

ART AS A TECHNIQUE IN ELEMENTARY COUNSELING

by 680

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B. A., Southwestern College, 1959

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1969

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1969
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for their continued confidence and support to my husband, Cliff Kater, and our children, Dale and Tami. Without their cooperation and sacrifice this work could never have been done.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

As early as 1928 interest was shown in elementary counseling,¹ but not until the 1960's did elementary guidance come to be viewed as an actual part of the educational system in many places. In 1962 Hill found that only fifteen of the fifty states had published statements concerning standards for elementary guidance and counseling.² Impetus to the development of the field was given in 1964 by provisions in the National Defense Education Act for training of elementary school counselors. A conference on the Development of Effective Guidance Procedures and Techniques To Be Used by Guidance Personnel at the Elementary School Level was planned by the United States Office of Education for March 31 to April 2, 1965.³ Other conferences and institutes have been held during the present decade for planning and implementation of elementary guidance programs at the local, state, and national levels.

¹Herman J. Peters, Bruce Shertzer, and William H. Van Hoose, Guidance in Elementary Schools (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), p. 243, citing Lillian G. Gordon, "Summary of Findings of a Questionnaire on Elementary School Counseling" (Pasadena, California: City Schools, January 31, 1929), (Mimeographed).

²Ibid., p. 248.

³Ibid., p. 256.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Need for counseling techniques appropriate for elementary school counselors. With the advent of any new field of endeavor must come new techniques which will implement it.

However striking the surface similarities may be between activities of elementary and secondary school counselors, significant differences are apparent - in emphasis,⁴ in methods and techniques, and in materials used.

There has been little opportunity in elementary counseling for experimentation with those techniques which are especially appropriate for its needs. This search for new or adapted techniques is a necessary one. Brammer and Shostrom stated, "The goals of counseling are similar for children and adults, but because of the child's immaturity and dependence on others, modifications of techniques are necessary."⁵ Another reason behind the quest for unique techniques has been suggested,

The counselor must be able to communicate with the child using nonverbal techniques, such as play therapy, and he must be skillful in stimulating

⁴Ibid., p. 146.

⁵Lawrence M. Brammer and Everett L. Shostrom, Therapeutic Psychology (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1960), p. 332.

children to verbalize or to express themselves in one manner or another.⁶

Use of play media as a counseling technique in the school setting. Others, too, have suggested play therapy as a means of nonverbal communication in the elementary educational program. Eugene D. Alexander wrote of school centered play therapy,

A play setting allows the child to express himself most comfortably, he can act out feelings, extend his limited means of communicating and explore experiences not readily available to him.⁷

Richard C. Nelson added to this,

The elementary school counselor must feel free to utilize play. This, the child's own means of expression and communication, is indispensable to counseling with younger elementary children. As a tool of the elementary counselor, play should be viewed as a facilitator to expressing and working through concerns.⁸

Others who concurred that play therapy can make important contributions in the educational program are Bills⁹ and Axline.¹⁰

⁶Peters, op. cit., p. 148.

⁷Eugene D. Alexander, "School Centered Play Therapy," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 43: 256, November, 1964.

⁸Richard C. Nelson, "Elementary School Counseling with Unstructured Play Media," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 45: 27, September, 1966.

⁹Robert E. Bills, "Nondirective Play Therapy with Retarded Readers," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 14: 140-149, April, 1950.

¹⁰Virginia Axline, Play Therapy (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1947).

Limitations of play media in the school setting.

The school situation sometimes sets limitations which exclude the utilization of play therapy. Among these limitations are those of space and equipment. Many school systems lack the physical plant facilities which are necessary for play therapy, and some are unwilling to provide play materials. Another less obvious limitation is the result of critical attitudes held by some members of the community and administration toward the relative permissiveness and total acceptance necessary before play can become an effective technique in counseling.

Art media as an alternative. One facet of play, art, may fit within the limitations imposed by the school setting and still retain much of the promise which play holds as a technique for the elementary counselor. Art media are traditionally included as part of play media, but little attention has been given to art itself as a technique in counseling. This narrower field of play, delimited by the situation may, as a technique of counseling in elementary schools, prove more acceptable than play therapy. Art does not require the physical facilities nor the material necessary for the broader play therapy. Permissiveness in art is not as obvious nor does it have the physically disruptive possibilities objected to in play therapy. In addition, art may make its own special contributions.

Art has been an important form of expression and therefore of communication in all of man's history. Those who seek understanding of the individual frequently turn to his art as a means of deepening this understanding. Much study has been done concerning the various uses of art in understanding the individual, but almost no thought has been given to the use of art in counseling.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of art as a technique which may be used in counseling in the elementary schools. It has been necessary to search the fields of art therapy, art education, and psychiatry for relevant ideas and information.

II: DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Art. The term art will be used to imply a visual means of expression. The importance in this paper lies not in the aesthetic beauty of the final product but in the process of the expression.

Elementary counseling. Elementary counseling is the establishment and utilization of communication between a trained counselor and an elementary school child for the purpose of enhancing the child's self-understanding and self-esteem. Through the increased self-understanding it is hoped he will improve his mode of interacting with his environment.

Play therapy. Play can be considered from the psychoanalytic point of view; this is not the connotation given to it here.

Play therapy is based upon the fact that play is the child's natural medium of self-expression. It is an opportunity which is given to the child to "play out" his feeling and problems just as, in certain types of adult therapy,¹¹ an individual "talks out" his difficulties.

Art therapy. This term is used because there is no other which more closely describes the concept to be used, however it is used in a rather limited sense. "The aim of therapy is generally considered to be personality change of some sort."¹² As psychiatrists use the term art therapy, this definition might be applicable. However the term is frequently used by art educators to refer to the incidental emotional benefits derived from an art experience. This more nearly approximates the meaning desired. As used in reference to counseling it would denote emotional relief from tension and subsequent emotional development as a result of art expression in an accepting atmosphere. Implicit would be the processes of communication and catharsis.

¹¹Ibid., p. 9.

¹²Leona Tyler, The Work of the Counselor (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961), p. 12.

Catharsis. Webster defines catharsis as

1: purgation 2a: purification or purgation of the emotions (as pity and fear) primarily through art b: a purification or purgation that brings about spiritual renewal or release from tension 3: elimination of a complex by bringing it to consciousness and affording it expression¹³

The second meaning is the sense in which the word is used in this paper.

¹³Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, (G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1963), p. 132.

CHAPTER II

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN THROUGH ART

The elementary counselor attempts to understand the child with whom he works through communication. If art is to become a technique of the counselor, it must facilitate communication and enhance the counselor's understanding of the child.

The use of art in counseling has not been discussed in the literature. It has therefore been necessary to turn to other fields for information. Tests have been devised using children's drawings as a means of measuring both personality and intelligence. Psychoanalysts have looked at art for symbolic meanings, and art therapists and art educators have commented on various values of artistic expression. A summary of the work which may be applicable to counseling will be given here.

I. THE USE OF ART AS A PSYCHOMETRIC INSTRUMENT

In the school setting, one of the most important traits which must be assessed is that of the child's intelligence. The measurement of intelligence is based on the progressive development of the ability to learn. Combs and Snygg suggested that the child's drawings will reflect his development. "All learning of whatever variety has as its

basic characteristic a progressive differentiation from a more general perceptual field. This is perhaps best illustrated by observing changes in the drawings of young children."¹⁴

In discussing the relationship of intelligence and drawing, it is necessary to distinguish between developmental and aesthetic qualities of drawings. "If one ignores art qualities and only considers developmental status, progress in drawing can be said to parallel rather closely general intellectual development, at least during the preschool and primary years."¹⁵ This relationship provided the basis for the Goodenough test of intelligence by drawings.

In 1926 Florence Goodenough published a standardized test called the Draw-a-Man Test. An extension and revision was published in 1963 as the Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test. In the original test, the subject was simply instructed to "make a picture of a man; make the very best picture that you can."¹⁶ The revised test added the drawing of a woman and of the self. Through a standardized evaluation of the

¹⁴Arthur W. Combs and Donald Snygg, Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach to Behavior (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), p. 190.

¹⁵Hilda P. Lewis, Art Education in the Elementary School (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1969), p. 4.

¹⁶Anne Anastasi, Psychological Testing (Third edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 248.

child's drawing, a score is derived which describes his intellectual maturity, or ability to form concepts of increasingly abstract character.

The Goodenough-Harris tests are to be used with children from the ages of four or five to fourteen or fifteen. Anastasi reported that the reliability of the test has been repeatedly investigated by a variety of procedures and ranges from a test-retest correlation of .68 to a correlation of .98 between the Man and Woman Scales. Validity of the test is provided by correlations with other intelligence tests. These correlations vary widely, but the majority are over .50. Examiner effect was found to be negligible as was the effect of art training in school.¹⁷

Naomi Stewart of the Educational Testing Service wrote in the Fourth Mental Measurements Yearbook of the test,

. . . a number of studies have confirmed that it compares favorably in test-retest reliability with most group tests of intelligence applicable in the same age range. It also compares favorably in validity, as demonstrated on the basis of its correlations with the Stanford-Binet within the age groups for which it was designed, while yet possessing the advantage of being non-verbal in character. . . . The Goodenough Draw-a-Man test is undoubtedly a most valuable instrument and as such is well worth the effort to keep it fully up-to-date.¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., p. 249-250.

¹⁸O. K. Buros (ed.), The Fourth Mental Measurements Yearbook (Highland Park, N. J.: Gryphon Press, 1953), p. 292.

The Goodenough-Harris revision provided the restandardization data which Stewart felt necessary.

In view of the evidence regarding its usefulness, elementary counselors could profitably use this standardized measure of intelligence through drawings. It would best be used as a supplement to other tests of intellectual capacities commonly used in the schools. However in the case of the child with verbal handicap or in whom conventional tests create a high degree of anxiety, the counselor may gain information not otherwise available to him.

Work with the Draw-a-Man as a measure of intelligence has shown that the test measures something in addition to the child's intelligence. Because so many different approaches can be made to the task of drawing the human figure, it must be regarded as a means of personal expression. Many psychologists believe that drawings express not only the intelligence but also needs and emotions as well as the more deep-seated and lasting characteristics of the personality.

Harris, working with Goodenough and later alone, noticed that socially and emotionally maladjusted children do somewhat more poorly on the drawing test than well-adjusted children of the same general age and mental level.¹⁹ After

¹⁹Dale B. Harris, Children's Drawings as Measures of Intellectual Maturity (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), p. 36.

a comprehensive review of the literature on the projective tests of children's drawings, Harris reached the following conclusions:

1. Children as well as adults intentionally adapt lines and color in drawings to indicate moods, states or affect. However, it is not possible from the available evidence to state that there is a language of line, form or color particularly expressive of affect.
2. There is little evidence that the human figure drawing is in fact a drawing of the self, presented directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly.
3. When children are assigned the task of drawing the "self", they approach the task representatively and realistically. . . .
4. A number of general statements based on the research literature may be made concerning the use of drawings in the clinical study of the human personality. The more cautious and generalized of these statements are plausible common sense. The more specific claims and positive assertions do not seem to have reasonable support in the accumulated evidence.
5. A survey of the research and clinical literature is persuasive; the projective hypothesis as it applies to human figure drawings has never been adequately or consistently formulated, and systems for the evaluation of such drawings have, for the most part, been exceedingly loose. Consequently, the assessment of drawings by such methods very often shows modest reliability and low validity. The more rigorous the conditions of the experiment--control of variables, matching of control samples, and the like--the lower the validity of the human figure drawing as a measure of affect and personality.²⁰

Others working with drawings have reached different conclusions. While administering the Draw-a-Man for

²⁰Ibid., p. 67.

intelligence assessment, Karen Machover, a clinical psychiatrist, developed a method of evaluating projected personality characteristics in the drawing of the human figure.²¹ This device, the Draw-a-Person, or D-A-P, has become popular in personality diagnosis. It consists of asking the subject to draw a person, then to make a figure of the sex other than the first drawing.

Serious questions have been raised concerning the usefulness of the measure. Both Buros' Fourth and Fifth Mental Measurements Yearbooks expressed criticisms relating to inadequacy of theoretical bases and the absence of statistical normative data and reliability and validity information. The review in the Fourth ended, ". . . drastic improvements are needed before the draw-a-person technique should be employed in personality appraisals."²² Kitay wrote in the Sixth Yearbook, "For evaluation of voluminous research on human figure drawing, the reviews by Swenson . . . are most useful. Swenson concludes that more research contradicts Machover's hypotheses on interpretation than supports them."²³

²¹Karen Machover, Personality Projection in the Drawing of the Human Figure (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1949), p. 20.

²²Buros, op. cit., p. 111.

²³O. K. Buros (ed.), The Sixth Mental Measurements Yearbook (Highland Park, N. J.: Gryphon Press, 1953), p. 229.

Even more serious objections occur to the use of the D-A-P in the schools. The valuation was developed through work mainly with adults and in the clinical setting. Seemingly meaningful findings can not be generalized to the normal child in the school setting. Harris aptly pointed out, ". . . it may be that drawing analysis has a different utility for children than for adults."²⁴

Research done in the schools with children has not confirmed Machover's hypotheses. In a study using second and fourth grade children no support was given to the hypothesis relating figure size to energy level, large head to reading disability, arm length to ambition, and arm width to achievement.²⁵ Another study was concerned with relationship between aggression and the size of human figure drawings. With third grade children, size of figure was found to be unrelated to aggressiveness.²⁶ In view of the facts now available, the only legitimate use of the D-A-P by the elementary counselor would be for research purposes.

²⁴Harris, op. cit., p. 66.

²⁵Ann F. McHugh, "Children's Figure Drawings and School Achievement," Psychology in the Schools, 1: 52, January, 1964.

²⁶Monroe M. Lefkowitz, "Aggression and Size of Human Figure Drawings," Psychology in the Schools, 1: 314, July, 1964.

Another projective drawing test is the House-Tree-Person Projective Technique devised by John N. Buck. The H-T-P involves the drawing of a house, a tree, and finally a person. It was originally meant as a measure of intelligence as well as a projective tool. The H-T-P as a measure of intelligence required so much time, and scoring was so ambiguous that little use has been made of it for this purpose.²⁷ Extensive use has been made of the H-T-P as a projective instrument. The drawing of a house is considered to arouse associations concerning the individual's home and those living with him, the tree is to be interpreted as pertaining to his life role and his ability to derive satisfaction from his environment in general, and the drawing of a person is supposed to reveal information concerning interpersonal relationships.

Some clinicians may find helpful leads in such drawings when they are considered jointly with other information about the individual case. But the elaborate and lengthy administrative and scoring procedures described by Buck appear unwarranted in the light of the highly inadequate nature of the supporting data.²⁸

Haworth commented, in the Sixth Mental Measurements Yearbook, "The most recent research studies designed to test various hypotheses connected with the H-T-P's rationale

²⁷O. K. Buros (ed.), The Sixth Mental Measurements Yearbook (Highland Park, N. J.: Gryphon Press, 1953), p. 215.

²⁸Anne Anastasi, Psychological Testing (Third edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 508.

have generally reported non-significant findings."²⁹ The conclusion is obvious that the elementary counselor with a non-clinical background can not make use of the H-T-P following Buck's criteria for evaluation.

Although other evaluations have been constructed, those discussed above are the most widely known and used. The published projective evaluations based on children's drawings have not been supported by research evidence. When the child's drawing is used as a normative psychometric instrument in the study of personality, validity coefficients are so low that individual prediction is impossible except in cases of extreme deviance. In the case of an extremely deviant child, referral would be made to those prepared to work with him on the basis of information other than his drawings.

II. PSYCHOANALYTIC VIEW OF CHILDREN'S ART

Another approach to the understanding of children through their art utilizes their free expression. Quite similar to some of the psychometric means of evaluating personality, the psychoanalytic view offers less objectivity and no stated or implied norms. Rather than asking the

²⁹Buros, op. cit. (Sixth), p. 215.

child to draw a specified figure, the psychoanalyst interprets the symbolism present in the art work the child chooses to do, the choice being as important as the method. This approach, based on Freudian or Jungian psychology, hypothesizes universal symbolism used for the expression of repressed drives and symbolic representation, including phallic elements.

It seems important to keep in mind that there are a wide variety of ways in which children can express the same concept or emotion.

There is little evidence for the validity of signs beyond that of selected case studies using small clinical groups. The drawings made by these selected cases may or may not be representative of those made by others whose behavior is similar. Drawings similar in style or symbolism may be common among persons who show no indications at all of the behavior such drawings have been assumed to symbolize!³⁰

Not all workers agree upon the interpretation of art symbols. Bell prepared a detailed summary table that includes the analytic schemes of many workers and the clinical meanings they give to various aspects of drawing and painting. The table indicates the complexity of art forms and processes and the difficulties in comparing interpretive methods. In a preface to the table Bell specifically warned, "Only comparative studies with control groups and

³⁰Harris, op. cit., p. 55.

sufficiently representative samples in each group can provide us with valid criteria for interpretation."³¹ While clinical assertions abound on the validity of various interpretations, very little conclusive research has been done to provide objective validation.

Even with a background of psychoanalytic theory and visual symbolism, the elementary counselor could not depend upon this method of understanding the child through his art. The counselor's concern is not with the deviant but with the normal child who continues to function in the school. Assumptions must not be made concerning symbolic meanings of the child's art. If he uses a great deal of brown color, it can not be interpreted, as has been suggested, to mean that he is regressing to the anal stage. Perhaps brown was the only crayon available to him or maybe the color simply pleases him. Although the psychoanalyst would be interested in why this particular color does please this particular child, the counselor would be interested mainly in the fact that it does. Little justification can be found for symbolic analysis or attempts at diagnosis through art by the non-clinical worker. Though the ideas hold a fascination, the inadequacies of supporting research are too great to ignore.

³¹John E. Bell, Projective Techniques: A Dynamic Approach to the Study of the Personality (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1948), p. 361.

III. ART FOR COMMUNICATION AND THERAPY

Art educators, perhaps more than teachers in any other field, have frequently noticed the fact that their field can and does meet basic needs in children. This may stem from the philosophy, put into practice by art educators, that each child is unique and that this uniqueness should be encouraged and fostered. When he is himself, the child is more likely to be valued. He is not as likely in art to be criticized for ideas and behavior which do not conform as he might be in many other areas. His uniqueness is accepted and prized, and he, too, learns to accept and prize it. The field of art itself is more conducive to this attitude which is part of the reason that it has been observed to contribute to the emotional well-being of those who participate in it.

The use of art as suggested by art educators can best be shown by reviewing some of their comments and experiences. The influence of Viktor Lowenfeld is unavoidable. His concern for the individual along with his enthusiasm for art made him a much quoted leader in his field. He wrote convincing descriptions of creative art expression which ". . . releases emotional tension and

rigidity and opens the way to freer mental development."³² Lowenfeld cited specific cases of children handicapped by blindness, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, and maladjustment who, through creative activity, experienced this release. He stressed the creative and mental development of children and devised evaluative charts for the different stages of this development. These charts were not intended as diagnostic or predictive measures as Lowenfeld emphasized, "It should, therefore, be clearly pointed out that the results obtained by the evaluation chart are only indicative of the child's present status and do in no way predict the child's future growth."³³ However, he did assess the child's developmental status and worked with the child toward self-adjustment through feelings of achievement and confidence. "Art education," he said, "serves a double purpose: as a means of self-expression and as a therapeutical means."³⁴

After Lowenfeld's death in 1960, a former student, W. Lambert Brittain, compiled some of his speeches and

³²Viktor Lowenfeld, Creative and Mental Growth (revised edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 357.

³³Ibid., p. 76.

³⁴Ibid., p. 162.

published them. A recurring theme in these speeches was the importance of objective research, "And now let me come to the major challenge to art education of our present time--research . . . we should be very anxious to replace opinions with facts wherever we can find new knowledge."³⁵ Lowenfeld, through his own sensitivity for people, provided this important point to keep in mind when considering his ideas. The force of his personality as seen through his writing and the leadership he provided, the enthusiasm he generated, and the attractiveness of his ideas must not influence the realization that much of what he wrote is only opinion. The objectivity of research is needed before this opinion can be considered fact.

Other art educators, though not writing as extensively nor as effectively as Lowenfeld, add their ideas to his. Each stresses a slightly different phase of the therapeutic qualities of art.

Communication is one of the most often mentioned attributes of art. In a book about the art of children under eight years of age, a British author, Kenneth Jameson, emphasized the opportunities for the teacher to develop

³⁵Viktor Lowenfeld, Speaks on Art and Creativity ed. W. Lambert Brittain (Washington, D. C.: National Art Education Association, 1968), p. 55.

understanding of the child through his art.

The teacher has available three distinct but associated means of communication which if discreetly and delicately used will help her to get to know something of what is happening within the child's mind.

1. The content of his drawing and painting.
2. The child's talking to himself while painting and drawing.
3. The child's conversation with his teacher about his art work.³⁶

At times the child can communicate through art what he is not able to express in words. An illustration of this was the young girl who was very withdrawn in school. A teacher, concerned with the child's seeming unhappiness, but unable to draw her into verbal conversation, gave the class much opportunity for artistic expression. The girl painted a house with an attic window in which there appeared a sad face. She was then able to explain that the face was hers. Further investigation showed that the child was orphaned and lived with her grandmother who did not want to be bothered by her. The child was kept locked in an attic room, fed very little, and was allowed only to attend school. What she couldn't express in words, she communicated

³⁶Kenneth Jameson, Pre-School and Infant Art (London: Studio Vista Ltd., 1968), p. 64.

through her artistic expression.³⁷

Barbara Davidson, an art therapist, wrote:

The purpose of art therapy for emotionally disturbed children or adults is to establish creative activities which will aid the individual in communicating and expressing his emotions, desires, experiences and ideas.³⁸

In a later article she suggested the use of art with behavior problem children in the schools:

Creative art activities can afford a means of helping students with special problems make a better adjustment to their environment. These experiences may improve self-concept and emotionally relieve tensions and inhibitions which hamper the development of their potential abilities.³⁹

In addition to communication, Davidson realized the possibility of art as a means of enhancing self-concept and of relieving tensions.

Others, too, have noticed these possibilities in art. Lew wrote, in a booklet on research on art education in the elementary school:

Often the value of art is discussed in terms of the opportunity presented for purging pent-up emotions.

³⁷Gary Barlow, "Creative Education and the Special Student," School Arts, 63: 31, January, 1964.

³⁸Barbara E. Davidson, "Art as a Tool for Therapy," Arts and Activities, 58: 24, January, 1966.

³⁹Barbara E. Davidson, "Art Meets the Needs of Behavior Problem Children," Arts and Activities, 59: 26, May, 1966.

Certainly art activity does offer an acceptable outlet for less acceptable emotions, but its value is not limited to this function. Through art the child can be helped to master his emotions and to channelize his energies toward a worthwhile goal. The sense of achievement which rewards his efforts can contribute to emotional well-being.⁴⁰

A teacher in the government's Project Headstart commented:

What better way is there to develop a sense of personal worth, of uniqueness, and of integrity than through art? Art education can offer all this and, therefore,⁴¹ can play a key role in the Headstart program.

A mother described the relief from tension that her three year old daughter experienced through painting after an emotionally upsetting episode. Constance DeMuth Schraemeyer, who is an art educator as well as a mother, wrote:

The more opportunities we give our children to express all their feelings and hostile emotions in a constructive manner, the more we are preparing them to face and accept themselves.⁴²

Janet Gordon, a journalist with a deep interest in

⁴⁰Hilda P. Lewis, Art Education in the Elementary School (Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1961), p. 26.

⁴¹Leendert Kamelgarn, "Headstart with Art," Arts and Activities, 63: 40, June, 1968.

⁴²Constance Schraemeyer Berg, "The Lion and the Rainbow, Painting as a Release for Tensions," School Arts, 59: 17, December, 1959.

art, wrote after visits and interviews at the art studios at the Menninger Foundation and at Winter Veterans Administration Hospital in Topeka:

But what makes these art sessions therapeutic is that the patient may express in his work what he has been keeping to himself for fear of harming himself or someone else. . . . It permits the patient to "let loose" those troubling emotions without consciously revealing them to the outside world.⁴³

In relation to the observation made by others, the present investigator has noted the behavior of girls in YWCA arts and crafts classes, of children in kindergarten art periods, of junior high students at work on posters, of college students in art courses, and of adults in art extension classes. In each case observation was made of gradual relaxing of tensions, of seemingly idle talk that sometimes led to expression of and insight into personal problems, and of a personal sense of achievement experienced by those involved.

An art therapist at a rehabilitation home for severely disturbed boys described her work with the suggestion that the example might help establish basic ideas and standards in the setting up of therapeutically-oriented art programs under other conditions.⁴⁴ Of interest for this purpose are

⁴³Janet Gordon, "Art Helps Free a Troubled Mind," School Arts, 58: 14, May, 1959.

⁴⁴Edith Kramer, "Art Therapy at Wiltwyck School," School Arts, 58:8, May, 1959.

the descriptions of other art programs. Those ideas used in schools for children with behavior or adjustment problems may be useful along with programs established for the mentally ill and the physically handicapped.

Art is utilized frequently in schools for children who are disciplinary problems. These programs usually consist of art in group sessions. Programs described include the one for severely disturbed boys at Wiltwyck, one for girls described by Bhatt,⁴⁵ and another described by Molina.⁴⁶

Art therapy is often used with the patient who is mentally ill. The psychoanalyst's or psychiatrist's practice of symbolic interpretation would not be suitable for use in other programs, but the ideas gained from non-analytical art sessions of the mentally ill might be. One such article shows that art can do much to establish rapport between the mentally ill and those who seek to help them, and art activity in a permissive atmosphere may help the individual clarify his own feelings.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Markhand Bhatt, "Art and the Socially Maladjusted," School Arts, 54: 23-25, March, 1955.

⁴⁶L. Molina, "Teaching Art in an Adjustment School," Arts and Activities, 64: 28-30, January, 1969.

⁴⁷Richard V. Freeman and Irwin Friedman, "Art Therapy in Mental Illness," School Arts, 54: 17-20, March, 1955.

Davidson described materials and techniques she used to help her emotionally disturbed students understand themselves, gain insight into their own behavior, and interact positively with other students.⁴⁸ Gordon's comments on art therapy with the mentally ill are helpful,⁴⁹ as are the suggestions of an art therapist and a psychiatrist working together.⁵⁰ Another psychiatrist especially interested in art wrote:

. . . the use of spontaneous art has been demonstrated as a supportive aid in the development of the interpersonal relation during art therapy. . . . As spontaneity of creative expression expanded, verbalization grew freer and moments of insight became more frequent.⁵¹

With physically handicapped children, art has been found to serve as a means of communication and as an aid in increasing self-confidence. Aphasic children find a much needed means of expression in art;⁵² the deaf can utilize

⁴⁸Barbara E. Davidson, "Art as a Tool for Therapy," Arts and Activities, 58: 24-25, January, 1966.

⁴⁹Gordon, op. cit., 13-14.

⁵⁰Freeman and Friedman, op. cit.

⁵¹Margaret Naumberg, Schizophrenic Art: Its Meaning in Psychotherapy (New York: Grune & Stratton, Inc., 1950) p. 217.

⁵²Julia B. Helms, "Art Classes for Aphasic Children," School Arts, 63: 15-17, January, 1964.

this way to express themselves more freely.⁵³ The cerebral palsied can attain success and gain in self-confidence as a result of personal artistic expression.⁵⁴ The mentally retarded and even the blind can reach a degree of emotional independence and satisfaction through artistic means.⁵⁵

These benefits have, for the most part, been regarded as incidental to the teaching of art. The possibilities of art in the schools for purposes other than the teaching of the subject have been mentioned by several writers. While none of these specifically advocates the use of art by the counselor, the guidance possibilities of art in the schools have been noted.

In a book written as a guide for teachers of art, Keiler urged teachers to use aids from the field of art education in furthering their understanding of individual children. He suggested that misunderstandings between the

⁵³Grace Bilger, "Art Helps the Deaf Child Develop Language," School Arts, 60: 13-15, May, 1961; and Clair G. James, "Art and the Adolescent Deaf Girl," School Arts, 54: 21-22, March, 1955.

⁵⁴Gilbert Nagy, "Cerebral Palsied Discover Art," School Arts, 58: 15-16, May, 1959; and T. Daniel Scheerer, "Art and the Cerebral Palsied," School Arts, 62: 15-17, December, 1962.

⁵⁵Viktor Lowenfeld, "The Creative Process and the Handicapped," School Arts, 54: 5-8, March, 1955.

pupil and teacher might be avoided if the teacher would look for clues concerning the child in his art work.

Davidson suggested an art program in the schools to meet the needs of behavior problem children. Her background as an art therapist convinced her that a special class in art could help the student find a solution to his problems.

Through the consolidated effort and cooperation of the guidance counselor and the art teacher, a special art class apart from the regular art curriculum could be set up to provide for these special students.⁵⁶

The emotional needs of children in one elementary school were, at least partially, met by group art sessions. These were held on Saturday morning especially for children chosen by their teachers as having special needs. The majority of the children were those who were frustrated by an unfortunate home situation. The goals of the sessions were to give each individual a chance for the achievement of success and happiness through art experiences.⁵⁷

An article, called "Child Guidance Through Art," by another art educator stressed art as a method for teacher

⁵⁶Barbara E. Davidson, "Art Meets the Needs of Behavior Problem Children," Arts and Activities, 59: 24-26, May, 1966.

⁵⁷Gerard, Sister, "Art as Therapy," School Arts, 68: 37, November, 1968.

understanding of children:

The visual art experience can furnish clues to the teacher regarding the general experiential, conceptual, physical and artistic development of the child. This information, if utilized by the teacher can confirm, extend, and⁵⁸ make more meaningful other data in her possession.

Lowenfeld always stressed the involvement of the individual and his needs in art education. He suggested:

As long as we remain within the means of art education, that is, using visual conception only and by refraining from the interpretation of inferences, we may even evolve a specific form of therapy--an art education therapy.⁵⁹

Touching a little more closely upon the actual use of art by the counselor, Robert Henkes wrote in an article entitled "Art and the Professional Guidance Counselor,"

It is essential that cooperation exists between the art educator and the guidance counselor . . . since both oral and written techniques are used in the counseling process, the addition of art expression to the established approaches will further the search into the mental and spiritual makeup of the child; which, in turn, may⁶⁰ lead to eventual solution of behavior problems.

Henkes' conception of the implementation of this idea was

⁵⁸Julia Schwartz, "Child Guidance Through Art," School Arts, 55: 43, November, 1955.

⁵⁹Viktor Lowenfeld, Speaks on Art and Creativity ed. W. Lambert Brittain, (Washington, D. C.: National Art Education Association, 1968), p. 54.

⁶⁰Robert Henkes, "Art and the Professional Guidance Counselor," School Arts, 60: 7-8, May, 1961.

that the counselor would work not directly with the child and his artistic expression but through the art educator. This would certainly seem to be worthwhile, but the technique could be even more useful if employed directly by the counselor in counseling sessions, either individual or group. As another leading art educator, Victor D'Amico, pointed out, ". . . the teacher's approach is structured since he is expected to teach and to develop sensitivity and awareness to art values through guided action."⁶¹ This is contrasted to the permissiveness of the therapist's approach in the sense that he sits back and awaits responses. It might also be contrasted to the counselor's approach. The teacher's basic commitment must be not only to help the child but also to teach the subject matter; the counselor's basic commitment is to the child alone.

⁶¹Victor D'Amico, "Coming Events Cast Shadows," School Arts, 58: 13, September, 1958.

CHAPTER III

THE USE OF ART BY THE ELEMENTARY COUNSELOR

Suggested indirectly by comments from art educators and from psychiatrists working with patients involved in artistic expression is the use of art which might be of help to the elementary counselor in his search for appropriate techniques. This use begins with art as a means of expression and thereby of communication.

I. ART AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

The process of communication is basic to counseling. The child expresses his ideas and emotions. The counselor accepts this expression and conveys his understanding of it back to the child, furthering the cycle of communication. Because of his limited ability to verbalize or even to clearly conceptualize his own impressions and emotions the child needs to express himself at times in a manner less abstract than words. His level of living is greatly physical, concrete; his mode of expression needs to be the same. "The counselor must use media which facilitate communication."⁶² Art can be one of these media.

Rapport can be facilitated as the child involves

⁶²Richard C. Nelson, "Elementary School Counseling with Unstructured Play Media," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 45: 25, September, 1966.

himself in a means of expression which may be more natural to him than speech. Self-consciousness can be dispelled through the manipulation of media, and at the same time the child can communicate with the counselor. He may, at times fall into silence and seem to concentrate entirely only on his artistic expression, or he may become involved in conversation and neglect the art. Either way, it is his choice, and the choice tells something about the child.

II. ART AS A THERAPEUTIC AID IN COUNSELING

Closely related to communication is the therapeutic value of expression. The child may express himself but without communication he may feel no better for it. He may even feel worse because the emotions expressed may appear to him to be a threat to his welfare. However, if his expression, in this case an artistic one, is understood, accepted without judgment, and perhaps clarified, he can be freed to experience release from tension; catharsis occurs. As his emotions and ideas are accepted, he is able to accept them himself and move on to deeper self-understanding. His intrinsic worth as an individual is realized, and his self-esteem rises. He no longer needs emotions of fear, anger, and aggression, for self-protection, but can develop freely, toward maturity.

In the accepting atmosphere of the counseling interview, the individual can also attain a sense of achievement by creating something personal and unique, or by expressing

himself freely. This sense of achievement helps build self-esteem. In turn, a sense of self-esteem can allow the person to examine himself and arrive at deeper self-understanding which is necessary for growth and is an important step in the therapeutic process.

III. ART AS A MEANS OF OBTAINING INFORMATION

We must regard each bit of information as it is related to all other information about the pupil. Each item of information slightly changes our point of view when we look at a person. No one bit of information tells us all about a pupil; rather each bit added to all the other available information helps us create for ourselves and for the pupil a more consistent and meaningful picture of the individual as he currently is.⁶³

One of the most compelling reasons for considering art as an aid for the elementary counselor is that it can provide information about the child that may be otherwise unobtainable. Emphasis is made that this information is divulged by the child either through the content of his picture or through his conversation about it. Information is the result of communication facilitated by artistic expression. Symbolic interpretation has no place in counseling in the schools. It has been shown that information about the child's intelligence can be gained from his drawings. The counselor could properly make use of the

⁶³Ralph F. Berdie, Wilbur L. Layton, Edward O. Swanson, Theda Hagenah, Testing in Guidance and Counseling (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 125.

Goodenough-Harris evaluation of the child's drawing to gain information about him.

IV. SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR ELEMENTARY COUNSELING

To introduce the activity, the counselor might suggest it in a manner that the child does not feel coerced into following the suggestion. Possibly even the suggestion of a broad topic such as "Something you like very much" or "Something you don't like" might be worthwhile without seeming authoritative.

Except for the Goodenough-Harris test, art expression of the child should be free, both in the choice of media, execution, and in the choice of content. Materials should be available which offer the chance of success in creating. These would include clay, crayons, chalk, tempera, and finger paints. Media would not be limited to these, but would include them. The media should be simple enough not to require extreme concentration on manipulation, but at the same time they should hold intrinsic interest for the child.

The counselor will note what the child creates and may use the phrase, "Do you want to tell me about it?" Patterns or repetitions may be important clues to understanding. The approach the child utilizes tells much about him as does his choice of media. Several art expressions would be preferred to one so that the child could become accustomed to expressing himself and to discussing, if he wished, his work with someone

who viewed it as an important achievement. The child's art would be kept by the counselor unless he specifically requested to take it with him. Folders of each child's art might help develop a sense of self-identity and growth and provide for comparison of general content themes.

The child with an unclear self-concept or defensive attitude might be helped to clarify his thoughts if he made a self-portrait. The concentration on the self-portrait could lead to a better understanding of his own behavior. Through serious thinking about himself in an uncritical atmosphere, the child could face and assess his strengths and weaknesses where he felt no need to prove himself to his peers or anyone else.

Art could provide a means of channeling unacceptable impulses. The attitude of the counselor would be especially important in this case. The unsocial behavior itself would not be accepted, but the child and his reasons for his behavior would be. Art then would provide an alternate but more acceptable form of expression.

Group counseling sessions with art may be worthwhile. Mural work could be a means of helping each child develop a sense of social responsibility and contribute positively to a group endeavor.

It is felt that art as a counseling technique would be of more value with young children than with older, because

of the limited means they have for verbal expression. Also, as children grow older, they become more demanding and critical of the work they do, and art sometimes becomes a source of frustration rather than relief. In this case they would probably choose not to express themselves through art.

Further study augmented by action research would be advisable to investigate the value of art as a counseling technique in elementary schools. It is thought that the technique can be worthwhile and may prove a valuable addition to counseling techniques used with children.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Counseling techniques appropriate for use with young children in the school setting are needed. The use of play media was suggested, but limitations were noted in its use in the schools. Physical limitations of space and equipment and critical attitudes toward permissiveness reduce the effectiveness of play therapy. Art was considered to have fewer limitations than play under these conditions. Advantages not available in verbal techniques were thought to be possible in art. The young child may express himself more easily in a more concrete form of communication. Ideas not fully conceptualized may be expressed visually. Because the use of art in counseling has not been discussed, it was necessary to explore other fields for relevant ideas. Psychometry, psychiatry, art therapy, and art education contained helpful material.

A review was made of the literature on major psychometric uses of children's drawings. It was found that the Goodenough-Harris Draw-a-Man Test would give an adequate measure of intelligence. The Machover Draw-a-Person and the Buck House-Tree-Person were examined. Neither projective evaluation was found to be supported by research evidence. These measures would not be useful for the elementary counselor.

Investigation into symbolic interpretation showed that workers in the field do not agree on interpretive methods or symbols. The existence of a universal symbolism has not been proved. Symbolism seems to be unique with each individual. Validation of hypotheses has not been done with large groups of normal children; most of the work in the area has been done in the clinical setting with small groups. Counselors do not have the background for analysis and should not attempt it with the child's art.

Literature from the fields of art therapy and art education indicated that art may be useful as a technique in elementary counseling. Benefits of art cited included relief from tension, increased self-confidence, increased self-understanding, provisions for an acceptable outlet for emotions, and opportunity for development of the personality. Art has been suggested as a helpful aid in the understanding of children, and has been shown to be useful as a means of expression and communication.

Suggestions concerning the use of art as a technique include using it as a facilitator of communication, as a basis for understanding, and as a therapeutic device. The technique can serve to build a sense of achievement and increased self-esteem as well as provide a cathartic value. Younger children would be thought to benefit more by art as a counseling technique because they are limited verbally and

have not yet become self-critical in this area.

Further study and action research are advisable to investigate in an objective manner the value of art as a technique in elementary counseling.

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ART AS A TECHNIQUE IN ELEMENTARY COUNSELING

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1969

This study was undertaken because of the need for techniques in elementary counseling which are appropriate. Play therapy was suggested, but limitations were noted in its use in the school setting. Art was considered to have fewer limitations than play. Advantages not available in verbal techniques were thought to be possible in art.

A review was made of the literature on major psychometric uses of children's drawings. It was found that the Goodenough-Harris Draw-a-Man Test would give an adequate measure of intelligence. Psychometric evaluations of drawings as projective instruments have not been supported by research evidence and would not be useful for the elementary counselor.

Investigation into symbolic interpretation showed that workers in the field do not agree on interpretation methods and symbols. Validation of techniques has not been done with large groups of normal children, and counselors do not have the necessary background for analysis. Therefore, the non-clinical counselor should not attempt symbolic analysis of the child's art.

Art has been suggested as a valuable tool in understanding children, and has been shown to be useful as a means of expression and communication. The work of art educators, art therapists and psychiatrists was reviewed. Therapeutical benefits of art cited included relief from

tension, increased self-confidence, increased self-understanding, provision for an acceptable outlet for emotions, and opportunity for development of the personality.

The elementary counselor may find art as a technique in counseling useful. Suggestions are made concerning the utilization of the technique in the school setting, and the need for action research is indicated.