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Seducer or ally?: Popular culture iconography in the art
psychotherapeutic artwork of the individuating male adolescent

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ABSTRACT

Seducer or ally?: Popular culture iconography in the art psychotherapeutic artwork of the individuating male adolescent

Chloë Westelmajer

The following theoretical and clinical investigation explores the therapeutic potentialities of popular culture iconography in the artwork of the individuating male adolescent. While most research assumes that popular culture’s influence with regards to the adolescent is substantial, there have been very few studies which point to a beneficial use of this influence within the therapeutic process. The purpose of the present study is to show the validity of the adolescent’s use of popular culture imagery within the art therapy context. Psychoanalytic theory is investigated with regards to identity formation as well as conceptions of ‘sign’ and ‘symbol’ delineation. Psychology and art therapy’s historical and contemporary relationship to popular culture is pondered. The present research uses a symbolic interactionist frame and methodology, and suggests the need for a more multi-theoretical investigation within the art therapeutic domain. The clinical investigation consists of a case study occurring over ten-sessions within a Canadian metropolitan adolescent residential treatment milieu. Theory, artistic productions, and group interactions are examined with the hopes of shedding new light upon the useful properties of popular culture iconography within the art therapeutic space for the adolescent identity formation process.
"[...] little Hellions, kids feeling rebellious
embarrassed their parents still listen to Elvis
they start feeling like prisoners helpless
'til someone comes along on a mission and yells BITCH!!!
a visionary, vision of scary
could start a revolution, polluting the airwaves"

-EMINEM ("Without Me" from the LP The Eminem Show)

"Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law wrong it learned
to walk without having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,
it learned to breath fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete
when on one else ever cared."

- TUPAC (From his book of Poems -
"The Rose That Grew From Concrete")
DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to all the courageous young men and women in residential treatment with whom I have worked over the years - their stories have greatly impacted my life and taught me much about the world. I am honored to have been permitted to listen.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION**<sup>1.</sup>

**CHAPTER 1: ADOLESCENT IDENTITY FORMATION: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE**<sup>7.</sup>

1.1 The roots of identity: An analytic and object relations consideration 7.

1.2 Adolescent identity formation: Psychoanalytic postulates 12.

1.3 Art psychotherapy and the adolescent identity formation process 18.

**CHAPTER 2: POPULAR CULTURE AND PSYCHOLOGY: IS ADOLESCENCE IN DANGER?**<sup>23.</sup>

2.1 Youth culture and popular culture 24.

2.2 Sex, violence, and continuing worries surrounding popular culture 28.

2.3 The potential positive aspects in popular culture: Historical and contemporary theory 32.

2.4 Art psychotherapy and popular culture 39.

**CHAPTER 3: SEMIOTICS AND SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM: THE OPEN DOOR TO POPULAR CULTURE DISCOURSE AND RESEARCH WITHIN ART THERAPY**<sup>46.</sup>

3.1 Understanding the popular culture iconographic product 46.

3.2 The stereotyped symbol 48.

3.3 Semiotics and the inherent connectedness of sign to symbol 50.

3.4 The sign/symbol's importance within the task of individuation 52.

3.5 Symbolic Interactionism 54.

3.5.1. Symbolic Interactionism: A definition 54.

3.5.2. The tenets 56.

3.5.3. The creative arts therapies and symbolic interactionism 58.

3.5.4. Incorporation of a case study methodology: Rational 60.

3.6 Symbolic interactionist methodology 61.

3.6.1. Obtaining the data: 61.

3.6.2. Analyzing the data: 64.
3.7 Re-visioning the popular culture image in art therapy 65.

CHAPTER 4: A CASE STUDY: POPULAR CULTURE WITHIN AN ART PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC GROUP WITH ADOLESCENT MALES 67.

4.1 The setting: A residential treatment environment 68.

4.2 Methodology and research procedure 71.
   4.2.1 Data collection 71.
   4.2.2 Data analysis 77.

4.3 Limitations of the study 79.

4.4 Results 83.
   4.4.1 Biographical data 83.
   Group A. 83.
   Group B. 87.
   4.4.2 Session synopsis 92.
   Session 1 - Group A. 92.
   Session 1 - Group B. 94.
   Session 2 - Group A. 96.
   Session 2 - Group B. 100.
   Session 3 - Group A. 103.
   Session 3 - Group B. 106.
   Session 4 - Group A. 108.
   Session 4 - Group B. 112.
   Session 5 - Group A. 115.
   Session 5 - Group B. 118.
   Session 6 - Group A. 120.
   Session 6 - Group B. 123.
   Session 7 - Group A & B. 124.
   Session 8 - Group A. 125.
   Session 8 - Group B. 128.
   Session 9 - Group A. 130.
   Session 9 - Group B. 133.
   Session 10 - Group A & B. 136.

4.5 Discussion 137.
   4.5.1 Central concepts/ descriptive categories/ construct categories 137.
   4.5.2 Hypotheses 139.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS: WHAT DOES THIS PROVE? 144.

5.1 Popular culture and individuation 145.

5.2 Popular culture and the disciplines of psychology and art therapy 149.

5.3 The stereotyped symbol and sign/symbol tensions 156.

viii
5.4 Future research possibilities

REFERENCES

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2
Introduction

"Pop culture is MY culture." - 13 year old male

In the middle ages, children were thought of as miniature adults, rather than conceptualized differently from adults (Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998). It was not until the middle years of the 20th century that a 'youth culture' became apparent through its opposition to a dominant adult culture (Esman, 1990). Much of the opposition was manifested through cultural media products, which precipitated a delineation of the stage of adolescence as a place between childhood and adulthood. Thus, concepts like 'adolescence' and cultural transmissions as well as technological advances, like the media, have a shared history. This intimate connection provides, perhaps, some relevance with regards to ideas of censorship being related so closely to the media's effects upon the young culture. It has been proposed that western civilization's ideas of censorship are traceable to the Victorian-era fears, "that libidinous thoughts would lead to the 'secret vice' of masturbation" (Heins, 2001, p.8). Anthony Comstock, an American censor of the 19th century, seized and destroyed literature, art, and advertisements all with the intention of protecting youth. What followed, in North America, was the establishment of new doctrines (i.e. 'indecency') by the Supreme Court and governmental moralizing of what should be transmitted by the media as well as the establishment of the FCC (Federal Communications Commission).
Popular culture, also a Western term inherent to the 20th century, became a way to separate the media transmissions that the so-called 'educated' and 'lower' classes enjoyed. (O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery, & Fiske, 1994). Popular culture belonged to the mass of people who did not ascribe to the 'wealthy' or 'educated'. Since then, our mother’s saying "Television will rot your brain" has become a western cliché. A predominant belief has been that popular culture has a pejorative classification with the most negative impact belonging to its effect on children and/or adolescents.

This research paper will present a theoretical and clinical investigation into the adolescent's possible uses of popular culture as a rite of passage for the process of identity formation within the art therapeutic encounter. The purpose of the present research will not be the disavowal of the negative impact that these types of media products may have on the adolescent mind, but to seek to re-conceptualize the popular culture iconographic product. The primary research question of this research is whether a multi-theoretical and clinical qualitative investigation of popular culture in the art therapy context uncovers a therapeutic benefit for the individuating male adolescent, and could it contribute to art therapy discourses? Subsidiary research questions include; whether the male adolescent's use of popular culture sign and/or symbol's within art creation point to aspects of the self-actualization process; and whether a deconstruction of sign/symbol dichotomies will
provide helpful insight into recognizing the therapeutic potential of popular culture?

The art therapy discipline often defines popular culture imagery as 'seductive' (Willimas, Henley, Kramer, & Gerity, 1997) and condemns it as being 'passive', 'empty', 'alienating', (Politsky & Franklin, 1992) and 'consuming' (Gerity, 2001). Although the media's power is generally transmitted through imagery, art psychotherapy has seldom acknowledged its therapeutic constituents and possibilities. The central hypothesis of this research is that, popular culture imagery is capable of making very powerful 'medication', when therapeutic benefit is recognized and conceptualization of negative or stereotyped imagery are re-categorized.

It is this researcher's belief that adolescents involved in an art therapy group will bring popular culture themes - particular to their own tastes and desires - into the art therapy space. Since popular culture has such a weighty connection to adolescence, I believe these themes will easily be translated into visual creative formats and prove to instigate verbal exploration. I suggest this study will provide data to indicate that adolescents associate their popular culture tastes with their sense of identity. Moreover, I believe that these popular culture images will display healing properties and an intimate connection to their life situation and growth process. I conceive that this study will show that adolescents are not passive consumers of the media but useful 'manipulators', who
utilize popular culture images to explore a sense of self which is being formed and transformed within their individuation processes. The psychoanalytic perspective conceives of the individuation process or the formation of identity, as encompassing a complex and difficult process for each human being. While I am quite certain that some of the negative impacts of the media, including violent themes, inappropriate and discriminatory language, as well as maladaptive behavior acquiescence may become apparent within the defensive properties of using images from popular culture, my overall intention will be to move beyond this categorization and focus on an opening up of preconceived notions.

The exploratory case study component of an art psychotherapeutic group will follow a qualitative paradigm using symbolic interactionist theory as a foundation for its methodology. The case study will encompass 10 weekly clinical sessions in a residential treatment milieu with 9 adolescent males. Similar to many case studies, this study will rely on a passive description of identified variables within case notes taken after each group session by the researcher where descriptions, rather than interpretations, will be paramount (Aldridge, 1994). However, the focus will be exploratory in which objectives will be set by symbolic interactionist theory (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1992; Potter, 1996). Data has been collected using field observations, individual case records, and case notes taken after each group session. Each meeting has been recorded using
audiotape to ensure precise descriptions of subjective experiences and photographs have been taken of each member’s artistic creations. Data analysis will follow an interactionist and qualitative guideline. Case notes have been cataloged using inductive reasoning into descriptive, construct, and central categories (Cherry, 2000). Since symbolic interactionsit theories “focus on interpersonal interactions” (Potter, 1996, p. 59), great effort will be made to ensure that the constructs or categories will be seen as interactional and not causative (Potter, 1996).

It is important to point out that the data from my study is relegated to a very specialized and gendered population. Moreover, it will not be generalizable to the larger adolescent population, and the findings will be based on a very small sample sized group. Other limitations involved in the research process will be further expanded within Chapter 4. It will be quite interesting and, I believe, therapeutically informative, to expand on research of this type to different adolescent populations. The data in this exploratory study will supply what could, in the future, be compared to the broader adolescent population and yield useful data with regards to children in residential treatment as well as gendered viewings and usages of popular culture materials.

The first three chapter’s of the present thesis will encompass a broad spectrum appraisal of the available literature in a literature review on adolescent individuation from a
psychoanalytic perspective (Chapter 1), popular culture’s relationship to the therapeutic disciplines (Chapter 2), and a format for investigation of the popular culture iconographic product within symbolic interactionist and case study theory as well as methodology (Chapter 3). The clinical qualitative exploration will be presented in Chapter 4. This clinical exploration occurred within an adolescent residential treatment milieu and will use symbolic interactionist and case study methodology to survey the potentialities for popular culture iconography within the individuation process. Finally, the concluding chapter, chapter 5, will seek to incorporate the theoretical and clinical findings gathered through both the literature and clinical exploration and point towards future possibilities and directions for research.

In the end, the overarching intention will be to bring about corporeal and exploratory research that will illuminate the need to acknowledge popular culture’s incorporation into art psychotherapeutic practice as a beneficial tool to aid the struggle of the individuating adolescent. Would it not be in the best interests of the art therapy discipline to align itself with the powerful reverberations of popular culture in order to use its influence when working with individuals who are directly immersed and/or consumed by it?
Chapter 1: Adolescent identity formation: A psychoanalytic perspective

In order to begin the literature review, it is important to start by looking at the complex struggle of human individuation. What follows, in the present chapter, will be an investigation into the individuation process and its specific impact upon the adolescent. The influence of the social environment and popular culture upon the adolescent individuation process will conclude the chapter before we proceed with the literature review in chapter 2; looking at popular culture’s vast and ambiguous relationship to psychology and art therapy.

1.1 The roots of identity: An analytic and object relations consideration

When investigating the formation of identity through a psychoanalytic lens it is necessary to begin by taking into consideration two prominent domains that explore the development of self and identity. Ego psychology explored the concept of representation and brought it to notoriety within the psychoanalytic school of thought; it did so by investigating child development and psychosis (Schafer, 1973). Object-relations incorporated the external reality and narcissism into the development of identity by looking at the objects and their effects upon the individual human being. In order to shed light on the adolescent individuation process it is necessary to look at the genesis of identity formation within the child/infant, for
they are intimately connected and related to each other. The concepts of "self-representation" and "object representation" are essential to the continuing process of identity formation within psychoanalytic thought, and were heralded by two prominent and influential thinkers; Donald W. Winnicott and Margaret Mahler. The following description of their theories and constructs allows for a deeper understanding of the adolescent's continuing struggle for self-actualization and identity.

Margaret Mahler\(^1\), a child analyst and former pediatrician, outlined the process of separation and individuation between the mother and infant into several stages. 'Normal autism' was the first stage (in-utero and shortly after birth) in which the infant is in a "state of primitive hallucinatory disorientation, in which need satisfaction belongs to his own omnipotent, autistic orbit" (Mahler, 1968, p. 7-8). In this stage, the infant is unaware of the 'separateness' of the mother and is preoccupied with the achievement of homeostasis and/or the release of unpleasurable tension. Mahler's second stage was conceived of as symbiosis, referring to the mother-child dual unity, a "state of undifferentiation, of fusion with mother, in which the 'I' is not yet differentiated from the 'not-I', and in which inside and outside are only gradually coming to be sensed as different" (Mahler, 1968, p. 9). Mahler states that, "the primary method of identity formation consists of mutual reflection during the

\(^{1}\)Margaret Mahler was an influential member of the ego psychology school of psychoanalytic thought, which explored the complexity of 'the ego' and drive theory set forth by Freud (Mitchell & Black, 1995).
symbiotic phase. This narcissistic, mutual libidinal mirroring reinforces the delineation of identity - through magnification and reduplication - a kind of echo phenomenon" (p. 19). At 5 or 6 months, the hatching stage becomes evident, where the child begins to develop a sense of self-awareness and differentiation. Mahler describes this as the process whereby "outward-directed perceptual activity gradually replaces the inward directed attention cathexis that was, only recently, almost exclusively vested in symbiotically disoriented inner sensations" (p. 16). Finally, ‘object constancy’ occurs at around age 3, when others are seen as being more separate from ‘the self’. Mahler states that, "during the course of individuation, internalization has begun, by true ego identification with the parents" (p. 23).

Where Mahler (1968) saw identity formation as presupposing "structuralization of the ego and neutralization of the drives" (p. 35), D.W. Winnicott, also a pediatrician and psychoanalyst, saw "the quality of the infant's experience of the earliest months of life as crucial for the emergence of personhood. It was the environment that the mother provided (not the child's conflictual instinctual pressures) that determined the outcome" (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 125). Winnicott did not place his theory of self emergence within the process of stages or linear sequence; instead he reflected upon necessary conditions within the environment which aided the child to form his/her identity. Winnicott contemplated the mother as supporting the infant's experience of selective omnipotence. By bringing the needs of the
infant to him/her without delay, he suggested that "her responsiveness is what gives the infant that moment of illusion, the belief that his own wish creates the object of his desire" (p. 126). The mother creates what Winnicott termed the holding environment, "a physical and psychical space within which the infant is protected without knowing he is protected" (p. 126). Through the mother's increasing separation from the infant he or she begins to realize, in the widening of the gap between desire and satisfaction, that he or she is not omnipotent. This realization of one's subjectivity and of an objective reality, under Winnicott's theory, does not replace subjective omnipotence, but exists in relation to it. For Winnicott, "being a distinctly human person with a continually regenerating sense of self and personal meaning requires the preservation of the experience of subjective omnipotence as a deeply private, never fully revealed core of experience" (p. 127).

Between subjective omnipotence and objective reality lies transitional experience. In subjective omnipotence, the child feels he or she has created the desired object and in objective reality, the child needs to find the desired object. The transitional object aids in the transitional experience by being perceived as "neither subjectively created and controlled nor as discovered and separate, but as somewhere in between" (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 127). Mahler saw the transitional object as something that represented the mother, and maintained ties to the mother when she gradually left the infant for increasingly longer
periods of time, so as to aid with the child's separation and
individuation. Winnicott, however, viewed the transitional object
as aiding the transition of the child between two different modes
of organizing experience; positioning the self in relation to
others. The transitional object (such as a teddy bear) does not
solely stand for 'mother' but comprises an extension of the
child's 'self' - in between the mother that is created by the
child and the mother that the child finds in her own objective
reality. Winnicott's transitional object 'cushions the fall from
a world where the child's desires omnipotently actualize their
objects to one where desires require accommodation to and
collaboration of others to be fulfilled' (p. 128).

Subjective omnipotence and objective reality living in
relation to and with one another creates for Winnicott the 'true'
self, whereas those individuals who live within an entirely
objective or subjective center bore a 'false' self. Winnicott
pondered this need for ambiguity with relation to his concept of
individual dependence which he saw as "being at first near
absolute and changing gradually and in an ordered way to relative
dependence and towards independence" (Winnicott, 1971, p. 139).
He defined independence in the following terms:

  Independence does not become absolute, and the
individual seen as an autonomous unit is in fact never
independent of environment, though there are ways by
which in maturity the individual may feel free and
independent, as much as makes for happiness and a sense of having a personal identity. (p. 139)

For Winnicott, the environment was significantly related to the creation of identity within the human being, and not just genetic predisposition. He states that, "growth is not just a matter of inherited tendency; it is also a matter of highly complex interweaving with the facilitating environment" (Winnicott, 1986, p. 157). For Winnicott, the creation of a 'true self' and 'identity' within the human being involved having been provided a 'good-enough' facilitating environment to allow for the continued negotiation between one's subjective and objective perceptions of the world, which continues into adolescence and adulthood.

1.2 Adolescent identity formation: Psychoanalytic postulates

While much has been written on the individuation process and identity formation of the infant/child (usually until 3 years of age) within psychoanalysis, only a few theorists have grappled with the complexity of the continuing struggle for identity throughout the lifespan; particularly the period of adolescence. Winnicott, as well as Peter Blos (a psychoanalyst who studied directly under Sigmund and Anna Freud), are two key contributors to understanding adolescent identity formation process as well
as its importance within the human lifespan (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Theorists hypothesizing about adolescent identity formation have compared the process to that of infant individuation. With regard to identity, Winnicott (1986) states that, "it is valuable to compare adolescent ideas with those of childhood" (p. 158) and Schafer (1973), a psychoanalyst, argues that "adolescents think about self and identity, and the emotions and relationships they imply, in infantile concretistic, substantialized, or primary process forms" (p. 56). For this reason, it is useful to conceptualize the adolescent processes that will be explored further in this chapter with the theorizations made by Mahler and Winnicott as cited above, concerning separation-individuation and object-experiences.

Freud conceptualized the process of separation-individuation within adolescence as "detachment from parental authority" (as cited in Schafer, 1973, p. 56). On adolescent development Freud (1905) wrote:

[...] one of the most significant, but also one of the most painful, psychical achievements of the pubertal period is completed: detachment from parental authority, a process that alone makes possible the opposition, which is so important for the progress of civilization, between the new generation and the old. (p. 227)
The struggle for detachment from the parents and a separation from parental influence was conceptualized as the basic task of adolescent identity formation. Schafer (1973) underlies that genuine emancipation from parental influence for the adolescent, "seems to be built on revision, modulation, and selective acceptance as well as rejection, flexible mastery, and complex substitutions and other changes of aims, representations, and patterns of behavior" (p. 45). Schafer also points out that these changes are slow, ambivalent and fluctuating in nature; however, in adolescence "self and identity are not things with boundaries, contents, locations, sizes, forces and degrees of brittleness" [emphasis added](p. 51). He postulates that,

self and identity are not facts about people; they are ways of thinking about people. They are not outside of and above the realm of self-representation and object representation; each is merely one type of representation or one way of representing. (p. 52)

Winnicott (1986) conceived of adolescence as a time of growth, in which there is a shift from childhood and dependence, where the individual gropes towards an adult status. Personal growth and identity are primarily related, for Winnicott, to the 'good-enough' mothering and
facilitating environment of the adolescent as an infant/child. Winnicott claims that in adolescence, if the family is still there to be used, it is used in a big way; and if the family is no longer there to be used, or to be set aside (negative use), then small social units need to be provided to contain the adolescent growth process. (p. 157)

Winnicott pondered the adolescent's use of society as something which would not let them down in their search for identification, the struggle to feel 'real' and not constrained by an adult-assigned role. He saw society as being important with relation to the adolescent's simultaneous need for dependence and independence. In *Deprivation and Delinquency* (1984), he states that, "society does in fact get very much caught up with this curious thing about adolescents: the mixture of defiance and dependence which characterizes them" (p. 152). Similar to the passage of the infant from omnipotence to the realization of an objective reality there is a need for a continued negotiation with defiance and dependence within the adolescent identity growth process. Winnicott relates the adolescent's struggle to Hamlet's speech "to thine own self be true"; where Winnicott's adolescent is striving to find the self to be true to.

Peter Blos (1962) conceptualizes adolescence as being a second step in the individuation process of the human
being, which eventually leads (through its completion) to a sense of identity. Blos states that, "before the adolescent can consolidate this [identity] formation, he must pass through stages of self-consciousness and fragmented existence" (p. 12). For Blos, the process of self-definition requires resistive strivings, opposition, experimentation, and the testing of the self by going to excess. Feelings of isolation and confusion fatefully accompany this stage of maturation since, "individuation brings some of the dearest megalomaniacal dreams of childhood to an irrevocable end. They must now be relegated entirely to fantasy: their fulfillments can never again be considered seriously" (p. 12). Urgency, fear, and panic, as well as a slow severance of the emotional ties to the family are required for the process to be complete; a process which Blos affirms is the "profoundest in human existence" (p. 12).

Within psychoanalysis, the adolescent's experience of individuation is similarly depicted in infancy. Blos states that,

the organization of the self can be compared to an individuation process similar to the one which occurs when the infant of about eight months experiences the separateness from the environment in terms of 'I' and 'non-I' which does not take the object into account. (Blos, 1962, p. 192)
The mental life of adolescents, as Blos conceives, is similar to early object relations and their feelings of 'being one with the other': "by imitating gesture and affect of the love object" (p. 193), the adolescent is often unconcerned with the differences between outer reality and the self. The formation of the self is dependent on the recognition of the emotional, intellectual, social and sexual self. The adolescent's connections to objects in his or her environment require firm boundaries which, Blos states, "separate the individual from the external world. The formation of the self at the close of adolescence permits the individual an independent pursuit of ego interests and an assurance of object-related tension discharge" (p. 195). According to Blos, the limitations of the individual are realized at this juncture as well as the nature of the human condition itself. For Blos, adolescent maturation occurs in seven major areas; two of which are "a sense of individual identity incorporate[ing] successfully a variety of internal and external roles" (as cited in Riley, 1999, p. 31) and "a sense of self strong enough to continue to mature with reduced outside assurance" (p. 31).

It is significant to point out that while Freud's (1905), Blos' (1962), and Winnicott's (1986) primary belief's regarding the major task of adolescent development and individuation was the process of separation from the
family of origin, more contemporary thought has focused on the simultaneous need for independence and dependence in adolescence. Bloch (1995) saw individuation as it is best accomplished as "moving away from the family while simultaneously staying connected" (as cited in Riley, 1999, p. 68). Under this paradigm, the adolescent's struggle involves finding the proper distance from their family of origin that will allow for simultaneously a connection as well as autonomy. Just as Winnicott noted that society is often used by the adolescent to achieve simultaneous dependence and independence, so too is the adolescent peer group, whom he/she often turns to for advice and support throughout the individuation process (Riley, 1999).

1.3 Art psychotherapy and the adolescent identity formation process

The process of identity formation within the art therapeutic encounter has been approached by researchers like Arthur Robbins (2001), an object-relations art therapist and psychoanalyst, who notes that the therapist must use the art process to communicate the message: "I am with you, will help you and teach you, but I am also separate and must promote in you, regardless of your pleasure or pain, your own independence and autonomy" (p. 64). The task of the art therapist becomes the establishment of a treatment plan that resolves past
attachment problems and encourages autonomy. The client becomes simultaneously connected to the therapist and the art therapeutic process, as well as remaining independent in their pursuit of an individualized identity. Cathy Malchiodi (2003) specifies that, “the images created in therapy reflect past relationships while interactions between the therapist and client support and enhance the process of individuation” (p. 55).

The exploration of adolescent individuation within art therapy has been conceived of by Shirley Riley (1999), a prominent and influential art therapist, as requiring a group format. Although, the peer group is often just as confused as the individual with regards to identity, Riley states that, “the adolescent is more inclined to accept treatment in a group with his/her peers than work in individual treatment” (p. 68). She points out that adolescents often struggle with aiding others as they are often struggling to find themselves, and giving to each other may feel like they are parting with some of their hard earned identity. However, Riley points out that “the group finds identity by a peer structured dress code, sexual and drug orientation, socio-economic culture and vocabulary” (p. 80). Riley specifies four components of the art therapy group modality which uniquely permit responsiveness with regards to the identity process of the adolescent:
[...] (1) gives them control over their expressions, the young clients reveal in the art products only what they wish to reveal, visually or verbally; (2) they find using media provides an outlet for their creativity; (3) this provides a pleasure component; and (4) utilizes the personal and age-group metaphors and symbols; the adolescent believes that his/her control over verbalization effectively keeps the adult (therapist) from making intrusive interpretations. (p. 69)

While working within the art therapeutic process, it is significant to underscore the necessity of paying attention to the specific needs of the adolescent, as well as the particulars of the identity formation process itself.

When thinking about popular culture's place within the individuation of the adolescent, it is important to refer back to Winnicott's (1984) descriptions of the adolescent's use of society, described above, as well as Riley's (1999) suggestion of working within a group context with the adolescent, as there appears to be a profound connection between the adolescent's social environment and the search for identity. Popular culture products are part of this population's environment. In order to achieve an understanding of 'self' in relation to culture or pop culture, there is a need to be able to negotiate and play with the experience of inner and outer 'reality', subject
(me) and object (not me), phantasy, and reality (Minsky, 1998). Art is one way in which subject and object are brought together in unity, similar to Winnicott's ideas of the transitional object. It is a way of trying to create ourselves, make sense of our loves and hates and simultaneously the world outside. The use of cultural symbols allows for the negotiation of the gap between our phantasies and reality, our desires for oneness and separation, our need for collectivity and individuality (Minsky, 1998).

Before undertaking an investigation of the significance and possible usefulness of popular culture symbols within art therapy for the individuating adolescent, it is necessary to review research and writing about the relationship popular culture has had with the psychological discipline as a whole. I will demonstrate, that psychology, and consequently therapeutic practice, has an ambivalent relationship with popular culture and its influences on adolescence throughout decades of research and theory. Art psychotherapy has also grappled with the effect of popular culture on the artistic and therapeutic process. The following chapter will outline psychology's, as well as art therapy's, historical and contemporary beliefs regarding popular culture's effect upon the adolescent. While primarily negative connotations have been ascribed to popular culture's influence, it is this
writer’s belief that there is a space for a re-visioning of the popular culture product within the art therapeutic milieu.
CHAPTER 2: Popular culture and psychology: Is adolescence in danger?

To begin to describe what could be seen as psychology's conflicted relationship with popular culture and its influence on adolescence, there is a need to explore what popular culture means in Western society. Any systematic inquiry into popular culture comes into conflict with problems of definition and involves issues surrounding the definition of culture in and of itself. The term 'popular culture' began as a way to distinguish the mass of people in Western society from the titled wealthy or 'educated' classes (O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery, & Fiske, 1994). Popular culture's most recent definition involves its association to the mass mediated culture of industrialized societies transmitted through, and by, the mass media (Roe, 1983). Popular culture's media products are usually considered less valuable than 'high' cultural practices (such as the ballet or the opera), and are generally associated with media preferred by the working-class or 'common folk' (Sternheimer, 2003). The vehicles through which popular culture is most often thought to be transmitted are: television, mass print media, film, videogames, computer technology and celebrity, to name only a few.

Due in part to these historical implications, media associated with popular culture is relegated to a derogatory position within society, sometimes simply by its association to the label of 'pop' culture. This provides the basis for much of
popular culture's history as a pejorative classification within psychological theory and study, which will be explored within the present chapter. As we will see, many psychological opinions of popular culture and its effects on adolescents, in particular, are in a process of change, and prior assertions are now being re-examined. However, newly emerging specialized branches of psychological practice, such as art psychotherapy, have made much less progress in modifying their beliefs about the influence of popular culture on adolescence.

2.1 Youth culture and popular culture

Esman (1990) postulated that the concept of youth itself can be seen as a metaphor for social change. In earlier years, Margaret Mead (1970) contended that advances in technology in the postwar years made the experience of young people different from that of their elders (as cited in Esman, 1990). This difference created a tension within youth that led to a rising feeling of society as belonging to adults. Esman states that it was this tension and resentment that lead to dissocial and antisocial behaviors in adolescents that were perceived by adults as rebellious and deviant. Adolescence, as we know it today, was born. Through this, the formation of a youth subculture can be conceived of as a product of industrialization. It is through the history of this demarcation of adolescence as a period between childhood and adulthood that we are first given a glimpse into the immeasurable connection of youth to popular culture. Without
technological advances and industrialization itself, we could claim that there would be no adolescent delineation in the human life span, since pop culture and the adolescent are irreversibly linked in their connected histories.

Fears about the media and its impact on youth date back to Plato, who was concerned about the effects the Greek tragedies had on children. It was thought that the effects of these types of entertainment would lead to a 'moral decay' among youth. In 1954, psychiatrist Fredrick Wertham wrote a book entitled *Seduction of the Innocent*, which lead to the establishment of a law called the 'Comic Code' that prohibited children less than 15 years of age from buying comic books (West, 1988). Wertham believed that the influence of comic books led to juvenile delinquency, he also tried to establish a connection between comic books and homosexuality. Over the years, many theories have abounded with regards to the increasing fear of the effects popular culture has on Western society's youth. One theory of the twentieth century, points to more people spending time alone consuming popular culture, to which it had previously been a more public event; consequently controlling information that young people were exposed to was somewhat easier (Sternheimer, 2003). Psychology has put forth numerous studies, which will be described later in the chapter, pointing to the negative impacts that popular culture has on youth and adolescents. These studies appear to have reinforced aspects of Wertham's presumption of the media's negative impact on the behaviors and psyches of
adolescents into the present day, but have shifted with newly emerging media in our contemporary culture.

One of the first experiments to look at the influence of television on behavior was performed by Albert Bandura in 1963. This demonstrated that filmed examples of young adults attacking an inflated toy lead to imitative acts by children of a nursery school age (Comstock, 1991). This experiment lead to the development of Bandura's 'Social Learning Theory' or 'Social Cognitive Theory', which posited that "children learn behavior by observing others directly in real life and vicariously through the media" (Strasburger, 1995, p. 8). This theory assumed that users of popular culture (through its many transmissions) would be likely to assimilate and imitate behaviors depicted by attractive models who are rewarded and/or not punished (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002). It was thought that the young viewers subsequent behaviors would take on the negative behaviors depicted through the media. Gerbner's Cultivation Theory was formulated by George Gerbner and his colleagues in 1986. This theory's hypothesis involved the idea of cognitive influence and suggested that viewing images on television promoted perceptions of the world that were in accordance with the medium (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002; Comstock, 1991). With this theory concern grew that youth would not be able to distinguish the 'real' world from that depicted on television. Moreover, if what was depicted involved a negative behavioral pattern, it was thought that the youth would then have difficulty distinguishing
it from his or her everyday life and would be more likely to display it.

Another theory, called the Excitation or Arousal Theory, posited that excitement produced by the media in the individual could transfer to other on-going activities (Comstock, 1991; Strasburger, 1995). This theory hypothesized that through a heightened arousal level - put forth through the media - maladjusted behaviors of a multitude of varieties would be instigated within the individual and produce negative behavioral patterns. In 1963, Leonard Berkowitz and Edna Rawlings demonstrated that when a violent film clip was shown to college subjects, it increased the hostility expressed against someone who had previously irritated them. This experiment lead to a Cognitive Neo-association Theory which linked stored experience to media, or vicarious media experiences, which were thought to encourage certain negative behaviors by evoking associations.

Psychological assumptions on how the media could negatively influence behaviors in viewers were also reiterated in Huesmann's (1982, 1986) Theory of Cognitive Scripting and incorporated what was called The Stalagmite Effect. Huesmann's theory holds that the media provides behavioral scripts to young people which can be retrieved at any time and are dependant on the similarity between the real situation and the fictional event as well as the circumstances involved when the script was first encoded (Strasburger, 1995). In this way, youth formulate behavioral patterns in accordance with what they see depicted within the
media as well as the similarity it has to their own life experiences; therefore, negative behavioral and psychological patterns may be exacerbated. The Stalagmite Effect refers to the influence of the media as being indirect, subtle, and above all, cumulative. Under this theory the 'cognitive deposits' build up over time and with increased exposure. Pertaining to all of the above theories, these 'deposits' are thought to evoke negative behavioral expressions in the media consumer, and possibly increase with exposure to them. The specific types of negative behavioral and psychological outputs thought to be instigated by the media on adolescents are numerous. An exploration of a few of the most prominent themes, which continue to be highly debated in our contemporary society, is essential to understanding which behaviors the above theories attempt to explain.

2.2 Sex, violence, and continuing worries surrounding popular culture

The two major themes which emerge through the literature on media and its effects on adolescents have to do with sex and violence. There is a fear that an adolescent's unmediated exposure to sexual as well as violent themes within popular culture media transmissions will increase maladaptive, or even dangerous, behaviors within these domains. Surrounding the theme of sex, the most prominent concerns discussed are the following: teens being exposed to permissive attitudes about premarital sex, the belief that content of the popular culture media is designed
for adults - which concern adult sexual roles and relationships that could place teens at risk, and the possibility that this information on sex will replace other educational tools that would provide a better foundation for healthy sexual understanding (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002). Violence and the effect of its depictions within popular culture on the adolescent have also been a heated realm of debate within the psychological discipline. The Cognitive Neo-Association Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory examples described above seem to show an increase in hostility and violent imitative behaviors in youth after viewing aggressive media. There is also a predominant concern that the increases in violent depictions in the media are causing a desensitization to 'real-life' violence in adolescents (Strasburger, 1995). A concern has also been voiced that violent behavior on television is increasing adolescent suicide rates, and that some adolescents, who are predisposed to violent tendencies, are having those tendencies exacerbated by violent media (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002).

Video-games have become a highly inspected popular culture transmission with regards to the effects of violent images as well as the use of simulated violent action, made possible through computerized technology. It was recently proposed that adolescents who expose themselves to greater amounts of videogame violence are more hostile, reported getting into arguments with teachers more frequently, were more likely to be involved in physical fights, and performed more poorly in school. (Gentile,
Lynche, Linder, & Walsh, 2004). This preposition is generally supported by the General Aggression Model developed in 2000, which states that personological (personality disposition) and situational (video-game play and provocation) lead to aggressive behavior by influencing internal states and decision processes. Within this framework it is posited that the harmful effects of violent media are greater for children who are already at risk, or have a trait disposition, for aggressive behavior. In 1986, two reports done in the US, showed that thefts increase with the introduction of television and a rise in homicides after televised championship boxing matches (Roe, 1983).

Other concerns surrounding media effects upon adolescents also include, mood and body dissatisfaction in adolescents due to unrealistic ideals transmitted through the media (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2002), a low interest in school and low academic success with increased immersion within popular culture products, intergenerational conflict and a 'cut off' feeling from parental forces as well as involvement (Roe, 1983), and finally, more stereotyped beliefs and coping by avoidance (Comstock, 1991). Within the literature, there is also an expression of concern for the absent parent within adolescent pop culture consumption. It is hypothesized that youth have difficulty distinguishing fantasy from reality which leads them be highly influenced by the media, particularly when adult involvement is limited. In this way, popular culture is often referred to as the 'super-peer group', and fears are vocalized regarding the influence that might have
on the adolescent (Strasburger, 1995). Also significant is the presumption that the media encourages processing that is unanalytic and unreflective (Comstock, 1991) which essentially leads to adolescents forfeiting 'authentic' conscious activities for activities within popular culture which provide a distraction (Cottle, 2001).

Solutions that have been put forth by psychological health professionals who have voiced concerns about the impact of popular culture transmissions on the adolescent are numerous and particularly relegated to changes within the popular culture media industry. Psychology and Communication Studies theorists Strasburger & Wilson (2002, formulated ten solutions to working with popular culture media for the betterment of youth. Their suggestions include: improving programming quality to incorporate more educational and informational resources, ameliorating advertising, creating a uniform rating system for all media, improving the portrayal of sex and sexuality in the media, conducting more research, increasing media education, using media for prosocial purposes, and perceiving media violence as a public health threat. These proposals seek to transform the media and/or immunize adolescents, as well as youth in general, against what is believed to be its accepted harmful effects. There is little or no mention of popular culture's possible positive products, or proposed research into this prospect within their dialogue. However, to believe that the positive role of the media does not exist as a legitimate theory within the
psychological discipline would be misleading, for many contemporary theorists have begun to explore this theme with very intriguing results.

2.3 The potential positive aspects of popular culture: Historical and contemporary theory

Aristotle wrote in his Poetics that spectators could be cleansed of feelings of grief, fear or pity vicariously (Strasburger, 1995). He posited that audiences responded to gruesome deeds and events in theatrical productions not with anger, frustration, or imitation but by "identifying with their suffering and emerging exhilarated and emotionally drained" (as cited in Heins, 2001). He called this process Katharsis, which later began the construction of the theory called The Cathartic Effect. The underlying hypothesis of The Cathartic Effect is rooted in psychoanalytic theory, which asserts that aggressive impulses can be purged through exposure to fantasy violence. As can be imagined, the Cathartic Effect has been widely debated by psychologists, including many who believe it has been discredited by studies like Bandura's (Berkowitz & Rawlings, 1963; Comstock & Strasburger, 1990; Ellis & Sekrya, 1972; Gunter, 1994; Huesmann, 1982, 1986). However, there are still a number of current theorists and researchers who maintain its validity within psychological thought and support its further exploration in connection with media influence and effect upon adolescents (Cottle, 2001; Feshbach, 1961; Heins, 2001; & Jones, 2002).
Much research has been undertaken in order to look at the possible positive potentialities of popular culture on the adolescent mind. Seymour Feshbach is one researcher who explored the Cathartic Effect in 1961; he found that hostile imagery decreased by exposure to a violent portrayal. Feshbach believed that the vicarious experience could release the viewer’s aggressive drive. Thomas Cottle (2001), a clinical psychologist and sociologist, used theories like Piaget’s to form the basis for his own theory, claiming that media, like television, restructures the minds of adolescents and that these restructurings are similar to the way in which intelligence is formulated. Cottle states that, “experiencing television is merely a form of intelligence emerging” (p. 138). He assumed that youth were making mental leaps, using their imagination, and performing a series of internal experiments to restructure their minds. Cottle uses Piaget’s theories by introducing the idea that, when adolescents ‘take in’ information from the TV, their consciousness is being transformed as a direct result of the act of ‘watching’, as well as the stimulus which they are viewing.

Adversaries of the belief that popular culture has a negative impact on the adolescent mind and behavior, reason that individuals have this conviction due to Western society’s tendency to underestimate youth and overestimate the power of popular culture. Firstly, it has been argued that the psychological discipline focuses on the media as the feared spoiler of ‘innocence’, a term used to describe children and
adolescents (Sternheimer, 2003). Perhaps this view is predominant due to the fact that there has been an increase in advertising and media aimed specifically at the youth market. Western society often views adolescents in relation to popular culture as consumers, watchers, and victims of marketing agencies. Gerard Jones (2002), a media theorist, stipulates that it is important for us to consider that adolescents are also "choosers, interpreters, shapers, fellow players, participants, and storytellers" (p. 18). Jones cautions that "viewing children as passive recipients of the media's power puts us at odds with the fantasies they've chosen, and thus with the children themselves" (p.18-19). Instead of being simply passive observers, it is conceptualized that adolescents may transform 'pop' culture's influence to their own empowerment (Sutton-Smith, 1994). Therefore, there seems to be a recognition of the danger in classifying adolescent's as 'innocent' victims of the media, in that the psychological discipline might lose valuable information available in the choices they have made.

Secondly, a concern has been voiced that through condemning popular culture transmitted in the media, Western psychology is overlooking the complexity of the history of these types of 'negative' behaviors, as well as social change (Sternheimer, 2003). There has been some dialogue within our society concerning the belief that, as media culture has expanded, adolescents have become more violent. However, what is becoming more evident is the possibility that isolated and tragic incidents have gained an
increase in attention when, in fact, the rates for teenage crime have diminished over the years (Allen, 2002). One theory, often articulated within society and within our culture, concerning this assumption is that fearing the media enables adults to condemn youth culture. Another theory posits that ethnicity and social-class is a factor in this false belief about the increase of violence; for when middle-class white youths commit violence there are not many more explanations beyond popular culture and the media (Jones, 2002).

The debate concerning adolescent susceptibility to the powerful reverberations of popular culture media has been considered, by some theorists, to be based in the adult's fear of losing 'control' of what effects society has on their children (Sternheimer, 2003). For instance, advertising and marketing geared towards teenagers have shown adults that they do not always have the ability to control their children's desires, identities, and status as consumers. There has also been some speculation into the difficulty that adults have in taking responsibility for their own consumption of popular culture, which they often partake in and enjoy. It has been suggested that the fear of the media and its ability to induce negative or maladjusted behaviors within the larger society, is actually a display of the unwillingness of mainstream society to acknowledge that there are problems in our culture that we are not able to satisfactorily cope with, for instance, sexism, racism, drug usage, and violence. In this way, it is much easier to blame
popular culture for inducing the effects in adolescents than to explore other factors that contribute to maladaptive behaviors in our society. Karen Sternheimer (2003), a sociologist, supposes that "we blame media violence to deflect blame away from adult failings - not simply the failure of parents but our society's failure to create effective programs and solutions to help troubled young people" (p. 71).

Additional concerns about the correlations between maladjusted behavioral patterns in adolescents and the influence of the media have been articulated with regards to the research studies themselves. Dr. Stuart Fischoff, founder of a Media Psychology laboratory in California, addressed the American Psychological Association Convention in 1999, proclaiming that "it is virtually impossible to get a large-scale study funded in this country unless it's designed to look for harmful effects" (as cited in Jones, 2002, p. 30). This statement highlights the possible reasons for the abundance of research literature written on the harmful effects of the media, when compared with research that looks at the possible positive effects or uses of the media within adolescent psychology. It appears that the Western public hears very little about research that challenges 'conventional wisdom' or which seeks to understand how adolescents make sense of their popular culture worlds.

Furthermore, debate regarding the effects of popular culture has included questions regarding the ability of laboratory studies to sufficiently explain real-world influence.
of the media on adolescents (Jones, 2002). Are these abnormal situations, created in a laboratory, producing abnormal results? Moreover, it has been witnessed that "the more naturalistic a study is, the smaller the findings tend to be" (p. 35). This is compounded by one observation made by Sternheimer (2003) regarding the research on the media's correlation to violent adolescent behavioral patterns, where she found that much of the research saw aggression and violence as mutually exclusive. One could also ask if it would not be worrisome to assume that all aggression is the same, or that all aggression leads to violence. The primary argument would be that simplistic questions are being asked and researched and then applied to very complex social issues.

Some theories and studies have speculated that adolescents use popular culture in very specific ways, and that these ways can be very helpful to the adolescent both behaviorally and psychologically. Cottle (2001) showed that, "identification with athletes as well as the investments of all sorts made in them reveal a great deal about the adolescent's definition of an ideal culture" (p. 96). Cottle articulates that through this use of popular culture identification much may be revealed psychologically regarding the adolescent. Cottle also states that "the hero is not precisely someone the child wishes to be like but someone deep in his or her private sense of self, anyway, the child already is" (p. 91). By identifying with the popular culture figure, the adolescent may be expressing his/her
own 'heroic' belief in themselves, something which can be seen as promoting resiliency and self-esteem.

Jones (2002) proposes that adolescents' use of popular culture is a way for them to rehearse what they will become later in life. He posits that when adults fear a certain form of media and the effects that this has on adolescents and youth, adults may be missing the emotional content of what is being articulated. He contends that, "by focusing so intently on the literal, we overlook the emotional meaning of stories and images" (p.11). Jones also speculates that children often 'play' with emotionally distressing concepts in order for them to 'feel better' about them in their daily lives. He states the following:

[...] aggressive kids may be more drawn to violent entertainment precisely because they need a compelling alternative to acting out or because they want to help make sense of their own aggressive feelings. (p. 31)

David Buckingham and Julian Wood (1993) performed a study on children’s emotional responses to horror films and found that children reported watching scary films in order to 'toughen up'. In this fashion, horror films helped the children to experience fear and deal with anxiety in a safe setting. Perhaps one way in which adolescents use the media is to prepare themselves to deal with their fears and complex feelings in everyday life. Researchers like Einerson (1998) and Holbrook (1994) stipulated that the agency of popular culture allows the adolescent to overcome their own fears by building up inner resources, where
the terms and images offered by popular culture allow everyday life to become at least partly understandable.

In a study on the role of media figures in adolescent development, autonomy and attachment, David Giles and John Maltby (2004) found that celebrity attachments aided in the transition from parental attachment to peer attachment. It was shown that media figures may provide an important component to the establishment of autonomy since they offer a variety of possible selves that a young person might wish to try out as well as information on cultural materials, such as gender role identity, values, and beliefs. It was also found that shared standards of morality were formulated by peer group attachment to celebrity and that they were likened to an 'extended family'. Perhaps, most significantly, Giles and Maltby found that, "the function of relationships with different types of celebrity may be related to other aspects of social psychological development" (p. 821). It is then possible, to speculate that further exploration into adolescent’s use of celebrity could lead to increasing amounts of information with regards to adolescent social psychological development.

2.4 Art psychotherapy and popular culture

Without denying the results shown by various psychological studies on the effects of popular culture media on adolescents, studies like Giles and Maltby’s demonstrate the usefulness of exploring further other aspects of popular culture than simply
its negative impact. While the field of psychology may continue to debate the effects of pop culture on adolescence, it is clear that there is an opening up of dialogue with regards to varying points of view. Unfortunately, within the newly emerging specializations of psychological inquiry, like art psychotherapy, there has been much less investigation into popular culture and its positive potentialities for adolescents. Comstock (1991), a psychologist, stipulated that television could be used effectively to teach visual skills, such as "the relationships between a complex whole and its components or between a three-dimensional figure and the unfolded one-dimensional diagram that represents it" (p. 118). In his argument for the use of popular culture when working with youth, Jones (2002) noted:

[...] children are usually taught to compartmentalize their communication into either linear narrative or static portraits, but storytelling that is both visual and verbal leads them to transcend the compartments, to experience their thoughts and feelings more completely. (p. 9)

Based on the Comstock and Jones studies, we could make the hypothesis that the visual natures of the majority of popular culture's transmissions would undoubtedly influence the artistic and therapeutic productions made within the art therapeutic encounter. However, to date, very little research or theorization has been undertaken with regards to popular culture within the realm of art therapy. When there has been dialogue on
this topic, there appears to be a prominent resistance within the
art therapeutic research literature to date.

Forty-three years after Wertham's book was published, not
much has changed in the art therapeutic community's conception of
the media and popular culture. One clear example of this is can
be found within the 26th annual conference of the American Art
Therapy Association (1997), which was based on exploring ways of
using technology to counteract the "stultifying effects of the
passive consumption of electronically generated entertainment"
(Williams, Kramer, Henley, & Gerity, 1997, p. 106). Within an
article generated in conjunction with the conference, the sphere
of electronic entertainment consumption was nostalgically named
(similar to Wertham's book 'Seduction of the Innocent'), the
'seductive environment'. Throughout the article, we are
consistently reminded of the conclusions of Wertham's generation.
However, in this instance, comic books are not the impetus,
rather, art therapeutic images that include popular culture
references are reviewed. In fact, the literature on art
psychotherapy (which includes references to media and popular
culture) notes that there is a similar accord across the
discipline: popular culture is seen as a seducer of the youth
psyche, providing a roadblock to beneficial therapeutic
intervention.

With this fear of technology and electronics, we cannot
help but be reminded of the luddite anxiety that was raised along
with the advent of the industrial revolution. By exploring the
luddites, we are reminded of the terror concerning technological overpowering, which is dissonantly similar to the fears that resonate even today with regards to popular culture. For instance, Edith Kramer (1992), an influential art therapist, voiced that "the lure of easy entertainment and technological novelty may replace vigorous activity to the extent that any capacity to relate to others may be reduced to purely electronic means" (p. 127). Along this continuum of thought resides the 'seductive environment', which is defined as the atmosphere of advertising and electronic media that is larger than life, extremely compelling, and virtual, where the human mind may be seduced to such an extent that our ability to create imagery is diminished and we are left with a feeling of emptiness (Gerity, 2001).

It appears as though there is a more or less shared assumption within the art therapy community that the media, and consequentially popular culture, is a barrier to imaginative thought within youth. There is agreement within the literature that the "seductive environment's" access to escape diminishes the individual from finding solutions to their own difficulties, and that a dependence on the media is a direct result (Gerity, 2001). In fact, there has even been a pairing of the 'seductive environment' with scientific theory in art therapy dialogue, although no actual research has taken place. It is assumed that,
[...] a failure to develop imagery leads to a lack of imagination which leaves most of the brain unemployed. Children so deprived are unable to see what a mathematical symbol or a chemical formula means, or visualize the concept of civilization. They can sense only what is immediately bombarding their physical system and are restless and ill-at-ease without such bombardment. (Williams et al., 1997, p.115)

This is a potent example of the fears generally associated with popular culture, and specifically, of the implications that these fears have with regards to art therapeutic practice in general. Through this 'brain manipulation' by the media, it is feared that there will be no ability for metaphoric transmission and conceptualization.

Although the art therapy literature usually deems the media to be the 'seductive environment', and most often condemns it, there are rarely any solutions provided. When there are solutions, there appears to be a consensus that the best alternative is to take youth away from the media and stay away from the images they are bombarded with, both within therapy and outside of it. Some theorists propose a return to grandparental wisdom, since it is stipulated that both the child and now the new generational parent have been assimilated by the 'seductive environment' (Gerity, 2001), while others assume that a return to 'nature' and its richness will allow for more therapeutically beneficial images (Williams et al., 1997). Sometimes there is
talk about providing what technology cannot; that is, companionship and corporeal experience. Solutions involving introducing youth to tangible art materials are considered avenues to transcending the powerful effects of the 'seductive environment'. Most surprisingly, there is generally no mention of the therapeutic use of images inherent to the 'seductive environment' that are so readily available to adolescents and a part of adolescent culture. These are simply considered reproductions, encompassing all that is wrong with, and 'seductive' about popular culture.

As we have seen, adolescents are inherently connected to the culture that surrounds them and due to this, art therapists have and will experience a surge of what appears to be material emanating from its influence. Coupled with the general belief of the 'seductive environment' infringing on the ability to create images, is the fear that the adolescent's ability to create spontaneous novel imagery will fade out due to popular culture's influence. Gerity (2001) assumes that, "what children need is less time spent in a virtual reality that is cold, remote, and intrusive, that leaves their bodies inert and their minds filled with somebody else's imagery" (p. 47). It appears that there is almost no evidence or recognition that a re-articulation - or its metaphoric connotation - of the popular culture image is, within the therapeutic context, of any therapeutic value. Instead, only the 'purely' original art piece seems to be considered worthwhile therapeutically. However, as will be evidenced in chapter 3, some
art therapists including Dafina Moriya (1995) have considered the repetitive nature of repeatedly occurring symbols as having therapeutic potentials. We will see that with the use of semiotic and psychoanalytic theory these types of symbols can be equated to the popular culture image, opening up the door for art therapy to begin to rethink popular culture in a similar fashion to contemporary psychological elaborations.
CHAPTER 3: Semiotics and symbolic interactionism: The open door to popular culture discourse and research within art therapy

Thus far, the review of the literature has focused on the psychoanalytic view of adolescent individuation (Chapter 1) and the relationship popular culture has historically had to the discipline of psychology as well as that of art therapy (Chapter 2). Within the present chapter, the focus will be an exhaustive exploration of the popular culture iconographic product and the ways in which it may be viewed from a research standpoint. I will look further into art therapy's possible definition of a popular culture image within the therapeutic endeavor. In addition, I will question the distinction made between a 'sign' and 'symbol' through the use of psychoanalytic and semiotic theory, with the intention of broadening the possibilities from which to view the popular culture image therapeutically. Ultimately, this review (as well as the preceding chapters) will serve to provide the basis for a qualitative case-study exploration of popular culture iconography that will encompass subsequent chapters. Lastly, this chapter will begin to establish the foundation for a case study methodology incorporating a symbolic interactionist stance.

3.1 Understanding the popular culture iconographic product

In order to conceptualize what the popular culture iconographic product is, we must look towards its definition within art therapeutic practice. While the psychological impact
of popular culture on the adolescent is highly debated within psychology, it is much less investigated within the art therapy field. As was discussed in chapter two, art therapy seems to view popular culture and the media as 'seductive', and it often suggests that the images inherent within it are 'empty' and 'inauthentic' (Gerity, 2001; Williams, Kramer, Henley, & Gerity, 1997). While very little is written specifically on the popular culture image in art therapy, two art therapists and theorists have found ways to conceptualize types of imagery that are closely related to popular culture and which appear in client artistic products. In 1971, art therapist, Edith Kramer, labeled a popular culture image as 'stereotyped' or 'conventional'. Much later, Dafina Moriya (1995), also an art therapist, looked at the possibilities inherent within this type of stereotyped imagery; she called this type of image a 'stereotyped symbol'.

In Edith Kramer’s (1971) book entitled Art as therapy with children, much is written on repetition and stereotype within the art therapeutic process. Kramer defines conventional and stereotyped art as serving as a defense, and moreover, as an expression of emptiness and passivity. In one case example of stereotyped or conventional artwork, Kramer presents "Angel", whose "earliest drawings all represented either Superman or similar omnipotent heroes of television and comic strips" (p. 135). This use of popular culture imagery is considered by Kramer as an obstacle to the therapeutic process as it is 'endlessly repetitious'. With this example, Kramer provides a
possible definition of the popular culture image (Superman) as 'conventional' or 'stereotyped' artwork within the art therapy context.

3.2 The stereotyped symbol

Later incorporated into the definition of stereotyped art were images of hearts, flowers, and rainbows. Dafina Moriya (1995) points these out in her investigation of the 'stereotyped symbol', which she defines as repeatedly drawn symbols that are stereotyped forms of art expression. She speculates that these defensive symbols have been historically considered as evading authentic self-expression. Moriya goes on to suggest that while these types of symbols do serve as a defense, there is a danger in them being dismissed. She states that, "they are an authentic expression of the patient's current state of self and emotional needs" (p. 24). In this way, it is conceived that the stereotyped symbol enables the therapeutic situation by providing safety and serving an adaptive function in its use as a defense. She stipulates that great care should be taken on the part of the therapist not to deny its importance within the therapeutic encounter.

Within her investigation, Moriya (1995) views the 'stereotyped' symbol as a transitional object. As noted in chapter 1, Object Relations Theory defines the transitional object as the entity that relates subjective reality to shared reality and which can be objectively perceived (Winnicott, 1984).
Under this delineation, the stereotyped symbol helps to expand the client's subjectively perceived world by serving as a trusted companion in times of change — particularly when entering new therapeutic territory. Moriya points out that the use of stereotyped symbols may increase with response to the amount of anxiety the client feels, particularly in times of change when anxiety levels are quite high. She theorizes that a repetitive use of the 'transitional object' or 'stereotyped symbol' may point to an internal process similar to that of individuation. It is my premise, under this conceptualization that the equation of a popular culture image to a stereotyped symbol within the artwork of the adolescent could signal a sign of individuation and the process towards self-actualization. In order to equate a popular culture image to that of a stereotyped symbol for the purposes of a research exploration, although briefly, an investigation of the 'sign' and the 'symbol' within psychoanalytic theory must be undertaken.

Traditionally, analytic psychology, a significant contributor to the field of art therapy, has upheld a distinction between a sign and a symbol. Jung described a symbol as having "an indefinite expression with many meanings, pointing to something not easily defined and therefore not fully known" (Jung, 1956, p. 124) whereas a sign, "always has a fixed meaning, because it is a conventional abbreviation for, or a commonly accepted indication of, something known" (p. 124). The distinction between a sign and a symbol is considered one of the
many instances where Jung and Freud diverged in their thinking. Unlike Jung, Freud saw symptoms as symbols and an abbreviated designation for a known thing (Frey-Rohn, 1974). Freud regarded symbols "exclusively from the casual point of view, without giving attention to the general content of symbols" (p.257); he maintained that "symbols still retained the original character of signs representing the meaning of words" (p. 260).

Freud reflected that, "a number of symbols are as old as language itself, while others are being coined continuously down to the present time (Freud, 1900-1901, p. 352). The analytic stance towards a dichotomy between 'sign' and 'symbol' is inherently what the present research investigation seeks to re-conceptualize. It will attempt to demonstrate validity of the Freudian conception of the interconnectedness between the 'sign' and 'symbol'. Freud not only points to the possibility that 'symbols' are continuously being created within contemporary or 'present' time (a reflection of popular culture itself) but their connections to language may also provide the basis for a deconstruction of the dichotomy between sign and symbol. In order to facilitate this deconstruction, semiotics, the study of signs is useful; however, a thorough survey of semiotic theory is beyond the scope of this paper.

3.3 Semiotics and the inherent connectedness of sign to symbol

Many definitions of Semiotics abound, however, most often it has been defined as:
the pivotal branch of integrated science of communication, it is concerned with the formulation and encoding of messages by sources, the transmission of these messages through channels, the decoding and interpretation of these messages by destinations, and their signification. (Sebeok, 1985, p. 451)

Jacques Derrida² (1978), the prominent French philosopher, worked towards deconstructing the distinctions made between 'signifier' and 'signified' which made up the concept of 'the sign' first set forth by Saussure (O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery, & Fiske, 1994). He construed that there was no transcendental 'signified' and that, therefore, the domain of signification had no limit. Similarly, theorists Stewart (1966) and Ullmann (1962) broke down the customary distinctions made between sign and symbol by looking at the idea of 'meaning', particularly within communication. Stewart suggested that these concepts were both inherently ambiguous entities and therefore equivocal within their connections to the creation of 'meaning'. It was believed that the distinction made between a sign and a symbol resulted in the loss of the complete 'meaning' attributed to either or both. Stewart states that, "one often encounters an attempted distinction between 'sign' and 'symbol' at the expense of critical attention to 'meaning'" (p. 4).

²Jacques Derrida (1990 - 2004) recently died of cancer at the age of 74. The philosophical world has lost a provocative and inspiring mind.
C.S. Peirce, a multi-disciplinary philosopher, brought much semiotic thought to the psychological discipline. Peirce believed that, "the explanatory, idioscopic science of psychology ought to draw heavily upon the normative, coenscopic science of semiotics" (Colapietro, 1989, p. 53). Peirce saw much of the development of psychological thought resting on the development of semiotics, due to therapeutic involvement necessitating communication. Similar to Derrida, Peirce’s ternary model\(^3\) of semiotics, opened up the conceptualization that one sign could give rise to another sign depending on the interpretation of the sign, and that therefore, signification was a dynamic process (Fisette, 1990). It was Peirce’s belief that a symbol existed as a ‘sub-sign’, which essentially connected ‘the symbol’ to the datum of knowledge acquired by ‘the sign’. These re-conceptualizations of the sign and symbol produce a discord when viewing them as dichotomies and it provides for a recognition that both the sign and/or symbol are relevant to exploration within art psychotherapeutic images.

\[3.4 \text{ The sign/symbol's importance within the task of individuation}\]

In Peirce’s (1897) words, "a Symbol is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the Symbol

\(^3\)‘Ternary’ referring to Peirce’s bi-dimensional ternary concept of semiosis encompassing the icon, the index, and the symbol. For the purposes of my discussion, I will be directly focusing on his idea’s surrounding ‘the symbol’.
to be interpreted as referring to that Object” (p.102). Using
the logic of Freud, Peirce, Derrida, Stewart, and Ullmann, if a
symbol is in essence a sign then, under this framework, a popular
culture image could be considered both a sign and a symbol (and
possibly simultaneously). Many of Peirce’s theorizations
concerning the sign/symbol speak to the task of individuation
similar to Moriya’s attribution of the stereotyped symbol as
transitional object. Peirce asserted that, “the word or sign a
person uses is the person him or herself, and that one’s language
is his or her sum total” [emphasis added] (as cited in Pettigrew,
2000, p. 127). The sign, for Peirce, was inherently connected to
the psyche and the concept of ‘self’; for him the self is itself
a sign. In this way, the present exploration of individuation
with regards to popular culture iconography as a sign/symbol is
made quite relevant. The connection of the process of
individuation to sign/symbol, by providing the basis for how we
see ourselves, highlights the potentialities for popular culture
imagery manipulation by the adolescent art therapeutic client.

Peirce’s theorizations further the possibilities for
popular culture signs/symbols use by adolescents through his
ascription of the social community significance within the
individuation process. He saw the most basic fact about the
human psyche as that he or she is in communication with other
beings. In this way, the identity of humans depends in some part
on the ultimate decision of the community (Colapietro, 1989;
Pettigrew, 2000). Thus, Peirce brought the concepts of
signification and symbol formation away from the individual and included the element of the social network that surrounded the individual. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the adolescent’s process of individuation under a psychoanalytic paradigm relies a great deal upon the social environment. Using Peirce’s logic as well as the psychoanalytic view of the importance of social life for the individuating adolescent, it is evident that research of this nature would similarly require a social perspective.

3.5 Symbolic Interactionism

3.5.1 Symbolic Interactionism: A definition

In order to incorporate the social aspect of the individuation process into the current research project, the theoretical structure of symbolic interactionism was deemed most suitable. However, to define symbolic interactionism is not a simple task. In order to do so one must tackle a complex system of philosophy, where each pioneer within this theoretical stance has provided new ways in which to perceive it. Coupled with this complexity of theory are the ways in which its philosophy, its practitioners’ objectives, and its assumptions have been molded into methodologies for research within the social sciences. Symbolic interactionism is, in essence a philosophy and an approach to the study of human group life and conduct, where it is assumed that humans do not act randomly but that behavior is influenced by meanings that people give to objects and situations in their interactions with others (Denzin, 1992; Potter, 1996).
Meaning making is seen as arising from social-interaction, and is non-automatic and subjective. Meaning is also conceptualized as a social product, where the individual and society are inseparable units (Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds, 1975).

Though an exploration of the literature, symbolic interactionism’s principle origins can be traced to the work of George Herbert Mead, a social psychologist, whose work straddled the philosophical and psychological traditions (Denzin, 1992; Lauer & Handel, 1977; Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds, 1975). His student, Herbert Blumer, interpreted much of Mead’s theories and passed them onto the public domain; he later became the father of the term ‘symbolic interactionism’ in the 1950’s (Travers, 2001). Blumer’s interactionism consisted of three basic premises:

[...] human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them [...] these meanings are a product of social interaction in human society [...] these meanings are modified and handled through an interpretive process that is used by each individual in dealing with the signs he/she encounters. (as cited in Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds, 1975, p. 1)

Although Blumer did not conduct empirical studies of his own, he has been heralded as one of the individuals “responsible for creating the intellectual and institutional conditions for symbolic interactionism to develop as a research tradition” (Travers, 2001, p. 20). Blumer focused on qualitative research
protocols using a symbolic interactionist framework and theoretical stance for empirical research (Blumer, 1969). Many of his students, as well as students of the Chicago School of Symbolic Interactionism, went on to employ interactionist methods in researching a broad range of topics within various disciplines. Although sociologists and social psychologists were the forerunners and carriers of this tradition, it was during the 1950s that there were attempts to merge these theories with phenomenology and Freudian analysis (Denzin, 1992).

3.5.2 The tenets

Hewitt (1991) describes five major tenets or principles of symbolic interactionist theory ascribed to by most of its users. First is the idea that "human conduct is social and cannot be explained merely as the result of idiosyncratic individual efforts" (p. 23). In this way, patterns of regularities of human behavior cannot be grasped without the understanding of the social processes which created it. Symbolic interactionists believe wholly in the joint methods of perceiving reality - both by the individual and society. It is believed that humans use their interpretations of the actions of others to understand their own actions. Motivations are thought of as originating not from drives but by meanings, particularly those relating to the social environment. The second tenet is that "human conduct depends upon the creation and maintenance of meaning" (p. 24). It is believed that humans act with plans and purpose, and that
meaning is ascribed both overtly in behavior and covertly within the individual's mind - not always verbalized to others. There is a recognition, within symbolic interactionism, of the individual meaning as well as the shared meaning.

The third tenet is that "human conduct is self-referential" (Hewitt, 1991, p. 25). The human being is both a subject which acts and an object in his or her experience. The self is an important component within an individual's conceptualization of their life as is their social identity. Human beings are "able to consider their own acts from the vantage point of the group as a whole and [...] imagine the consequences of their acts for others" (p. 26). Fourth, "people form conduct as they interact with one another" (p. 26). Most acts are not considered individual acts by interactionists, but social ones. According to this tenet, it is conceptualized that the audience plays as much of a role as the actor, for we learn to behave in certain ways by watching each other and generalizing our behaviors to other situations. The last tenet of symbolic interactionist theory is that "society and culture shape and constrain conduct, but they are also products of that conduct" (p. 27). Through this, symbolic interactionists view the human being as being simultaneously creator and created by the social world in which he or she exists. The individual is not a helpless figure within his or her culture - but an active participant in creating what society means both for others and for him or herself.
Symbolic interactionist researchers of the present day also articulate their methods using seven principles: first, each and every method must look at symbols and their interactions; second, the researcher must have the perspective of his/her participant when viewing the world; third, the researcher relates the participant's symbols and definitions to the social relationships that provide them; fourth, the researcher records the specific observational situations; fifth, each method must reflect the process of change as well as the static behaviors; sixth, researchers must be aware of their own definitions, values and ideologies; and finally, they must realize that theory is formal and not grand and causation should be seen as interactional (Potter, 1996).

3.5.3 The creative arts therapies and symbolic interactionism

Within the creative arts therapies, symbolic interactionist theories have been mainly articulated in terms of psychological research within drama therapy. However, very little has been experientially undertaken. Landy (1984) states that "the body of symbolic interaction theory has provided a framework for much research in the social sciences and can provide a similar basis for research in drama therapy" (p. 91). Landy quotes Mead's theories with relation to role-taking and the ways in which people take on roles and/or attitudes of people in their social environments, and internalize these conceptions of themselves. Play is also heralded as a way to take on these roles of others,
and is a very useful technique often employed by drama therapists. Hewitt (1991) states that "symbolic interactionists view human beings not only as shaped by culture and society, but also capable of shaping them" (p. 30). They are similar to the client within art psychotherapy who shapes and molds the symbols which they find in their environments and which, they in turn, use creatively to express aspects of themselves. Each client that is seen within the art therapeutic engagement is also a product of the social environment in which they reside, as is the therapist who comes into contact with the client.

Symbolic Interactionism methodologies offer a latitude which could easily be translated into art therapeutic research practice and usage. The method could, in the end, open the door to significant developments both within the art therapeutic world and the psychological world as a whole. Research using symbolic interactionism that looks at the ways in which client's artistically develop the symbols within their social environment is conspicuously lacking within the literature.

In the past, studies using symbolic interactionist theory and methodology have explored issues of the media and popular culture. In fact, these studies also incorporated semiotic theory - similar to what has been suggested for the present study of popular culture iconography - and provided a foundation for the need to explore semiotic theory along with symbolic
interactionist methods. Norman Denzin (1987)\(^4\) indicated that semiotics occupies a central and mediating place in symbolic interactionism as it structures the way we interpret the symbolic in our everyday lives. In one particular study, deconstructing the popular culture Jack Daniels whisky sign, Denzin (1987) notes that, "signs implicate the user (consumer) of the object in imaginary and signifying relationships with self and other" (p. 5). He proposes that there is a relationship between an image, an observation and an idea. Denzin posits that advertisements within popular culture work through a complicated logic of signification where the 'objects' become art forms; he states that, "the individual has become the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. Personal subjectivities are endlessly reproduced through the mass media" (p. 15). Through Denzin's analysis, we are able to see how popular culture images (like the Jack Daniels sign) and the semiotics of this sign/symbol can and should be explored using symbolic interactionist theory due to its inherently social nature.

3.5.4 Incorporation of a case study methodology: Rational

When delving into the history and theoretical foundations of symbolic interactionism, it becomes quite clear as to why a method of inquiry of this nature is best suited to exploring a social phenomenon like popular culture. Symbolic interactionism

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\(^4\)An American professor of Communication, Sociology, and Humanities and a leading researcher within the tradition of symbolic interactionism.
heralds a methodology that is vast in scope and allows for a
great deal of flexibility in its practice. It is often the
assumption of the symbolic interactionist researcher that the
data gathered provides an adequate guide to analytic procedure.
However, the flexibility and multi-faceted dimension to symbolic
interactionist method makes it very difficult for empirical study
to use it as a methodological base. Symbolic interactionist
methods lack a clear delineation of particular techniques, and
hence, this is the basis for my incorporating its theories within
a single-case study paradigm. While I will endeavor to stay true
to the essence of symbolic interactionist study I will
incorporate case study methods in order to structure the research
process and create an organization from which to obtain and
analyze the data throughout the research. Highlighting the
symbolic interactionist research practices, both historically and
presently, will aid in providing a basis for the research methods
of the present study that will be further articulated in chapter
4.

3.6 Symbolic interactionist methodology

3.6.1 Obtaining the data:

Herbet Blumer (1969) elucidated an exploratory application
for obtaining data within the publication of Symbolic
interactionism: Perspective and method. He speculated that this
methodological approach would involve "direct observation,
interviewing of people, listening to their conversation, securing
life-history accounts, using letters and diaries, consulting public records, arranging for group discussions, and making counts of an item" (p. 41). His exploratory study was considered, by definition, a flexible procedure where the researcher shifts from different modes of inquiry depending on the information and better understanding that he/she acquires.

The most adaptable methodology for symbolic interactionism can be found within the sociological branch of social psychology. While an in-depth definition of social psychology is beyond the scope of this paper, what is significant is that it is a branch of psychology concerned with the study of human group life. Lauer & Handel (1977) are two social psychologists who specified some applicable methods for the symbolic interactionist framework. Robert Broadhead (1980), a sociologist, allotted more specific techniques for applying the symbolic interactionist structure to a research project, and both stress the continued expansion and inspection of the methods, which they speak about within psychological practice.

Participant observation is one symbolic interactionist method for data collection articulated by Lauer & Handel (1977). They report that it involves some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subjects of the study, some direct observation or relevant events, some formal and informal interviewing, some systematic counting, some collection of
documents and artifacts, and open-endedness in the direction the study takes". (p. 169)
They posit that there is a need for a certain amount of methodological flexibility, where the data provides an adequate guide to analytic procedures. Exploratory study is articulated by Lauer & Handel as "research that is flexible and that involves a progressive sharpening of focus as the research proceeds" (p. 314). They use Blumer's theories and conceive of exploratory research as consisting of five components; autobiographical data, personal interviews, a collection of conversations, direct questionnaires, and direct observation for data collection. As with much qualitative research, symbolic interactionist study takes place in the field rather than in a laboratory and this is emphasized by all symbolic interactionists. It is thought that a combination of interviewing, discussion, and observation is best for grasping a social phenomenon. Techniques of how to observe are set forth by the symbolic interactionist method; it stipulates that,

one may remain external to that which one is observing, or one may be in the group but remain passive. One may choose to interact only when necessary to clarify matters for oneself, or one may more actively talk with others in order to provide particular kinds of information. (p. 351)
Rather than variables and/or concepts within the study, Lauer & Handel point out that Blumer suggested the use of 'sensitizing
concepts' that "suggest directions rather than compel specifics" (p. 316).

3.6.2 Analyzing the data:

With regards to analysis of obtained data, Broadhead (1980) discusses 'substantive sampling', which "refers to a conceptual ordering and comparison of the same items, primarily in the form of descriptions and classifications" (p. 29). Substantive sampling is an open theoretical coding of the initial data, where the data is analyzed noting the range of events (not amounts), problems, meanings, processes, contexts, and consequences of the subject area of study. This data, placed through the processes of constant comparison as well as open coding, where Broadhead states, "the researcher is encouraged to borrow and make use of concepts, codes, and expressions from any given source of thought or theory" (p. 29). Through this process it is believed that an emergence of central concepts and hypotheses will emerge which will account for the processes that are occurring.

Lauer & Handel (1977) point to the use of comparison groups as 'checks' that the researcher can impose on his or her research. Comparative analysis of this kind is said to help us to estimate the magnitude of a relationship, to see to what extent we may generalize our findings [...] comparative studies are useful in testing hypotheses; the verification of a theory is greatly aided by the support of comparative data. (p. 353)
Precision of data and concepts as well as a better understanding and confidence within one’s emerging theory are motives for using comparison groups. One of the major differences between experimental research and symbolic interactionist qualitative research is that the ultimate objective is to create or generate new theories (Broadhead, 1980). In fact, one of the greatest documented weaknesses with the symbolic interactionist method is that it yields ‘too many’ results and new ideas – sometimes beyond the scope of the research problem. Research does not simply modify theory under a symbolic interactionist framework, it generates it – there is an interaction between research and theory that is quite instrumental; each stimulating and being stimulated by the other.

3.7 Re-visioning the popular culture image in art therapy

Art therapeutic discourses and concepts such as the ‘stereotyped symbol’ have provided a starting point for research into popular culture. Psychoanalytic and semiotic theory have challenged the distinction between a sign and a symbol and have concurrently formulated a space in which popular culture imagery can be conceptualized as relevant to art therapy. Moreover, these discourses have created a space in which to view individuation. As well, popular culture symbology has a social nature, which necessitates exploration with this context in mind. Symbolic Interactionism as a theoretical structure that incorporates social dynamics and the investigation of symbols is
innately suited to a study of media and popular culture iconography. However, its flexibility and lack of methodological structure require its incorporation with other qualitative procedures, such as the case study. The present research is based on the use of symbolic interactionist theory, along with a qualitative exploratory case study methodology, in order to investigate the potentialities for popular culture iconography within the artwork of the individuating adolescent.

Art therapy's newly emerging research base, still traversing the large territory of psychological research inquiry, has yet to incorporate symbolic interactionist theory. Its ideologies and adaptable methods provide a space for art therapeutic research, even in the simple fact that art therapy, in itself, is a significant interactional process (between the therapist, client, and created image) and that art is an output of symbolic expression. It is through the use of theoretical standpoints, like that of symbolic interactionism, that contemporary thought involving a re-conceptualization of the popular culture image is possible.
Chapter 1 outlined the psychoanalytic view regarding the process of adolescent individuation, and chapter 2 presented the relationship that the field of psychology and art psychotherapy has to popular culture. Within chapter 3, the focus shifted to highlighting the ways in which to conceive the popular culture art therapeutic product and began to delve into the research practices best suited towards its study. In the present chapter, I will set forth the components of symbolic interactionism and qualitative exploratory case study methodology which will provide the framework for a practical exploration of popular culture imagery within the art therapeutic work of the individuating male adolescent. As will be evidenced, many of the components of symbolic interactionist and case study methodologies share very similar structures and are inherently suited to being used together.

This chapter will be delineated into four components: the setting; the methodology used (a combination of symbolic interactionist and qualitative case study frameworks) and the research procedure; the results obtained; and finally, a discussion of central concepts and hypothesis brought forth through the research process. Conclusions of the obtained data, incorporating theoretical standpoints set forth through preceding chapters, will be considered within chapter 5, the final step
towards unearthing the potentialities for popular culture iconographic work within art psychotherapy.

4.1 The setting: A residential treatment environment

Residential treatment arose from what has been traditionally conceived of as orphanages within Western society. In the 30s and 40s, improvements to Western government Medicare separated the children who displayed behavioral difficulties from those who were neglected and/or abandoned. The so-called 'problem-child' was placed in group care, while often the less problematic child was placed in foster care. Interestingly, many of the actual buildings used for orphanages are now the very structures which make up residential treatment facilities today (sometimes known as group homes). Some are located in communities, while others are somewhat separate and take up a larger area which may contain their own school, as well as recreational sites. The theoretical structure varies from one residential treatment centre to another as do the appearances of their sites; however, the fundamental basis of treatment involves employing deliberate practical and theoretical strategies to improve problematic behaviors of their clients. Adolescent residential treatment centres structure treatment around the client's problems, their home, family, and community circumstances. These issues are translated into a treatment plan particular to the agency. Within residential treatment, all program elements (from recreation to individual treatment, as
well as group therapy and daily living) are "interrelated to create an overall positive impact on the child during his stay in residence" (Weber & Haberlein, 1972, p. 56). Care and custody of the child are important features of the residential treatment plan as well.

A child is brought to residential treatment through many routes and circumstances. Specifically, in Canada, a child is mandated to a residential facility through three legislative avenues: the Health and Social Services Act, The Youth Protection Act, and the new Youth Criminal Act (formally known as The Young Offenders Act). All involve a child's maladaptive behaviors being evidenced by a third party and brought to the attention of specific groups within the community dedicated to helping the welfare of children in need. Social Services agencies, in conjunction with the residential facility, determine the length of stay for the adolescent. Services and treatment plans are generally created to provide for the particularities of each young person in care.

The agency within which the adolescent's in this study reside is a sizable residential treatment services organization located in a large Canadian metropolis. The organization's services extend to various areas around the city, including office, housing and school compounds, as well as residential placements. The clients live within the residential sub-setting of the organization (or group home) situated in a suburban neighborhood outside of the downtown sphere of the city, and
surrounded by community resources as well as associations which are directly used by the facility. This setting houses eight treatment placement beds which are gender specific (males) and age specific (between 13 and 18 years). Residency is sporadic; clients reside in the setting from one month to over a year, depending primarily on the court order, treatment measures and resolution, as well as alternate placement strategies. Five regular childcare counsellors are employed, in shifts, 24 hrs a day, to care for the basic needs of the residents and structure of the program. Each childcare counsellor is assigned as a primary worker for every client; they are responsible for making sure the treatment, files, and management of the resident are documented and executed. Relief child care counsellors are used periodically to fill shifts when the regular child care staff are unavailable. Additional professionals, including social workers, program managers, and other healthcare professionals are regular fixtures at the group home setting. Their presence is sporadic and relegated to the needs of the clients. The space used for art therapy is the basement area of the home; this space also houses a pool table and other recreational games. The art therapy materials are located in a large locked cabinet in the basement. The resident’s lives occur directly outside the art therapy space and it is located steps away from the childcare workers office.
4.2 Methodology and research procedure

4.2.1 Data collection

The present case study was conducted using the exploratory method set forth by one of the pioneers of symbolic interactionism, Herbert Blumer (1969). Blumer defines exploratory research in the following terms:

[...]a focus [which] is originally broad but becomes progressively sharpened as the inquiry proceeds. The purpose of exploratory investigation is to move toward a clearer understanding of how one's problem is to be posed, to learn what are the appropriate data, to develop ideas of what are significant lines of relation, and to evolve one's conceptual tools in the light of what one is leaning about the area of life.

(p. 40)

As will be evidenced further in this chapter, the progression of each session relied on what the clients chose to bring to every meeting. In order to navigate the ways in which the adolescent could use popular culture iconography constructively, and to hone this broad investigation with regards to what was brought up by the participants, it was the researcher's task to address themes that emerged and to progressively limit the art creations to apply to increasingly more specific themes. The goal was to increasingly demarcate the appropriate data and relate this to the potentialities for therapeutic benefit.
Methods articulated under a qualitative case-study research paradigm include observation and unstructured interview for data collection. Data for the present study was collected by using a combination of interviewing (within the art therapeutic group context), discussion of the created imagery and themes, as well as observation of the individual, and group dynamics. Cherry (2000), a researcher who has written on the execution of research within the helping professions articulates that, within the qualitative case study "sample [size] will be small, but the data collected on each participant will be voluminous" (p. 41). Due to this, two groups of four adolescent males residing in residential treatment went through each art therapy session. Two groups were used in order to fulfill Lauer & Handel's (1977) suggestion of including comparison groups in order to perform comparative analysis, as was discussed in chapter 3 (see p. 64 - 65). There was no control group, and within each group I was the therapist/researcher. The limitations with regards to my being both the therapist and the researcher within the study are explored, more in depth, further within the limitations section of the present chapter.

Both research groups met weekly for one hour. The art therapy space within the residential home was sectioned off by a closed door with a sign announcing the space as being used for art therapy work and allowing the admittance of only the members of the group. Decisions of which group the residents would be placed within were made by the front-line child-care workers, who
randomly selected names out of an envelope and placed each adolescent male in a respective group, labeled either A or B. Each group was given the same themes to work with at the beginning of the first session, after which themes for each session were determined by the particular members of the group. The research art therapy groups consisted of ten group sessions, which occurred on a weekly basis for approximately three months. Cherry (2000) points out that unobtrusive data like field observations and interviews are often combined with case records, documents, and photographs within qualitative case studies. These qualitative products became the basis for data collection within the present study, as well as the use of a tape recorder for more accurate description of events through observation. Data was derived, using Lauer & Handel's (1977) suggestions of field participant observation on the part of the researcher, where direct observation, informal interview, and open-endedness of the study were paramount.

Due to both symbolic interactionism and case study methodology pointing to the necessity of incorporating historical data (Cherry, 2000; Lauer & Handel, 1977) before the group sessions began, biographical data was first collected and documented. Due to the changing nature of residential treatment, and high turnover of residents that live within the group home, some participants left through the course of the group sessions while new residents began the sessions at various intervals in the research process. Each new participant's biographical data
was taken and added to the data already collected before their participation in the art therapy research process. Each member’s departure or arrival was noted through the course of the group’s progression and added to the data collected. Also important to note are the fluctuations in attendance of the participants, as many are involved in shifting treatment strategies and some exhibit impulsive behavior matters. Involvement in the research group was dependant on both treatment plans of the residential facility as well as the shifting behavioral needs of the residents. Great effort was made to document the reasons for absences of the participants, which was included into the data of the present study.

Sensitizing concepts are considered by symbolic interactionists to be less objective and more flexible in nature; less easily definable and inherently ambiguous rather than definitive (Lauer & Handel, 1977). Blumer (1969) believed that these types of concepts were more flexible tools for inquiry into the empirical world. The sensitizing concepts used within the present study were ‘popular culture’ and ‘identity’ as well as concepts that were variations on these themes (self-awareness, media, etc.). As we have seen in previous chapters, the inherent ambiguity of these concepts allows for the flexibility which symbolic interactionists define as sensitizing. Using these concepts, each group began with ‘identity’ and ‘popular culture’ (or some derivative thereof) as a broad theme where they were to discuss their particular conceptions of the words (as well as how
they related to each other's conceptions) and the iconography which encompassed them. More specifically, they were encouraged to create images that reflected their ideas of popular culture in a very broad way. I remained primarily a passive observer, who became more active in the discussion component, in order to provide structure to the discussion and to help the group to remain focused on topic. As the weekly group sessions continued, the concept of 'popular culture' appeared to become increasingly more specific to what the young people brought to the group meetings. Similarly, the concept of 'identity' appeared to naturally become more honed to each individual through the group's progression. Both the themes of 'identity' and 'popular culture' are quite broad and complex in nature, however, within vastness of the themes the adolescents were afforded the ability to point to their own definitions and attributions. The themes at the beginning of each group reflected a discussion piece that generally had been brought up during the previous group. Open-ended questioning was used in order to allow the client's to come up with their own conceptualizations, and to lessen researcher bias.

With regards to the process of observation, David Aldridge (1994) reports that clients observed within the case study method are "described quite freely without any attempt to set formal parameters" (p. 338). As will be evidenced, this study's focus is on the description of presented variables within the research rather than an explanation of these variables and hypotheses of
why these emerged. After each group, I recorded dominant observations (particularly to social interactions), as well as the presence or absence of group members. Through the use of open-ended questioning - an important consideration within symbolic interactionist methodology (Broadhead, 1980) due to its allowance for client directedness - the clients were able to structure the increasing specification of the theme, as it always had something to do with what had been discussed previously in the group the week before. At times, this would mean that I would bring in specific art materials in order to meet their needs when discussing and creating images of popular culture. At the end of the 10 sessions, each group was given the opportunity to take their artistic creations with them or to dispose of them as they wished.

Prior to their involvement in the study, participants were informed of the area of study, as well as the fact that photographs of their images would be taken by myself and that audiotape would be used. Information about the study and consent was performed in the presence of a childcare worker and/or their social worker (at times the legal guardian). Participants were encouraged to ask any questions which they may have and it was made clear that each member of the group could refuse to attend the research group or could leave both the group and/or the study of their own volition at any time. This information was provided to the research participants, the front-line staff, supervisors, and at times the social worker, in the form of an informed
consent form (Appendix 1 & 2). These groups had been working together for three weeks prior to the commencement of the research process and the residents also lived with one another in the group home. It should be kept in mind that while negotiating the data of this study, the participants had relationships with each other that existed away from the treatment/research process and which undoubtedly would affect their interactions within the group. Moreover, each child was engaged in individual therapeutic art therapy sessions with myself (the researcher/art therapist) and therefore also had a relationship to the researcher prior to the pop culture research group process. More will be developed on the possible limitations, as well as biases, inherent within this practice further in the present chapter.

4.2.2 Data analysis

Case study data analysis is performed through inductive reasoning, which Cherry (2000) defines as "a reasoning process where one uses specific observations to propose generalizations that apply to the whole" (p. 59). Aldridge (1994) points to the use of meta-level analysis or the ability to analyze material at a higher level, where connections between themes and emerging meanings in the therapeutic process are proposed. Collected observations are analyzed to identify common patterns across cases and recurring events. The observations made while in the research process are placed within various categories; descriptive categories are "made up of sets of participant remarks that are similar" (Cherry, 2000, p. 59): construct
categories are "a cluster of items organized together to characterize and/or measure aspects of a broader concept" (p. 59) - these types of categories are often formulated out of the descriptive categories; and central categories are "core categories that explain the phenomenon" (p. 59).

Once the data had been accumulated into the forms of biographical data, photographed artistic creations, audio-taped group session conversations and social observations, substantive sampling (Broadhead, 1980) was used to sift through the data/material and to come up with the descriptive, construct categories, as well as dominant themes which emerged through the course of each group's 10 week history. Robert Broadhead (1980), a researcher in the symbolic interactionist field, states, "substantive sampling refers to a conceptual ordering and comparison of the same items, primarily in the form of descriptions and classifications" (p. 29). In substantive sampling, open coding is used to analyze and note the range of events (not amount) of the problem. Through this open-coding, central concepts (similar to the case-study's construct categories) emerge and become paramount to creating hypothesis about what is occurring. Photographic and audio-taped data aid in the process of this type of sampling and creating construct categories/central concepts.

While the biographical data on the clients would be too expansive to go into great detail and would exceed the limits of this research, I will supply the most relevant data with regards
to biography of each client (while assuring confidentiality and anonymity) as well as session synopsis. Each session will be relegated to construct categories and dominant themes as well as those individuals and/or dominant descriptive interactions that were present. Clients will be referred to by pseudonyms and no identifying data will be given concerning the participants in either research group. It is significant to note that often the pseudonyms were chosen specifically by the participants themselves to reflect their own identities even within the realm of being anonymous. The discussion component of the present chapter will resolve the prominent descriptive categories, construct categories and central concepts that emerged within the group sessions. In the hypothesis section of this chapter, I will highlight the comparative analysis between groups A and B to bring to light the construct categories and concepts that emerged through both of the groups and through the 10 week process. Through this delineation, hypotheses - or central categories - related to popular culture's use pictorially and therapeutically for these adolescent males will be set forth.

4.3 Limitations of the study

While the present study suggests a great deal with regards to adolescent's use of popular culture imagery, it is important to underscore the inherent limitations involved in this research process. First and foremost, the most powerful limitation to the study is gender, as all the clients involved in the research were
males. The residential placement in which I conducted my research was relegated to the housing of only male adolescents and this limits the results to a male perspective on popular culture as well as individuation itself. The results are based on what these particular young men chose with regards to popular culture and their 'gendered' and situated knowledge regarding media and its technological transmissions. It was not possible to highlight the full spectrum of popular culture images within the study and was based solely on the adolescent’s choice of what to being to each session.

A second limitation to the study is the delimitation of the residential treatment environment. Since residential treatment itself is directly entangled with societies governing structures, multifarious theoretical stances, and psychological treatments immersed within the complexity of the structure itself, my research data is limited to this specialized setting. These adolescents were readily immersed within individuation and separation from the family unit, for they are all physically absent from their familial spheres. It is also pertinent to stipulate that this type of adolescent population has for many years been considered 'deviant' by society. Moreover, in many instances the behaviors exhibited, both in order to be placed within this type of facility and directly performed within its confines, are behaviors not 'normally' exhibited by adolescents at large. However, I believe that although this is a limitation
for generalizability to the 'normal' teenage population, it serves as a distended example of the individuation process.

Also involved in the limitations inherent within the residential environment is the concept of 'space'. For the group home environment is one easily made accessible to interruption and lack of therapeutic containment - due to its commonly being a small structure occupied by numerous individuals (staff and youth) where private areas for art therapy work is limited. Another important consideration for therapeutic work within this type of organization is the lack of therapeutic involvement. Due to this, there is a need and a realization that many members of the group had been seen by me on an on-going individual therapeutic basis for approximately six months before the commencement of the research process. This may cause limitations in the kinds of information obtained within the group situation, as my presence unavoidably took on a multi-dimensional quality and influenced the choices of information brought to light and shared within this atmosphere. Also inherent in the residential environment is the reality that treatment and behaviors are continuously shifting and necessitating the absence of the client through alternate therapeutic intervention or discharge home or to another residential facility. Therefore, as is evidenced within the results, many of the participants could not participate on various occasions, were discharged and/or admitted during the research process. My data is therefore limited to the adolescent's own shifting treatment needs and the time-line of
the research project; whereas some residents were able to attend most of the groups, other attended only a select few.

My position as a participant observer necessitates the inclusion of a limitation that the results are relegated to my position within the group situation and my assumptions concerning the group process are paramount within the research results. As I used substantive sampling to identify the categories and constructs, the data is relegated to my own subjective views of what occurred during the course of the research groups. My subjective view is evident in the reality that another researcher may have viewed other concepts/constructs as having a dominant or central place within the study, if this was the case, the data analysis would have yielded very different results. The presence of a tape recorder also undoubtedly influenced the choice of materials expressed and what is reflected within the results of the study. Finally, the material brought forth within the hypothesis section is certainly relegated to my assumptions with regards to the group process and material brought forth throughout each group. All data must be understood with the above limitations in mind.
4.4 Results

4.4.1 Biographical data

Group A.

Duncan* was a 13 year old male at the time of the research project. He had arrived at the present group home approximately one month before beginning the art therapy group. Duncan had been left with a babysitter when he was a few months old and his mother did not return. Duncan had never known his mother, or his biological father, and therefore his cultural history was also a mystery to him; Duncan displayed physical attributes of bi-racial and/or mixed parentage. Custody was granted to the Director of Youth Protection when Duncan was quite young, and consent was given for his participation in the present research project by his child welfare worker. Duncan had lived in a variety of foster homes through the course of his life, each one breaking down due to an escalation of his behaviors - specifically lack of respect for curfews and consistently being suspended from school. Duncan had been suspected of stealing from other residents in his foster-home and he had been fined for vandalizing a well-known eating establishment. Since Duncan’s admittance to the present group home he had been sent to a secure and locked facility to stabilize his behaviors which included physically abusive behaviors towards peers in the residence. He was diagnosed as having ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and was taking medication for its maintenance.

* Pseudonym
Kevin* was a 13 year old Black male who was placed in the present group home several months before the commencement of the present research project. Kevin’s family had come to the awareness of social services due to abuse that he had suffered at the hands of his mother. Kevin’s brothers and sisters had also been placed in foster care, after he testified against his mother in criminal court. Kevin’s father, who had been separated from his mother for quite sometime, ceased contact with Kevin after the court hearing and moved many miles away where he married and had another child. After sometime in foster care, Kevin accused his foster parents of sexual abuse. A lengthy investigation was undertaken with no evidence, where it was concluded that this accusation sprang from Kevin’s post traumatic stress surrounding his mother’s past abuse. At the same time, Kevin’s behaviors also became more aggressive and he was involved in ‘bullying’ and drug usage within the school environment. Kevin’s foster parents could no longer support him in their home and stated that he was disrupting the other foster children. Kevin was subsequently placed in a group home for children under the age of 13 years, which was deemed to be inappropriate for him when he turned 13 years of age approximately one year after his admittance. He was transferred from this group home to the present residential group home due to these events. Kevin did not have contact with his mother, father, nor his brothers and sisters throughout the research time-line.

*Pseudonym
Peter* was a 15 year old African Canadian male placed in the residential facility under a Youth Protection urgent measure. The emergency placement for Peter was mandated due to verbal and physical aggression that he was displaying in the home. Peter lived with his single-mother and older brother, and it was articulated that when his needs were not immediately met, his behaviors would become quite dangerous and could be directed at his mother. Peter’s mother requested the emergency placement as she had called the police on several occasions due to her son’s rising aggression with no change in his behaviors. Peter’s father had come back into his life after being absent for quite sometime and he voiced a great deal of difficulty figuring out where to place his father in his life. Peter had threatened suicide in the past, and had been placed on a ‘suicide watch’ program while in the group home. His mother and brother were both highly involved in his treatment plans and interventions throughout the course of his stay at the residence. Peter’s placement coincided with the beginning of the research art therapy group. Peter refused to attend any of the art therapy groups, although he did consent to his involvement before the treatment groups have begun. Peter had no current diagnoses and was not on any medication.

Trevor* was a 15 year old Caucasian male who had come to the residential facility a few weeks prior to the commencement of the

* Pseudonym
research art therapy group. Trevor’s parents had recently divorced and Trevor had decided to not follow through with visitation with his father as he stated that his father would use physical punishment. Trevor had come to the attention of social services through a Youth Criminal Order, due to his being charged with the physical assault of his mother. His mother had called the police and had charges laid against him. Trevor’s low anger tolerance had made it very difficult for him to live with his mother, and he had been placed in the current residential facility to help with transitioning him back to the home. While Trevor presented as quite smart, he displayed a great deal of difficulty with social relationships and portrayed some struggles with academic tasks. Trevor’s mother revealed through the course of treatment that his father had used physical punishment in the home and that Trevor had displayed ‘abnormal anger’ in the home since he was four years old. He had been diagnosed with ADHD and a learning disorder, and was currently taking medication for ADHD. Trevor was discharged from the residential facility and back to his mother’s care after the fifth group session.

Mark* was a 14 year old African Canadian male who arrived at the residential treatment group home halfway through the research art therapy group process (week 5). Mark’s mother and father had been separated for years and he had three older siblings who either lived independently or in care. Mark’s mother was a heavy user of drugs and alcohol and sent her children to live with her

* Pseudonym
sister when she could no longer afford to house them. His aunt also did not have many monetary or support resources and the children were sent to live in foster homes. Mark was placed in a residential facility due to his increasing behavioral issues, including leaving the foster home’s he was placed within to seek his mother who still remains in his life, although she refused to inform child protective services where she was living. Mark also had difficulty respecting the rules and curfew of his foster placements; on several occasions he would not return to the home for many days. Mark was brought into residential care with concerns about his lack of accountability in the community and his possible involvement in gang activity. Mark has also been involved in the criminal system with charges of vandalism, shoplifting, and possession of a dangerous weapon. Mark had had no contact with his father since he was a very small child. Mark had no documented diagnoses and was not on medication throughout the research process.

*Group B.*

Bobby* was a 14 year old male who had resided at the current residential placement for approximately six months before the art therapy research group. Bobby originated from a mixed cultural background, his mother being Aboriginal and his father, Caucasian. Bobby came from a very large family with five brothers and sisters. His mother and father had been separated for quite sometime and his mother had another child with her

* Pseudonym
current partner. Bobby had been placed in long term foster care, along with his brothers and sisters, when he was six years old. The children had been taken away from the parents due to substance abuse problems and consequent negligence and neglect. Bobby had been moved from three foster homes and two group homes since being placed in care. These moves occurred due to neglect within a foster home and Bobby’s increasing behavioral issues involving anger both in the residences and at school. Bobby had been found with fabricated knives in the home and had been involved in bullying behaviors at school. Through the course of the research group, Bobby’s long-term plans involved returning to live with his father, who had successfully abstained from alcohol and drugs for a significant amount of time. Bobby would frequently visit with his father; however, his father was living off social services and could not support him at that time. Bobby did have contact with his brothers and sisters, although sporadic, as they lived in foster care and group homes themselves, often at quite a distance from Bobby’s residence. Bobby did not have contact with his mother throughout the course of the research group and he had one older brother who had been incarceratated due to violent behaviors. Bobby had no diagnoses on file and was taking no medication at the time of the research.

Tony* was a 15 year old male of mixed cultural ethnicity; his mother was Black and his father was Caucasian. Tony had been residing at the current residential placement for approximately

* Pseudonym
one year before the commencement of the art therapy research group. Tony’s father had been incarcerated for most of Tony’s life due to various offences, including robbery, possession of a firearm, and forcible confinement. Tony’s mother had died when he was quite young and left him and his sister without parental support. They had lived with various maternal aunts and uncles. However, Tony’s increasing behavioral difficulties broke down each of these living situations for him, as they stated that they had difficulty raising their own children due to Tony’s high behavioral needs. Tony was placed in various foster homes, which also broke down, due to his acting up in school, as well as his inability to abide by the expectations within the home and respect curfews. Tony had been charged with assault and conspiracy for offences in the community and significant ‘bullying’ behaviors at school. During the course of the treatment group, Tony was placed in a secure treatment setting due to verbal and physical aggression towards staff and peers. Tony had been diagnosed with Adjustment Disorder with Depressed Affect and Oppositional Behavior, as well as ADHD (for which he was taking medication). Tony was discharged from the residential placement to a nearby foster home on the eighth week of the research group; however, he continued to join the group for the two remaining weeks and would commute from his foster home to attend.
Tom* was a 14 year old Black male who had been residing in the current residential placement for approximately one week before the commencement of the art therapy research group. Tom had one older sister who was also residing within a group home and with whom he had very little contact. Tom was born premature (possibly due to parental drug usage) and was abandoned at the hospital where he was born. Tom has lived most of his life with extended family members, specifically a paternal aunt, and he had no contact with either his mother or his father for most, if not all, of his life. Tom was placed in a foster home when he was 12 years old due to behavioral issues he was presenting, including significant drug usage. Tom’s drug usage contributed to his being expelled from school and was thought to contribute to his being placed in secure residential placements due to aggressive behaviors against staff when he was transferred to a group home setting. Tom’s stay had been extended due to his increasing drug usage and his running from various treatment placements. His aunt still retained custody of Tom and hoped to see him ameliorate his behavioral issues in order to return to live with her. Tom continued to struggle with aggressive behaviors, running from the program, and drug usage throughout the course of the research group. Tom was diagnosed with ADHD; however, he consistently refused to take medication to ameliorate it.

* Pseudonym
Bones* was a 14 year old Black male who had resided in the residential placement for approximately seven months prior to the commencement of the art therapy group. Bones had been placed in care under the Youth Protection Act, due to his disclosure to police that he was being hit by his maternal grandmother with whom he lived. Bones had been found sleeping in a park by the police and was removed from his grandmother’s home. He was first placed in a foster home, where he was unable to abide by the curfews and expectations, and the police were called numerous times to help locate Bones in the community. Bones still remained in contact with his mother, although this was sporadic, and he had not had contact with any member of his paternal lineage since he was born. He was transferred to a group home placement due to the foster home being unable to provide a safe environment for him. In his various group home placements, Bones had been found with possession of narcotics, under the influence of various illegal substances, and had shown increasing behavioral difficulties. He was charged with taxing (bullying behaviors involving the theft, or threat of theft of money) and had been suspended from school many times for noncompliance. Bones displayed a great deal of difficulty within the school environment and due to his frequent residential placement changes had been held back a few academic grades. Bones was diagnosed with ADHD and was taking medication for its maintenance throughout the course of the research art therapy group.

*Pseudonym
4.4.2 Session synopsis

Session 1 - Group A.

Duncan, Kevin and Trevor were present for this session and Peter had chosen not to attend due to feeling ill. The theme was to explain how pop culture was defined for each individual and to create an image pertaining to this definition. Most of the group themes centered around brands of clothing (Nike), music (G-Unit), sports (basketball), cartoons, and particular celebrity basketball players. Dominant interactions included agreements or disagreements regarding whether these brands, songs, and basketball players were 'good' or 'bad'. Opinions were often voiced loudly, affirming allegiances to specific components and finding compromises through discussion and descriptions of why they held the opinions they did. Loyalty to a particular brand of clothing or musical band appeared to separate the group members and simultaneously bind them to each other. At various instances during the discussion, both Kevin and Duncan would break into rap song, where they would change the lyrics to fit their tastes and to speak about themselves in the moment.

Art productions continued the concept of allegiance. After yelling "pop culture is MY culture" Duncan created a sculpture of a happy face on white canvas board (Figure 1). Kevin had brought in an image made in pencil of a famous basketball player (Figure 2) and he formulated another stick basketball player image (Figure 3) while discussing his appreciation of the athletic abilities which this player possessed. Trevor, the quiet member
of the group, made a clay sculpture of what he referenced as the 'old cartoons' where 'they ran around hitting each other with weapons' (Figure 4). At the end of the group, two members had emerged as leaders; Duncan and Kevin. These members decided upon the theme for next week, where each member would bring in lyrics to their favorite songs and these would be formulated into an art product.

Figure 1

Figure 2
Session 1 - Group B.

Tony, Bobby, and Bones were present for this session, while Tom had been placed in a secure facility for a few days due to a violent altercation with a peer. The theme which introduced the session was the same as that of Group A. This meeting occurred primarily in silence as each member worked on their artistic productions. Tony had brought a CD player to play R&B music, a music which he stated he preferred. Much of the interactions between the group members occurred through singing the lyrics and voicing opinions of the music artists or themes of the songs. When the artistic productions had been completed there was some discussion of the pop culture icons which had emerged: basketball players, basketball products and styles and musical celebrities (Tupac - a musical rap artist). The members of this group
differed primarily in their allegiances to various pop culture products; however they found a common bond in the story of Tupac's death (a gang related shooting) and the love of basketball. Bobby brought up his belief that he enjoyed musical artists with whom he could relate and this appeared to be an opinion shared by the group as a whole.

Tony's created image was a pencil drawing of a basketball player (Figure 5), similar to the image made by Bobby (Figure 6). Bones created an image of Tupac Shakur, the rap artist (Figure 7). Bones reinterpreted the writing of this artist's name (2-Pac) and appeared to be the most knowledgeable member of the group on Tupac's life and death. Commitments to a particular basketball player or musical artist appeared to separate each member of the group and there were very vocal discussions between the group members with regards to who possessed the most 'talent'. Through these discussions, Tony emerged as the leader who was most vocal with his opinions. Often Bones and Bobby would remain silent or appear to eventually agree with his positions on various sports players and musical styles.
Session 2 - Group A.

Duncan, Kevin, and Trevor were present for this meeting where the theme had been set by themselves and involved the use of musical lyrics they had chosen the week prior. Peter had
chosen to not attend of his own accord. Major themes which were brought to the fore within the group included: sex and sexuality, 'appropriate' vs. 'inappropriate', and ethnicity. Loyalties to particular musical artists were once again paramount throughout the session; each member of the group referred to the lyrics that they had chosen and had difficulty accepting that other members could articulate a similar preference. Much of this difficulty surrounded issues of ethnicity. Both Duncan and Kevin shared a visual minority ('Black') ethnic status that was different than Trevor's (who was 'White'). There was some conversation about Kevin's appreciation of 50 Cent (a 'Black' musical artist) and whether they (who belonged to the same ethnic heritage as the singer) would allow Trevor to appreciate him as they did. Other major themes involved discussion of sex and the use of women within the visual and lyric dynamics of the song. Both Kevin and Duncan recited the rap lyrics that they had chosen and when something of sex or women came to the fore they would state "it's not our fault". However, at other instances they would censor the lyrics, stating that they would not sing them due to them being 'inappropriate'. A decision regarding what was 'inappropriate' and what was 'not their fault' appeared to go without saying as each would agree upon what could be articulated and what could not through nonverbal interactions. Some rappers whom they did not like would be called 'gay', 'fag', or a 'homosexual' in unison. When I would ask about the basis for
these comments, they stated that this meant the rapper slept with other men.

Each member created a different artistic production based on their own articulation of the lyrics which they had picked. Duncan formulated a collage of pictures of all the musicians he respected (Figure 8) and, on the reverse, he invented a rap which, he stated, involved the use of many different lyrics as well as his own words, also on this side of his image was a self-portrait of his head (Figure 9). Kevin made two collage images of celebrity women and a basketball player that he cut out of magazines (Figure 10 & 11). On one image he quoted the lyrics "Lotta bitches love when I spit so let me dazzle you hoes". Kevin stated that these lyrics spoke to his experience of women, particularly to those in the images he was using for his collage. Trevor set himself apart from his group members and created a sculpture of the name of a popular rap artist (50 Cent) (Figure 12), which set in motion and debate regarding whether he would be allowed to like a 'Black' artist since he was 'White'. In the end, it was decided by Duncan and Kevin that while Trevor could like the music of a 'Black' musician, he could not approximate the amount that they appreciated him, since they shared a common ancestry.

98
Session 2 - Group B.

Bobby, Tony, Tom and Bones were present for this group, where it had been decided by them that they would be placing themselves into the pop culture image the week prior. Central themes of the group involved ethnicity, musical appreciation, and personal affiliation. Much of this group centered around the discussion of skin color and music appreciation; primarily Tom and Tony voiced their musical preferences in terms of what they stated belonged to their ethnic heritage; Tony stated his enjoyment of 'punk' music (categorized as 'White' music) while Tom voiced his love of R&B (categorized as 'Black' music). Much discussion ensued with whether 'Black' or 'White' music had more substance and spoke more profoundly about issues occurring in the world. At times, there would be agreement on an artist, particularly Eminem, whom did not belong to the ethnic background from which his music style (rap) had originated. There was a consensus that since Eminem was 'White' he should not be allowed to rap, since rap had been categorized as a 'Black' musical
style. The discussion often became so personalized that Tony asked to leave the room due to his anger at his peers for not respecting his musical choice, Punk, and for not comprehending the reasons behind his appreciation of it.

Tony's image was of himself, which he titled "jackass man" (Figure 13). Through this image, Tony vocalized his connection to the Punk ideology and spoke about it's anger at the injustices and politics of the world. Tony also spoke about viewing himself as a 'jackass' - referencing a popular film, and his own feelings of not belonging to the larger society. Tom created an image of himself as his favorite basketball star, Lebraun James (Figure 14) whom, he said, was a very talented 'Black' player. Tom stated that he wished to someday be a very powerful 'Black' sports star. Bones began by defacing an image of Eminem, the 'White' rap artist, from a magazine by placing derogatory labels, particularly referencing homosexuality (Figure 15). Bones then created and image of himself as Eminem (Figure 16). He stated that this was a reflection of a 'Black' Eminem; this seemed to legitimize this rap artist by attributing Eminem with Bones' own characteristics and better attaching him to the ethnicity which his musical style had been labeled by the group. Bobby made what he considered to be a humorous image of a peer (who was not present in the group) listening to music that Bobby articulated he did not like (Figure 17). The image was of an individual whose head was coming 'unscrewed', and Bobby reflected that he believed that this peer listened to music that was so awful that
he would eventually die from listening to it so much. Through this Bobby was able to express his own distaste for his peer's music as well as place emphasis on a contrast between the music he appreciated as compared to his peer.
Session 3 - Group A.

Duncan, Kevin, and Trevor were present for this meeting while Peter could not attend due to an alternate therapeutic appointment. The theme of delineating popular culture into 'good' and 'bad' aspects had been set forth by the group the week prior. Major themes which emerged through the course of the session were sexual abuse and ethnicity. Michael Jackson became the primary concept spoke about throughout the group process, and provided the impetus for a discussion of sexual trauma and a disclosure of a sexually aggressive incident which had occurred with the group home and which involved two members of this group. In delineating 'good' and 'bad' aspects of popular culture, Michael Jackson became a reference point for an individual who had changed himself from being 'Black' to 'White' through cosmetic surgery. There was a consensus within the group that
Michael Jackson had been a 'good' musical artist when he had been 'Black' and as he had changed the color of his skin he had become 'bad', primarily due to the fact that he had not had pride in his ethnic heritage. When a discussion ensued concerning the charges against Michael Jackson for sexual abuse of young boys there was some discussion of sexual victimization in the pasts of the group members. Through this discussion a disclosure that one member of the group had had an inappropriate sexual altercation with another a few days before the session was revealed. This disclosure resulted in a violent posturing involving a pair of scissors, at which point the group was terminated and a discussion of the incident was continued with the front-line staff.

Duncan separated his large page into two sections; one which he labeled 'good' and the other 'bad' (Figure 18). He placed an early image of Michael Jackson along with some of his favorite black musical artists in the 'good' side of his image. The 'bad' side showed an image of Michael Jackson's transformation with the words "just beat it!" written underneath – using Michael Jackson's own musical lyrics to express his distaste for his new persona. Alternatively, Kevin did not delineate his 'good' and 'bad' choices quite so strictly: in his image pictures of Michael Jackson were combined with images which he deemed as 'good' (such as a cell phone, basketball star, and female celebrities) (Figure 19). Trevor separated his image quite similar to Duncan's and placed an image of Michael Jackson
as the only image under 'bad'. Many of Trevor’s 'good' pop cultures choices involved themes of women, alcohol, and a motorbike (Figure 20). Trevor hesitated during much of the art making process and many of his choices appeared to reflect the ones of his peers. Often he would wait to see what his peers had chosen before making his own choices. This group dynamic is also reflected in the decision to use the same collage medium, as there was no expectation that this be the medium used by all participants.
Session 3 - Group B.

Bobby, Tony, Tom and Bones were present for this meeting, where they had requested to do separate images each reflecting their own popular culture themes. The most prominent themes of the session revolved around sex, sexuality, and the current television programs and celebrities which they were all invested in watching. The only individuals who decided to make art products were Tony and Bobby; the rest of the members of the group tended to migrate towards the magazines that were available and discuss the current events of particular celebrities. The focus tended to be on images of women, and where one individual would point out an image he found in a magazine, the other members would swiftly crowd around the magazine to voice an opinion on the attractiveness of the individual, whether they would choose to engage that woman in a sexual encounter, and to hypothesize as to whether she was 'gay' or 'straight'. Much was discussed with regards to preference; some members were revered for their choices while others were ridiculed. Conversations around male celebrities in the magazines revolved around whether the person was a homosexual, a 'fag', or worthy of being admired. Interestingly, these conversations were frequently interrupted with insults involving an individual's mother and/ or fathers; however, all of these appeared to be understood among the group as humorous and not to be taken seriously.

Tony decided to work on an image which he had decided to emblazon the back of his jacket: a symbol, he stated, represented
anarchy (Figure 21). He spoke about valuing this symbol as it was attached to the history of the Punk sub-culture. Tony was quite articulate about how this symbol represented Punk's distrust of society and a wish for a better world through disobedience. Tony expressed a feeling of individuality within his choice of admiring the Punk lifestyle, as he pointed out that he was the only individual in the group who liked this style of dress and music. Bobby's image was of a male wearing a basketball jersey and baseball hat inscribed with the Boston Celtics logo (Figure 22 & 23). Bobby spoke about his appreciation for this basketball team and stated that the reason he felt so connected to this team was due to his own Irish heritage. The prominent aspects of the image are the clover leaf, NBA (National Basketball Association), as well as other Irish symbols.
Session 4 - Group A.

Duncan, Kevin, and Trevor were present for this meeting, while Peter had an alternate therapeutic appointment and could not join the group. During the course of the week, many residents within the group home had approached me with the idea of creating their own CD (compact disc) covers; due to this suggestion this became the theme of both Group A and Group B for session 4. Each member of the group eagerly engaged in the creation of a CD cover which would tell their own life story, similar to the ways in which their musical icons created their musical creations. Dominant themes of this session included; drug use and paraphanilia, discussion and arguments over racial identities, as well as the sexual disclosure of the previous group. The group member who had been involved in the sexual disclosure of the prior session, brought to light immediately the disclosure of the previous meeting. He articulated a desire to forgive his group member and a hope that this peer would 'learn from his mistakes'. There was a short discussion regarding
Trevor's need to fit in within the group home, and his status as an 'outsider' - due to his visible ethnicity ('White') and behaviors exhibited. Each of the CD covers created within the group re-incorporated their favorite music artists as well as production companies that they were aware funded these artists. Discussions revolved around drug usage that they believed occurred frequently within the lives of their admired celebrities; however, only Trevor included references to drugs within his CD. Once again, Trevor's different ethnicity came to the fore; when he placed reference to famous Los Angeles gangs (Crips & Bloods) on his CD cover he was ridiculed for his re-appropriation due to his being 'white'.

Trevor's CD cover (Figure 24) displayed the dichotomy between the two famous rival Los Angeles gangs. Inside the CD was a symbol of a smiling face with its tongue sticking out and, on the CD, Trevor had mixed the two colors signifying Crips (blue) and Bloods (Red) together to create a pattern (Figure 25). In this way, it could be hypothesized he was trying to visually create a harmony between the two dichotomies; however he did not articulate this throughout the group. Inside the CD cover Trevor referenced different contemporary songs and places a rational beside some of them, particularly in reference to sex and drugs (Figure 26). Kevin colored both sides of his CD cover completely in black (Figure 27). Inside he placed the distribution company of some of the most well-know rap artists and he specified the title of his CD as 'The Black Album', which he stated was already
the name of an album by a well-known rap artist (Figure 28). Inside the cover Kevin articulated 'my life is bullshit' in large black marker and included the names of some of his favorite rap songs (Figure 29). Many of the song titles depicted appeared to speak directly to Kevin's feelings regarding his own life; however, he spoke very little verbally about the connection. Duncan covered his plastic CD cover with blue marker and then placed an image of himself on the paper cover so that it could be seen through the blue plastic (Figure 30). Inside the CD cover Duncan also placed well-known rap record distribution company names, adding his own title "Gangsta Mix". He specified aloud that he considered himself to be a 'gangster' (Figure 31). Once again, Duncan placed a self-portrait image inside the CD cover (Figure 32). However, he only specified three contemporary rap songs in very light pencil marks, a direct contrast to the vivid blue throughout the rest of the CD, perhaps indicating a hesitation to affiliate himself with these songs.
Session 4 - Group B.

Bobby, Tony, Tom and Bones were involved in this meeting, where they had also requested a theme of making CD's. The most prominent themes and concepts within the session pertained to issues of ethnic ancestry and heritage, gang life, as well as sub-culture. Each member was highly invested in the creative process during the session, and when discussion occurred, it centered around rational for including specific components on the CD. Bobby, Tom and Tony each included references to their ethnicity and discussed their pride in these backgrounds. Both Bobby and Tony found a common bond within their shared Irish heritage and discussed symbols, which reflected this lineage including clovers and colors of the Irish flag. Tom also introduced the Trinidad flag to the group, which each member responded in positive affirmations. Bones discussed his affiliation to 'G-Unit' and NBC, which referenced belonging to a
gangster organization ('G-Unit' being a rap band name and NBC a youth gang within the city which Bones lived).

Bobby's CD cover was adorned with a shamrock and a glass of beer with the words 'Irish Pride' inscribed (Figure 33). Bobby decorated his CD using the dynamics of the Irish flag and repeated the flag and shamrock that he had placed on the cover (Figure 34). Bobby described being from mixed heritage, his mother belonging to an Aboriginal backgrounds while his father was Irish. Bobby discussed his closeness to his father and specified this as the reasoning behind his being most connected to this part of his heritage. Tony's CD cover also included reference to his Irish heritage with the inclusion of a rainbow and a shamrock (Figure 35). Tony spoke about including a statement at the bottom of his CD, which would speak to his subculture affiliation of the Punk lifestyle. Tony used the inside of the CD cover to write swear words backwards and re-formulate them into his own language, one that possibly did not hold the same negative connotations - or did so covertly (Figure 36). His CD was emblazoned with names of Punk bands which he admired as well as the anarchy symbol that he had brought to a previous group meeting.

Bones' CD cover reflected a re-interpretation of the band name 'G-Unit' into 'C-Unit' (referencing one of his initials) (Figure 37). Inside the CD Bones placed the 'Bad Boy' music production company logo, a company which manages many of the large names in the rap music industry (Figure 38). Bones also
included a shamrock stating that he wished to be Irish. He became quite upset when members of the group asked him what his actual heritage was and he reluctantly stated that he was Caribbean, apparently hoping to be bonded to his peers who were Irish. Tom's CD cover reflected a Trinidadian flag (Figure 39), his own ancestry which he eagerly shared with the rest of the group; he spoke considerably concerning his appreciation of the aesthetic of the flag and his strong connection to his lineage. Tom's CD repeated the colors and pattern of the flag (Figure 40) and he showed great care and concentration in its creation, asking to take it with him after the group had ended. A discussion at the end of the group brought forth a desire on the part of each member to create a pop culture image together, that of a popular culture world.
Session 5 - Group A.

Duncan, Kevin and Mark were present for this meeting, while Trevor was visiting his family and Peter had an alternate
therapeutic meeting. The theme of this meeting had been decided upon by the group in conversation with Group B who had planned to make a 'pop culture world'. Central themes and concepts of the group revolved around a discussion of 'Black' culture and sex. The inclusion of a new member into the group had a profound change in the dynamics, particularly due to Mark being from an African Canadian heritage. Much of the interactions surrounded the idea of lineage and what constituted a true 'Black' identity. Each member of the group discussed their own 'Black' heritage and a delineation of 'Black purity' was brought to the fore; Mark specified that both his parents were 'Black', while Kevin's mother was half 'Black', and Duncan's paternity was unknown - his skin was dark but he had never known his mother or father's ancestry. Much of the interactions between the young men involved the use of negative stereotypes and racial slurs; however, throughout a discussion of this each member of the group spoke about how they were 'permitted' to use the terms and generalizations as they belonged to the ethnic group. The topic of sex came to the fore with the inclusion of collage images of women and a discussion of a 'pop culture' city needing to be inhabited by particularly attractive celebrities.

At the end of the group, each member decided that they felt that the image was not completed and requested a continuation of the theme within the next meeting. The resulting popular culture city image, for this session, (Figure 41) was distinctively separated by each member of the group's inclusion and seating
arrangement. None of the individuals involved added to the images of the others. Mark was the most vocal member of this group, as well as the newest member, and created a self-portrait of himself surrounded by images of women and alcohol (Figure 42). Duncan appeared to have difficulty with the art component and made reference to Mark’s having taken his ‘style’ of self-portraiture. He included a very light pencil self-portrait in an alternate position to Mark’s at the top of the page (Figure 43). Kevin did not include himself in the pop culture image with the rest of his peers; instead he created a variety of roads that interconnected and pasted images of female celebrities on top (Figure 44). He included the words “Sex City”, referencing his desire to include a place for sex within his component of the popular culture world.

Interestingly, Kevin chose to incorporate images of Micheal Jackson, P-Diddy (a rap artist and business man), as well as a luxury automobile. Through this Kevin spoke about how sex is understood within popular culture, both the consensual and non-consensual (particularly with reference to Michael Jackson’s alleged molestation of young boys). This spoke directly to Kevin’s own sexually traumatic history and could possibly be seen as a working through of this component of his past within the context of the art therapy group - although he did not speak directly to this within the discussion.
Session 5 - Group B.

Bobby, Tony, Tom and Bones were each present for this group meeting, where the theme had been decided upon by them during the previous meeting and shared with the other residents within the group home. Major themes and concepts of this meeting were violence, celebrity lifestyle, wealth, fantasy, and musical preference. Interactions between the group centered around the belief that famous people do not have to account for their actions and how often they are involved in violent acts and were
not penalized for them. The group began by creating images, quite
different from one another and occupying their own spaces.
Particular reference was made to black musical artist (P-Diddy)
who was stated to be quite rich and assumed to be heavily
involved in violent altercations in the community. Tony separated
himself from the rest of the group in his continued theme of
Punk, and articulated the differences in his image from the rest
of the group on several occasions. Tony brought in the aspect of
fantasy, including space ships and dragons, referencing the
‘imaginative’ aspects of popular culture. Bones set himself
apart within the group by interconnecting each member’s images
with a road, while Tony decided upon the title of the combined
image without negotiation with the rest of the group (Figure 45).

Bobby’s image, on the left hand side of the page, is a very
intricate depiction of various guns (Figure 46). Tom’s image is
located directly above and depicts a house with a police officer
by his car placing weapons in the trunk (Figure 46). Bone’s image
(Figures 46 & 47) is of a mansion inhabited by P-Diddy, which he
titled the ‘pop culture house’ as he believed that P-Diddy would
be the most powerful individual within their pop culture world.
Tony’s imaginative contribution, on the right hand side of the
page, included both symbols of the Punk lifestyle (anarchy as
well as a middle finger hand gesture) and magical or fantastic
narratives of dragons and a falling spaceship (Figure 47).
Discussion continued throughout the creation of the image
regarding ‘real-life’ violence, gossip that had occurred in
school that week, as well as some conversation and fantasizing of what each member would do if they were famous and/or rich.

Figure 45  Figure 46

Figure 47

Session 6 - Group A.

Duncan, Kevin, and Mark were present for this session. Trevor was discharged from the residential group home into the care of his mother and was unable to commute to the art therapy group meetings, while Peter continued to have alternative therapeutic arrangements at the time of the sessions. As decided at the end of the previous meeting, the group members continued to work on their ‘pop culture world’. Main themes of this meeting involved ethnicity, gang activity and violence.
Significant interactions included an exploration of racism and the highlighting of myself as a Caucasian therapist. Conversations included my inability to comprehend their preferences and an articulation of the belief that Trevor would not be missed within the group due to his differing cultural identity from the rest of his peers. With reference to each other, many of the members discussed their ‘Black’ identities - specifying the darkness of each others skin relative to the other residents in the group home, gang affiliation as a sign of ascribing to ‘Black’ culture, and references to symbols (i.e.: combs for one’s hair) in the artistic creations that signified membership to one’s cultural background.

Mark continued his self-portrait and commented on the darkness of the skin in his image (Figure 48). He commented on the difficulty he had finding colors that best matched his skin tone. Mark also highlighted the color of his eyes; stating that they reflected both drug usage and gang affiliation. Duncan continued on a similar self-portrait to Mark that he had started the previous session, including colored eyes (Figure 49). However, he did not color the skin of his portrait. Through the course of the artistic production, Mark and Duncan competed in their self-portraits with regards to the size of their combs. There was some discussion about the size of the comb pertaining to the amount of ‘Black,’ which they were. Kevin choose not to continue his image of the ‘sex city’ during this session and instead created his own self-portrait within the mural (Figure
50), located in the middle of the image. Kevin encased his portrait in a circle and included antennae. Interestingly, each member of the group depicted themselves as quite substantially older and there was a common inclusion of facial hair although none of the group members wore the style that they depicted.

Figure 48

Figure 49

Figure 50
Session 6 - Group B.

Bobby, Tony, and Tom were unable to attend this meeting due to alternative appointments and/or visits with family. Therefore, Bones was the only member in the group to create the theme and to engage in the discussion. Bones choose to create an image of pop culture from his past. Major themes he brought up were his preferences to specific television programs and books as a child. Specifically, Bones mentioned his childhood appreciation for Winnie the Pooh and his favorite characters being Kanga and Roo (Kanga's Son). Significantly, these two characters represented very nurturing and familial types of symbolism within the cartoon series. Bones created an image of both these characters quite swiftly on a piece of paper (Figure 51). He related to these images stating that he often sat with his grandmother to watch cartoons including Winnie the Pooh and that he had looked forward to this interaction with her daily.

Bones was quite articulate about how he continued to like cartoons (The Simpsons) at present and believed that he would continue to think of watching television with his grandmother when he thought of Winnie the Pooh. Bones depicted his feelings with regards to this connection in an image involving a television (Figure 52); once again it was completed quite swiftly and he choose to change the subject as soon as he had finished the image. The resulting image was filled in with two colors in a swift motion, possibly indicating Bones own anxiety concerning talking about his grandmother and perhaps with regards to his
anger related to the disconnection in their relationship at present. Bones spoke about how his grandmother perceived his pop culture choices in the present. He stated that she often spoke of her dislike in the language used by his favorite musical artists or movies which he liked to watch. Bones went on to speak about how 'slang' used by adolescents often was created in order to speak to each other without being infringed upon by adults who believed that they 'knew better'. Without the presence of his peers, Bones appeared able to be more reflective in his discussions of his pop culture choices (both past and present).

Figure 51

Figure 52

Session 7 - Group A & B.

Each group was cancelled due to a previous therapeutic intervention which had been planned for the residents in the group home. Each member of each group was presented with the option of re-scheduling session 7 for later in the week; however, in a decision made together, the members decided to forgo this
session in favor of a break and continue the following week for Session 8.

Session 8 - Group A.

Duncan, Kevin and Mark were present for this group meeting; Peter refused to attend, citing that he did not feel comfortable with his peers in the group. Due to a discussion with the members of Group B, they had decided to explore pop culture in their pasts. The major themes that were present in the discussion continued to be issues of ethnicity and drug usage. Particularly there were discussions involving delineations between what was considered 'Black' popular culture and 'White' popular culture, specifically referencing music as well as drug use (marijuana). Through the course of the group major interactions involved connecting popular culture as the entity, through which many of the young men learned about what constituted being 'Black'.

Kevin stated that he 'thanked God' for popular culture due to his learning how to be a 'Black man' and what it meant to be 'Black' in history. At various instances in the group, each member would rise from the table and display a dance they had learned when they were younger. There was also some discussion of watching and enjoying "The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles", a television show about superhuman turtles who were forced to live underground due to their 'abnormalities'. Each member recited their ability to name each turtle; each were named after world famous artists (Donatello, Michelangelo, etc.). At the end of the session, Duncan created two images which he later crumpled up and threw on
the table; they were quite sexual in nature (Figures 53 and 54) and he was apparently wanting to disclose non-verbally, however, he was unable to bring this to light within the group session and discuss what had instigated these productions.

Kevin's resulting image (Figure 55) was of categorizations of 'white' and 'black' music, specifying that 'White guys' listen to tapes while 'Black men' listen to CD's. Kevin specified various musical artists that 'Black' men would listen to as compared to 'White' men, and also included references to marijuana cigarettes (where 'Black' men smoked large 'joints' and 'White' men smoked 'skinny joints'). In the right hand corner of his image, Kevin also specified issues of class delineating between the preferences of 'Black' men and 'Black' men of a lower socio-economic status. Duncan's image (Figure 56) included references to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (TMNT), drug paraphernalia (bottles of alcohol and cigars) and a self-portrait of himself smoking. Mike's image reflected a very powerful racial message, that is, an arm holding a marijuana cigarette emblazoned with a tattoo "Black Men" (Figure 57 & 58). After the images had been made, each member discussed watching racist situations on television and seeing black men being arrested for doing 'nothing', simply due to the color of their skin. Throughout the session, Kevin would pick up the tape recorder and perform what he called "Negro Radio" - talking and rapping songs about the maltreatment of 'Black' men in society and the 'stupidity' of the 'White' man.
Session 8 - Group B.

The only member present for this group session was Tony. Tom had been sent to a secure placement due to drug usage and procession of narcotics, Bobby had a prior therapeutic appointment and Bones refused to attend. Therefore, Tony decided upon the theme of the group and became deeply immersed in the creative process allowing for extended silences and limited discussion/conversation with me. Tony stated that he wished to depict a personal drawing about how popular culture affected him. He set about creating a very intricate image that he deemed to be a 'self-portrait' (Figure 59). Tony spoke about the heads of his image (Figure 60) referring to his favorite band, Insane Clown Posse, a musical group who painted their faces and wore masks before going on stage. The body of the figure (Figure 61) was a
stereo and the left hand a speaker. Tony made the right hand a videogame console (an 'X-box'), and specified that he had included an image of his own shoes on the body.

Figure 59

Figure 60

Figure 61

While making the image Tony was primarily silent; however, he did state that he felt he used these pieces of popular culture

129
in a productive manner. When I further questioned him with regards to this, he reflected that popular culture often allowed him to think clearer. Tony made specific reference of listening to Punk music and playing videogames which helped him to concentrate on tasks. Moreover he articulated feeling as though he could have control over and success within both the video-game and his musical preferences. Tony was able to reflect quite deeply during the session and asked me to keep his image as he felt that this image spoke to how he had felt during the group process and through the course of our meetings. Tony titled this image 'Fricken Frick', as he stated that he felt it did not make enough sense to him; however, he did not wish to expand upon this confusion.

Session 9 - Group A

Duncan and Kevin were present for this group meeting. Mark was placed in a secure facility due to an extended unauthorized absence from the program and his treatment. Peter's refusal to attend the groups continued as he cited that he did not wish to spend time with his peers. Duncan and Kevin appeared to create the theme of the group on their own, making images of themselves and the influence of popular culture. Major themes involved musical referents, sports and sport brand names, wealth, and 'saying good-bye' to the art therapy group. A discussion of the money that celebrity (within sports and music) make and the things which they could afford to purchase and/or to do due to their abundant wealth was also evidenced. When referencing
themselves in their images, they often included brand names and sometimes reinterpreted labels into more personalized expressions. When exploring the theme of this being the last session as an individual group, Tupac’s death became an object of conversation, as well as the rumor that Tupac had been faking his own death. It appeared a much safer way to discuss exit than speaking directly to the reality that the group would very soon be terminating.

Duncan’s image (Figure 62) shows an outline of what he specified was his body filled with a contemporary clothing brand label name (Phat Farm) as well as references to the NBA. Duncan filled the rest of the page with his name in very large letters, and at the top right hand corner he placed the word ‘25 cent’ referencing his affiliation for ‘50 cent’ the rap artist. In the bottom right hand corner of his image he placed the words “Farewell” (Figure 63); however, he refused to explore its placement there – stating only that it had meant to be a message to me. Kevin’s image was of himself in front of a basketball hoop (Figure 64). In the distance there is a house, which he stated was his future home, and he specifies the brand name ‘Reebok’ as his sports shoes. At the bottom of the page Kevin included a pseudonym of “T-Master- K”. The right hand side of the page, Kevin reserved for a discussion of Tupac’s famous words about death. He stated that there was a contemporary rap band with the name of “N.E.R.D” which reflected Tupac’s words: “Noone Every Really Dies” (Figure 65). In this way, Kevin was able to
talk about the finality of the group sessions without directly referencing his emotions, perhaps a safer way to say 'good-bye'.

Figure 62

Figure 63

Figure 64

Figure 65
Session 9 - Group B.

Bones and Tom were present for this group meeting; while Bobby had a prior therapeutic meeting and Tony could not attend due to being in the process of moving to a foster home. Bones and Tom decided upon the theme for the group session, which became mixing themselves with their conceptions of popular culture. Silence was a constant presence within the session where major themes were: sports, symbols, labels of musicians and clothing brands, as well as the future. When interactions did occur they were based primarily on a critique of the artistic talents of one another, and hypotheses of the future, with specific attention to potential professions. Tom described his image as a self-portrait of his future self as a famous pro-hockey player (Figure 66). Tom referenced the brand name sports equipment he had depicted himself wearing and seemed quite proud in his knowledge of these companies. Tom spoke of his desire to become one of the few black hockey players in the world. When he had completed his image he stated that he would sign it to himself from his future famous self and placed this autograph on the bottom right hand corner of the page (Figure 67). Bones created an outline of his body and filled the inside with popular cultures symbols and brand name clothing and musical labels (Baby Phat, Bad Boy Records, Adidas, etc.) (Figure 68). Bones appeared to take great pleasure in discussing his vast knowledge of the brands and companies, and specified that he had included symbols of a turntable for disc jockey’s and some ‘tag’s’ which
represented his own pseudonym. It was interesting to note that Bones placed a gun symbol in the head of his figure, which he equated to the rapper 50-Cent who had been shot several times in the head before he had become famous and when he had been a member of a street gang (Figure 69). Bones appeared to be quite connected to this rapper, whom he stated, had managed to live through many difficult times to become very rich and famous. Bones became upset at one point during the meeting, when he affirmed that he believed his image was not as well made as Tom’s; he expressed this aesthetic concern by ripping the left side of the page (Figure 70). However, with some encouragement and praise, he was able to keep his image and point out some aspects which he appreciated.
Session 10 - Groups A & B.

Duncan, Kevin, Mark, Bobby, Tom, and Bones were present for the final group meeting. Tony traveled from his foster placement to join the final group festivities. The only member of the residential placement who did not join the final session was Peter, who had a previous therapeutic appointment. It had been decided a few weeks prior to this final encounter that the groups would assemble together and would vote on a movie to watch while eating a dinner treat. There was also reference to a final summing up of the pop culture group either through a discussion and/or the creation of an art piece. The two movies chosen by the group were "Boyz in the Hood", a story about a young man and his friends and family living in a gang dominated community in the US and struggling to overcome the pressures of belonging to a gang, and "Above the Rim", a movie starring Tupac (the rap artist), about a young man trying to avoid a dangerous lifestyle and harness his talent at basketball. These choices appeared to very much reflect the major themes that had dominated the discussions over the course of the group meetings.

The group chose to have a short discussion and a 'summing up' of their experiences within the pop culture group. Unfortunately, this discussion with all seven members lasted only approximately ten minutes before a physical altercation ultimately led to a quiet time in their rooms and a shift to watching the films. Perhaps, this was due to the difficulty these boys had with saying good-bye, the change in group format,
or the high energy level present in having all seven residents in the same room. Therefore, not much discussion occurred with regards to the group process over the ten weeks. Some statements made included: having enjoyed the space to express themselves the way they wished without having to censor their choices, having felt 'calmer' after each meeting, and feeling 'good' about being active in teaching each other about what they knew about society at large. Many members spoke about feeling connected to each other and the group experience and voiced an allegiance to the groups from which they had originated at the inception of the research. Many members of the group were able to watch each film and reflect upon what had been brought up in the group regarding Tupac and 'black' culture; opinions were voiced quite loudly and passionately. Some disagreed while others would shout their agreement. Regardless of the disagreements and conflict, there seemed to be no shortage of opinion and always a space in which to express it.

4.5 Discussion

4.5.1 Central concepts/ descriptive categories/ construct categories

In group A, the descriptive categories that emerged surrounding the concept of popular culture included: brand names, sports players, sex/sexuality/abuse, ethnicity/lineage/cultural heritage, drug use, and wealth. The construct categories brought forth through substantive sampling (finding dominant themes and
common patterns) of audio-tape, artistic productions, and written
documentation of each group A meeting were the following:
allegiances, opinion sharing, loyalties (to celebrity or musical
taste), personal affiliation (to celebrity and/or musical - media
genre), and self-portraiture. It is important to point out that
while violence did not become a descriptive or construct
category, due to its being present in only a select group session
interactions, it nevertheless remained a dominant force as it
instigated a profound exchange in the group process and
necessitated ending the session (Session # 3). Moreover, for
group A, violence came to the fore not through the created
imagery but through a physical interaction brought forth due to a
discussion related to a popular culture celebrity (Michael
Jackson).

Within group B, the descriptive categories that emerged
through substantive sampling included: sports players, music
(rap, R&B, punk), sex/sexuality, wealth, fantasy, and violence.
The construct categories were: personal affiliation (musical
genre), loyalty, ethnicity/cultural heritage, and individuality.
In group B, violence was most paramount within the created images
and discussions of the group members, and hence relegated this to
a descriptive category. No physical altercations or interactions
occurred through the course of the group sessions. It is
important to note that within group B, the discussion of
celebrity was quite paramount and that often assumptions related
to gossip regarding the celebrity lead to discussion and fantasy
with regards to the group member's own lives.

4.5.2 Hypotheses

Through constant comparison of the comparison groups, central categories/concepts were formulated as certain themes were evident within each group's process. These central concepts included: sports players, musical preferences (genres and artists), allegiances/loyalties, ethnicity/cultural heritage/lineage, sex/sexuality, and wealth. The most dominant interactions and concepts that appeared in almost every session for each group was that of ethnicity. As is evident within the created productions of the group members, as well as the interactions noted, this subject matter occurred most frequently and instigated the most interactions within both comparison groups. Due to the reality that many of the young men involved had been separated from their familial units, or had a very limited (to no) awareness of their lineage, it is significant that this was a continuous topic of discussion. At times, the individuals in the group would 'try on' the cultural attributes of other members of the group (Bones, in group B), while others would hold steadfastly to their own heritage - to the point that insult would prevail within interactions of others with a differing ancestry (Mark, in group A). Further, with regards to ethnicity, in group A, there appeared to be a in-depth exploration of the concept of 'Black-ness' with relation to the 'lightness' or 'darkness' of the skin. When each member in the
group was visually ascribed to a 'Black' ancestry, there appeared to be a need to discover who was the most 'Black' and the least 'Black', whereas when a 'White' member of the group was present, the need to delineate this concept was not apparent. Within group A, was another significant factor, the replication of the dominant member's cultural affiliation. In group A, when the leader appeared to change from Duncan to Mark upon Mark's arrival, so too did the group member's dialogue concerning 'Black' ancestry.

In group B, cultural heritage (Irish, Trinidadian) came to the fore in a much more respectful manner than group A, where members of the group were permitted to explore verbally and artistically the meaning of cultural heritage for themselves. Sports players tended to instigate the conversations related to ethnicity, where many member's personal affiliations mirrored their own cultural background. This occurred also within group A, where members discussed vehemently the topic of whether a 'White' artist could perform a style that had been ascribed to 'Black' cultural heritage, and whether a 'White' group member would be permitted to enjoy that style of music. In group B, where the group members were more equally culturally split, there appeared to be less disagreement and/or more ability to come to a consensus without a need for personal insult.

The act of sex and definitions of 'sexual attractiveness' were also central concepts within each group's artistic productions and discussions. Interestingly, this often heralded
a bond between the group members, as many affiliations mirrored each other. As well, 'homosexuality' was consistently given a pejorative classification. Heterosexual sexuality appeared to also be a topic within which the members could find consensus and discussions of sexuality appeared to incite humorous interactions. Importantly, sexual attractiveness was not relegated to cultural specificity in the same way that sports players, musical artists, and musical genres were. There were seldom concerns over a 'white' man being attracted to a 'black' woman or vice versa. It is also significant to point out that the popular culture figure of Michael Jackson brought forth discussion of sex, sexuality and abuse which tended to herald consensus between the group members.

Wealth and fantasy were present as themes within each group, primarily with regards to celebrities of music and sports. Much discussion surrounded what these celebrities did with their power as dominant figures as well as what they spent their money on. Often these discussions involved negative connotations, with regards to violent interactions and the purchase of grandiose merchandise; often of a violent nature. Discussions of wealth and power easily translated into the group members contemplating what they would do if they were in the position of their celebrity hero's. At times, it became apparent that through discussing the violent attributes of their celebrity choices, they would speak about violence that was occurring in their own environments (school or within the program). The use of fantasy
regarding their celebrity hero’s often translated into flights of imagination into what they would do in their own lives with the power and money that their heroes were privileged to have.

Personal affiliation and loyalty to specific popular culture genres, artists, and sports players appeared as dominant as ethnicity within each of the groups. As described above, personal affiliation to a specific celebrity or genre often incorporated aspects of cultural heritage and ethnicity. However, there were also instances when personal affiliation seemed to function as providing a space for individuality. This can be evidenced in Bone’s manipulation of Eminem (Figure 16), where he made himself into a ‘black’ version of Eminem (a white rapper) in order to validate his appreciate of the music. As was seen in the interactions of Tony, his allegiance to the ‘Punk’ musical genre and lifestyle was so profound that he often set himself apart from the other members of his group. Interesting, Tony’s allegiance to Punk was simultaneously ridiculed by members who did not hold the same affiliation as well as nurtured as a component of his individuality. In the creation of the pop culture city (Figure 45 - 47), Bones interconnected each image in what appeared to be an attempt at including Tony’s very different image contribution; simultaneously, Tony joined himself to the group by titling the project, thereby including his individuality as a powerful component within the overall image creation. In group B, personal affiliation was heralded primarily through self-portraiture where each member depicted themselves in their
own ways; for example, Duncan and Mark often combined their unique styles into each other's images. Where personal affiliations were most often articulated verbally as being quite distinct from other members in each group, artistic productions often displayed a repetition of, and inclusion of, other member's opinions. Apparently, through the non-verbal artistic dialogue, there was more space to 'try on' other members' likes and dislikes.

It is also important to note that through the course of the research, there were two instances (once in each group) where only one member was present. In each of these sessions a great deal of insight and exploration of the popular culture theme and iconography was evident. This reality was one that leads me to believe that therapeutic intervention utilizing popular culture theme and iconography may provide more insight and reflection into the personal use of popular culture on a one-one-one basis with the therapist. Perhaps this is due to the power of personal affiliation for the adolescent and the difficulty to exert individuality within the group atmosphere.
CHAPTER 5: Conclusions: What does this prove?

The sentence which opened both the group research process as well as the first chapter of the present research, "Pop culture is my culture!" was articulated by Duncan, a 13 year old member of Group A. Having no tangible lineage due to being abandoned by both biological parents very close to birth, Duncan is, I believe, a very potent example of how the present investigation demonstrates that popular cultural iconography is used by the individuating adolescent and has therapeutic value. With the absence of a cultural heritage with which Duncan could ascribe, he had taken on the Western popular culture that surrounded him. It provided for him a cultural identity that was conspicuously lacking along with his parental ties.

Through the course of the research, Duncan described what he had learned from popular culture about being a visible minority, filling in the absence of information that could have been transmitted through his parents. In order to more completely discern the significance and the usefulness of popular culture iconography for the individuating adolescent, it is necessary to reflect upon the literature presented in the first three chapters with regards to the research study findings. It is through investigating the ties between the literature and theories, as well as the experiences and dominant themes that emerged within the qualitative study, that conclusions regarding the usefulness of popular cultures to the art therapeutic experience can be articulated and future research possibilities pondered.
5.1 Popular culture and individuation

One of the central categories revealed through a constant comparison of Group A and Group B was that of ethnicity. Often, aspects of ethnicity were articulated through affiliation to popular culture celebrities that shared a common physical appearance (i.e. 'blackness'), musical styles, or cultural artifacts that had been taken up by the media and highlighted (i.e. brand names). Numerous examples of tackling the questions of ethnicity can be seen throughout the research data. Dominant artistic examples of this can be seen within Bone's re-articulation and visual image of himself as a 'black' Eminem (who is Caucasian) rapper within session 2 (Figure 16), group A member's session 3 images which pondered Micheal Jackson's ethnic changes with regards to physical appearance (Figures 18, 19, & 20), and Bobby's CD cover - from session 4 - where he depicted elements of his Irish affiliation using popular culture connotations of alcohol and symbology (Figure 33 & 34) - to name only a few. Throughout the verbal interactions of the majority of the meetings, ethnicity became a highly charged and integral theme when dealing with popular culture. Artistic depictions of 'black' and 'white' popular culture labels, lyrics, and symbols within the CD creation sessions (Figures 24 to 40) as well as the final session (Figures 62 to 70) are numerous and varied.

With regards to the use of labels by adolescents, Riley (1999) makes the following statement:
The 'look', the dress, the jeans, the shoes, all identifies the clique to which the teen belongs. Without a peer group from whom the teenager can find support they feel lost. Rejection by peers is the greatest threat. If therapists do not understand that these values are primary in the minds of their clients, they will be ignoring the basic facts of adolescence. (p. 43)

In this way the media label becomes a symbol of the adolescent him or herself. This tension of 'I' and 'not I' is integral to the symbiotic phase of individuation articulated by Mahler (1968) and Blos (1962), where re-duplication is essential. This process of duplicating the popular culture symbols (brand name logos, musical logos, musical artists and lyrics, etc.) and transforming them is evidenced throughout the results of the present study. This reality heralds a possible connection to the individuation process of these adolescents and popular culture, primarily with regards to formation of a cultural identity. One potent example, I believe, of the tension between 'me' and 'not me' within the process of individuation is Tony' self-portrait (Figures 59, 60, & 61) displaying his body as popular culture products.

In each group, personal affiliation and loyalty to specific popular culture icons or products was paramount. Each group member spoke of and articulated artistically their attachment to the popular culture icons that they chose to portray. Often this affiliation lead to the disavowal of choices made by others, and
arguments would break out. Winnocott speaks to the formation of a sense of personal 'being' for the adolescent and a need to 'rival' against other's in order for it's creation to take place. He relates this process to the metaphors inherent in a childhood game:

'I'm the King of the Castle' is a statement of personal being. It is an achievement of individual emotional growth. It is a position that implies the death of all rivals or the establishment of dominance. The expected attack is shown in the next words: 'And you're the dirty rascal' (or 'Get down, you dirty rascal'). Name your rival and you know where you are' [emphasis added]. (Winnicott, 1986, p. 158)

These arguments with regards to loyalties and choices are also important to Winnocott's theories of identity formation in that they point to the continued negotiation between 'defiance' and 'dependence' as well as 'dependence' and 'independence' that characterize the adolescent identity process, as was demonstrated in Chapter 1. Winnicott articulates the needs of the adolescent as being,

the need to avoid false solution: the need to feel real or to tolerate not feeling at all; the need to defy-in a setting in which their dependence is met and can be relied on to be met; the need repeatedly to prod society so that society's antagonism is manifest, and can be met with antagonism. (Winnicott, 1984, p. 153)
In this context, the therapeutic group situations provided the holding environment for the negotiation of these splits and hence aided in the process of identity formation.

Winnicott's (1984) theories pertaining to adolescent individuation also take into account the teenager who does not have the familial situation from which to separate and provide the 'good-enough' transitional space, and whose behaviors can be defined as 'maladjusted' - a situation that was similar to many of the individuals involved in the present study. He states the following:

[...] at some early date the environment failed to adjust appropriately to the child, and the child is therefore compelled either to take over the cover-work and so to lose personal identity, or else to push around in society forcing someone else to act cover, so that a chance may come for a new start with personal integration. The antisocial child has two alternatives - to annihilate the true self or to shake society up till it provides cover. In the second alternative if cover is found then the true self can re-emerge, and it is better to exist in prison than to become annihilated in meaningless compliance. (p. 195)

This relates directly to the results of the present study, as many of the adolescent males involved appeared to affiliate with popular culture symbology which was not advocated by the parents or the larger society, and thus susceptible to 'shaking it up'.

148
The tensions in the group related to personal affiliation appeared almost instinctively to combat the idea of meaningless compliance with the larger society as well as to each other; by ascribing to a symbol that existed in the dominant culture as a pejorative symbol and by setting parameters of which members of the group, they would allow (or not allow) to ascribe to the same symbol. In this way, it is possible that they were searching to uncover their 'true' selves.

5.2 Popular culture and the disciplines of psychology and art therapy

The adolescents involved in the study appeared to instinctively understand what 'popular culture' meant. By their choices of images - often sexual, violent, or pejorative to certain ethnic groups - they ascribed the same definition to popular culture as researchers of the past century: as belonging to a mass of individuals who do not belong to the 'high' or 'educated' social classes. While the present study was qualitative in nature and did not take into account the adolescent's behaviors outside of the therapeutic space, it is difficult to speak directly to some of psychology's most prominent theories regarding the effects of popular culture. However, when perusing the available data it is possible to relate some events, interactions, and images to the hypothesis presented in Chapter 2.
Gerbner's Cultivation Theory of cognitive influence, which suggests that viewing images of the world through media promoted views of the world in accordance with the medium (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002; Comstock, 1991), does have some relevance within the present study. Many of the adolescents brought images and issues portrayed through popular culture, and at first glance the created images could appear to present accordance with dominant beliefs perpetuated by the media (racism, violence, homosexuality, sex, gender, etc.). However, through discussion with the adolescents involved it is apparent that many of them recognized the difference between what they viewed and what existed in 'reality'. In Tony's image (Figures 59, 60 & 61), described above, Tony appeared to be aware that his body did not consist of media transmissions, but instead was able to reflect on their importance through the metaphorical realm of the created image. Another example of this can be seen in the depiction of violent imagery: much of the dialogue for both groups spoke of the violence that was occurring in their own worlds and relegated some aspects to 'fantasy', which they verbally distinguished as fantasy through interaction with each other.

The "Excitation or Arousal theory" which posits that the media provides a heightened arousal level within the individual and produces negative behavioral patterns (Comstock, 1991; Strasburger, 1995) was evidenced through the incident of violence within Group A. As was the "Cognitive Neo-association Theory", which links stored material to vicarious media and encourage
negative behaviors by evoking associations. In this case, the allegations of Michael Jackson being a sexual perpetrator to young boys appeared to instigate a connection to a sexual incident occurring between two members of the group. Through a discussion of Michael Jackson, a disclosure was made that lead to a violent interaction between two members of the group. However, whether this was caused by the heightened arousal level or not (produced by the media), it did provide a space for further discussion and resolution of the incident that may not have been possible if it had remained hidden and unspoken.

Huesman's "Theory of Cognitive Scripting" and "The Stalagmite Effect" (Starsburger, 1995) described in chapter 2, would require further investigation to provide useful information, both in the form of longitudinal data and varying research studies. The issues of sex and violence, two topics that continue to be at the fore of popular culture controversies, were quite evident throughout the group process. However, rather than being passive to the messages transmitted through their choices and articulated bravado, when the boys were further questioned (by myself during the research process) there appeared to be a reflexivity as well as a deeper understanding of the issues inherent to sex and violence. Although, this understanding appeared to be difficult to articulate in the presence of peers, as it was intertwined with 'cool bravado' and any admitting of a deeper understanding of these concepts appeared to be primarily disfavored by the groups. I believe the data of the present
study drastically counteracts Comstock’s (1991) stipulation that popular culture leads adolescents to forfeit ‘authentic’ self-expression and encourages processing which is ‘unanalytic’ and ‘unreflective’. Each group session, each created image, and each verbal comment exchanged, portrayed the adolescent’s use of the image with regards to their own preferences, historical data, lineage, culture, and understanding of the world around them. One of the most outcomes of the study was the abilities of these young men to speak about the cultural and social newsworthy events that were happening in the world - the popular culture image appearing to provide an outlet for its discussion.

The Cathartic Effect (Cottle, 2001; Feshbach, 1961; Heins, 2001; & Jones, 2002), as well as the psychological theories described above, would similarly require further specific research study. However, through discussions with the staff of the residential center after each group session, it became evident that the young men of each group would leave the therapeutic situation in a more ‘relaxed’ and ‘calm’ space. After each group, it was related to me, that they could often be seen sitting together watching television and discussing the images and themes they saw depicted - a practice which they rarely were able to accomplish on their own initiative. Tony also articulated this within his (individual) group session (session #8 - group B), where he stated that popular culture usage helped him to concentrate on tasks. Furthermore, within the final group session, many of the group members affirmed that
the felt 'calmer' after the group therapeutic meetings. Through these examples, it is possible to refer to Seymour Feshback's (1961) belief that vicarious experience could release the viewer's aggressive drive. My only direct example of this, which emerged in the study, is with regards to the violent interaction that followed the sexual disclosure. Once it had been discussed in the group and with the staff members of the facility, these two group members appeared to interact more amicably. One could make the hypothesis that without this interaction occurring in the therapeutic space, a violent interaction with a more dangerous possible consequence could have occurred later.

Thomas Cottle's (2001) reflections on how popular culture identification reveals much about the adolescent is highly evident within the present research. Many of the images within each group appeared to promote resiliency and self-esteem, revealing the youth's ability to provide a space for their beliefs and ideals through self-portraiture. Jones' (2002), writing on aggressive adolescent's use of popular culture as a form of 'play' with emotionally distressing concepts, is highly applicable to the present study, since many of the young men were presently involved tackling issues of violence in their own lives. Through discussion of the violent imagery that was created through the course of the group, many of the adolescents spoke about their own violent environments, whether in the group home, school, or community. Perhaps, as Jones stipulates, these young men choose violent images not because these images made
their behaviors violent, but because they helped them to make sense of their own violent environments.

Furthermore, the bravado that occasionally accompanied their created images lends support to Buckingham and Wood's (1993) hypothesis that children use violent popular cultural products to 'toughen up' and deal with their fears of the culture which surrounds them. Giles and Maltby (2004), in their research on celebrity attachments, explored in Chapter 2, speak to the process of identity formation as well as a sense of autonomy which applies to Freud (1905), Blos (1962) and Winnicott's (1986) theories, and their belief that the major task of adolescent individuation is separation from the family. Giles and Maltby found that celebrities aid in the transition from parental attachment to peer attachment. This is very evident in each group and the individuals who ascribed to similar musical or sports celebrities in order to form, what I perceived to be, a sense of community. Often this need for community through attachment to musical or sports celebrity was articulated through knowledge that one had acquired about that celebrity, and often attachment to celebrity appeared to be a way these adolescents could speak about their ethnicity and position it within the group context.

I believe Comstock (1991) and Jones (2002)'s hypotheses regarding the visual nature of popular culture, explored in chapter 2, and my own hypothesis that this could influence the art therapeutic encounter was supported during this research
process. For each adolescent brought forth multiple images related to popular culture and there appeared to be no end in the possibilities that could have been brought forth for discussion, artistic, symbolic, and metaphorical elaborations. I believe this research demonstrated that these adolescents did not 'passively' consume electronically generated entertainment, as was hypothesized by Williams, Kramer, Henley, & Gerity (1997). These adolescents were able to create spontaneous imagery, within the theme of popular culture. They showed an ability to re-articulate and re-conceptualize the popular culture products in their environments. Even though there were re-duplications of themes and even images at times (Michael Jackson, etc.), there was never a lack of thematic content, and that content also changed with the images that these adolescents created.

I believe these teens demonstrated that they think reflectively and with insight into the images that they see within popular culture, and were able to relate these images to themselves and their own environments. They also showed the ability to place their own internal imagery into the popular culture images. In doing so, they have invalidated assumptions made by Gerity (2001) and Williams, Kramer, Henley & Gerity (1997), that popular culture is a barrier to imaginative thought, 'empty' and 'inauthentic'. They have also shown that popular culture images can be used to access beliefs regarding popular culture as well as fears and anxieties, which lend themselves readily to the therapeutic endeavor. With regards to the, at
times very difficult, termination process of therapeutic relationship, popular culture appeared to provide these young men with an avenue for speaking reflectively about it. Tupac’s words "Noone Ever Really Dies", lent a powerful metaphor to the termination of Group A’s artistic therapeutic process, and allowed them a space to mourn the loss of the group situation and the enduring lessons they had learnt within - and from - each other. Kevin’s final image (Figures 64 & 65) articulates this discussion in a metaphorical sense and combines many popular culture elements that he used throughout the group meetings.

5.3 The stereotyped symbol and sign/symbol tensions

Edith Kramer’s (1971) speculations on stereotype and repetition - which incorporate thoughts of popular culture imagery - conceived as an obstacle to therapeutic process in their ‘endlessness repetition’ (explored in chapter 3), are easily refuted within the present research data. A simple perusal of the available images of both Group A and B show that even stereotyped and repeated images in the group process were transformed and molded by the artist/client creating them. If we use semiotic theory to deconstruct the images of popular culture, it is possible to view signs and symbols as analogous and/or components of each other. By combining Kramer’s specification of popular culture imagery as ‘stereotyped’ and the notion that a popular culture image may be considered both a sign and/or a symbol, we are able to associate these images to Moriya’s (1995)
definition of a stereotyped symbol. In so doing, it is possible to conceive of the popular culture image as a transitional object - pointing to the process of individuation.

Therefore, the popular culture image seen as a transitional object, enables the therapeutic situation in that it provides safety and an adaptive function as a defense. Moriya's (1995) research demonstrated that what appears to be a 'defensive symbol' may turn out to be the key to understanding the client's problems, and the stereotyped symbol may be seen as a sign of progress. In her research with anorexic clients, she found that, "the stereotyped symbol, a rainbow in this case, was an organizer for her [client] and gradually more and more levels of meaning became attached to it" (p. 26). Moriya pointed to the possibility that each time the stereotyped symbol changed it might signal "a beginning of the emergence of a more authentic self expression" (p. 31). I believe this to be equally demonstrated within the present study data; for each time a popular culture symbol was produced, or re-produced, there was a re-articulation as well as an objective to articulate something important concerning the individual artist/client who manipulated it.

Within the debate surrounding the dichotomy between a sign and symbol (and whether a popular culture image can be consider a sign or a symbol), I believe the most significant factor to contemplate is that which was articulated by Stewart (1966) and pondered in Chapter 3. Stewart's suggestion that both the sign and symbol are highly ambiguous entities, and the distinction
between the two results in a loss of 'meaning' - attributed to either or both - is highly important within the present study. In order to place critical attention on 'meaning', as a priority, this distinction must not be made. The popular culture image, therefore, becomes highly meaningful - whether it is a sign and/or a symbol. Furthermore it can, consequently, be considered equally relevant to the stereotyped symbol as a transitional object. Just as the 'label' becomes, for the adolescent, him or herself through the individuation process, so too does the 'word', 'sign', or 'symbol' in Peirce's (1897) theories, as contemplated in chapter 3. For Peirce, the sign was the 'self' and the 'self' was itself a 'sign'. Regardless of the theoretical metaphors, it is abundantly clear that the sign/symbol of popular culture is essentially intertwined with the process of identity and identity formation.

5.4 Future research possibilities

The present theoretical and clinical study provides a great deal of data with regards to the male adolescent's use of popular culture imagery during identity formation within the art therapeutic context. Its primary intentions are the recognition of the use of popular culture iconography for the adolescent, and the opening up of dialogue related to its implications both for research and clinical intervention. The information presented, however, reveals primarily that there is, as of yet, a great deal of research road to transverse before coming to a comprehensive
understanding of the ways in which popular culture iconography is used, and can be used, therapeutically for the adolescent. Questions of why and how adolescents use popular culture are also significant to understanding the complexity of popular culture iconography for the discipline of art therapy. This study has explored new ways in which to use research methodology within the art therapeutic discipline, specifically that of symbolic interactionism. I believe that I have shown this theoretical and methodological standpoint to be highly conducive to art therapeutic research, and I purport that it be used in the future, not only in relation to exploring ideas of popular culture but with regards to many different art therapeutic quandaries - particularly with regards to those involving group interactions processes.

Symbolic interactionist studies, like Denzin's (1987), described in Chapter 3, could be re-duplicated using art therapeutic strategies for the deconstructions of particular popular culture symbols. In this way, perhaps it would be possible to understand particular popular culture symbols - either within advertising, television, music, etc. - and how these could have an effect upon the therapeutic process. Using this theoretical standpoint and methodology it may also be possible to explore popular culture within other societies around the world, in order to investigate the impact that popular culture iconography may have on people and therapeutic practice from cultures and ideologies other than North American.
Due to the fact that the present study was gender (males), age (adolescents) and population (residential treatment) specific, more qualitative and exploratory research is needed to understand the significance and uses of popular culture in art therapy for other genders, age groups, as well as populations. The data derived from these types of studies will no doubt shed a greater light on how and why individuals use popular culture and how they use them differently from one another. Longitudinal studies, as well as research that takes into account the behaviors outside of the therapeutic context, would increase the depth of knowledge related to popular culture iconography within the art therapeutic context.

More qualitative investigation into the depths of popular culture influence within art therapy, both positive and negative, may be able to produce new insights in the psychological discipline as a whole. There is a conspicuous lack of research on the potentialities for popular culture use within the therapeutic context that could be ameliorated by research performed within newly emerging fields, like art psychotherapy. These types of qualitative investigations could lead to a deeper and fuller understanding of specific popular culture iconographic products, which could eventually be experimentally defined and consequently provide new ways in which to view and use therapeutically the popular culture image, perhaps eventually leading to quantitative study. With regards to adolescence, specifically, and its weighty connection to popular culture
through history, it would be interesting to explore the popular culture images that are favored at different stages of the identity formation process. Perhaps these results could also be investigated with regards to how the uses of popular culture change over the course of the human life span and how these changes are manipulated artistically. The possibilities appear to be endless. What I believe the present study has demonstrated most is that there is opportunity to re-conceptualize the art therapeutic use of the popular culture image and to perceive it as useful therapeutically.

To be an adolescent today means to be bombarded by advertisement and media that has you as its target. The influence that popular culture imagery has upon the adolescent is undeniable. By focusing primarily on whether it is a positive or negative effect, I believe we are overlooking important facets of the influence, and the possible uses of this influence. Within the art therapeutic space, it is up to the therapist to explore the issues that adolescents bring to the fore, and often these issues involve images of popular culture. Instead of perpetuating the belief that these images are 'inauthentic' or 'empty', it is important to realize that, adolescents who are deeply immersed within identity formation, often see these images (attached to labels, musical types, celebrities, etc.) as extensions of themselves. If we deny their importance, we may be denying the adolescent him/herself. The purpose of this research has been to elucidate the fact that the field of art therapy has
everything to gain from re-conceiving the popular culture iconographic product, and allowing adolescent's to teach us what these images mean to them. It is through listening, and not being fearful of responses, that we will learn to use these images therapeutically for the empowerment of the adolescents who are directly immersed within them. As Winnicott (1986) affirmed, "let the youth alter society and teach grown-ups how to see the world afresh" (p. 166).
REFERENCES


Eminem (2002). Without me. On *The Eminem Show* [LP]. Los Angeles, CA Interscope/Aftermath records.


APPENDIX 1

INFORMED CONSENT INFORMATION

Popular culture iconography in the art therapy work of the individuating male adolescent

Art therapy Student: Chloe Westelmajer
Concordia University
1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd.
Montreal, QC
H3G 1M8
XXXXXXXXX: XXX-XXXX

Research Supervisors: Josée Leclerc Ph.D., ATR-BC, Research Supervisor
(XXX) XXX-XXXX
Henry Dunaj, On-Site Supervisor
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Dear (Parent/Legal Guardian of)_______________________________

Purpose

While most research assumes that popular culture’s influence with regards to the adolescent is substantial, there have been few studies which point to a use of this influence within the therapeutic process for benefit. Adolescents appear to naturally gravitate towards popular culture and it’s images for sources of identification, and the purpose of the present study is to look at the ways in which adolescent’s use these images, and the possibility this imagery may present for working within the art therapy domain.

The present research project is an exploratory study of an adolescent therapeutic group having the central theme of popular culture. Each participant will be asked to bring whatever popular culture imagery pertaining to music, television, movies, books, or advertising, which they deem to be significant within their lives. Creative tasks within the group will be to explore one’s on-going personal history with regards to images and pop culture themes. It is hoped that through this collaborative inquiry, new light may be shed upon the useful properties of popular culture iconography within the adolescent identity formation process.

Procedures

A series of 10 -weekly art making sessions, each 50 minutes in duration, will be held by the art therapy intern and will take place between February 2004 to April 2004. Participants will be invited to bring their popular culture themes and materials
(video, CD's, images, etc.) into the art therapy space and to share their experiences both of the popular culture subject matter and their feelings related to growing up. These meetings will consist both of open discussion and guided art making.

The series of 10 sessions will be audio-taped and only the art therapy intern/researcher will hear the audiotapes of the sessions. If any participant refuses consent to the audio-taping within the sessions, it will not be used. Consent is also requested from participants for the photography of their artwork for future educational presentation and publication. Participants may withdraw their consent for photography of their artwork and audio-taping without penalty, and still participate in the remaining sessions of the research study.

Participant’s confidentiality will be respected in every way possible. Their names and identifying information will be kept under lock and key, separately from the tapes and artwork. If a child was to write his name on his artwork, the art therapy intern will cover the name during the photographing of the art piece. Only pertinent information will be revealed during the writing of the paper such as the age of the child, child’s presenting problem, and reasons for referral to residential treatment. No other identifiable characteristics would be used. Participants and/or legal guardian may withdraw their consent to participate in the study at any time, without consequence.

The art therapy intern will keep the artwork for the duration of the series of sessions, after which it will be returned to the participants, if desired.

The final research paper will include some features of the sessions, describing aspects of participant’s experiences using pseudonyms, in keeping with the respect for confidentiality described above. Bound copies of the research paper will be kept in the Program’s Resource Room and in the Concordia University Library.

Risks

To the researcher’s knowledge, participation in this group holds no risks for the participants. However, certain persons could find that they have reactions that are uncomfortable due to the personal nature of the exploration. Each participant will be involved in individualized art therapy sessions with the art therapy intern, and will be offered a space in which to voice any concerns related to the research process. The art therapy intern will also be able to provide a referral to other sources of therapy if needed, in consultation with the on-site research advisor.
Benefits

The aim of the sessions is to create a supportive space where the participants may voice their feelings with regards to popular culture as well as the process of growing up. This may help participants to better understand their particular affiliations with the popular culture products as well as the ways in which these inform their current life situations. The participants involved will learn more about how their choices are informed by their peers and how the social context of the group can provide a forum to learn from the experiences of others. In the end, it is hoped that the creative exploration will aid to improve self-awareness and self-esteem.

If you have any questions regarding this research study, please call the student or supervisors listed above.

If at any time you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call Adela Reid, Compliance Officer, in the Office of Research:
Adela Reid, Compliance Officer
Office of Research, GM-1000, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8
Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

174
APPENDIX 2

Informed Consent Form

Popular culture iconography in the art therapy work of the individuating male adolescent

Art Therapy Student: Chloe Westelmajer
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Montreal, QC
H3G 1M8
XXXXXXX: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Research Supervisor: Josée Leclerc Ph.D., ATR-BC, Research Supervisor
(XXX) XXX-XXXX
Henry Dunaj, On-Site Supervisor
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

I agree to participate (or to allow my child to participate) in the research inquiry conducted by Chloe Westelmajer, entitled Popular culture iconography in the art therapy work of the individuating male adolescent, as part of her Master’s studies in the Creative Arts Therapies Program at Concordia University.

I have carefully read and understood the consent information about the above study. Its purpose and nature have been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I understand that I will (my child will) participate in 10 weekly 50 minute sessions from February 2004 to April 2004, during which I (he/she) will be allowed to bring whatever popular culture materials I (he/she) wish and to talk about my (his/her) experience related to this as well as my (his/her) experiences of growing up.

I understand that my (his/her) identity will be kept confidential, and I agree to protect the confidentiality of the other participants by not mentioning their names, the experiences they have shared, or their artwork to persons outside of the group.

I understand that the session will be audio-taped. No one except the researcher will listen to the audiotapes. The tapes and the artwork will be stored separately under lock and key without any participant’s names attached to them. The final research report will include aspects of things that occurred in
the sessions, describing participant's experiences with identities kept confidential. Artwork will be used, but my name (the child's name) kept confidential within the research paper, or any future presentations or publication of the research. No art work will be photographed without my written permission. I understand that at the end of the project, my (the child's) artwork will be returned to me (my child).

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent at any time.

I understand that copies of the research paper will be bound and kept in the Program's Resource Room and in the Concordia University Library.

I freely consent and voluntarily agree to (allow my child to) participate in this study.

I, the undersigned

______________________________

Authorize

To take any: YES NO

Photographs: _____ _____

Audio recordings: _____ _____

Case material: _____ _____

That the art therapist deems appropriate and to utilize and publish them for educational purposes, provided that reasonable precautions be taken to conserve confidentiality.

However, I make the following restriction(s):

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

176
Signature of participant (or legal guardian)  

Date

Signature of Guarantor (art therapist)  

Date

Witness to Signature  

Date

177