seems to address the needs of students who are engaged aesthetically, as well as cognitively and verbally.

Levine stated that using an arts supervision with counseling students from other disciplines can be more challenging because they may feel more insecure “when they have to approach an art task in the supervision context” (as cited in Knill et al., 2005, p. 251). She stressed the importance of creating the right atmosphere, and reported that students from other disciplines reported:

that the arts introduced an element of surprise into their learning experience.

They found that to be enjoyable and also touching. They appreciated the playful
space created in the group and noticed that they could learn just as well (or better) in this more relaxed environment. (as cited in Knill et al, 2005, p. 252)

Levine’s (as cited in Knill et al., 2005) work provides an impetus for continuing to collect and understand the experiences of counseling students who are not expressive arts students. She recognized the discomfort trainees might feel when they are not used to using arts-based approaches to learning. This study provides some descriptions of the reasons that some students are uncomfortable in using the arts in supervision, and others are comfortable.

Mooli Lahad’s (2000) developed an expressive arts group supervision model based on a theoretical model he created to understand human psychic life and coping styles. His BASIC PH model provides a way to work with trainees that uses metaphors, stories, and images as representations of the objective or subjective worlds of the supervisee and client. This model of counselor trainee supervision is grounded on the constructivist assumption that all people see the world in their own way. In the BASIC PH model, supervisors must develop an understanding of their supervisee’s style and use that information in supervision to meet the needs of the counselor trainee.

Lahad & Niv’s (1996) model of supervision suggested that supervision could be both creative and individualized for trainees in a way that maximizes their growth. They suggested a method of understanding a client or supervisee’s preferred learning style by having them answer questions, and coding the answers based on the coping styles. By counting the number of codes in each coping style given, the supervisor or therapist can identify the predominant coping style of the supervisee or client. Lahad and Niv’s model stresses the importance of individual learning style as a way to meet the pedagogical
needs of the supervisee and proposes a method of determining the learning style of each supervisee. Unfortunately, no previous research has validated Lahad & Niv’s supervision model or used this approach in determining learning style preference. Lahad & Niv (1996) are among the first to develop a model for the use of expressive arts in counselor supervision, and the only authors that promote the use of Learning Style preference for individualizing expressive arts group supervision.

**Research in Expressive Arts Supervision**

Research has only been conducted on one model that incorporates expressive arts into counselor trainee supervision. Neswald-McCalip et al. (2003) developed the regenerative model through a grounded research study conducted by with a small \( n=3 \) sample of master’s level counselor trainees using expressive arts in supervision in a Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Counseling Related Programs (CACREP) accredited counseling program. In this study of expressive arts group supervision, students created their own supervision process by identifying their pedagogical needs for each supervisory session, and setting their own time schedule and place for supervision sessions. They met weekly for 90 minutes, and the students choose activities and issues for supervision. Five students volunteered for this project, and three participated in the study that had no evaluative component. During the course of this study, participants also were required to take a traditional supervision class.

Data for this study was collected through interviews, reflective journals, and observations. It was analyzed through collective coding and the collaborative construction of categories leading to three themes: (a) structure, (b) characteristics, and (c) confluences. The findings suggested a model that is based on trainee needs and the
trainees became co-researchers. Instead of conceiving counselor trainee growth as developmental and linear, this model conceptualized counselor trainee growth as continually “feeding back into itself” (p. 237). In Neswald-McCalip et al.’s (2003) study, counselor trainees reported a high degree of group cohesiveness through using the experiential and expressive arts interventions.

Neswald-McCalip’s et al.’s (2003) study is important to and supportive of the use of expressive arts in supervision, but more studies need to be conducted on larger samples in more traditional classrooms. They developed a theory and model of expressive arts group supervision, but did not address the experiences of individual trainees. All of the trainees self-selected for the study, and this may suggest that they were more inclined to have a positive experience than a group of randomly chosen trainees might have had. Neswald-McCalip et al.’s study provided an understanding of the process of learning in expressive arts group supervision, but did not explore the individual and collective phenomenological understandings of trainees’ experiences. This current dissertation study explored the individual and group experiences of trainees as a way to increase the understanding of trainees’ thoughts, feelings, and meaning-making before, during and after three weeks of expressive arts group supervision.

A pilot study conducted by Markos et al. (2004) used sand tray supervision with beginning practicum students. Sand tray is an expressive intervention that employs a small rectangular container, and small objects to depict the client’s issues and relationships. In this study, during the 4th week of supervision, three students received sand tray supervision, and three received traditional supervision. The traditional supervision consisted of watching videotapes of their supervision sessions and receiving
feedback. Data was collected using the Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory (Efstation, Patton & Kardish, 1990). Trainees who had received the sand tray intervention had higher scores on case conceptualization than the students who received traditional supervision. Both groups received equal scores on perceptions of supervision intervention effectiveness. This small pilot study suggested the positive impact of one expressive intervention in a semester long course. However, the sample size ($n=6$) was small, and there is not a way to determine from the study how the students ($n=3$) receiving the sand tray intervention were chosen. In this current dissertation study, the focus was different from Marco’s study, and attempted to understand better the experiences of the trainees. Data was collected through triangulation of methods, multiple experiences of expressive arts, and qualitative data collection and explication.

The use of drawing in counselor trainee supervision found support in a mixed methods study by Stone and Amundson (1989). The study involved seven counseling trainees at a community crisis center. The intention of this study was to compare a drawing technique developed by Stone and Amundson with traditional verbal supervision. Trainees were divided into two groups and those receiving verbal supervision focused on discussing their client’s problems, client assessment, and on the counseling intern’s skills and interventions. The students who received the drawing technique intervention were asked to depict their counseling session metaphorically using lines, symbols, or combinations of words and pictures.

Data was collected through clinical case notes, videos of supervision sessions, transcripts, drawings, and from a 39-item questionnaire. The questionnaire asked trainees to evaluate the value of the supervision sessions, their development as a counselor, the
supervision’s contribution to their sessions, the client-counselor relationship, and the success of achieving their goals.

Data analysis resulted in findings that were supportive of the use of drawing in counselor trainee supervision. Trainees in the metaphoric drawing supervision presented more emotionally charged cases, met less often for supervision, and scored higher on greater understanding of client issues, client counselor relationships, and counselor development. Overall, the students receiving supervision that included drawing perceived their supervision as having more value. This encouraging study focused on outcomes, and is important to the field. However, there is a need for trainees to have a voice in sharing their experiences of expressive arts group supervision to understand the individual positive, negative, and neutral experiences of participants and to describe the common essence of expressive arts group supervision.

Ishiyama (1988) conducted another study on using drawing with 19 undergraduate counseling students. Ishiyama tested his metaphoric drawing approach with students who also received verbal supervision. Data was collected using a 9-point scale, and written explanations of the ratings. Thirteen of the 19 trainees found the drawing intervention to be more helpful than the verbal supervision in several ways. They thought that the drawing helped them to achieve their counseling goals and to conceptualize their client more profoundly. The use of the drawing technique positively added to their client-counselor relationship and to their understanding of themselves. Their written explanations showed variety in their responses. Two students reported having difficulty in conceiving of an appropriate metaphor, and three others found both supervision approaches equally helpful. Ishiyama (1988) suggested that the drawing
interventions might be most helpful with visual learners or students more comfortable with arts-based expression. This study points to the need for a greater understanding of how the arts are experienced by different and similar trainees in expressive arts group supervision.

Lett’s (1995) study of 5 recently graduated psychologists in a weekly supervision class using experiential and expressive interventions led to a greater understanding of the phenomenological process of creative supervision. In Lett’s study, trainees established the methodology in their first session, choosing to present their clients through drawing and talking, and then exploring what arose through painting, movement, dramatization, and reflection. Their process was taped, and the trainees received a transcript that allowed them to reflect closely on their process. In Lett’s phenomenological study, the intention was to stay close to the experience of the drawing and talking process, and to provide in-depth exploration of that experience. Through a description of two cases, this process is described in the write-up of Lett’s research study.

Reflections on the process indicate there was a flow between the visual images that are drawn and the verbal descriptions that follow. This process led trainees to a greater understanding of their clients and themselves. Trainees in Lett’s (1995) study reported that new knowledge was constructed through shifts in awareness that occurred from the phenomenological process of reflection on self and others during and after the expressive arts group supervision. Lett has provided an in-depth look at the process and adds to the literature on the use of expressive arts in supervision. This dissertation study also used a phenomenological approach to look at the experiences of expressive arts group supervision students. However, this current study explored the experiences of
eight master’s level counseling trainees involved in a training supervision, whereas Lett’s study explored the drawing and talking supervisory experience with recently graduated psychologists. Lett’s study focused on understanding the process of expressive arts group supervision, but this current study focused on the inner experiences of trainees before, during, and after the supervision.

Bowman (2003) explored the use of visual art in counselor trainee supervision with master’s level students using mixed methods research. Using a Likert scale, Bowman measured the (a) participants’ level of enjoyment of the art task intervention, the (b) participants’ perceived level of benefit derived from the art task intervention, and (c) how often participants used art tasks in counseling their own clients. This study also correlated creativity with the dependent variables. Students were given the Barron-Welsh Art Scale and the Remote Associates Test, along with an exit questionnaire that included qualitative responses.

The findings suggested that participants benefited from and enjoyed the arts tasks. Students who scored higher on the Barron-Welsh Art Scale were more creative which correlated with higher enjoyment. This study indicated that using arts interventions in counselor trainee supervision did not result in trainees using arts interventions with clients at a higher rate with clients. This study provided an interesting look at the correlation between creativity and enjoyment of arts based interventions, but leaves a gap in exploring what individual trainees experience during expressive arts group supervision. It calls for future studies to “determine if certain trainees show a stronger preference for creative approaches than other trainees” (Bowman, 2003, p. 4).
Conclusion

Experiential methods, already shown to be effective as pedagogical practices in other educational settings, indicate promise in counselor trainee supervision. Expressive arts are one of the experiential methods that have been effective in counseling and are being adapted to counselor trainee supervision (Gladding, 2005). Research in the use of expressive arts group supervision suggests some positive results in creating group cohesion (Neswald-McCallip et al., 2003), perceived enjoyment and benefits (Bowman, 2003), a greater understanding of clients and self (Stone & Arundson, 1989), and case conceptualization skills (Ishyama, 1988; Markos et al., 2004).

These beginning studies in the use of expressive arts in counselor trainee group supervision suggest positive results for trainees. The available research studies have looked at the outcomes of expressive arts group supervision, but only Lett (1994) looked at the experiences of trainees in the expressive arts group supervision process. This current dissertation study fills a gap that exists in the literature concerning the individual in-depth experiences of trainees in expressive arts group supervision. No other study has explored the positive, negative, or neutral experiences of individual trainees as a way to understand the essence of the experiences of expressive arts group supervision. This study adds to the understanding of individual counselor trainee trainees’ experiences of expressive arts group supervision through a phenomenological look at individual experiences. It also looked for common essences of expressive arts group supervision through a textural and structural description derived from the explication of trainees’ words and meaning making. In conclusion, this paper suggests a need for research that addresses the experiences of counselor trainees in expressive arts group supervision as a
way to understand the following question: What do master’s level counselor trainees experience in expressive arts group supervision?
Chapter Three. Research Design

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the in-depth experiences, accounts and meaning making of Master’s level counselor trainees in Expressive Arts group supervision. This chapter focuses on the research design of this study. It will provide a rationale for the choice of methodology, a description of the phenomenological approach used in this study, the context of the study and its overall design. This chapter also includes a detailed plan of the expressive arts group supervision that was used in the study. Data collection and data analysis procedures follow and are illustrated with data collection/analysis maps (Appendices B & C).

Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study because it is the most effective way to answer the research question concerning the in-depth experiences of Master’s level trainees in Expressive Arts group supervision. Methodology is “a body of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2010). Qualitative research is well suited to this study because it is a methodology that searches for meaning in subjective data, and this study is concerned with the meaning that trainees make from their experiences of expressive arts group supervision. Qualitative research is process oriented and concerned with what is happening, how it happens, and what meaning participants make of their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research does not posit a single truth about the experiences of the subjects in a study. This study describes the experiences of all participants and acknowledges that their experiences are rooted in multiple contexts. In qualitative studies, the researchers try to give rich descriptions based
on the direct accounts provided by various subjects (Creswell, 2007). The epistemological assumption of qualitative research is that data can be best understood from intense immersion with the subjects. This research was conducted in an environment where the trainees and I had a semester to develop relationships and be immersed in the supervision process. In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary collector of data, and I will be solely responsible for the collection and explication of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). The axiological assumption in qualitative research is that researchers have values that they bring to the research (Creswell, 2007). It is important that researchers engage in an effort to provide transparency around their assumptions and values in order for readers to discern possible confounding of the data (Denzin, 1989). This study included a pre-study interview of my assumptions and biases that was conducted by the co-teacher, Margie McCarty before the collection of data. This interview was an effort to bracket my previous theoretical knowledge, biases, and assumptions.

Qualitative research emphasizes the subjective experiences of the participants and uses the first person in the writings. The methodology of qualitative research is constructivist, and subjective personal data is collected through methods of observation, interview, survey, focus groups, the arts and reflective journaling (Creswell, 2007; McNiff, 1998; Neswald-McCalip, R., Sather, J., Strati, J. & Dineen, J. 2003). This study used the qualitative methods of reflection papers, researcher observations and in-depth interviews to collect the subjective experiences of trainees in expressive arts group supervision.
Choosing Phenomenological Methodology

The choice of phenomenology as a methodology for this study was the result of a thorough exploration of qualitative research designs. I began the search by keeping the purpose of the study and the research question in my mind in order to find a methodology that would best answer the question. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of Master’s level trainees in expressive arts group supervision. The research question asks, “What do Master’s level counselor trainees experience in expressive arts group supervision? The purpose of this proposed study and research question were best answered by a phenomenological approach because it facilitated the search for the meaning and nature of trainees’ direct experiences through their first person accounts. It provided a methodology that privileged the rich descriptions and explorations of the trainees’ personal experiences of expressive arts group supervision.

Phenomenology is the study of individuals and their world (Shepardie, Young & Daniels, 2010). It originated at the turn of the century with the philosophy of Husserl (1859-1938), a student of Brentano (1838-1917), and has evolved into two major forms, descriptive and interpretative (Giorgi, 1992; Moustakas, 1994). Husserl’s phenomenology was descriptive, and he suggested the use of intention or mental directedness, and phenomenological reduction to better understand an experience (Aspers, 2009; Groenewald, 2004). Intentionality refers to directing one’s conscious awareness to an object or experience (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological reduction is the elimination of theories, previous experiences, and other conceptualizations concerning the phenomena in order to experience the meaning of the intentional object (experience) in its essences (Christensen & Brumfield, 2007). Husserl’s descriptive
phenomenology privileged staying close to the experiences or objects of consciousness. The description sought by Husserl’s approach was intended to be “what presents itself precisely as it presents itself, neither adding nor subtracting from it” (Giorgi, 1992).

As phenomenology evolved, researchers developed an interpretative track of phenomenology. Heidegger, a student of Husserl, moved away from Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology, and developed an existential interpretative form (Moustakas, 1994). He believed that it is the interpretation that gives the meaning to description. “The meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 37). Heidegger’s approach to interpretative phenomenology is called hermeneutic. Hermeneutic phenomenology includes the study of experiences within the context of language, social relationships and historical understandings (Finlay, 2009). It involves the art of understanding the whole so that the intentions and meanings behind the appearances are clear. In hermeneutics, interpretation “unmasks what is hidden behind the objective reality” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 10.)

For this study, this researcher chose the descriptive phenomenological approach developed by Van Kaam (1959, 1966) at Duquesne University to best answer the research question. This method is based on Husserl’s phenomenological approach, and has been called the Duquesne approach (Finlay, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Duquesne University has been a leading publisher of phenomenological studies that were conducted in their psychology departments since the early 1970’s (Fischer et al, 2001; Giorgi, Fischer & Eckartsberg, 1971; Giorgi, Knowles & Smith, 1979; Giorgi, 1985). This descriptive phenomenological approach was chosen for this study as a methodology to understand the meanings trainees’ make from their experiences of expressive arts group
supervision. The Duquesne approach retains Husserl’s concepts of intentionality, the epoche process, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). However, Husserl’s phenomenological approach has evolved through its use in psychological and other social science research into a form that employs two levels of explication (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas’s two level approach was used to analysis the data. The first level of explication focused exclusively on the descriptions of the master’s level counselor trainees obtained through reflection papers and individual interviews. Giorgi suggested that the experience is best understood through dialogue and reviews of narrative descriptions of the meaning a participant has for a particular experience (Giorgi, 1985). This initial analysis resulted in individual textural structural descriptions of each supervisee’s experiences. In the second level of explication, I used Moustakas’s guidelines to conduct a further analysis of the composite experiences of the trainees in expressive arts group supervision. This second level focused on the similar and disparate experiences of trainees as they described their experiences with each of the six expressive arts activities. It resulted in a composite textural structural analysis (Moustakas, 1994).

The Research Study

Phenomenological studies may include a pre-study (Aspers, 2009). The purpose of the pre-study is to ascertain whether it is possible to address the research question. During the course of this traineeship class, expressive arts group supervision was facilitated two times before the study began. During these classes, I conducted informal observations and received feedback about the expressive arts group supervision.
Reflection papers were submitted after these classes that indicated that students were able to describe their experiences.

This 5-week research study was conducted in a master’s level group counselor supervision internship class in a Northeastern university that lasted two semesters and employed a variety of counseling supervision approaches. A group of 10 students took the class as part of their required coursework. I chose this context as the most authentic natural setting to answer the research question. Expressive arts theorists have stressed the need for a “safe environment”, and this setting is familiar to students (Atkins & Williams, 2007; Rogers, 1993).

Prior to the expressive arts group supervision, RSRB approval was obtained, and the class was given an introduction to the study using an Information Letter (Appendix A). Students who wished to participate agreed verbally, and signed a paper indicating their willingness. Students who did not wish to participate did not sign the paper, but received the same instructional approaches as the participants. The expressive arts group supervision consisted of 3 weeks of classroom activities, and 2 weeks of individual interviews following the end of the classroom activities. The internship class was co-taught by another doctoral student, Margie McCarty, and myself. Margie McCarty took the primary role of facilitating the instruction after the research study was completed, while I was the primary instructor for the class prior and during the research study. Both of us contributed to the supervision in every class. During the study, I was responsible for the collection and analysis of the data. The student evaluations for this course were conducted solely by Margie McCarty. Margie McCarty also conducted a pre-study
interview with me designed to begin the epoche process, and identify my assumptions and biases.

At the beginning of each of the three weeks of expressive arts group supervision, I asked the trainees if they had any personal or professional supervision issues from their fieldwork or coursework that they would like to discuss before we began the expressive arts group supervision. In two of the three weeks, we spent some class time processing issues trainees brought to class before beginning the expressive arts group supervision.

This internship class consisted of 10 trainees, eight who participated in the study. Trainees were able to choose not to participate at any time during the study by informing me in person, email, or by phone. The two trainees who chose to not participate were not asked about the reasons for their refusal. In such a small class, any demographics used to describe these non-participants could lead to the identification of the non-participants or participants, and has been avoided. All trainees in the class were female, Caucasian, and were between the ages of 20 and 50.

**Expressive Arts Activities**

**First week.** During the first week of the study, two expressive arts activities were facilitated. The first was a timeline (Rossi, 2007) of the important events in trainees’ lives using images, symbols, and words to depict important memories. I chose this activity because it requires no artistic skill, and allowed trainees to engage in an activity designed to illustrate the positive and negative experiences in their lives. It was adapted to supervision to: (a) provide a counseling tool that can be used with clients, (b) encourage the development of self/other awareness, and cultural sensitivity, and (c) facilitate
the awareness of meaningful incidents in trainees’ lives that may contribute to transference in supervision, and counter transference in counseling sessions.

This intervention was also chosen because it (a) can be adapted for use with a variety of counseling clients and settings and (b) uses metaphor to create new perspectives. Metaphor has been used effectively in counseling, and its use in counselor trainee supervision can help build relationships with clients, help clients access and express feelings, uncover client assumptions, and facilitate working with resistant clients (Lyddon, Clay & Sparks, 2001 in Guiffrida et al., 2007).

Large paper and markers were distributed and trainees were instructed to put a zero on the left side of the paper, and their age on the right side of the paper. Between the two numbers, trainees were asked to draw a timeline. They were further instructed to place life events on the timeline in the following way. Positive events could be depicted on the top of the line, and negative events could be shown on the bottom. Trainees were asked to place these events along the line in direct relationship to their ages at the time. When the timelines were completed, trainees were given a chance to share whatever information they choose from the activity. They were asked to pick an incident from the timeline that they would like to act out in a psychodrama.

I chose a psychodrama activity for the second activity of the first week (Klagsbrun, 2008) because it seemed a good way to deepen the timeline process by acting out one of the timeline incidents. No one volunteered for the psychodrama, and I was initially unsure about how to proceed. I thought about the following options: (a) suggest another less risky psychodrama, or (b) discuss their resistance to the activity, but not proceed. I chose to suggest another psychodrama activity that might be less risky. I
asked if anyone would be willing to act out a *family dinner*. An intern volunteered who was not part of the study. She chose other trainees to act out her father, mother, and sister. Trainees who participated in the psychodrama were told about the person’s personality and behavior that they were going to act out, and then trainees played the roles they were given. This intervention can: illustrate unresolved issues, roles in family, or in relationships. It can provide a corrective emotional experience and be adapted to counseling.

My decision to suggest another activity was based on my experience using Expressive Arts in previous classroom situations at another university. I have found it necessary to be flexible when using creative approaches in counseling sessions, teaching, and supervision. In this study, I found myself in a situation I had not anticipated, and felt “unsure of what to do in the moment. I knew that my decision would affect my research, and was unsure whether I could deviate from the proposed study” (Researcher memo after first class). I thought that I would get interesting data either way, and that trainees would likely write about both their reluctance to participate in the first psychodrama, and their reactions to a second suggested psychodrama.

**Second week.** I chose to facilitate painting with sponges for the first activity of the second week. This activity, described by Atkins (2003), is used to reduce anxiety and facilitate the expression of thoughts and feelings. I chose it because painting with sponges is less risky than using brushes and this sponge painting process can be adapted to counseling. Trainees were given large pieces of paper, paint, and sponges for painting.

This method reduces the expectation that trainees will create a beautiful painting, instead the focus can remain on expressing the feelings and thoughts abstractly. For this
exercise, I chose natural sponges for the painting instrument. This approach can reduce anxiety about painting, be adapted to counseling, facilitate the expression of thoughts and feeling, and result in new perspectives.

For the second activity this week, I chose *speaking from the painting*. This activity is adapted from the work of Marcus Alexander (European Graduate School, 2004). I chose this activity (Alexander, 2004) because it allows the intern painters to identify more closely with the images on the pages, to personify them, and delve more deeply into the emotions that are expressed in the paintings. In this activity, trainees speak from the symbols in their paintings, by stating, “I am”. This activity can be: adapted for counseling and also used in supervision to develop case conceptualization skills. Interns may become more aware of their thoughts and feelings, and be able to use them to explore their understanding of the case.

**Third week.** In this week’s class, the creation of a Mandala collage allowed trainees to reflect on their professional identity (Bratton, Cebellos & Sheely, 2008). The use of Mandala was chosen as an intervention as a way to integrate one’s life, and as a way to develop self-awareness (Campbell, 1974). It is a way for trainees to integrate their learning into their professional identity (Bratton, Cebellos & Shelly, 2008). I chose this activity (Bratton, Cebellos & Sheely, 2008) as a method to facilitate the development of self-awareness and self-identity as a counselor. The Mandala was created through the use of collage materials and in response to the question, “How do you see yourself as a counselor now?” Words, images, various papers, glitter, pom-poms, ribbons and other collage supplies were provided for the construction of the collages. When the collages
were complete, trainees shared their collages, and their thoughts, beliefs and values about themselves as counselors.

The final activity was a playful movement activity entitled the Group Machine (Knill, 2004). I chose this activity as a method for trainees to practice group skills, and to form group cohesion. Three trainees and I demonstrated this final activity as a way to model the activity. Then the class was divided into two groups of four to five trainees. They were given the task of developing a cooperative “machine” that represents what they need to be successful in their journey to becoming a counselor. This activity can be used: (a) to develop group cohesion, (b) to understand the power of the group, (c) to practice self-assertion and leadership skills, and (d) to practice skills in performing group tasks.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this research study was collected through trainees’ reflection papers, individual interviews, and researcher memos. The data was collected over 5 weeks. This data collection is illustrated in a Data Collection Map (Appendix B). As the data was collected, the analysis began. The data analysis is depicted in the Data Analysis Map (Appendix C). This next section will discuss the data collection and analysis methods used in this study.

Researcher pre-study interview. Before collecting the data, I engaged in the epoche process described in Moustakas’s (1994) analysis. This process was designed to identify and set aside my biases toward expressive arts group supervision, and bracket my assumptions and previous knowledge about this method of supervision. The purpose of this epoche process was to allow me to view the data with an increased awareness of my
own biases and assumptions so that I could keep them separate from trainees’
descriptions of their experiences. I engaged in a pre-study interview for this purpose,
which was conducted by Margie McCarty, co-teacher in this class.

The pre-study interview revealed my biases concerning expressive arts group
supervision. It clarified my views on expressive arts as an avenue for students’
expression of thoughts and feelings. In my interview, I talked about how the arts have
encouraged self/other reflection among students, helped them explore personal
experiences, and promoted a sense of community in the classroom. I was able to see how
my personal and professional training in expressive arts has resulted in a strong belief in
the ability of the arts to facilitate personal and professional growth. I also talked about
how I thought the students would enjoy and benefit from the expressive arts group
supervision. I reviewed the transcript from this interview several times during the
analysis in order to separate my previous biases from my findings, and to use imaginative
variation to look for other possible meanings in the data.

Reflection papers data collection. Written reflection papers were a requirement
for all students each week of the two-semester traineeship class. Reflective writing can
present valuable data about the trainees’ perceptions of themselves and their experiences
(Christensen & Blumfield, 2007). During the study, all students wrote a reflection paper
after each class describing their thoughts, feelings, observations and learning before,
during and after the expressive arts group supervision. They were instructed as follows:
In your reflection paper, please describe as fully and with as much detail as possible your
thoughts and feelings before, during, and after the Expressive Arts group supervision
experience. Is the anything that “sticks out” as you think back to the expressive arts group
supervision this week? As the reflection papers were received, individual files for each participant were established. Data from the reflection papers was often more personal, describing feelings on a deeper level than in the interviews. Emma talked about the depth of her feelings in her second reflection paper by stating:

What struck me most was the emotional tone of the painting. It seemed pretty depressing. At first I thought this was about how I was feeling that my client’s situation was depressing, but in looking back now I think a lot of it was actually just my mood which was depressed that day. Still, it called to my attention that my client had been doing well and had relapsed, so to speak, and after making such good progress. I remain, hopeful, but I think it was a shock and part of me was sad for him and I had my own personal reactions of sadness, too. (reflection paper 2)

Jane wrote about her fear of being honest in her timeline, “I thought it was interesting that I held back from putting certain things on my timeline because I felt that others would not think they were crucial in my life” (reflection paper 1).

Subjects’ reflection papers were an important data collection method in this study. I was aware of the possibility that the subjects’ reflection papers may not be completed, or might not include the rich, descriptive data needed for this study. Every intern in the study handed in at least two reflection papers, and participated in the individual interviews. The follow-up interviews helped clarify and deepen the data that was collected from reflection papers. All students submitted their reflection papers to me in person or through email. Student data from reflection papers is being kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s office.
For the analysis of the reflection papers I initiated Moustakas’s (1994) initial steps of analysis with each piece of data I received: (a) horizontalization of data, (b) reduction and elimination to create invariant constituents, and (c) theme creation. As I began to collect data from the reflection papers, almost every sentence was a horizontalization. A horizontalization is “every expression relevant to the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). I highlighted every word, sentence or phrase that seemed to capture a part of the trainees’ experience of expressive arts group supervision. For example, Riley spoke about how her body reacted to the experience of expressive arts group supervision in her first reflection paper when she said

I found my body reacted accordingly with whatever I was feeling. When I felt content and happy, reliving good memories, my body was relaxed as well. When my thoughts moved to unhappier times, my body tensed and I found myself having to remember to breathe, try not to cry, and swallow. (reflection paper 1)

As I thought and reflected about Riley’s description of her body’s reaction to the timeline exercise, I began to look for other instances in the data where this might be a beginning code. Julie also described a physical sensation in her body as she thought about her client during the painting process when she said she experienced “waves of happiness to sadness, and uncomfortableness” (reflection paper 2). When I read these descriptions in the data, they seemed congruent and I continued to look for more descriptions of bodily experiences.

I looked for ways these horizontalizations might be abstracted and labeled to create invariant constituents. In Moustakas’s approach (1994), an invariant constituent is a horizon that has met the following criteria: (a) It contains a moment of the experience
that is a necessary to understanding it, and (b) It must be able to be abstracted and labeled. I used the term mind-body to label these data horizontalizations to create invariant constituents. In this case, there were other invariant constituents related to trainees’ feelings and thoughts that could be added to create the theme of mind-body connection. I used this process of staying close to the trainees’ words to develop the codes, horizontalizations, invariant constituents, and themes of expressive arts group supervision.

Next, I looked for codes that had been suggested in the literature. These included descriptions of the phenomena, thoughts, feelings, and judgments of the experience, and statements that are linked to other studies of expressive arts group supervision and the literature in the field. For example, statements that included references to developing reflective skills (Wilkins, 1995), expressing thoughts and feelings (Knill, Levine & Levine, 2005; Lahad, 2000), developing new perspectives (Gladding, 2005), increasing the communication between trainees and supervisors (Fall and Sutton, 2003), creating success and cohesion (Neswald-McCalip et al. 2003), developing self-understanding (Lett, 1993,1995), and creative skills (Lahad, 2000) were used as initial codes. References to personal and professional growth were also used as initial codes.

After creating themes, I validated them by checking the themes against the original texts. Next, an individualized textural/structural description was created for each participant. An individual textural/structural description is a composite phenomenological “synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p.144). Each participant’s data was analyzed separately before the final composite data analysis. The purpose of this separate analysis was to understand
the in-depth experiences of individual participants, and how the individual accounts of their experiences contributed to the composite understanding of master’s level counselor trainees in expressive arts group supervision, and to allow for the individual divergent experiences to be heard. As I continued to immerse myself in the data, descriptions of trainees’ experiences and a process of expressive arts group supervision emerged. Some of these experiences related to the initial codes found in the words of the trainee’s and others from the literature. Julie described how she experienced the development of a new personal perspective by reflecting on her art-making: “When you go through and aren’t really sure about what you did, you’re also learning stuff like, oh, I didn’t realize I put that there because” (Julie, interview) And Lucy described how expressive arts supervision could increase communication between a supervisor and supervisee through drawing her client’s issue: “I think they would understand. I think they would get it. It’s a cool tool to use with your superviso.” (Lucy, interview).

During the individual collection and analyses of data, I was aware of the divergent data that appeared. Much of the divergent data consisted of content, with trainees thinking and remembering different events in their lives. Riley’s memories were of her grandfather who had died, “I miss the things he gave me, unconditional love, someone to talk to whenever I needed, someone who always had my favorite cookies on hand, and someone who would take my side” (Riley, reflection paper 1). One intern had a divergent experience of the timeline, and explained that it was not in alignment with her preferred way of learning, “I get concepts better as hands on, visual rather than speech” (Lucy, reflection paper 1). I wrote about this in my researcher memo, and became aware that what I thought was a hands on activity was to this student more of a verbal exercise.
I wrote, “I was surprised by Lucy’s negative reaction to the timeline activity. Even though it seems experiential to me, Lucy experienced it as a verbal exercise. I could have suggested that trainees could draw their experiences, or use symbols.”

**Researcher memos.** An on-going journal was kept that included my observations in vivo of Expressive Arts activities, my own process during the class, my thoughts and feelings about the class discussions, my thoughts about the reflection papers, my ideas about what I was reading in the reflection papers, and my efforts to make sense of the data. About the timeline activity, I wrote an observation, “I observed students working quietly, and the energy felt really low. They appeared thoughtful, only minimal talking. No one shared about their timeline in depth.” I wrote my thoughts and feelings about an intern’s reflection paper:

Lindsay’s activities brought up many feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration for her. She had the desire to participate in psychodrama but didn’t feel safe. I feel responsible for creating activities that feel safe, but also recognize that there are very few Expressive Arts activities that would feel safe to everyone. With this student, there is also a history of feeling unsafe that she also wrote about.

Remember that expressive arts happens in a multiple context. (Researcher memo, first week)

My journaling led to more research in the area of consciousness, as I reemerged myself in the data repeatedly. As I tried to make sense of the data, I wrote to try to understand their experience of consciousness:

What is it when we are existing in a state with awareness moment to moment of the past and present and future? Is it a state that allows us to use what we have
experienced in the present? Is there a name for that experience of consciousness? Is it just awareness but of all? Can Expressive Arts allow us to hold that experience without being stuck? The experience seems fluid in their descriptions.

(Researcher memo)

In a later week, it seemed that some trainees again described an experience of consciousness during the arts engagement. In my memo, I wrote about Emma’s interview, “She described being excited or scared at first, got into a flow experience, totally engaged in art, not thinking during the project she got most into, unaware of time.”

In my researcher memos, I questioned my own assumptions about the process and my biases as I viewed the data. I wrote:

I wonder if I have the ability to see the data in new ways. I definitely see themes from what I have read. Maybe if I asked myself what surprises me, I can uncover new ways of looking at the data. (Researcher memo)

This allowed me to begin the process of imaginative variation, going back to the data again and again, and looking through different perspectives to understand it. Instead of imposing my working hypothesis on the data, I let each new piece of data speak for itself, giving it the opportunity to totally change my perspective and working hypotheses. The researcher memos helped me delineate what I was thinking during the analysis, and gave me a chance to get some distance, which allowed me to see where I was imposing my own interpretations on trainees’ experiences. In one memo during the interviews, I wrote:

I have a beginning hypothesis for this study from my writings and their papers, and interviews. Students’ initial reactions to the arts process in supervision stems
from their history and personality (their individual differences) and involves feelings and thoughts. In the arts portion of the class, students experience a “fluid consciousness”, intuition, experienced differently based on developmental levels.

(Researcher memo)

My notes helped me realize that I was interpreting the data when my intention was to stay close to the participants’ words, and that this interpretation was broader and deeper than their words had conveyed.

I used the journal to examine new ideas and to explore the process of Expressive Arts group supervision. I asked myself repeatedly, “What is happening here” as a way to keep my focus on my participants’ experience, and to continue to understand what it was when I meant experience. My understanding of what I was looking for expanded and deepened, and I was able to generate questions for the interviews that helped participants explore their experience in a deeper way. As I thought about Jane’s statement, “I began to paint without thinking consciously about what I was painting, “I wondered, is this similar to others? I developed the following interview question. “After your initial reaction to the activity, and you are engaged in it, what is happening inside you?”

**Individual interviews data collection.** After the expressive arts class activities were completed, and I had received reflection papers from participants, I conducted individual in-depth interviews. Before meeting with each participant, I reviewed their data to develop additional probes that would help me understand their experiences in more depth. I began the interviews by informing them that I hoped to obtain more information about their in-depth experiences of expressive arts group supervision and asked them to please describe as fully and with as much detail as possible their thoughts
and feelings before, during and after their expressive arts group supervision experience.
The data from the interviews was audiotaped and transcribed in all but one case where
the tape recorder malfunctioned. In that case, observation memos were written
immediately after the interview and the participant read and verified them. The
interviews were scheduled at convenient times and locations for the trainees and were
conducted in coffee shops, work places, and academic settings. All the contexts provided
some privacy for the interviews, but some were more distracting than others. The coffee
shop in the student union was the loudest, and very distracting. Work places provided
privacy and quiet except for one that was in a large workroom with other workers. This
was also distracting, and I was concerned about enough privacy.

All of the interviews were conducted in a space where others could not hear what
was being said. From my observations, the quieter, more private settings led to a more
focused interview. These interviews were more serious, and I perceived slightly less
comfortable for the trainee than the more crowded settings. The louder, more distracting
environments invited interruptions due to noise and activity. This stopped the interviews
for a brief time, and the trainee and I would share a laugh or other social connection, and
then the focus would return to the questions. Despite the noise and interruptions, neither
environment seemed to affect the interview in any negative way, and trainees were able
to answer questions, and provide rich, deep data in all environments.

It seemed harder for trainees to express negative feelings or thoughts during the
interviews than in the reflection papers. I suspected that they were less comfortable
sharing negative feelings or thoughts face-to-face because of our supervisee-supervisor
relationship and a desire to please me. Time may also have been a factor, and feelings
experienced at the time of the reflection paper may have diminished or changed by the interview. For example, in her reflection paper, Lucy felt free to write that she “didn’t like the activity at first because I didn’t quite get how this could be helpful” (reflection paper 1) After her interview, I wrote in my memo:

Lucy seemed more positive about her experience in expressive arts group supervision in her interview. I wonder if she found it hard to tell me what didn’t work for her. When I asked her about the timeline, she kind of skipped past it and talked about how the collage helped her. (Researcher memo)

In the interviews, the trainees gave me a broader overview of the entire process of expressive arts group supervision, and their initial reactions were described less intensely and from a more distant perspective. They had had more time to reflect on the entire process, and what they had experienced. As trainees wrote and talked about their initial reactions to expressive arts group supervision, it became clear that many had a myriad of feelings about engaging in expressive arts group supervision.

After each interview, the transcripts were reviewed multiple times, and themes were developed from the horizontalizations for each participant. As the data was collected from reflection papers and individual interviews, a consistent pattern emerged from the intern’s descriptions that helped me organize the data. During the later interviews, I used member checking to validate my perception of the pattern, which presented itself as overlapping phases of experiences. I used this framework to discuss the findings from this study as a way to give order for the reader.
Developing the Data Analysis

When all the data for each participant had been received, and themes had been identified in each piece of data, a composite analysis of each participant’s data was developed. From these composite analyses, Individual Textural/Structural Descriptions were written for each participant illustrating the meanings and essences of participant’s individual experiences of Expressive Arts group supervision. In each individual Textural/Structural description, four themes were explored, (a) feelings about expressive arts group supervision, (b) thoughts about expressive arts group supervision, (c) process during expressive arts group supervision, and (d) interpretation of expressive arts group supervision. Included in Lindsay’s individual Textural/Structural description is her interpretation of her experience. She described the impact of peer feedback on her own understanding of her artwork, and the meaning she made from it. She stated:

I think going around in the group might have helped me, too. I remember sitting there thinking one thing, and a couple of people started presenting what their picture meant, and I started seeing more meaning in my own picture, so I think the sharing part is important in the supervision, and I got a lot from just hearing what other people were thinking and sharing and it changed how I saw my picture. (Lindsay, interview)

Individual Textural/Structural descriptions also gave voice to individual participants about how they engaged aesthetically in the arts process. Amy relates, “Initially, when I first started painting, I started in the middle of my paper. I made various “s” shaped patterns all over my paper and then filled in the white spots with the other colors of paint.”
After the individual Textural/Structural Descriptions were written, a composite description of the experiences of master’s level trainees in expressive arts group supervision was created by grouping invariable constituents together into themes that emerged from all participants’ data. From the participants’ descriptions, meanings evolved, and a composite Textural/Structural Description was written. The findings of the composite Textural/Structural Description will be included in the next chapter.

There were many challenges in analyzing the data. Different expressive arts group supervision activities were described and experienced in different ways. Trainees often described the external process of what they did artistically, rather than what they were experiencing internally. Trainees sometimes wrote more about their clients than themselves. The first week exercises were about the intern, while the second week’s exercises were focused on the client or case. In the third week, the focus was again on the intern. The interviews provided an avenue to explore in more depth their internal experiences of expressive arts group supervision. For some trainees, even during the interview, it was difficult to describe internal experiences in depth or breadth. The trainees who were able to explore and describe their experiences verbally provided rich data for this study.
**Chapter Four. Findings**

This chapter presents the process of data collection and data analysis, and the findings of this qualitative research study. The purpose of this study was to understand the in-depth experiences of master’s level counselor trainees during expressive arts group supervision. The findings answer the following research question: What do master’s level counselor trainees experience in expressive arts group supervision?

Moustakas’s (1994) approach to phenomenological analysis was used in this study to describe and explicate the experiences of trainees in expressive arts group supervision. Moustakas’s (1994) method of analysis employs an initial analysis of each participant’s data, and the writing of individual textural structural descriptions, followed by a composite analysis, and the writing of a composite textural structural analysis. In this chapter, I present the themes that emerged from the trainees’ descriptions of expressive arts group supervision in the composite textural structural description.

**Composite Textural Structural Description**

The composite textural structural description provides a rich, thick account of master’s level trainees’ experiences of expressive arts group supervision. This account is the result of the combined analysis of all participants’ textural structural descriptions and reflects individual accounts and composite themes.

**Four-Phase Process**

Trainees consistently described a process during each expressive arts group supervision class where they had internal experiences that moved through overlapping phases. This pattern can be visualized as a series of four overlapping circles, each
representing an aspect of the trainees’ experience (Appendix D). The four overlapping phases are: (a) initial reaction, (b) arts engagement, (c) reflection, and (d) transformation.

By organizing the findings in this heuristic way, I hope to provide a framework that makes it easier for the reader to understand the experiences of the trainees in expressive arts group supervision. To identify this patterned process, I titled it the four-phase process (FPP). As I considered the words used by the trainees and my own conceptualizations, I employed imaginative variation as a phenomenological tool to expand my understanding of this process. Each phase consisted of the themes that emerged during the phase, and the circles represent containers that can hold the variety of themes explicated during each phase.

As the consistent pattern emerged from the descriptions of individual trainees, I used the individual interviews to member check the idea of overlapping phases. When asked about a phase process, Mary Lou described the first three phases:

Like at first, when I’m hearing about the activities that we were doing for that day, I’m just not sure how it’s going to play out because I haven’t had experience with that with clients. Or I’ve never seen it before. And [I’m] a little anxious, but then as we’re doing it, especially the painting and the collage, I’m really just kind of going with it. Just doing and not really [thinking about it], like later I will think about [it]. This means this and this means that. I’m not really as cognitively involved when I’m doing it, and it is more of a feeling like with the painting. That was more the emotional process. I just picked colors that felt like the moods I was having, or felt that the child had. With the collage, [I picked] pictures and things that appealed to me, and I put them in ways that appealed to
me. Then I reflected. Towards the end of doing and then afterwards when I presented to the class. (Mary Lou, interview)

And when Riley was asked about a phase process during her interview, she stated: “That would definitely [be] exactly how I would describe it. Just like that” (Riley, interview).

Within the four-phase engagement process, 10 themes emerged that described the expressive arts group supervision experience of these trainees. In the first phase, initial reaction, one theme was prominent: thoughts and feelings. In the second phase, arts engagement, three themes emerged: (a) mind-body experience, (b) substantial cognitive engagement, and (c) sense of knowing. In the third phase, reflection, four themes developed: (a) thoughts about clients and themselves as clinicians (b) thoughts about self and supervision (c) thoughts about expressive arts supervision activities, (d) thoughts about peer feedback. Finally, in the fourth phase, transformation, two themes were apparent: (a) personal and (b) professional. These phases and themes will now be described to illustrate the experiences of trainees in expressive arts group supervision in an in-depth way that answers the research question: What do master’s level counselor trainees experience in expressive arts group supervision?

**Initial Reaction**

Each time a new expressive arts activity was suggested, trainees experienced an initial reaction consisting of thoughts and feelings. Trainees described their initial reactions to the expressive arts group supervision first in their reflection papers, and then in their individual interviews. Many of the trainees had an initial reaction of anxiety or fear to the idea of the expressive arts activities before the activity began or when they first heard about that day’s activities. Jane stated:
I was feeling anxious before the expressive arts experience. I am not really sure why, but I do not like doing certain creative activities. I think it is just very hard for me to just “do” something without thinking and analyzing my choices.

(reflection paper 1)

And Amy found the expressive arts group supervision to be anxiety provoking in the beginning for similar reasons. “My feelings at first were a little nervousness, because anything artistic you get kind of a little self-conscious about it” (reflection paper 1)

Other trainees also worried about their artistic abilities and how they would be perceived. Julie was “excited to try it, because I like new things, but I was nervous because I’m not artistic” (reflection paper 1). Riley’s initial reaction to expressive arts group supervision was similar, “What I first thought when I heard about the expressive arts group supervision was a combination of fear and knowing that everyone in the room was about to get a huge dose of humor. My mind focused on the word art that is what brought about the feeling of fear- I am a terrible artist” (reflection paper 1). Lindsay also experienced concern for others’ reactions. “I wanted to do it, then I thought, I’m not going to get up in front of everyone and do this cause I didn’t know what it would be like” (reflection paper 1).

Three trainees had positive or mixed feelings toward the expressive arts group supervision from the beginning: Lindsay stated that “each day I was excited to walk in, and I wondered what we would do” (interview). Another intern recognized the opportunity to learn from a new experience, and willingly participated despite her uncomfortable feelings towards arts activities. Emma said, “In general I feel silly doing these kinds of artistic, unconventional, free form exercises. However, I also believe that
there is great potential for something to be gained from taking a completely new/different stance” (reflection paper 1).

Trainees expressed fear of participating in the psychodrama, but also an interest. Fear of embarrassment was an initial reaction that was a key factor in trainees’ decisions to not participate. Lindsay stated:

I thought that sounded really, really cool I really wanted to do that one, but then I thought I’m not going to get up there in front of everybody and do this. Just because I didn’t know what it would be like and stuff” (reflection paper 1).

Mary Lou felt anxious and worried about being embarrassed to at the thought of participating in psychodrama:

When the psychodrama activity was described to the class, I felt a little anxious. Public speaking, and even speaking in front of the class generally makes me feel anxious. I am well aware that my face flushes whenever I am the slightest bit uncomfortable and embarrassed. I thought that this exercise that I would embarrass myself in front of the class.  (reflection paper 1)

The sponge painting was met with various reactions. Mary Lou’s feelings were ambivalent toward the sponge painting:

When the expressive arts exercise (sponge painting) was explained to the class, I immediately thought that the activity would be fun, thinking I could just express myself and not have to think about anything. The idea seemed very therapeutic. However, I was skeptical about how I could illustrate my work with my clients. (reflection paper 2)
Riley felt some initial anxiety: “The painting one; that made me anxious a little bit at first” (interview). Julie was concerned with the sponge painting when it was described, and her feelings changed as she began the activity. Her comments illustrated both initial reaction and her movement into a new phase as she engaged in the arts process. She stated:

At first I thought that I was going to struggle with the sponge painting activity because I have never been talented in an artistic way; and I also struggle with thinking abstractly with art. However to my surprise I found that once I decided on the client and got started with the sponge painting, it wasn’t that difficult. (reflection paper 2)

Speaking from the painting was the second activity. Students were asked to speak from the images of the painting, instead of about the images. From my observations in class, I noticed that students experienced some difficulty in speaking from the painting, as opposed to speaking about the painting. In my researcher memo, I wrote about what I had observed,

Only one student attempted to speak from the painting without being prompted. Each started speaking about the painting, instead of personalizing it by saying, “I am the”. This created an emotional distance by speaking about it, rather than from it. When asked to speak from the painting, they seemed embarrassed. (researcher memo)

Mary Lou reflected about her initial reaction to being asked to speak from the painting when she stated “I was very nervous about describing my painting to the class, and felt even more embarrassed about being expressive in front of the class
and speaking from the painting. Yet, I was happy with my painting and think I was able to explain it effectively to the class” (reflection paper 2)

**Arts Engagement**

As the initial reaction of thoughts and feelings about each new activity continued, an overlapping process of engaging with the arts began. Trainees began to work with the arts materials for that specific expressive arts activity. Most began by thinking about how they were going to proceed. Thinking about the project continued for a time as they worked with the arts, and then seven of the trainees became more immersed in the arts.

**Mind-body experience.** Trainees described experiences where they were engaged during expressive arts group supervision in a mind-body experience. Some trainees reported experiencing an overlap of feelings and thoughts that were continuing from their initial reactions as we began the arts activities. Several trainees found it was hard to begin the project. Two trainees described their experience of how the initial reaction overlapped with the beginning of the arts engagement. Mary Lou stated, “It took me a while to get started. I sat there for 10 minutes not really sure” (reflection paper 2). And when beginning the collage exercise, she reported, “After a couple of minutes, I started to get into the exercise and think about how I view myself as a counselor. I looked at the pictures I had cut out and saw a theme” (reflection paper 3). And Julie described her difficulty in getting started like this, “it took me a while to get started with this assignment. I think it was overwhelming for me, and I just didn’t know where to begin” (reflection paper 2). Riley and Emma felt sensations in their bodies that were related to feelings. Riley stated, “I found that my body reacted accordingly with whatever I was feeling.”
**Substantial cognitive engagement.** Substantial cognitive engagement has been defined as a learning environment where students “interact with the content in a deep and thoughtful way” (McLaughlin et al, 2005). I observed during class that trainees were focused intently on the arts projects, and were working or sitting quietly and looking thoughtful and totally engaged. From their descriptions of their experiences while they were engaged in the arts activities, trainees report being totally involved in the experience as they move beyond their initial reactions.

Trainees described how they began a period of substantial cognitive engagement. Riley explained, “I would say that some of it was cognitive, probably thinking about my client and things like that at first. So I think when it started, it was more cognitively based. She described the process in more detail:

> It started coming to me little by little how it would be represented. I started trying to think about the colors and how I would, ya know, how I would think about those colors and what they would mean. I would think of red and I would think of love, but also anger. Blue, I would think of depression or sadness, but that would calm me, so I kind of put my own feelings on it, not my client’s feelings. It was kind of me coming through after that. (Riley, interview)

This substantial cognitive engagement process is one where trainees are intensely present with their feelings and thoughts. Lindsay noticed a mood change during the timeline activity. “My mood changed as I started to reflect on my current education. I began to feel frustrated.” Several trainees felt they were able to go deeper into their feelings about their clients when doing the sponge painting and Emma feared she would not have been able to make some therapeutic connections without the painting. “What
struck me most was the emotional tone of the painting. It seemed pretty depressing; I think it was actually just my mood which was depressed that day” (reflection paper 2).

Several trainees experienced sad memories during the timeline, thinking back to deaths, and other losses. For Mary Lou, the timeline experience facilitated a multitude of feelings:

I began the activity, enjoying mapping out the highlights and pivotal moments of my life. While working, I wondered if we would be asked to share out timelines with the class. At first, I thought it would be fun to share my timeline and to hear others. However, as I added more negative moments and experiences in my life, I began to feel a little shame or disappointment. (reflection paper 1)

During the arts engagement, trainees thought about themselves and their clients. Emma stated that her painting “reminds me of how they both came from physically and sexually abusive households and grew up predominately in group homes due to behavioral problems” (reflection paper 2). Amy became more aware of her client’s experience through expressive arts group supervision. “Then I thought that this is probably how clients feel at first talking” (reflection paper 1). Lucy thought about what she chose to put on her timeline and about the experience of the timeline activity. “I found that I didn’t list much under the bad times in my life. I think that I tend to not dwell on these events” (interview).

**Sense of knowing.** After getting started with the activity, most interns described a shift from a conscious cognitive process into a process that emanated from a sense of knowing that some described as intuitive. These two ways of knowing are described by Wilbur (1993) as dualistic (cognitive) and intimate (intuitive). Further descriptions of
intuition are of a heuristically based decision making process (Bergen, 2010). Seven out of the eight participants described an intuitive sense of knowing or feelings of rightness that occurred as they moved more deeply into the arts engagement. Mary Lou described this process: “The more I thought about my client, the more I began to let myself paint without thinking consciously about what I was painting and how it would look.” And Lucy provided a description of her experience:

At first I don’t know what I’m doing, I feel a little nervous, but then it’s kind of like a drug. I get relaxed, I lose track of the time. I don’t have anything specific in mind, just kind of let my fingers go, and I was aware of that, just letting go.

(interview)

Trainees’ descriptions portray a letting go of conscious decision-making that is replaced with a sense of knowing what to do next. Julie stated, “Once we started everything, it just kind of came to me.” (interview) Amy described the same process as “So then I just kind of did it. I stopped thinking so much about it because I can get stuck thinking too much about things instead of just doing it.” (interview) For Jane, there was a sense of being drawn to choose different images and words during the collage activity, “I basically just picked things I was drawn to, although certain things just popped out to me as I picked them up that had significance.” (interview) Emma’s painting emerged without planning what she would paint: “I painted, not on purpose, somewhat of a chaotic storm outside them and almost a shelter above them.” (reflection paper 2) For these seven trainees, the experience of the arts engagement was one where an inner sense of knowing or intuition became the guide for the work that they created at some point during the arts engagement process.
Lindsay described a different experience during the arts engagement. She found that she stayed in cognitive process that was rationally conscious and present.

Rather, I worked to compose a patterned picture in an orderly way. I mentioned in my last reflection paper that it is difficult for me to do expressive arts activities because I think too much about the end result. As much as I tried to let my painting flow, I took great interest in creating symbolism. Although I am comfortable with the ambiguity of the counseling profession, I still like to be organized and therefore applied this mentality to my painting.

(reflection paper 2)

Reflection

Trainees were reflective during and after the expressive arts group supervision. For some trainees, this reflection began during the arts engagement, and for others it followed the arts engagement. What distinguished the beginning of the reflection process from the arts engagement process was the emergence of thoughts about the arts process and their clients, themselves, and supervision. Trainees also reflected on the expressive arts activities themselves, and the importance of peer feedback to the reflection process. The trainees’ thoughts were generated through the involvement with the arts processes.

Thoughts about clients and themselves as clinicians. Trainees reflected on themselves as clinicians, and on the use of expressive arts with their clients. Mary Lou thought the timeline would be “a good way to solicit a broad base of information about the client’s life,” or “to explore significant moments in their lives in-depth” (reflection paper 1). Julie also found the timeline to be “interesting in terms of my personal life and also for use with clients (reflection paper 1).
Emma reflected on her painting, and what it says about the therapeutic process. “I thought about the therapy process as helping them to cut loose those ties that held them back from their growth and that the loose leaves represented a kind of personal growth and freedom.” Reflecting on her counselor identity collage, Emma wrote:

I added it in because I thought of a part of my role as counselor is to establish a level of trust and connection with the client so that I can provide another place for my clients to share deeply personal things. (reflection paper 2)

And Julie’s painting expressed hope for her client:

I think giving him the bright color wasn’t necessarily what was happening now, but what I hope for him speaking up more and standing up for his kid, and kind of say how he feels instead of letting the mother just control everything. (reflection paper 2)

Riley found the arts engagement to be a springboard for creating a vision of the future. “It got me thinking about my office, and how I would include things like that, especially when working with kids…I really liked that as far as being something I would include in what I do.” (reflection paper 3)

Mary Lou wrote about the reflective process she experienced during the sponge painting by saying:

All of the colors reaching towards her seemed to be all of her supports trying to help her. I went with this new take on my painting, and let the colors become personified as my client’s mother, the agency, and myself. I used brown as the mother, and made strokes that were desperate to reach the fiery ball. (reflection paper 2)
For Mary Lou, reflection began while she was painting, and continued throughout and after the arts engagement.

Lucy described how her reflections began during the feedback and sharing and continued for days. Lucy’s reflections “happened afterwards when we were showing and talking about it, when I would describe it, I know that the feelings were different when I was doing it and later when I described it. And wrote about it, a few days later, the immediate feelings weren’t there, so it was like being in a backseat and seeing how I was and how I was thinking at this point.” (interview) Emma described how her painting led to a new perspective on her client’s family:

There were violent slashes in the painting, and at first when I was doing them I thought about my client’s violent behaviors and how he lashes out at himself and others, including cutting himself, which he did upon his most recent relapse. Some of the slashes have the colors of all three hearts to show how my client’s pain is bound with that of his family’s and how they all affect each other. For some reason, the red slash beneath the hearts almost looks like it is trying to catch the tears. (reflection paper 2)

**Thoughts about self and supervision.** Trainees reflected on themselves and expressive arts group supervision activities. Riley talked about how she thought about herself at the end of the expressive arts group supervision:

I can’t draw, but I can be artistic. Just in a different way. Maybe not drawing or sketching, but you know, doing different kinds of projects. It is something that I think I would like to do again. Because it really made me think about how I
would use these symbols as a way to represent myself. I really liked that a lot. (reflection paper 3)

Lucy reflected on the differences between expressive arts group supervision and traditional supervision, and found this new experience was able to give her something helpful in supervision. Lucy said, “I think it added a dimension to the seminar that is just a little bit more than say going over tapes.” And later in her interview, Lucy followed up on that theme by saying, “I think it’s opening up a door of a place that maybe I sometimes don’t use enough, or it is completely unawares to me that it’s there and it’s a tool for me to use, another tool”. Julie’s reflections included an image of “being out the box”, and she described the difference between the expressive arts group supervision and traditional supervision, “So, when you are doing something out of the box, you start to think out of the box. She found that for her, “different things come out of doing it this way than the traditional way.” (interview) Lindsay stated that expressive arts activities “relieve a lot of stress”, and “helps her reflect”. After years of being in school, she is “sick of writing, and I think this was more effective.” (interview)

Some accounts had a qualitatively different feel because of the language used to describe their experience. Two words that were used, noticed or realized, were used to describe an awareness that seemed to appear from a non-conscious place. This emerging awareness facilitated selfknowledge, and led to trainees reflections on ways to use the activities with their clients. Emma gives the following account of her painting,

I noticed that they were each attached to thin dark strings woven together. The leaves then began to represent to me things about the client, certain ideas they have, emotions that hold them back, hurtful relationships, whatever it is for the
client that keeps them down. The strings were what kept them bound to these things. I thought about the therapy process as helping them to cut loose these ties that held them back from their growth and the leaves represented a kind of personal growth and freedom. (reflection paper 2)

And Jane wrote about her recognition during the arts engagement, “During the exercise, I recognized myself again noticing a lack of self-confidence and self-acceptance” (reflection paper 1). This recognition also occurred to Julie as she engaged in the timeline activity, “an opportunity to notice the struggles I’ve overcome.” She then connected her own recognition to her work with clients, “I think clients could also benefit in this way” (reflection paper 1).

**Thoughts about expressive arts supervision activities.** Trainees reflected on their reactions to the various expressive arts activities, liking one, but not another. Trainees in general expressed talked and wrote more about the first activities we did each day in class and had more positive initial reactions to the timeline, sponge painting, and collage, and less positive reactions to the psychodrama, speaking from the painting, and group machine activities. Mary Lou found the timeline enjoyable and thought it could be helpful to clients. “I really enjoyed some of the exercises, especially the one where we mapped out our timeline of our life from birth to present. I think that would be really helpful” (interview). However, this was not universal. One intern, Lucy, wrote about her negative experience with the timeline. “Thinking more about this, it really didn’t do much for me cause I couldn’t find much about it that I wanted to write about. Very little reaction. I got nothing” (reflection paper 1). Lucy described her reaction further by stating; “I found that I didn’t list much under the bad times in my life. I think I try to not
dwell on these events” (reflection paper 1). In her interview, she described a decision to focus on the positive things in her life.

Lucy was positive about the psychodrama and wrote, “The second activity I found to be more fun. I got more of a reaction from it than the first one. It brought up scenarios that I have dealt with in my own family” (reflection paper 1). The psychodrama was new for Lucy, but it portrayed similar relationships in her own family.

More students were comfortable and enjoyed the collage more than any other activity. Trainees, who experienced positive reactions to this activity might have had previous experiences with collage, were open to trying new activities and learning new skills, or both. According to Riley, “I thought it would be fun. I’ve done collages before, and I liked it a lot. I had a positive experience before, so I was excited again” (reflection paper 3).

Having a previous positive experience of collage provided Riley with knowledge about what it might be like for her to do a collage again. It was not new to her, and she could enjoy it from the beginning.

Other students who did not think of themselves as artistic found collage to be less challenging than other art forms. Emma stated that “I really enjoyed this project! I think it was easier than the last one because I could pick out things I was drawn to rather than having to come up with something from scratch (easier for the less artistically inclined!) It felt like less pressure” (reflection paper 3). Amy described similar feelings about the collage activity by saying:

This project was my favorite. Again, as I mentioned in my previous reflection, I do not consider myself an artistic person! Therefore, being able to glue magazine
pictures, tissue paper, and other fun crafty things onto a piece of paper to form something unique was my kind of thing. (reflection paper 3)

Not everyone was comfortable or enjoyed the collage in the beginning. Mary Lou stated that she “began the collage exercise by clipping words and pictures that for one reason or another appealed to me. I felt a little childish at first, and wasn’t sure what I was looking for” (reflection paper 3)

Jane was interested in learning more about the group machine activity, and stated: “In regards to the group machine activity, I would be interested in learning more about the process” (reflection paper 3). Emma found the same activity to be difficult, “Regarding the group machine, I don’t have much I feel I can reflect on. I just felt silly and uncomfortable doing it” (reflection paper 3).

**Thoughts about peer feedback.** Trainees found the process of sharing their experiences and artwork to be helpful in developing additional perspectives on their arts projects, themselves, and their clients. Those who commented on this part of the arts engagement experience found the peer feedback to be an important part of their reflective process. Julie stated “there were things I didn’t notice until talking about them afterwards, like how I made myself a link between everybody (client, client’s family) and also put myself in between my supervisor/agency and the client’s family” (reflection paper 2). Lindsay found that others’ feedback helped her see her artwork through multiple perspectives:

I think the reflection part came when I heard other people talking because it made me see my picture through my own lens, but it was influenced by what other people say, and it almost put me in more of an analyzing state where I tried to
figure things out. I remember thinking what I was going to say and it was constantly changing as each new person went. (interview)

Amy described the new perspective she got on her painting; “the feedback was interesting because I was able to see it from another person’s view”. (reflection paper 2) Jane acknowledged the importance of her peers’ feedback and felt it changed her perspective of the experience:

I was intrigued by the thoughts of my classmates. In regards to my own painting, I seemed to have a concrete explanation. However, after hearing feedback from my peers, I again realized that expressive arts activities are not as much about an explanation as it is about the process. (reflection paper 2)

Trainees reported thinking still thinking about their experiences after the activities. Some showed their work to outsiders, and Riley describes the impact of sharing it with her mother:

I actually talked about it later. I kind of went through and told her, and that made me think even more because when you retell a story you almost kind of think about it more in depth. I thought about it more, about my hopes for my clients and their goals. (interview)

Transformation

As trainees reflected on their experience of expressive arts group supervision, they described changes in themselves personally and professionally. Transformation was a major theme in the trainees’ descriptions of their expressive arts group supervision experiences. They talked about new realizations about themselves and their lives, new conceptualizations for working with clients, increased self-awareness, and increased self-
confidence. These will be illustrated by the trainees’ descriptions in the following sections: (a) personal transformation and (b) professional transformation.

**Personal transformation.** Some trainees discovered that what they knew about themselves was confirmed and clarified by their experience of expressive arts group supervision. Jane anticipated a needed change,

> I mean I think that all of these activities were helpful in helping me realize that I need to be more like that [more free]. I’m the type of person who’s always thinking about what is going to happen in the future. When I’m working with one of my clients it’s hard for me to be like that. I’m doing the same thing. I think they were helpful in letting me experience being freer. It’s something I already knew, but it helped me to get clearer. (interview)

Lucy developed a vision of herself and her work with clients in the future. She stated:

> I see it’s making me a fuller person, and what I can give to my clients, and connecting with the client and helping them visualize something that they may not see, and it resonates with me as something I would like to use to work with people. (reflection paper 3)

A majority of the trainees referred to personal growth they had experienced as part of the process of expressive arts supervision. Lindsay found that the painting process helped her gain some perspective on her life.

> Some of it, I think I knew, but I think during the painting you think more about it and maybe develop it more. I think it was undeveloped, like I hadn’t really thought about it as much if I hadn’t done that. I definitely learned that my life has been mostly good. (interview)
Julie stated “I think this activity gave me a good perspective on my life and it’s a good activity to do over time” (reflection paper 1). Riley realized something new about herself: “I can be artistic. I can do these kinds of things. Which you think I would know, but I don’t. It gave me more self-confidence” (reflection paper 3). Amy described her experience as enlightening, “The comfort level was fine and I felt enlightened afterwards because I felt like I learned a little bit more about myself…. I felt a little bit more self-aware” (reflection paper 1). Jane also appreciated the experience and felt changed by it. “Personally, I think that this exercise has helped me with my own self-acceptance” (reflection paper 3).

Riley experienced a growth in self-confidence in using the arts; “It made me more confident in my ability to be artistic” (interview). Emma’s transformation was becoming more aware of her feelings during the expressive arts group supervision,

I had my own personal reactions. I don’t think I would have become aware of my emotional reactions had I not done this painting…. At first I thought that I was going to struggle with the sponge painting activity because I have never been talented in an artistic. However, to my surprise, it wasn’t that difficult. (reflection paper 2)

**Professional transformation.** Another theme was professional transformation. Trainees identified changes in themselves as counselors and in their work with clients. There was a link between the personal and professional transformation that was articulated by trainees. Lucy saw that it facilitated a better session with a client because she had an experience of doing her own collage. She stated,

It helped me work with a client who was doing a treatment collage,
…on a deeper level than I could have. I think it’s a big thing I’m taking away from this experience. I have more idea of how to talk about the expressive arts work they may be doing with their other therapists, and I have more targeted questions. (interview)

Riley recognized the acquisition of a new skill: “I have now acquired a tool that I can use with the appropriate client to help them look at their life from a different point of view” (interview). Lucy found the expressive arts group supervision to be a method of reducing stress, and thought about the ways she could use expressive arts activities with her clients to reduce stress, “it relieved a lot of stress just to do those kinds of activities. When I was working with clients, I thought, I could do that with them, and I did do some with clients, and I really enjoy it.” (interview)

Creating the Mandala allowed Emma to create a metaphoric vision of her work with clients and of her own personal and professional growth. When viewing her Mandala, she reflected on the images and reflected,

After creating the Mandala, I noticed the things I was drawn to ended up (to me at least) looking soothing and peaceful but also energizing and vibrant. I thought this fit well with the kind of environment I would like to create with my clients, calm and soothing, but also happy/vibrant/energizing as they begin to connect and engage in life in more energizing ways. I noticed I picked a lot of flowers and now that I look at it reminds me of blooming, and the hope that many of my clients will embark on that kind of personal growth. Also, I think I am also working hard to develop and consider it to be a lifelong endeavor both as a
counselor and in my personal life, so maybe the flowers could represent my continuous growth or blooming. (reflection paper 3)

Mary Lou experienced a change in her feelings about her collage that she felt helped her develop professionally,

I did not really like my collage at first…. For some reason, I have really grown to love everything about my collage…. However, I now feel better about having a representation of my professional life incomplete because I am just getting started.” I recognized myself again noticing a lack of self-confidence and self-acceptance. I believe this reflection has helped me in my own work as a therapist. I would never minimize the feelings of my clients, regardless of their current situation. Therefore, I also need to credit my feelings without judging them.

(interview)

Summary

Expressive arts group supervision was a reflective, holistic process that moved through a four-phase process (FPP) and resulted in personal and professional growth. This four-phase process provides a framework to look at a variety of trainees’ descriptions that were obtained during this study. I recognize that each intern’s descriptions were affected by multiple contextual factors that may or may not have been described in the study. From my observations and trainees’ reflection papers, I noticed that three of the activities resulted in a deep process of feelings, thoughts, and reflection. These activities were the timeline, the sponge painting, and the collage. The data revealed that in the first phase of the expressive arts activity, trainees described an initial reaction of anxiety, embarrassment, and fear of judgment. Some were concerned about
being judged by others, and some immediately judged themselves as not being good at art. Others were worried about being embarrassed. A few trainees were excited and thought it might be fun. Not all of the expressive arts activities were well received by the trainees. The psychodrama activity was first met with resistance, and a second version met with limited success. Speaking from the painting and the group machine were uncomfortable for most trainees.

As trainees began the expressive arts activity, some of their initial reactions overlapped their beginning engagement with the arts process. They began by thinking and feeling about the expressive arts activity. The mind-body was engaged as the arts engagement began. For many, the arts engagement began with a substantial cognitive engagement with a gradual shift towards a more intuitive sense of knowing. For some, this intuitive sense of knowing was experienced as a different relationship to time, space, or a heightened awareness of their feelings on a physical level. Some experienced feelings more deeply or experienced a feeling of flow. The third phase of the four-phase process began for most trainees during the end of the arts engagement. Trainees began to reflect on the artwork they were finishing. They noticed things about themselves and their clients that seemed to emerge from a non-conscious place. They developed new perspectives on clients, themselves, supervision, the expressive arts activities, and the importance of peer feedback.

As trainees began to reflect on their experiences, they moved into the fourth phase of the four-phase process. They developed insights about themselves, their lives, themselves as counselors, and their work with clients. Trainees described changes in themselves such as increased self-acceptance, self-confidence, and perceptions of
creativity, self-validation, and the self as counselor. They determined expressive arts group supervision enhanced their work with clients as they developed skills in thinking outside the box, envisioning the future, developing their case conceptualizations, and themselves as counselors.

All eight trainees acknowledged that they had learned from the experience of expressive arts group supervision. Even trainees who were initially hesitant and afraid when first told of expressive arts group supervision were able to describe experiences that benefited them, and how they learned something new about themselves or their work. Amy expresses the feelings of many of her peers by stating, “I would definitely use this method with clients of my own.” (interview)
Chapter 5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop a phenomenological understanding of the individual and group experiences of master’s level counselor trainees in expressive arts group supervision. My intent was to give counselor trainees a voice about this relatively new method of counselor trainee supervision as a way to explore its use in counselor trainee supervision. I will discuss the findings of this study in relationship to the research question: What do master’s level counselor trainees experience in expressive arts group supervision? In this chapter, I will also situate the findings of this study in relation to the field of expressive arts group supervision by discussing its relevance to pre-existing literature that is anecdotal, conceptual, or research-based.

The literature in counselor trainee supervision has suggested using trainees’ experiences as a way to study constructivist approaches to supervision (Bowman, 2003; Guiffrida, 2005; Neswald-McCalip et al, 2003). This current study is the first study to explore the phenomenological experiences of master’s level counselor trainees in expressive arts group supervision.

Findings

Trainees described their experiences in chronological order, which gave a pattern to their descriptions that I have organized to make it easier for the reader. This consistent pattern can be visualized as a series of four overlapping circles, each representing an aspect of the trainees’ experience of each expressive arts activity. Within the four-phase engagement process, ten themes emerged that described the expressive arts group supervision experience of these trainees. In the first phase, initial reaction, one theme
was prominent: thoughts and feelings. In the second phase, arts engagement, three themes emerged: (a) mind-body experience, (b) substantial cognitive engagement, and (c) sense of knowing. In the third phase, reflection, four themes developed: (a) thoughts about clients and themselves as clinicians (b) thoughts about self and supervision (c) thoughts about expressive arts supervision activities, (d) thoughts about peer feedback. Finally, in the fourth phase, transformation, two themes were apparent: (a) personal and (b) professional

The findings that are suggested through the descriptions of the eight trainees in this study are (a) expressive arts supervision is a four phase process that is reflective and transformational, (b) most trainees found expressive arts group supervision to be uncomfortable initially, (c) expressive arts therapy promotes a sustained cognitive engagement, (d) an inner sense of knowing or intuition may replace a conscious thought process during the arts engagement, (e) that the process facilitates a heightened awareness of self that leads to the development of new self/client perspectives, (f) the importance of peer feedback and (g) the development of new counseling skills. These findings emanate from the descriptions of eight master’s level trainees in expressive arts group supervision, and cannot be construed to be representative of any other trainees. They do contribute to the existing literature in expressive arts supervision by giving voice to individual trainees and providing a composite description of their experiences which may inform counselor trainee supervisors.

**Anecdotal and Conceptual Literature**

Expressive arts supervision has been promoted in the literature as an experiential method of learning (Drewes and Mullern, 2008; Gladding, 2005; Lahad, 2000; Knill et
This study found that the majority of trainees’ accounts of expressive arts group supervision in this study support specific claims found in the body of conceptual or anecdotal literature in expressive arts supervision. This next section will discuss these claims in light of the research study.

Several prominent therapists have suggested that expressive arts group supervision can advance supervision goals (Gladding, 2005; Knill et al., 2005; Lahad, 2000). Bradley (1989) identified supervision goals as: (a) to assist the trainee in developing a personal and professional self, (b) to develop counseling skills, and (c) to promote accountability. Trainees in this study described ways in which they grew personally and professionally through the expressive arts group supervision. These included: (a) focusing on their clients and themselves in the art-making process, (b) making aesthetic and cognitive connections between themselves and their clients, (c) gaining new perspectives on themselves and their clients, and (d) gaining perspective and clarity on themselves as counselors. Trainees in this study developed expressive arts counseling skills through experiences with artistic materials and activities. Trainees conceptualized using expressive arts with their clients, and some utilized it during the study with clients. Trainees were accountable for reflecting and writing about their experiences during the study, and for setting up an individual interview. The results of this study support the claims that expressive arts group supervision can advance supervision goals.

Bratton et al. (2008) stated that expressive arts group supervision could stimulate a self-reflective process that leads to increased self-awareness. Trainees in this study described a reflective process that began in the second (arts engagement) and third phases
(reflection) in this expressive arts group supervision study. Trainees experienced a self-reflective process that was enhanced during peer feedback and continued while writing their reflection papers, and extended into their individual interviews. Trainees described a growth in self-awareness that developed from their participation in expressive arts group supervision. This study shows that a reflective expressive arts group supervision process leads to increased self-awareness.

Levine (2005) stated that expressive arts group supervision is initially more difficult with students from disciplines other than the arts therapies. Trainees in this study had limited experience using the arts in supervision before this study began. Many of their initial reactions to the expressive arts activities were fear and anxiety. This study provides some support for Levine’s claim, although a small minority of the trainees had divergent reactions, such as mixed feelings of excitement and anxiety, or just excitement (Knill et al., 2005).

This study adds to the knowledge of trainees’ reactions to expressive arts group supervision. In this study, students who had previous experience with a particular method described being more comfortable initially. Collage was the activity that had the most positive initial reaction. Some trainees had done collages before, and others described feeling more comfortable because the materials were spread around the room, and it was easy to pick images, words, and crafty items for their collages. Collage was the first activity of the third week of expressive arts group supervision, and trainees did not comment on an increasing comfort with the arts over the three-week study. In my observations, I noticed that students seemed more comfortable as they entered the classroom during the third week of the study.
Trainees in this study found it more difficult to do activities that involved psychodrama, the group machine, and speaking from the painting. These activities required acting or role-playing in some form and trainees found them difficult. Students’ initial reactions to these activities were most often fear, anxiety, or anticipation of being embarrassed.

In Neswald-Potter’s (2005) study on the use of the arts in master’s level supervision, students volunteered who were open to the creative supervision process. They expressed positive feelings about the creative supervision activities, and stated that they felt that having only students who wanted to be there made it a better environment for them, and increased group cohesiveness.

In this current study, students did not have a choice about whether to participate in expressive arts supervision, and there was more initial anxiety expressed than in Neswald-Potter’s study (2005). The findings from this study and Neswald-Potter’s study suggested that when students feel more comfortable, they have less anxiety and that choosing to participate in expressive arts group supervision is one way to make students more comfortable. This study suggests that using materials and methods that students are familiar with can also make students more comfortable.

Lahad (2000) stated that trainees gain new perspectives from engaging in expressive arts group supervision. Trainees in this current study developed new perspectives on themselves and their lives, their work with clients, and on the clients themselves. These perspectives emerged through the arts engagement and reflection process. The arts engagement allowed the trainees to interact with color, symbols, and
metaphors and their perspectives were enriched by other students’ feedback. This study supports Lahad’s (2000) position.

Wilkins (1995) described expressive arts group supervision as being an intuitive and reflective process. Trainees in this study provide support for her statement when they described an intuitive process that developed during the second phase (arts engagement) of expressive arts group supervision. For the trainees in this study, this intuitive process led to a reflective process. In the beginning of the arts engagement, students began with a cognitive process that became intuitive for seven out of eight trainees. These trainees described an intuitive process while working with the arts materials, that at times made them lose track of time, feel a sense of flow, and be totally engaged in the art-making.

Newsome et al. (2005) stated that trainees could gain access to their feelings and perceptions about clients through expressive arts group supervision. Only two of the six expressive arts activities were directed specifically towards working with clients. The sponge painting and speaking from the painting activities were designed to explore the trainees’ thoughts and feelings about their clients. This study provides support for Newsome et al.’s (2005) claim. In this study, trainees wrote about feelings that emerged during the sponge painting that were deeper, and made them more aware of their clients and themselves. New perceptions of their clients and themselves emerged from the process of expressive arts group supervision.

Trainees can gain skills in conceptualizing cases (Lahad, 2000). Trainees in this study described gaining new insights into their work with clients that developed from the sponge painting process. They developed skills in conceptualizing their clients’ feelings
and issues, and envisioning future goals for their clients. Trainees described how expressive arts activities could provide a process for conceptualizing cases that brings new perspectives.

The use of metaphor can be used to facilitate the expression of thoughts and feelings, and promote growth and development (Guiffrida et al., 2007). In this study, the use of a Mandala collage as a metaphor for self-as-therapist allowed trainees to express their thoughts and feelings about being a therapist and clarify their identity of themselves as therapists. For most, this lead to a stronger sense of counselor identity.

**Research in Expressive Arts Supervision**

There has been a dearth in research in expressive arts group supervision. Existing studies on the use of expressive arts supervision with master’s level trainees have been important in providing an understanding of the effectiveness of certain approaches (Marcos, Coker & Jones, 2004; Stone & Amundson, 1989), benefits and enjoyment of expressive arts supervision (Bowman, 2003), and the establishment of a regenerative model (Neswald-McCallip et al., 2003; Neswald-Potter, 2005). Other studies with undergraduate counseling students (Ishyama, 1988) showed positive results with drawing, and Lett's study (1995) explored the phenomenological experiences of recently graduated psychologists in expressive arts supervision.

This current study expands the understanding of master’s level trainees lived experience of expressive arts group supervision, and gives trainees a voice concerning their experience. This study was conducted in a traditional classroom as an adjunctive experience, and added to the understanding of what trainees experience in expressive arts group supervision as part of a traditional internship class. For the purposes of this study,
*traditional internship class* is defined as one that uses a variety of teaching methods such as case presentations, discussion of cases, personal exploration, tape review, discussion of counseling issues in the field, article reviews, and some experiential exercises, including art-making.

The findings in this study include the emergence of a consistent pattern of experience that I have used to frame the discussion of themes. This pattern was described as a process of overlapping phases of expressive arts group supervision. To identify this pattern, I titled it the four-phase process. It was not the intention of this study to look at the process of expressive arts group supervision, but rather to explore the in-depth experiences of master’s level interns. I did not expect trainees to describe a process of expressive arts group supervision. However, as trainees described their experiences this process emerged. Two other studies looked at the process of creative supervision in master’s level students (Neswald-McCallip et al., 2003; Neswald-Potter, 2005), and developed a cyclical model of creative supervision called the *regenerative model*. The regenerative model described a process of feeding back into itself, whereas this study’s four-phase process framed trainees’ experiences as they occurred during and after expressive arts group supervision. In this study, the four phases occurred in an overlapping pattern, with one phase still occurring while another started. (See Appendix D)

Both the regenerative model and this study developed from the descriptions, observations, and reflections of master’s level supervision students. Differences in the participant selection process between the studies may account for variation in the descriptions of the process, or may describe different aspects of the process.
Neswald-McCallip et al.’s (2003) and Neswald-Potter’s (2005) studies were conducted with trainees who chose to be part of the creative supervision process. In Neswald-Potter’s study, she described the comfort students felt by having other students in the class who chose to be there, and no students who did not want to be there.

Students in Neswald’s et al.’s (2003) and Neswald-Potter’s (2005) studies’ experiences differed from the trainees in this study in the following ways. Creative supervision was collaborative, and activities were designed around student needs. In this study, the curriculum was designed before the study began. Trainees’ individual needs were addressed at the beginning of class, and then followed by the expressive arts activities. Creative supervision had three participants in one study and five in the next. Trainees described having five in the group as conducive to a comfortable environment.

One of the findings of Neswald-McCallip et al.’s (2003) and Neswald-Potter’s (2005) studies was that the trainees experienced group cohesion. This current study had eight trainees who did not describe increased group cohesion, which may be reflective of the size of the supervision group, and their inability to opt out of expressive arts group supervision. Creative supervision students also attended both creative and traditional supervision classes. This study’s participants received expressive arts supervision for 3 weeks as part of a traditional class.

These differences created a different supervision, and each has its benefits. This study gives a voice to all students, those who are drawn to the use of the arts in supervision, and those that are not. It did not provide an opportunity for students to create their own curriculum, but relied on the arts process to meet the needs of the student.

Neswald’s et al.’s (2003) and Neswald-Potter’s (2005) studies demonstrated the powerful
cohesiveness that can be obtained in groups that choose the arts-based supervision.

Despite the differences between these older studies, and this current study, trainees in all three studies found the use of arts in supervision to be a dynamic process of personal growth and self-discovery that led to an increase in self-awareness.

Most research studies in the use of the arts in counselor trainee supervision investigated the use of one or more modality and their impact on trainees. A pilot study by Marcos et al. (2004) explored the impact of sand tray supervision with beginning practicum students during one class period with a comparison study. They found that trainees who participated in sand tray supervision scored higher on case conceptualization. Trainees in this current study described how participation in the sponge painting activity helped them find ways to illustrate thoughts and feelings through imagery and color. This process helped them see their clients’ lives more clearly. This suggested that it is the experience of engaging in the creative process that provides new perceptions.

Several studies have focused on the use of drawing in supervision. Stone & Amundson (1989) found that drawing was an effective way to help trainees present emotionally charged cases and contributed to counselor development. They also perceived supervision that included drawing as having more value. Trainees in this study described how they connected emotionally with their lives and the lives of clients using expressive arts group supervision. Several commented on finding the expressive arts group supervision more helpful than traditional supervision.

Ishyama’s (1988) study on the use of drawing with undergraduate counseling students found that most found it helpful, but there was variation in their responses.
Some found it difficult in conceiving of a metaphor, and some found both approaches to supervision helpful. Two trainees in this current study described themselves as cognitive than intuitive, and others reported difficulty in beginning the arts engagement, but all reported benefits. This study did not attempt to compare the expressive arts group supervision process to the traditional supervision to see which students preferred, but some students volunteered that the expressive arts supervision added something helpful. Ishiyama (1988) suggested that visual learners or students who are more comfortable with arts-based experiences might benefit more.

This current study provided an opportunity to add to the understanding of trainees’ individual reactions to expressive arts supervision. I had anticipated in my pre-study interview that some students might not like expressive arts group supervision, but neither the previous literature in the field or my teaching in expressive arts had explicated the trainees’ reactions to various expressive arts activities. The initial anxiety that most trainees felt when they heard of the expressive arts activities had not been reported in the literature, nor elicited in my pre-study interview. As the findings of this study emerged, it became clear that most trainees experienced anxiety, fear of judgment, self-judgment, and embarrassment as they thought about engaging in the proposed expressive arts supervision activity. Student’s descriptions include a) thoughts of not being artists, b) comparisons with others, and 3) fears of looking silly. These initial reactions faded as interns became engaged in the activities itself. Although anxiety was the predominant initial reaction, one student consistently expressed excitement about the activities, and another expressed a combination of fear and excitement. This study’s findings concerning the variety of intern reactions, as well as the amount of anxiety, that trainees experienced
initially in expressive arts group supervision can help counselor educators make better
decisions about incorporating expressive arts in group supervision.

These findings are important in developing curricula in expressive arts group
supervision, and point to the need to be aware of each trainee’s needs to feel safe and
supported as they explore this new modality. Despite trainee’s initial anxiety, trainees
felt that expressive arts group supervision was helpful in facilitating their personal and
professional growth.

Lett’s (1995) study of five recently graduated psychologists used a
phenomenological approach to describe the experiences of two trainees in a simultaneous
drawing and talking supervision process. Trainees in Lett’s study described shifts in
awareness that occurred during and after the supervision process. In this study, trainees
described shifts in awareness as they had feelings and thoughts about the expressive arts
activities, then became engaged with the art. Shifts occurred as they reflected on their
experience, and experienced realizations and new perceptions about themselves and their
work. Lett’s (1995) study described a holistic knowing that was achieved by one
supervisee through engaging in “a spiraling interaction between her visual sense, her
verbalization, her emotions, and her bodily feeling self”. In Lett’s (1995) study, trainees
described a flow of thoughts, feelings, and reflections that resulted from an interaction
with the arts activities. Two trainees mentioned a bodily feeling sense that provided a
holistic knowing. Lett’s study is the only other study that explored the inner experiences
of trainees in expressive arts group supervision. Lett’s focus was on the ways that
therapists become more intentionally self-knowing, while this study’s intent was to
explore the experiences of master’s level trainees in arts-based group supervision. Both
Let’s (1995) study and this current study describe an increase in self-awareness that occurred from engaging in the arts, and reflecting on the process. Both describe shifts in awareness that occur from interaction with the arts, peers, and reflection.

Bowman (2003) found that there was a correlation between master’s level trainees who rated themselves as more creative and their enjoyment of expressive arts group supervision. In contrast, my study found that trainees had various experiences and reactions to the individual arts activities. Only two trainees identified themselves as creative in this current study, and one of them found the activities “enriching and reflective” (Emma, reflection paper 3). The other creative intern liked the painting, but not the other activities, initially. Others who did not consider themselves artistic experienced anxiety initially, but then were able to fully engage in the process. From this study, it seems that there are multiple reasons that contribute to a supervisee’s comfort or discomfort, like or dislike of expressive arts activities. My study demonstrated that trainees who had engaged in an activity before were more comfortable. It also showed that students who lack confidence would have more trouble with their work being seen or shared, or with engaging in an acting scenario or imaginative role-play. Finally, this study suggested that engaging in an arts activity before did not guarantee that an intern would like that activity.

One of the trainees stated that it was a personal challenge to engage in expressive arts group supervision because it was new and felt risky. She understood that taking appropriate risks could be a growth opportunity, and was not something to avoid. She wrote a message that therapists often give clients; that growth often occurs when we are
somewhat uncomfortable, engaging in new behavior, being vulnerable, and sharing with another.

**Implications for Expressive Arts Group Supervision**

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of master’s level trainees’ experiences in expressive arts group supervision and to the process through which personal and professional growth is facilitated in an arts-based supervision group. Because this study concerns the experiences of students involved in a relatively new educational practice, it is helpful to understand the implications of their experiences to practice. Understanding trainees’ experiences allows supervisors to use expressive arts in supervision with more creativity, sensitivity, and effectiveness.

First, expressive arts group supervision is a reflective process that can be used by supervisors as an adjunctive method in supervision. Expressive arts group supervision can help trainees develop personally and professionally through facilitating self-awareness and self-understanding in trainees. Trainees described being able to see themselves and their clients more clearly than they could through traditional supervision.

Second, most trainees in this study, who were less familiar with expressive arts in supervision, found themselves initially anxious and fearful about the arts activities. When using expressive arts group supervision, there is a need to create a safe environment that is conducive to this method. My experience in teaching expressive arts therapy with undergraduates and master’s counseling students suggests that (a) keeping class size small makes trainees more comfortable and allows ample time for processing, (b) conducting class in a space with plenty of room for movement, art-making and psychodrama allows for a conducive environment, (c) providing each student with plenty
of their own space to work allows for more engagement in the art-making, and (d) allowing space for materials to be out where they can be seen and are easily obtainable facilitates comfort and interest.

The findings of this study suggest that students move through an initial uncomfortable reaction, and become fully engaged in expressive arts supervision. It did not indicate whether smaller or larger class size would affect the comfort level of the trainees in expressive arts group supervision.

Supervisors who use expressive arts in their own work with clients, and who are experienced and comfortable using the arts can reduce initial anxiety in trainees. To further reduce anxiety, supervisors can begin by explaining the expressive arts group supervision process, assign articles or books on expressive arts, and show videos on expressive arts before beginning the in-class work.

Trainees in this study indicated that not knowing what was going to happen was a cause of anxiety. To reduce anxiety, the curriculum can be explained, and a map of the curriculum given to the trainees as part of the syllabus. Trainees may have less anxiety with the structure of group guidelines. Confidentiality is a guideline that is part of group supervision. Other guidelines that I have found helpful when teaching expressive arts with undergraduates and master’s students are: (a) maintain a non-judgmental attitude toward self and others, (b) express feelings and thoughts (c) focus on process, not product. In my experience, when students forget these guidelines, they are less comfortable.

Third, the choice of activities is important to the success of the supervision. Supervision goals can be met with a variety of arts-based activities. Trainees who are
new to expressive arts group supervision are more comfortable with materials that are low skill such as clay, collage, finger painting, and writing activities. As supervision progresses, trainees can be introduced to movement, psychodrama, sound and play to explore themselves and their clients issues.

Chapter Six. Conclusions

Expressive arts group supervision has been developed from the practice of expressive arts therapy and is a relatively new approach to counselor trainee supervision. Expressive arts supervision has been proposed in the counselor supervision literature as an effective constructivist approach to meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student and client population. Unfortunately, because this method is new, little had been previously researched about the experiences of students in this supervision method.

The results of this phenomenological study have provided a glimpse into eight master’s level students’ in-depth experiences of expressive arts group supervision. This study was conducted in a traditional classroom as part of the semester’s internship supervision. It included 3 weeks of expressive arts activities, followed by 2 weeks of individual interviews. Students in this study described a four-phase process that included
initial reaction, arts engagement, reflection, and transformation. Trainees provided valuable insight into the thoughts, feelings, and meaning made during expressive arts group supervision. This initial study on the experiences of trainees in expressive arts group supervision gives a voice to trainees in a relatively new supervision method, contributes to the understanding of trainees’ perceptions of expressive arts group supervision, and sets the stage for more research into this promising pedagogical approach.

**Strengths of the Study**

One of the strengths of the study is its methodology and design. Although other studies looked at the expressive arts supervision process and outcomes of the method, this was the first to use a phenomenological methodology to explore the experiences of master’s level traineeship students in expressive arts group supervision. I chose phenomenology as a way to stay close to the actual descriptive words of the trainees to better understand their experiences. This experience provides the reader with an in-depth understanding of this group of traineeship students, and adds to the current scholarship on the use of experiential and expressive arts methods in counselor trainee supervision. This study followed Moustakas’s (1994) steps for analysis of the data, which provided a structure to review data from student reflection papers, researcher observations, and individual student interviews.

Another methodological strength of this study is the use of reflection papers and interviews to obtain data. These provided rich descriptions of individual student’s experiences. The interview offered an opportunity to collect additional data and to member check the findings of the individual reflection papers. Before each individual
interview, I reread that student’s reflection papers, and my observation notes. From that data, I devised probes that would answer questions that had arisen from reading the reflection papers. As the four-phase process emerged in the data, I began to describe the process, and ask trainees about their relationship to and understanding of this process.

Another methodological strength was the pre-study interview conducted by my co-teacher, Margie McCarty. The purpose of this interview was to increase my awareness of my preconceptions and biases concerning the use of expressive arts group supervision. I also bracketed thoughts and early working hypotheses. I wrote memos to explore my thinking about the data I was collecting and analyzing.

A final strength of the study is a larger number of participants than earlier qualitative studies on the use of expressive arts group supervision with master’s level trainees. This larger number of participants allowed for more descriptions of the experience of expressive arts group supervision to emerge.

**Limitations**

This research was conducted in the beginning of the second semester of a group traineeship class. I was a co-teacher for the class in the semester before the study. I developed a supervisor/supervisee relationship with the students during the first semester that may have contributed to students desire to please me in their responses in their reflection papers, during class, and in interviews. I repeatedly stated that I was looking for their honest, in-depth responses to their experiences of expressive arts group supervision. I explained that I was looking for their individual and group responses, feelings, and thoughts, both positive and negative. However, I recognized that some
students might have had difficulty writing and talking about any negative experiences because of the relationship or power differential.

Even though consideration was given in the study to separate the evaluative component from the research component, students may have felt compromised in their ability to be totally honest in their responses to expressive arts group supervision, fearing that it would indeed change their grade or their supervisors/departments’ perceptions of them. Another potential limitation is based on trainees’ differing abilities to self-reflect on their experiences, and generates the language skills to describe them.

Another potential limitation exists based on the shortness of the study. Trainees’ responses to the study included their reactions to three weeks of expressive arts group supervision, and my experience has shown me that when trainees are more comfortable, then they have a richer experience. The findings may not be indicative of a study that lasts an entire semester or year. I suspect that the findings of a year long study would show a reduction of initial anxiety as trainees became more comfortable with the process, as well as increased personal and professional growth.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

This study provides a unique look into the inner experiences of eight trainees in expressive arts group supervision. It is a beginning that calls for additional studies to capture more trainees’ experiences. For example, all of the participants in this study were Caucasian females aged between 22 years and 50 years. There is a need for more research to be conducted on the experiences of trainees with different cultural backgrounds and gender identity as a way to begin to understand the experiences of a more diverse population of students. Students from traditionally under-represented
groups would add much to the understanding of how effective expressive arts group supervision would be with a more diverse sample. In addition, this study was conducted at a large research university in the northeast US and it would add to the understanding of expressive arts supervision if this study were conducted at other US and international university locations.

This study revealed a four-phase process of expressive arts group supervision, and it would be helpful to replicate this study with other master’s students to see if they describe the same process. The process could also be better understood by extending the length of the study. Additional time would contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of trainees in expressive arts group supervision.

Finally, it would be interesting to conduct a blind study to mitigate the possible distorted reaction of students to a supervisor with whom they have a positive relationship. Students could submit reflection papers without names, and interviews could be conducted by another researcher, one with no previous supervisee relationships.

Further studies could focus more intently on any of the findings of this study, in order to develop more understanding of the trainees’ experiences. For example, one aspect that particularly interests me is the gap in understanding that still exists in how the realizations and noticing of new perceptions occurs. Where does the new information come from that leads trainees to new understandings of themselves and their clients. It occurs through the arts process, but how? In this study, I refer to this new information as coming from an unconscious place, but it would be very interesting to hear more descriptions from trainees about their experiences of this phenomenon.
This study opens the door to more studies on the process and experiences of trainees in expressive arts group supervision. More studies will help us better understand how to use this approach in a wide variety of supervision settings. This phenomenological study was the first to give voice to master’s level trainees in expressive arts group supervision. Their descriptions suggest that this is a promising method of supervision that increases self-other awareness, and one that results in personal and professional growth.
References


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Appendix A

Information Letter

Type of Study: Empirical Phenomenological
Principal Investigator: Martha Howe Rossi
University of Rochester Department: Warner School of Education
Co-Investigator: Karen Mackie, PhD.
Faculty Advisor: Karen Mackie, PhD.

This form describes a research study that Martha Howe Rossi, student from the
University of Rochester is conducting. The purpose of this study is to explore the
experiences of Master’s level internship students in Expressive arts supervision. This
study hopes to better understand the experiences of Master’s level internship students in
Expressive arts supervision holistically, as well as through their individual learning style
preferences.

The PI estimates that 10 students will take part in the study. This study will last for 5
weeks. In the first three weeks, the PI will facilitate Expressive arts supervision. Students
can choose to participate in the interventions or choose to not participate in any of the
interventions. You do not need to participate in every Expressive arts supervision to
participate in the study. Your verbal agreement is necessary to become a participant in
the study. Your participation will not affect your grade in any way or your program of
study. Your evaluation for this class is separate from the study, and based on the rest of
the semester. Your evaluator for this class is the Co-teacher, Margie McCarthy.

During the study, all students will be able to participate in the Expressive arts
interventions. All students will write reflection papers about their thoughts, feelings, and
experiences and interpretations of the Expressive arts supervision. They will submit these
on a weekly basis. Data will only be collected from those students who participate in the
study. The PI will also write research memos of the Expressive arts process, observations
of the class process, and interpretations of the process that will be included in the data.
During the fourth and fifth weeks, participants will meet with the PI at a mutually agreed
upon location for an individual interview. Interviews will be audio taped, and transcribed
by the PI.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You are free not to
participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason without penalty or loss of
benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.
All information I receive from you, including your name and any other identifying information will be strictly confidential and will be kept under lock and key. I will not identify you or use any information that would make it possible for anyone to identify you in any presentation or written reports about this study. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in any publications.

You should be aware, however there is a small possibility that responses could be viewed by unauthorized parties. There are no other expected risks to you for helping me with this study. There are also no expected benefits for you either.

For more information concerning this research, please contact: Martha Howe Rossi at 315-263-4692.
If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research subject, or any concerns or complaints, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Human Subjects Protection Specialist at the University Research Subjects Review Board. Box 315, 601 Elmwood Avenue, Rochester, NY, 14642-8315, Telephone 011 (585) 276-0005, for long distance, you can call toll-free, 011 (877) 449-4441. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research staff or wish to talk to someone else.
Appendix B

Data Collection Map

Week One

Timeline (Expressive arts Intervention)
Psychodrama (Expressive arts Intervention)

*Data collected 1-Reflection papers, Observation memos*

Week Two

Painting (Expressive arts Intervention)
Speaking (Expressive arts Intervention)

*Data Collection 2- Reflection papers, Observation memos*

Week Three

Mandala collage (Expressive arts Intervention)
Group Machine (Expressive arts Intervention)

*Data collected 3-Reflection papers, Observation memos*

Week Four

Interviews

*Data collected 4-Audiotaped interviews*

Researcher Memos/Bracketing

Week Five

Interviews

*Data collected 5-Audiotaped interviews*

Researcher Memos/Bracketing
Appendix C

Data Analysis Map

Week One

Researcher’s memos about her observation of Expressive arts group supervision.

Review the data.

Begin data analysis on each individual supervisee’s reflection papers.

Horizonalize the data.

Begin to build a file of relevant statements for each supervisee about Expressive arts supervision.

Bracket researchers’ biases in memos.

Week Two

Researcher’s memos about her observation of Expressive arts group supervision.

Continue data analysis on each individual supervisee’s reflection papers.

Continue to collect relevant statements from each supervisee.

Begin to determine Invariant constituents.

Continue to bracket in researcher memos.

Week Three

Researcher’s memos about her observation of Expressive arts group supervision.

Continue data analysis on each individual supervisee’s reflection papers.

Continue to collect relevant statements from each supervisee.

Continue to develop Invariant constituents.
Cluster the Invariant constituents into Themes.

Check the themes against the original words of the participants.

**Week Four**

Conduct interviews

Continue to expand the descriptions from the reflection papers.

Transcribe interviews.

Develop Invariant constituents, and Themes from the interviews.

**Week Five**

Continue interviews, transcribe data, and continue analysis as in week four.

Write Individual Textural/Structural Analysis.

Develop Composite Textural/Structural Analysis.
Appendix D

Four-Phase Process

Initial Reaction

Arts Engagement

Reflection

Transformation