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Cinematherapy with Preadolescents Experiencing Parental Divorce: A Collective Case Study

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CINEMATHERAPY WITH PREADOLESCENTS EXPERIENCING PARENTAL DIVORCE: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

CINEMATHERAPY WITH PREADOLESCENTS EXPERIENCING PARENTAL DIVORCE:

A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

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A multiple-case study of the use of cinematherapy in six sessions of individual therapy each with three preadolescent aged children who were experiencing parental divorce was conducted. Children were shown film clips from six different films over six weeks of individual therapy. Questions were used to facilitate discussion with the children and children were given the opportunity to respond to the film clips expressively, by using their choice of art, creative writing, story-telling, and/or drama. Each child was interviewed one to two weeks after the intervention.

Multiple themes emerged across the cases, including the use of films for: assessment of children's ability to identify and express emotions and to learn to identify emotions. A new concept, interactive viewing, occurred for each participant and involved a child spontaneously interacting with a film and/or the therapist through narrating, sharing thoughts and emotional responses, or interacting expressively while viewing. Furthermore, all the children shared the plots from films or television shows they watched outside of therapy which can be viewed as form of story-telling which conveyed their concerns and contributed to healing. Through expressive responses, children experienced catharsis and created therapeutically relevant metaphors.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

``From the very beginning E.T. was a movie about my childhood--about my parents' divorce, although people haven't often seen that it's about divorce. My parents split up when I was 15 or 16 years old, and I needed a special friend, and had to use my imagination to take me to places that felt good--that helped me move beyond the problems my parents were having, and that ended our family as a whole. And thinking about that time, I thought, an extraterrestrial character would be the perfect springboard to purge the pain of your parents' splitting up."
-Steven Spielberg (in Ebert, 1997)

Topic of Study

Cinematherapy, an extension of bibliotherapy, is a creative approach to therapy in which commercial films pertaining to clients' issues are assigned to clients to watch during or between sessions with the opportunity to discuss the films with the therapist afterward. Films can be used to engage the imagination, enable discussion of difficult material by decreasing resistance, allow for emotional release and expression, help clients view problems from different angles, and provide role models or alternative solutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study was to explore the use of cinematherapy in a six-week individual therapy intervention with three preadolescent aged children who were experiencing parental divorce. The dissertation is a collective case study in which three preadolescent aged children's responses to a cinematherapy intervention were explored; themes were developed within and across cases; and then compared with the existing literature. Film clips from six films which have been recommended in the cinematherapy literature were shown in individual therapy with each child. Follow-up questions were used to promote discussion about the children's reactions to the film clips. Each child was given the opportunity to select expressive activities, including art, creative writing, story-telling, and drama to explore his or her own responses to the

films creatively. Each child was interviewed about his or her thoughts about the intervention one to two weeks later. The overarching research question was:

> How do preadolescent aged children respond to the use of film clips about divorce in six sessions of individual therapy?

Subquestions were as follows:

1) What themes emerge in each child's verbal, creative, and metaphorical responses to the cinematherapy intervention?

2) What are the children's therapeutic outcomes based on an analysis of session transcripts and an interview with each child to gather his or her impressions of the intervention.

3) Based on a cross-case analysis, what themes emerge generally in the children's responses to cinematherapy?

4) How do any of the themes support or contrast with theoretical constructs in the extant literature in the emerging area of cinematherapy?

Statement of the Problem

Children are frequently referred to me for therapy with symptoms of depression, anxiety, or behavior problems. During the assessment, it often becomes apparent that a child has experienced a recent loss, such as parental divorce, which contributes to his or her psychological problems. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry estimates a 50% divorce rate; leaving many children impacted by parental divorce. Despite the reality that parental divorce has become a common childhood experience; children with divorced parents are at higher risk for academic problems, behavioral and emotional problems, lower self-esteem, and interpersonal problems (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991a).

Providing therapeutic opportunities to help children grieve the losses associated with divorce, increase accurate and adaptive beliefs about divorce, and develop coping skills is crucial. However, children are often unable or unwilling to express their thoughts and feelings verbally in therapy, therefore creative approaches to treatment can be helpful (Berns, 2003; Pardeck, 2005; Tyson et al., 2000). Bibliotherapy has been used to facilitate communication with children about transitions in the family, including divorce (Berns, 2003; Hames & Pedreira, 2003; Sargent, 1985; Pardeck, 2005; Tussing & Valentine, 2001). Bibliotherapy can be a particularly useful intervention for preadolescents experiencing divorce, who may feel too old for play therapy, yet may not all be ready for talk therapy (Pehrsson, Allen, Folger, McMillen, & Lowe, 2007). However, like Bowen (2006), I have found that books are less popular with many child and adolescent clients, because some young clients do not want to invest the time required for reading, and many prefer technology, television, and movies.

Contribution to the Expressive Therapies

Cinematherapy is an extension of biblio/poetry therapy (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Calisch, 2001; Hebert & Neumeister, 2001; Hebert & Neumeister, 2002; Portadin, 2006; Sharp, Smith, & Cole, 2002) which may have useful applications in the treatment of preadolescents experiencing parental divorce. Poetry therapy is one modality of expressive arts therapy. While films have been recommended for a variety of issues, including parental divorce, there remains a need to pilot the use of recommended films with children. Furthermore, while the expressive arts are frequently suggested as responses to literature and occasionally to films, there are few studies in which children's actual expressive responses have been explored in depth. Therefore, this study will contribute to our knowledge of which films are therapeutic, how cinematherapy works, and how the expressive arts in addition to discussion can help children explore films further.

Definition of Terms

Preadolescence

Preadolescence is defined as the period between childhood and adolescence, including ages ten to twelve in girls and eleven to thirteen for boys (The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary, 2002; Santrock, 2008). Preadolescence can be a challenging developmental stage, involving rapid physical, intellectual, and social-emotional changes (Pehrsson, Allen, Folger, McMillen, & Lowe, 2007). For the current study, preadolescence will include children between the ages of ten through twelve.

Cinematherapy

Cinematherapy has been defined as "a therapeutic technique that involves careful selection and assignment of movies for clients to watch with follow-up processing of their experiences during therapy sessions" (Sharp, Smith, & Cole, 2002). Sharp et al.'s definition will be adopted for the current study, since they specify both the careful selection of films, and follow-up processing in therapy.

Discussion

Discussion will be defined as a dialogue between therapist and child in response to film clips to encourage interpretation and synthesis of the content and children's connections to their own lives. The definition is based partially on Berns' description of the use of discussion in response to literature (2003). For the purpose of the current study, Berns' definition has been extended to include discussion in response to film clips. The discussion is guided by a series of questions beginning with open-ended questions and followed by more specific questions (Berns, 2003).

Expressive Responses

Many researchers have encouraged the use of expressive activities, including painting and drawing, creating or using puppets, role-playing, creative writing, rewriting the story with a different outcome, journaling, and poetry following the discussion of therapeutic literature with children (Jackson, 2001; Mazza, Magaz, & Scaturro, 1987; Pardeck, 1990a; Pardeck, 1990b; Pardeck & Markward, 1995; Prater, Johnstun, Dyches, and Johnstun, 2006; Sullivan and Strang 2002/03). Similarly, Hebert and Neumeister (2001; 2002) suggested using similar expressive activities with children in response to films. For the current study, expressive responses will be defined as having the children select expressive activities including art, creative writing, story-telling, and drama in order to respond creatively to the film clips.

Motivation for Pursuing Cinematherapy as a Topic

It is 1985 and I am a high school sophomore. I am struggling with teenage alienation which is exacerbated by coping with the aftermath of my parents' divorce. Lacking motivation for school resulting in frequent tardiness, I occasionally find myself in in-school suspension. The multi-purpose in-school suspension room is the long, narrow room where students dress and apply make-up before appearing in plays; hence the long table where I am seated has a large mirror in front of each seat. So, for eight hours I sit about twelve inches from a large mirror, into which I stare at my reflection. Alas, I am not pondering the error of my ways, nor am I dutifully completing any missed homework assignments. Instead, I stare into my reflection, and those of the other wayward students, pondering identity. Who am I? How can I be a unique individual, yet still fit in? Who are the other students? This is the year that *The Breakfast Club,* written and directed by John Hughes, is released, and I go to see it, silently mesmerized that a movie so closely parallels my own experiences.

In *The Breakfast Club* five different high school students spend a Saturday together in an in-school suspension. When the day begins, they feel that they have no commonalities, seeing each other as stereotypes: the brain, the athlete, the princess, the basket case, and the criminal. As the day progresses they begin to share how each has felt bullied, pushed to live a parent's own dream, torn loyalties between parents, or ignored in different ways at home which has resulted in feelings of alienation at school. They begin to develop empathy for one another realizing that on a deeper level, they are each much more than a stereotype, and that they share certain internal experiences. At the end of the day, they complete the essay which they have been assigned to write by the principal about "who you think you are":

Dear Mr. Vernon: We accept the fact that we had to sacrifice a whole Saturday in detention for whatever it was we did wrong. But, we think you're crazy to make us write an essay telling you who we think we are. You see us as you want to see us: in the simplest terms, in the most convenient definitions. But, what we found out is that each one of us is: a brain . . . and an athlete . . . and a basket case . . . a princess . . . and a criminal. Does that answer your question? Sincerely yours, The Breakfast Club.

The Breakfast Club offered a unique response to the struggles that I experienced as a high school sophomore, which externalized a dialogue which had previously been mostly in my own mind. The film created the awareness that we can have multiple identities simultaneously. For the first time, I felt validated by the realization that other students had similar concerns at school and home, and began to understand that dealing with parents, stereotypes, and the search for identity were near universal experiences of teenage life. Since that time, there have been many films pertaining to my current life experiences and challenges which have offered an alternative lens, new perspectives, catharsis, empathy for different types of people, and a feeling of shared experiences with others. Since films have brought meaning and personal growth to my own life, I hoped to share these possibilities with others.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This multiple-case study explores the use of cinematherapy followed by discussion and expressive responses with three preadolescent aged children experiencing parental divorce. An important component of case study research is comparing the themes which emerge from the study to existing literature (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 1998). Therefore, findings from the professional literature within several topic areas will be discussed in this chapter. The areas of literature to be reviewed include 1) the relationship between biblio/poetry therapy and cinematherapy; 2) definitions, history, and efficacy of biblio/poetry therapy; 3) selection of literature, discussion and other expressive activities in response to the literature; 4) applications of bibliotherapy with children including socio-emotional functioning and grief and loss; 5) definitions, history, and efficacy of cinematherapy; 6) psychology and film, therapeutic factors, and theoretical models of cinematherapy; 7) selection of films, discussion, and expressive activities in response to films 8) cinematherapy with children experiencing grief and loss; 9) children and divorce; 10) research on bibliotherapy and children of parental divorce; and 11) research on cinematherapy and children of parental divorce.

Cinematherapy: An Extension of Bibliotherapy

While literature may have been the primary way of sharing cultural stories and values in the past, currently films are often the main way our cultural stories, conflicts, goals, and values are shared by contemporary culture and are especially important to teenagers (Berg-Cross et. al, 1990; Calisch, 2001; Hebert & Neumeister, 2001; Suarez, 2003). Therefore, most authors have discussed cinematherapy in the context of bibliotherapy, which has been more extensively researched than the more recently developed cinematherapy (Portadin, 2006; Sharp, Smith, &

Cole, 2002). Much of the cinematherapy literature refers to the use of films in therapy as a natural extension of using books in therapy (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Calisch, 2001; Hebert & Neumeister, 2001; Hebert & Neumeister, 2002; Portadin, 2006). "Movies are simply the latest, most accessible and time-saving addition to what has become known as bibliotherapy" (Hesley, 2000, p. 55). Both bibliotherapy and cinematherapy have also been recommended as self-help or adjuncts to therapy (Lampropoulos & Spengler, 2005). Therefore, bibliotherapy research has important applications to cinematherapy, and therefore, will be discussed in this literature review.

Portadin compared the use of films and books in therapy stating that both "literature and film tell a story in the form of a narrative" (2006, p. 33). Literature and films share common elements including plot, metaphor, characters, and different points of view (Portadin, 2006). Like bibliotherapy, cinematherapy utilizes both story and character as therapeutic agents (Berg-Cross et al., 1990).

Because clients' lives are often busy, people read less, and society is becoming more technically-oriented, films may often be assigned in place of literature (Calisch, 2001; Portadin, 2006). While a book may take days for a client to read, watching a film for homework only takes two hours and therefore, more clients complete the homework (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Hesley, 2001; Portadin, 2006; Sharp et al., 2002). Books are less popular with many child and adolescent clients, because some young clients do not want to invest the time required for reading, and many prefer technology, television, and movies (Bowen, 2006). In addition, it may be easier for anxious and depressed clients to maintain focus on a film than a book which requires greater concentration (Calisch, 2001). The viewer can experience the whole "healing story" at one time, as opposed to a book which is broken up over time and may confuse or dilute the messages

(Solomon, 1995). Another potential benefit is that films are sometimes watched with family members who are not a part of therapy, and this can increase communication and therapeutic impact on a family system (Calisch, 2001). Videocassettes (and now DVDs) are readily available and a popular activity which promote compliance (Berg-Cross et al., 1990). Further, there is pressure to keep therapy costs down and films can expediently elicit emotional responses (Calisch, 2001; Hesley, 2001). There have yet to be any studies comparing the use of literature and films in therapy. However, in a meta-analysis of bibliotherapy studies, Marrs (1995) found that audiovisual formats were more effective in increasing assertiveness than books.

Definitions, History, and Efficacy of Biblio/Poetry Therapy

Introduction to Biblio/Poetry Therapy

While a literature search under the term bibliotherapy and children identified a multitude of studies, there are many fewer published articles on the topic of poetry therapy and children. Most of the larger body of literature about bibliotherapy with children has been published in journals of school psychology, school counseling, mental health nursing, and sometimes teacher education. With rare exceptions, the bibliotherapy research does not reference the field of poetry therapy. For the purposes of this literature review, the term bibliotherapy generally will be used when referring to studies about bibliotherapy. When referring to studies from the poetry therapy literature, the term biblio/poetry therapy will be used as recommended by Hynes and Hynes-Berry (1994). Hynes and Hynes-Berry were poetry therapists who proposed the term biblio/poetry therapy to encompass both bibliotherapy and poetry therapy.

Defining Biblio/Poetry Therapy

Samuel Crothers first used the term bibliotherapy in 1916 to refer to the therapeutic use of books (Jackson, 2001). In 1950, Shrodes confirmed the definition of bibliotherapy as reading

books to promote mental health, but added that the reader's interaction with the content is crucial for therapeutic benefit. Hynes and Hynes-Berry (1994) noted that the interactive process is enhanced by a therapist facilitated discussion with the reader about his or her responses to the literature. Hynes & Hynes-Berry (1994) define biblio/poetry therapy as:

> A trained facilitator uses guided discussions to help the clinical or developmental participant(s) integrate both feelings and cognitive responses to a selected work of literature, which may be a printed text, some form of audiovisual material, or creative writing by the participant. (p. 17)

Note that this early definition of biblio/poetry therapy included audiovisual material as a valid application of biblio/poetry therapy.

History of Biblio/Poetry Therapy

References to the therapeutic aspects of reading literature and viewing dramas have been made since early recorded history. Henry and Sawyers (1987) discuss how in ancient Greece, Aristotle proposed the idea of catharsis which occurs through the vicarious experience of watching dramas. Catharsis can mean therapy, healing, purging, or clarification. Aristotle theorized that when dramas evoked feelings of pity or fear in response to the hero's dilemma, the viewer could be "purged by his vicarious experience" (Henry & Sawyers, p. 32). Part of Aristotle's original definition of tragedy was the therapeutic and cathartic impact for the viewer: "A tragedy, then, is the imitation of action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself;...with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions" (Aristotle, 335B.C./1947).

In the 1920s and 1930s, librarians in psychiatric institutions began compiling lists of books which could be used therapeutically and worked with mental health professionals to assign books to clients with emotional problems to read independently (Gladding & Gladding, 1991; Hynes & Hynes-Berry, 1994). For example, in the 1930s, psychiatrist William C. Menninger had

psychiatric patients read literature as therapeutic assignments (Hesley, 2000; Hesley, 2001). The first theory of bibliotherapy was proposed in 1950 by Shrodes in her dissertation who described successive stages of the bibliotherapy process through which client change occurred: identification/projection, catharsis, and insight (Hebert & Neumeister, 2001; Pardeck, 1990; Shrodes, 1950).

Efficacy of Bibliotherapy

Prater, Johnstun, Dyches, and Johnstun (2006) reviewed the research on bibliotherapy and found that while many professionals affirm the use of bibliotherapy with children, further research is needed to verify the efficacy of this practice. They stated that researchers have not always used a consistent definition of bibliotherapy; therefore it is difficult to compare what studies have actually measured. Further, while many researchers have observed therapeutic results with clients, many of the studies lacked research designs which would make it possible to attribute client change to bibliotherapy as opposed to other factors (Prater et al., 2006). Most research has been based on clinician's observations or brief case studies that are reported anecdotally rather than empirically based studies (Pehrsson & McMillen, 2005). Often research methods have not been discussed in enough detail for future researchers to fully evaluate or replicate previous studies.

Marrs (1995) conducted a meta-analysis of previous bibliotherapy studies and found a moderate effect; bibliotherapy appeared to be effective in treating anxiety, assertiveness, and sexual dysfunction. However, bibliotherapy had less effect on problems involving impulse control, weight loss, and addictions.

Examples of empirically based research are studies by Shechtman in which bibliotherapy was used as an intervention for children with aggression (Shechtman, 2000; Shechtman & Ben-

David, 1999). Students listened to a story or poem or watched a film on emotions often leading to aggressive responses, and then discussed their personal responses related to the literature or films. Researchers found that bibliotherapy reduced aggression in treated children as compared with wait-list children, regardless of whether they were treated individually or in groups (Shechtman and Ben-David, 1999). This study replicated previous findings, and went further by showing that the format (individual verses group) was not a factor in the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in reducing children's aggression. One limit to these findings was that while the bibliotherapy intervention was more effective in reducing aggression than no treatment, bibliotherapy was not compared to any other form of treatment. Therefore, it was difficult to determine what the specific therapeutic factors were. Bibliotherapy should be compared to other treatments for treating children's aggression, for example, cognitive-behavioral therapy. Furthermore, until these findings are replicated with children's issues in addition to aggression, results cannot be generalized (Shechtman and Ben-David, 1999).

In another quantitative study, Shechtman (2000) found that bibliotherapy decreased aggression by both self and teacher reports. While students noted that their social problems decreased, teachers reported fewer attention and thought problems. Both teachers and students noticed a decrease in anxious and depressed behavior. The intervention aided in "emotional relief, the development of self-awareness, and the enhancement of social skills... Participants in the intervention reported gains in insight and self-control, and pointed to catharsis and interpersonal learning as the major therapeutic factors in the group process" (Shechtman, 2000, p. 165). While this study intended to measure aggressiveness, it also showed an improvement in the students' "general well-being" (Shechtman, 2000, p. 166).

Selection of Literature, Discussion, and Expressive Responses to Biblio/Poetry Therapy

Selection of Literature

While many authors have identified literature that is clinically appropriate for specific issues, often their selections have not been tested systematically with various populations. For example, Sargent (1985) examined children's fiction about having a parent with a mental illness. The author developed criteria to recommend books on the basis of whether the books provided information about mental illness, modeled a child receiving surrogate parenting from another source, and showed coping skills for having a parent with mental illness. While this is useful clinically, future research should correlate suggested books with therapeutic outcomes with children.

Similarly, Tussing and Valentine (2001) examined young adult fiction using a qualitative approach to recommend novels which may be therapeutic for adolescents with a mentally ill parent. The authors recommended and described books after evaluating them according to Sargent's (1985) criteria, and encouraged follow-up research which would pilot the identified novels with adolescents in order to investigate their therapeutic efficacy.

One promising development for the selection of literature is a bibliotherapy evaluation tool in order to more systematically evaluate appropriate literature (Pehrsson & McMillen, 2005). Pehrsson and McMillen have developed a web-based tool in which graduate students and professionals are guided in evaluating the benefits or drawbacks of particular bibliotherapy materials on the basis of specific categories like developmental level and theme. They also encourage future research which would compare therapeutic outcomes with the literature evaluations.

Pehrsson and McMillen stated that while bibliotherapy is a frequently used and promising intervention, "there has been no discussion in the literature of how to prepare and assist graduate students in the appropriate selection of materials and their use" (Pehrsson & McMillen, 2005, p. 55).This statement is an example of how the research and training material from the discipline of poetry therapy is not always addressed by bibliotherapy scholars. Hynes and Hynes-Berry (1994) are poetry therapists who provided recommendations about the choice and uses of literature for poetry therapy based on specific criteria.

Discussion and Expressive Activities in Response to Biblio/Poetry Therapy

Reading literature can be followed by interactive discussion and an expressive activity in which the therapist helps the child connect the story to his or her own experience, potentially leading to catharsis and insight (Pardeck, 1990a). In response to the literature, Berns (2003) stresses that each participant's unique reactions should be encouraged to help the child come to greater self-understanding. Bibliotherapy is not a form of direct teaching, but allows for children to discover their own inner wisdom and meanings. By identifying with a character, children may realize that they are not alone in dealing with a particular problem. Further, dialogue with children can assist them to weigh the pros and cons of the various ways a character considered resolving his or her problem, as well as to generate potential solutions of his or her own (Forgan, 2002).

Reading a poem with children can be "a springboard for the expression of feelings. Children can be invited to respond to the whole poem, or a specific line or image" (Mazza, Magaz, & Scaturro, 1987, p. 86). After reading stories with children, having a discussion with them encourages interpretation and synthesis of the literature and children's connections to their own lives (Berns, 2003). Berns encouraged beginning with an open-ended question such as, "Are

there any thoughts or ideas about the story, things you liked, didn't like?" (Berns, 2003, p. 334). The open-ended questions can be followed by more specific questions to promote dialogue including: What picture comes to your mind; what memories come to mind; and are there any ways you would like to change the story? (Berns, 2003, p. 330). These questions could be adapted for use with cinematherapy, as well as lend themselves to expressive responses like artwork and story-telling.

Pardeck (1990a) recommended using expressive activities following bibliotherapy as a non-verbal means of helping children explore and identify with relevant aspects of a story, since children are often reluctant to express their difficulties verbally in therapy. Expressive responses can be particularly helpful with children who have experienced abuse and may have difficulty with the trust required for verbal disclosure. "When combined with creative activities designed to elicit personal connections between the listener and [the] characters, children's literature becomes a powerful tool for helping youngsters develop strategies for coping with their own struggles" (Nicholson & Pearson, 2003, p. 19).

Many researchers have encouraged the use of expressive activities following reading and discussing the literature with children. Expressive activities mentioned in the literature are painting and drawing, creating puppets, dramatization, role-playing, creative writing, rewriting the story with a different outcome, journaling, and poetry (Jackson, 2001; Mazza et al., 1987; Pardeck, 1990b; Pardeck & Markward, 1995; Prater et al., 2006; Sullivan and Strang 2002-03). Despite these recommendations, few studies have explored children's responses to literature using expressive activities in any depth.

Applications of Biblio/Poetry Therapy with Children

Bibliotherapy and Socio-emotional Functioning in Children

Bibliotherapy has been used to help children develop self-awareness, social skills, and problem-solving skills. Barrett-Kruse (2000) stated that bibliotherapy promotes the development of self-awareness, self in relationship to others, and empathy. Further, sharing stories can help strengthen the relationship between mothers and daughters (Barrett-Kruse, 2000).

Gladding and Gladding (1991) encouraged school counselors to use bibliotherapy combined with interactive discussion in classroom guidance and in individual and group counseling, arguing that children can benefit affectively, behaviorally, and cognitively. Affective benefits include recognition and acceptance of previously denied emotions. Behaviorally, children may identify with characters who can serve as role models for how to relate to others and handle difficult situations. Cognitively, children can learn new ways of thinking about their problems.

Sullivan and Strang (2002-03) encouraged teacher training in the use of bibliotherapy with students to promote emotional intelligence within the classroom, including empathy, optimism, assertiveness, and the ability to manage emotions and to perceive the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence can be enhanced by selecting books with themes related to friendship, including perceiving and responding appropriately to others' emotions. Children with low emotional intelligence sometimes have difficulty in identifying with others, and this can be improved by helping them learn to identify with a character. Similarly, Prater et al. (2006) reported that bibliotherapy can be used to teach social and developmental skills, including friendship and the value of working hard.

Additionally, bibliotherapy can be used to help children with problems including aggression, stress, and social skills deficits (Sullivan & Strang, 2002-03). Forgan (2002) encouraged the use of bibliotherapy to help children with learning disabilities and behavioral problems, dealing with bullying, managing anger, and improving self-concept. Likewise, Gregory and Vessey (2004) found that bibliotherapy helped children share their experiences of being bullied or bullying others, develop coping strategies to avoid bullying in the future, and increased children's empathy for each other.

Bibliotherapy with Children Experiencing Grief and Loss

Bibliotherapy has been used effectively with children with a variety of types of grief and loss, including fears of terrorism, homelessness, and abuse and neglect (DeVias, 1995; Farkas & Yorker, 1993; Mazza, 1987; Nicholson & Pearson, 2003; Pardeck, 1990a, 1990b). Bibliotherapy has also been effective with children who have experienced a parent with mental illness, a parent in prison, death of a parent, and parental divorce (Berns, 2003; Hames & Pedreira, 2003; Pardeck, 2005; Sargent, 1985; Tussing & Valentine, 2001).

While childhood fears are a typical part of development, increasingly, children are being impacted by fears which have normally affected adolescents and adults (Nicholson & Pearson, 2003). Younger children are experiencing increased fears of death, crime, and war due to changes in our society including September 11th, the war on terrorism, and the resulting media coverage. Bibliotherapy can help children "identify internal and external resources as well as develop subsequent coping strategies" and offers "vicarious opportunities for exploring and mastering their fears" (Nicholson & Pearson, 2003, p. 16).

Bibliotherapy can also help mediate the developmental impact on children who have experienced abuse (Pardeck, 1990b). Children who have been abused often have difficulty with

trust, impacting their ability to form a therapeutic relationship and disclose verbally in therapy. Using books with which abused children identify can help a child who is fearful of disclosing his or her experiences. Reading poems with children who have been abused can help the children express their feelings (Mazza et al., 1987). Bibliotherapy can validate the ambivalent feelings children often have about the abusive adult, and help children make sense of the experience (Jasmine-DeVias, 1995). Bibliotherapy can also help parents learn more appropriate ways of parenting, and can teach a child the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch (Pardeck, 1990a).

The use of bibliotherapy with children who have a parent with a mental illness has also been discussed in the literature. Children with a parent with mental illness are at greater risk for poor adjustment, difficulty with relationships, and identity confusion (Tussing & Valentine, 2001). Books and poetry can decrease the stigma adolescents feel regarding having a parent with mental illness and encourage them to speak about their experiences. Furthermore, characters in books can provide the positive role models whom these adolescents may lack in their homes (Tussing & Valentine, 2001).

Bibliotherapy has also been used in support groups to help children who are grieving the death of a parent, sibling, or another close person (Berns, 2003). Since children often have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings about a loss, program facilitators found that they were able to share feelings when talking about them through a character, rather than speaking about themselves directly. When children and their families experience a major loss, like the death of a caretaker or loved one, reading about others who have encountered similar experiences can help them feel less isolated and afraid, and more hopeful . Children can feel reassured by realizing that others who have experienced similar losses can survive and heal from

their painful experiences. Furthermore, the facilitator can demonstrate that there is no one right way to respond to grief by pointing out how characters cope with grief in many different ways.

Berns (2003) annotated literature which may be useful with grieving children, and mentioned criteria for selection of literature. The facilitator should be familiar with the literature and all of its themes before using it with bereaved children. Characters should be "believable," the plot realistic, and the character should take a creative approach to solving problems. The literature should avoid euphemisms for death like "passed away" and should not make reference to death as "sleep" which is confusing or frightening to children. Berns' ideas are compelling and make intuitive sense, however, little empirical support nor much information were offered about how children were helped by the program.

Definitions, History, and Efficacy of Cinematherapy

Introduction to Cinematherapy

The use of films in therapy is a growing area being discussed more frequently in the literature (Portadin, 2006). In a survey of attendees at the Texas Association of Marriage and Family Therapy in 1998, the majority of therapists stated that they discussed films in therapy regularly (Hesley, 2000). However, there are still relatively few case studies of cinematherapy in individual therapy with children. The majority of the cinematherapy case studies have been with adults in individual or couples therapy (Berg-Cross, Jennings, & Baruch, 1990; Hesley, 2000; Hesley, 2001; Heston & Kottman, 1997; Jennings, & Baruch, 1990; Suarez, 2003; Wedding & Niemiec, 2003). There has also been a case study of group treatment with female adolescents with mental illnesses in a residential program and two in which children whose parents were divorcing made their own videos (Bierman, Krieger, & Leifer, 2003; Ham, 1988; Hoorwitz, 1984). There were very brief case studies of gifted children, and one with an adolescent

considering sexual issues (Herbert & Neumeister, 2001; Sharp et al., 2002). However, only one fairly extensive case study of a child in individual therapy was identified (Christie & McGrath, 1987). Christie and McGrath's case study about an eleven-year-old boy grieving the suicide of his mother will be described in depth in a later section.

There have been five previous dissertations and one published thesis about cinematherapy, including two treatment manuals both intended for group therapy with adolescents: adolescents exposed to domestic violence and adolescents experiencing parental divorce; two proposed models of cinematherapy; a critical analysis of the literature; and a theoretical model for how films can be used to promote the goals of positive psychology (Bowen, 2006; Haas, 1995; Hall, 2006; Lee, 2005; Portadin, 2006; Waitkus, 2009). Both Hall and Lee's manuals proposed using film clips in group therapy sessions. Bowen (2006) proposed a treatment model to be used in group cinematherapy with adolescents with depression. Lee (2005) developed a group cinematherapy treatment manual intended for use with adolescents experiencing parental divorce. However, none of the treatment manuals or models was piloted with any participants.

Many authors have recommended films which may be clinically useful for a variety of problems and issues (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Grace, 2006; Hesley &Hesley, 2001; Solomon, 2001; Solomon, 2005; Ulus, 2003; Wolz, 2005). Many of these films were selected on the basis of the authors' clinical experience and surveys of other professionals. However, the process and effects of using the identified films with clients has not been documented in the literature frequently.

Defining Cinematherapy

Cinematherapy has been defined in different ways across the literature (Portadin, 2006). Common to all definitions is that a therapist asks a client to watch a film or film clip as a therapeutic method (Portadin, 2006). Berg-Cross et al. were the first to define the term cinematherapy in a journal article in 1990. They defined cinematherapy as a "therapeutic technique that involves having the therapist select commercial films for the client to view alone or with specified others" (Berg-Cross et al., 1990, p. 135). The film may either have a therapeutic effect in itself, or can be used to prompt further discussion and reflection in the session.

On the basis of his extensive review of the literature, Portadin (2006) developed a working definition of cinematherapy by synthesizing the most common components of previous definitions. He defined cinematherapy as a psychotherapist instructing a client to watch a commercial entertainment film selected by the therapist with a therapeutic goal in mind, and later discussing the client's reactions to the film in a future therapy session. Likewise, Sharp et al. (2002) defined cinematherapy as "a therapeutic technique that involves careful selection and assignment of movies for clients to watch with follow-up processing of their experiences during therapy sessions." Portadin and Sharp et al.'s definitions differ from Berg-Cross et al.'s (1990) original definition in that they necessitates that the therapist and client dialogue about the film. Assigning a film without discussing it afterward could be ineffective or potentially damaging if a client misinterprets the message or intention of the film.

History of Cinematherapy

The first published reference to the use of films in therapy is frequently identified as a study in which Katz (1947) surveyed psychiatrists at a Veterans Administration about the use of

audiovisual aids in treatment. Katz argued that silent and sound motion pictures could be useful in both the treatment of psychiatric patients and in the training of psychiatric, psychological, and social work personnel. He described how films which introduced concepts and a narrative about combat fatigue were shown to patients experiencing this problem, and in some cases, the audiovisual aids were used as the basis of group discussion.

However, this writer identified a previous reference to the use of film in therapy. Moreno discussed therapeutic dramas three years prior to the Katz study, even suggesting the term "therapeutic motion pictures" (1944, p. 7). He defined therapeutic as capable of producing catharsis and helping audience members to understand themselves better. Moreno stated that while small sections of dramas or films might be therapeutic, he doubted that commercial films in their entirety could be therapeutic. Therefore, he suggested the creation of therapeutic motion pictures, which would be similar to psychodrama, except could be repeated for multiple audiences. Moreno specified that while the production of the film may be therapeutic, "the main object of a therapeutic motion picture is not the production process but the treatment of audiences" (Moreno, 1944, p. 13).

Moreno explained that the therapeutic films should come with instructions for the psychiatrist who would present the film to an audience. The psychiatrist could stop the film, explain parts of it, and relate the film to the particular audience, and later the audience should discuss their own reactions. Furthermore, sometimes films could be presented as a warm up for a psychodrama session. Moreno stated that systematic research of audience reactions in mental institutions and in the community was needed to help us understand what is therapeutic in a film. More than sixty years later, this writer would argue that we still need systematic research about what are the therapeutic aspects of films and the therapeutic effect of films.

After Moreno and Katz's articles, there appears to be a nearly forty-year gap in the literature until the next published article about films in therapy. In Hoorwitz's (1984) study, children created and videotaped their own therapeutic dramas, in order to create their own movies.

One of the first books published about cinematherapy was by Solomon in 1995. Solomon wrote a series of books with different applications of cinematherapy, including one which guides parents in how to use films to help their children with problems and developmental needs (Solomon, 1995, 2001, 2005). The first reference to cinematherapy in the popular media was a brief article in The Wall Street Journal in 1995 (Hauser, 1995). The article was a summary of Solomon's first book, *The motion picture prescription: Watch this movie and call me in the morning*. While Solomon's books are primarily self-help, he acknowledged that the films can also be viewed in the context of therapy, and offered suggestions for therapists who use films in therapy. Solomon did not include many case examples, but presented evidence based on his personal experience using films to heal his own emotional wounds from childhood. Likewise, other authors have used examples of how films have helped them through difficult times in their own lives (Grace, 2006; Wolz, 2005).

Since Solomon's first book, there have been a number of other books written by psychotherapists encouraging the use of cinematherapy primarily as a self-help method (Grace, 2006; Solomon, 2001, 2005; Ulus, 2003; Wolz, 2005). Non-therapists Peske and West also wrote a series of self-help books about cinematherapy (1999; 2004a; 2004b). Unlike most cinematherapy books, Hesley and Hesley's (2001) book is a guide for therapists who use films in therapy with clients, and includes a theoretical basis of cinematherapy, how to choose films, and how to facilitate discussion of films.

Efficacy of Cinematherapy

While many therapists relay anecdotes about the successful use of films in therapy, there is still little empirical research on the efficacy of cinematherapy (Sharp et al., 2002). While authors have reviewed the literature; proposed cinematherapy models; or surveyed clinicians to compile lists of therapeutic films; there is a need for empirical research. Likewise, Portadin (2006) completed an extensive review of the cinematherapy literature is his dissertation. He found that most of the research documented to date has been anecdotal observations and brief case studies. On the basis of the lack of empirical research, he argued that cinematherapy remains in its developmental infancy as a field. He encouraged research studies which would begin to legitimize cinematherapy, including outcome research of the use of films in therapy.

Lampropoulos, Kazantzis, and Deane (2004) surveyed psychologists regarding their use of films as therapy assignments and the usefulness of specific films for clinical use. Their results were formed on the basis of 827 usable survey returns. They found that 90% of psychologists had discussed a film in therapy with a client, and 67% had recommended that a client view a film. 88% of respondents believed that assigning the film had been helpful or very helpful, while 11% perceived no effect, and 1% thought it had been somewhat harmful. The authors stated that because films are commonly assigned in therapy and perceived as useful by most psychologists, there is a need for research assessing the therapy processes and outcomes.

Berg-Cross et al. (1990) discussed three case studies of clients with three different issues: alcoholism, marital problems, and low self-esteem. Each client watched one film pertaining to his or her issue, and then discussed the film in the next therapy session. The authors noted the changes in self-perception and new ways of problem-solving that each client reported. One potential drawback to the study was that the authors did not mention whether they posed

questions to facilitate further exploration of the film. Therefore, the study would be difficult to replicate since there were no suggestions provided about facilitating the discussion.

Powell, Newgent, & Lee (2006) used cinematherapy in a six-week intervention to increase the self-esteem of teenagers with serious emotional disturbances. There were three different groups: one in which cinematherapy was used in the first three sessions and examples from the films were used throughout the whole six weeks; a control group which did not receive cinematherapy, but only received the coping skills portion; and a delayed treatment group which received the cinematherapy portion during the last three weeks only. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale was give to all 16 participants at pre-, post-, and one-week follow-up. While there were no statistically significant differences, the groups which received cinematherapy did show improvements in self-esteem according to the measures, while the coping skills only group actually showed decreased self-esteem after the group. The authors acknowledged that the study should be viewed as a pilot study because of the relatively small sample and the use of self-report measures exclusively. They encourage further studies which would use larger samples, additional types of assessments, and different cinematherapy interventions.

Psychology and Film, Therapeutic Factors, and Theoretical Models of Cinematherapy

Psychological Impact of Film: Film Theory and Popular Culture

Hugo Munsterberg, an experimental psychologist, one of the first film theorists, presented a philosophy of film in his 1916 book, *The photoplay: A psychological study*. He believed that film's development as an art form was based on its ability to reach a large audience. Munsterberg first noticed that viewers were involved in psychological functions while watching films, including the perception of depth and movement, attention, memory, and emotion. He focused on the cognitive processes which were mimicked and directed by film's technological

capacities, for example, the close-up which both mimics and directs the viewer's attention and the flashback, which calls attention to memory. Furthermore, he felt that viewers had affective responses to the images (he was writing during the era of silent films) based on their own emotional lives. For these reasons, Munsterberg believed that film, more than other art forms, directs viewers toward the internal world and mental processes and therefore, can affect the minds of the viewers.

Because of film's ability to influence the audience's mental processes, Munsterberg felt it had great value as both an art form and as a cultural influence made all the more powerful because dark audiences create conditions which make viewers more susceptible to its influence : "...in its moving form [film] impresses the young mind more strongly than any verbal description or simply printed illustration could do" (Langdale, 2002, p. 196). Because of film's power to influence mental processes, Munsterberg drew a distinction between films which present criminal and immoral behavior, and those which can educate and enrich children. Film could provide children with knowledge of aesthetics and appreciation for beauty, which he felt was often lacking on their lives: few children had the resources to go to art museums or the theater. Through the aesthetic education which could be provided by high quality films, children could receive an ethical and moral education which would benefit society.

How films impact viewers' emotions is still being explored and debated, according to Sterritt (2001), who described a recent conference on "The Emotions in Film and Literature." He questioned how film reaches viewers emotions more quickly and directly than most other mediums. According to Sterritt, the process by which films can bypass our intellect, and potentially alter our views, values, and attitudes is still not completely understood. Many of the

features in films, including the use of music, are designed to manipulate the emotions of the audience. Sterritt quoted one of the conference presenters, Krin Gabbard, who stated:

"When you really like a movie, it becomes part of you- not just on an intellectual level, but in such a personal way that things in the story become essential to you as an individual... and [people] also associate films with the important things that happen to them. 'It was just like in that movie,' they'll say."

References to the emotional impact and influence of movies are also found in popular culture, for example, a recent book produced by Variety magazine. Author Robert Hofler asked 120 celebrities including politicians, physicians, athletes, doctors, and people within the entertainment industry, "What is the movie that changed your life?" (Hofler, 2009, p. ix). While some could answer the question immediately, others did so with some prompting. Even those who initially responded that no movie had influenced them strongly went on to describe a movie that had, in fact, influenced either their career, personal cause, social or political views, or ideas about romance. Most of the interviewees saw movies as a "powerful medium, one that gets under the skin and goes straight to the soul to shape dreams, aspirations, and attitudes in a way that does change who we are. Certainly the movies change how we see ourselves" (Hofler, 2009, p. x). While some of the interviewees selected the same films, each viewer took different messages from the same film, presenting different reasons that the film influenced him or her.

Therapeutic Factors

Haas (1995) stated in his dissertation that there are natural similarities between film and psychotherapy: both record and analyze human behavior; can produce a therapeutic effect; and can make a participant feel better or changed. Furthermore, in an increasingly isolating and technological world, both film and therapy can be a personal and humanizing experience. While these are intriguing ideas to this writer, Haas does not offer any evidence for these claims.

On the other hand, when describing how they developed their theory of cinematherapy, Hesley and Hesley (2001) do provide case examples of how they reached their conclusions. The authors identified the following therapeutic factors of watching films for therapy homework: offering hope and encouragement; reframing problems; providing role models; identifying and reinforcing strengths; potentiating emotion; improving communication; and prioritizing values (2001, p. 17).

Films have been used in the education of counseling and psychiatric nursing students (Higgins & Dermer, 2001; Raingruber, 2003). In her phenomenological study, Raingruber used films with psychiatric nursing students and provided evidence for each theme she presented (2003). She assigned films about characters with mental illnesses and films portraying the therapy process to her psychiatric nursing education students, and then asked the students to respond to reflective questions about each film they selected to watch. She later asked the students about their reactions to using films as an educational tool in psychiatric nursing, and on the basis of their responses developed common themes. For each theme Raingruber presented, she included students' text illustrating the theme. The themes were: engaging and interesting; promoted reflection; increased empathy and emotion; and good for presenting mental health topics and ethical dilemmas. Raingruber acknowledged that the study was limited by a small sample size, and that writing about their views as part of a class might have influenced what the students reported.

Many other authors have identified various therapeutic factors of using films in therapy; however, few have revealed the process by which they came to their conclusions. Films can build connections through a shared experience between therapist and client, and decrease isolation through the realization that some feelings are universal. Films can help clients on

affective, cognitive, and behavioral levels. Finally, films can work on a metaphorical level in which a story can bypass a client's normal defenses or resistance when addressing topics which are difficult to address in therapy.

Affective, cognitive, and behavioral effects. A well-chosen film which speaks to a client's concerns can convey the therapist's empathy for the client's situation (Berg-Cross et al.,1990; Hesley, 2000). Further, discussing a film together can improve the therapeutic alliance since the client and therapist now have a shared experience (Calisch, 2001). Cinematherapy can provide a healing emotional experience and sense of relief for the client, through realizing that some of his or her feelings or experiences may be universal, and that others experience similar problems decreasing feelings of isolation (Berg-Cross et al.1990; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Hesley, 2000; Hesley, 2001). Films can be a chance to "experience the world through the eyes of another" (Dermer & Hutchings, 2000).

Art has the capacity to enhance emotional impact due to the engagement of multiple senses. Film, in particular, is a multi-sensory medium (Wolz, 2005). Films have many artistic features which may increase the viewer's ability to experience an emotional reaction: music, light, setting, dialogue, pacing, facial expressions, and body postures (Raingruber, 2003). Solomon referred to cinematherapy as "healing stories" (Solomon, 1995, p. 9) and stated that viewers can experience self-growth and awareness through the healing stories. Clients can increase insight about themselves and their problems (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Tyson, Foster, & Jones, 2000). In addition, films can increase a client's optimism, hope, and humor about his or her situation (Berg-Cross et al.1990; Hesley, 2000; Hebert & Neumeister, 2001).

Characters often experience events and problems that individuals experience in their own lives and can be an avenue to increase self understanding through viewing other peoples' stories

(Hesley, 2001; Solomon, 1995). Films often portray a character with a problem or crisis who tries different, unsuccessful ways of resolving the crisis, ultimately finding an appropriate resolution (Calisch, 2001). Films can provide role models of how others have dealt with similar problems, and which behaviors are helpful and which are likely to maintain the problems, especially for clients who come from difficult backgrounds, and lack mentors (Calisch, 2001; Hesley, 2000; Tyson et al., 2000). By watching characters' attempts to solve problems, clients can experience other options and avenues for problem-solving and learn to see their problems from different perspectives (Berg-Cross et al.,1990; Hesley, 2000; Hesley, 2001). Solomon described the process of paradoxical healing which can occur in cinematherapy in which similar to negative reinforcement, viewers can experience the negative results of a character's actions or choices, and therefore avoid similar choices in their own lives, for example, the painful life costs of addictions (Solomon, 1995).

Therapeutic metaphor. Films can create therapeutic metaphors which can express a client's dilemma indirectly (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Heston & Kottman, 1997; Powell et al., 2006). Metaphor can be in the form of a story that can help clients bridge their current life with what might be possible in the future. The story serves as a metaphor for parts of a client's life, while not intended to represent a client's life in its entirety. Furthermore, metaphors can be self-selected by grieving children who often choose stories and play intuitively to help them work through their painful feelings at a safe distance (Hunt, 2006).

Authors have discussed how therapeutic metaphor in the form of the story or narrative can be used to help clients address difficult areas, and can elicit cognitions and emotions of which clients are not consciously aware (Calisch, 2001; Heston & Kottman, 1997). For example, Sharp et al (2002) discussed how viewers sometimes enter a trance-like state as they watch films,

often forgetting time and place, as well as their everyday concerns, and this trance-like state can increase their receptiveness to the film's messages through metaphors which speak to viewers' creative minds, bypassing normal defenses and resistances: "Metaphors have been used to convey meaning to the symbolic, creative parts of our brain while bypassing the more analytic and logical parts of our brain" (Sharp et al., 2002, p. 273). Likewise, Solomon (1995, p. 11) explained how films can help viewers to "suspend disbelief" long enough to receive messages about that which they may normally remain in denial.

Films can help decrease clients' resistance to receiving feedback from the therapist or important others in their lives about issues about which they are partially in denial (Berg-Cross et al., 1990). Various authors have explained how films enable clients to address difficult material indirectly and can present issues in ways that increase clients' awareness of problems, decreasing resistance and increasing acceptance of treatment (Sharp et al., 2002; Tyson, Foster, & Jones, 2000). For example, films can be a way for problems to be externalized, increasing the client's feeling of safety while working on problems (Dermer & Hutchings, 2000). Finally, films can assist clients who intellectualize their problems, to experience their emotional reactions (Calisch, 2001). Furthermore, when a client is unable to discuss painful experiences, a film can help the client express the situation (Tyson et al., 2000). Elementary aged children often do not have the verbal skills to express feelings about death and loss, and films like *The Lion King* can be used to help them identify and talk about their feelings and thoughts (Tyson et al., 2000).

Theoretical Models of Cinematherapy

Theoretical models of cinematherapy. Berg-Cross et al. first proposed a four-step model of cinematherapy (1990). First, the client should be actively working on an issue, and be aware of the connection between the issue and the suggested film. Second, cinematherapy is most

useful at times when the therapist would like the client to explore different ways of seeing and different solutions to the problem. Third, the therapist should prepare the client to view the film and the reasons for its recommendation. Finally, the therapist and client need to discuss the client's reactions to the film in the next session.

Later, Dermer and Hutchings (2000) described a three-stage list of guidelines for the use of films in therapy; but did not explain how they developed the guidelines. The three stages are assessment, implementation, and debriefing. During assessment, the therapist should choose films on the basis of the following: the client's problems and goals, strengths, ability to understand the film, similarities of characters, and diversity issues. During the implementation stage, the therapist watches the film, explains the rationale to the client, and decides where, when, and whom should watch the film. Finally, during the debriefing stage, the therapist processes the client's reactions with the client, including overall reaction to the film, how the film does or does not relate to the client's problems, whether a metaphor might have emerged, and how the film might have impacted the client's thoughts, feelings, or behavior.

Tyson et al. (2000) noted the importance of understanding the emotional and cognitive processes experienced by a client when watching a film; however do not explain the basis on which they developed the model. They proposed the following four stages: dissociation, identification, internalization, and transference. In the dissociation stage, the client experiences the characters and stories as removed from his own life, and therefore experiences "a dissociative state in which his or her ordinary existence is temporarily suspended" (p. 38). During the identification stage, the client begins to connect personally with a scene, character, or problem. Next, the client internalizes and owns the feelings that were experienced vicariously through the character(s). Finally, transference occurs between what the client saw as outside himself in the

film, and his feelings and thoughts about aspects of his own situation. The transference process makes it possible for the therapist and client to discuss material that was previously impossible to discuss, because the material has now been identified and acknowledged by the client.

Hebert and Neumeister (2001) applied the four-stage bibliotherapy process developed by Shrodes in 1950 to cinematherapy with gifted high school students: identification, catharsis, insight, and application. The first stage is identification in which clients recognize similarities between themselves and characters. This stage has also been called universalization (Pehrsson & McMillen, 2005). Through universalization clients realize that others have similar problems which can decrease feelings of isolation (Jeon, 1992). During the catharsis stage, clients experience emotional response similar to those of the characters. During the insight stage which can occur while viewing or during the discussion, clients reflect on connections between their own and the characters' problems. Finally, during the application stage, clients apply their new insights to addressing their own problems.

Wolz (2005) explained in her self-help book that cinematherapy can work three different ways: prescriptively, evocatively, or cathartically. Prescriptively, films can be similar to guided visualization in that there can be an almost trance-like state during which viewers can receive messages and learn for others experiences. On an evocative level, as viewers relate to different characters they can connect with their authentic selves, including aspects which have been denied previously. Cathartically, as viewers empathize with characters they have an emotional response like laughter or tears, which contributes to healing and decreases stress responses on a bodily level. Wolz also includes many questions and exercises such as visualizations and cognitive-behavioral activities to further explore many themes (Wilson, 2006; Wolz, 2005).

Suggestions for the viewing process. Watching a film therapeutically differs than watching a film for entertainment: viewers often focus on the plot when watching films for entertainment, but during cinematherapy it is important to focus on relationships and character development and change (Calisch, 2001; Hesley, 2001; Hesley & Hesley, 2001). Calisch (2001) encouraged clients to focus on how characters and their relationships change and are different from the beginning to the end of the film. Clients can project themselves into the film, and identify with characters. However, Hesley (2001) cautioned that clients should not copy behavior from films and instead, can ask themselves how they would have acted in a similar situation, a process leading to an awareness of increased options. Similarly, Calisch(2001) asked clients to think about how the film's perspective differed from the voices and suggestions of friends and family.

Solomon (1995) offered the following suggestions for viewing: make sure to be undisturbed; avoid distractions; avoid addictive substances; focus on feelings; keep a journal handy for self-reflection; focus on the feelings that emerge in response to characters and situations; and reflect on how aspects of the characters and films relate to issues in one's life.

In her self-help book, psychotherapist Wolz stated that using conscious awareness of one's own emotions and reactions when viewing films encourages self-growth and is the key to receiving the greatest benefit from cinematherapy (Wilson, 2006; Wolz, 2005). Conscious awareness can be facilitated by: focusing on breath and attention to feelings held in the body; focusing on the present moment; staying present and alert during the film; and using the breath to address physical sensations or tension in the body. She explained that a viewer can increase his or her ability to observe: by noticing feelings and sensations; noticing what he or she liked or did

not like; observing which characters were identified with; and whether any aspects of the film helped him or her connect with any values, strengths, or spirituality (Wilson, 2006; Wolz, 2005).

Use of film clips. Generally, films are assigned to be watched between therapy sessions; however some authors have suggested showing film clips during therapy sessions (Hall, 2006; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Lee, 2005; Ulus, 2003). For example, Hesley and Hesley (2001) do not recommend that children watch films in between therapy sessions due to the developmental limitations of remembering a film a week after it is viewed. Therefore, they suggest that therapists show children and parents film clips in therapy, so that they can immediately be discussed. Ulus (2003) presented a cinematherapy model in which he used film clips in the context of group therapy. He included many film clips regarding specific themes about which a group may be developed, for example: anxiety, mood disorders, anger management, and caregiver groups, among others.

Selection of Films, Discussion, and Expressive Responses to Cinematherapy

Selection of Films

Film selection. Solomon encouraged therapists to wait for a few sessions when trust has developed to recommend films and to make sure the film is an appropriate match for the client (1995). Hesley and Hesley stated that films should be selected on the basis of the following: effective role models; content matches therapy issues; enjoyed by clients; characters solve problems; messages are indirect; and uplifting or inspirational moods are elicited (2001, p. 45). Films should match clients on as many criteria as possible including: issues portrayed, age, socioeconomic status, and values (Calisch, 2001).

Hesley (2001) explained that matching a film to a client's personality and problem is the main goal in film selection. However, while it is important for the themes in the film to match

the therapy issues, Sharp et al. (2002) explain that it is more important that the match is metaphorical rather than literal. Films which match too closely on a literal level can sometimes increase a client's resistance. Each client's situation needs to be addressed individually; there is no formula for which film to select. Furthermore, in cinematherapy, the aesthetic merit of the film is not as important as the therapeutic value.

Involving clients in film selection. While most therapists recommend films to clients based on the above criteria, a few have recommended using films preferred by clients (Calisch, 2001). For example, Wedding and Niemiec (2003) presented a case study which demonstrated the benefit of including a client's selections for films. The study involved a 53-year-old man whose depression had not shown much improvement in weekly individual therapy before the addition of cinematherapy. The therapist suggested that the client view films directed by Ingmar Bergman due to the client's cultural background, intelligence, and depressed mood. The client had already seen many Bergman films and the suggestion was a catalyst for a deepened connection between therapist and client, and increased enthusiasm and motivation which had been completely lacking during the prior six months of therapy. Over time, the client began to suggest many Bergman films to the therapist, which increased the therapist's awareness of the client's experiences and attitudes. The client showed increased assertiveness, more community involvement, and greater exploration of feelings and insight. On the basis of the case study, the authors concluded that it is most helpful to include clients in the selection of films for viewing.

Preparation for viewing and contraindications. Hebert and Neumeister (2001) stressed the importance of the therapist having watched the whole film to ascertain its appropriateness for use with teenagers. Sharp et al. (2002) recommended that the therapist view a film a second time to become extremely familiar with all of the themes and potential issues. Films which exceed the

client's current emotional strength should not be selected. For example, an extremely sad film may not be appropriate for a depressed client, unless the film portrays resolution to the issues (Sharp et al., 2002). Films which portray traumatic experiences which are similar to a client's recent traumatic experience should not be assigned and cinematherapy is not an appropriate choice for clients who are currently psychotic (Calisch, 2001; Hesley & Hesley, 2001).

The therapist should make sure the language and content is appropriate within the community's values (Hebert & Neumeister, 2001; Sharp et al., 2002). Further, in Raingruber's (2003) study of her psychiatric nursing students, students felt it important for the instructor to summarize each film in advance, noting whether there was language, sexuality, or violence. Students could then choose between films on the basis of the content. Raingruber pointed out that watching films might elicit difficult or forgotten memories. If a student were to be affected powerfully by film content, the instructor needs to be available to process the student's reactions and concerns, and provide a therapy referral if necessary. She cautioned that these considerations would be even more crucial when using films with clients instead of students.

Resources for film selection. Multiple authors have annotated films which they have suggested for many personal and therapy issues (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Grace, 2006; Hesley &Hesley, 2001; Solomon, 2001; Solomon, 2005; Ulus, 2003; Wolz, 2005). Dermer and Hutchings (2000) surveyed family therapists and directors of family therapy programs about appropriate films to use for a variety of clinical issues. They developed a list of 100 films, and for each film described the presenting problem, recommended participants, and rational for use.

On the basis of 827 psychologists' responses, Lampropoulos et al. (2004) rated the potential clinical usefulness of films which were recommended by previous authors (Dermer &

Hutchings, 2000; Hesley & Hesley, 1998; Solomon, 1995). The authors intended that their survey results be a preliminary basis for film selection and stated that films can be selected on the basis of those recommended by other therapists, as well as client familiarity and interest (Lampropoulos, Kazantzis, & Deane, 2004). In addition to clinicians' opinions, it is important that we begin to pilot and evaluate the use of the suggested films with research participants, to verify the therapeutic effects of these films.

Hesley and Hesley (2001) presented a large number of films, grouped by the type of therapy issue, describing each film and its characters, ratings, precautions, suggested viewers, and main lessons of each film. They included issues for therapists to discuss with clients after they view the films. In addition, they provided case examples throughout the book by describing how they used many of the films with therapy clients.

Solomon (1995) reviewed 200 films identifying "healing themes" grouped into 17 different problem areas. He included films for many problems including addictions, eating disorders, adoption and custody, divorce, friendship and relationships, abandonment, and coping with physical illnesses. Later, in *Cinemaparenting,* Solomon described 110 films which can help parents communicate with children about problems related to school, friends, and family. Solomon identified each film's themes, appropriate age ranges, rating, summary, and "moral of the story" (Solomon, 2005). However, he did not state how he defined therapeutic films, the method he used to select films, or the results of using the films in therapy.

Peske and West (1999, 2004a, 2004b) compiled and described hundreds of films which they suggest for different moods, life issues, and relationships in their self-help books. While the authors offer many useful film suggestions, the therapeutic value of films should be assessed before recommending them to clients, since the authors are not therapists.

Another resource for the selection of appropriate films for cinematherapy is web sites hosted by therapist-researchers. These web sites have lists of annotated films appropriate for many different therapy issues: http://www.ed.uab.edu/cinematherapy/home.html (Tyson, Foster, & Jones, n.d.); http://www.cinematherapy.com/filmindex.html (Wolz, 2002-2008); and http://www.zurinstitute.com/movietherapy.html (Zur, 1997-2008).

Discussion in Response to Cinematherapy

Therapists can develop questions to be discussed in session after the client watches a film, beginning with more general questions, and working toward more sensitive topics progressively. The questions can help children understand themselves better, communicate about films, feel more comfortable sharing their own issues, and become more engaged in the discussion (Hebert & Neumeister, 2002). Solomon (2005) provided questions for specific films to help guide a dialogue between a parents and children, in order to increase children's willingness to share important concerns with parents. When discussing a film in therapy, a therapist can either ask direct questions about the relevance to the client's life, or can ask indirect questions, keeping the discussion more metaphorical (Sharp et al., 2002). When the therapist asks more metaphorical questions by inquiring about the characters, client resistance to exploration can be reduced (Sharp et al., 2002). Examples of indirect questions include: What was the character thinking or feeling; how did the character solve his problem; and what other solutions might the character have tried?

An example of the use of indirect questions was in a monthly therapy group in a residential program for female adolescents with mental illnesses (Bierman, Krieger, & Leifer, 2003). The therapists used open-ended questions in the discussion, having the girls focus on character dynamics, and therefore process their own issues at a safe distance. The authors

provided an extensive discussion in a narrative form of both the group dynamics and individual

girls' reactions to three different films in this case study. They found that the films served as

metaphors that assisted the girls in discussing difficult material. Since the girls were not

voluntary clients, they had both denial and resistance to therapy. Talking directly about their

problems increased their resistance and defensiveness. Therefore, remaining in the metaphor of

the film increased their ability to explore personal and behavioral dynamics.

Expressive Activities in Response to Cinematherapy

Because a film and the discussion which follows can produce emotional responses, it is

important that follow-up activities are provided so that children can process their feelings

(Hebert and Neumeister, 2001, 2002). For example, in one therapy group, late-latency aged

children drew and role-played in response to videotaped scenes about parental divorce. Later, the

children created their own videos about problem situations that might be experienced by children

whose parents were divorcing (Hoorwitz, 1984).

In their studies of cinematherapy with gifted children, Hebert and Neumeister encouraged

follow-up activities as a way to increase introspection (2001, 2002). When done in a group,

creative activities can also provide opportunities for children to support and empathize with each

other (Hebert & Neumeister, 2002). They suggest the following activities as ways to process the

feelings that have arisen from the films: art, collages, journal-writing, role-plays, making up

slogans, creative problem solving, or self-selected activities. The authors provided sample guided

viewing plans for three different films appropriate for gifted students and the problems they

sometimes experience (Hebert & Neumeister, 2001). The viewing plans included possible scenes

from the films as prompts for discussion, questions to guide the group discussion, and follow-up

activities. While they included a thorough viewing guide which could be implemented by

therapists or researchers, the authors did not include students' responses to the discussion or expressive activities.

<center>Cinematherapy with Children Experiencing Grief and Loss</center>

There have been a small handful of case studies about the use of cinematherapy with groups and individual children experiencing different types of loss including one about discharge from a residential program, and two about the death of a parent. Each study described or demonstrated the therapeutic benefit of the use of films with children experiencing loss.

Discharge from a Residential Program

The film *Ordinary People* was used in group therapy for adolescents with emotional problems who were being prepared for discharge from a long-term residential program (Duncan, Beck, & Granum, 1986). *Ordinary People* was selected because it portrays the experiences of a teenager after he is discharged from an inpatient unit. There were eight sessions, and the entire film was shown over the first three group sessions. The authors showed scenes and asked questions to explore themes relevant to the participants' own situations. The selection of scenes for group discussion was the most important consideration for success, based on informal feedback from the participants.

Death of a Parent

Christie and McGrath (1987) presented an extensive case study of the use of the film *The Never Ending Story* with an eleven-year-old client who had experienced two major losses: being given up for adoption and later, the completed suicide of his mother. Like many children of similar age, John had difficulty expressing his feelings verbally regarding the death of his mother. He also had behavioral problems secondary to inhibited grief. *The Never Ending Story* is a film about a boy's grieving process and then beginning to feel optimistic again after his mother

dies. In the film, the boy reads a book about a hero who goes on a journey in which he needs to take multiple actions to save a fantasy land from destruction. The authors explained that the hero's journey is a therapeutic metaphor which had the ability to bypass the conscious restraints often involved in the denial of grief. Christie and McGrath defined a therapeutic metaphor as a type of story which can convey a message about a problem, and how it was overcome. John watched the film in between sessions and then during future sessions, he was assisted in an action ritual which replicated the steps taken by the hero in the book within the film, but related specifically to John's own grief and associated behavioral challenges.

Christie and McGrath's (1987) case study is more reliable than many in that the authors explained their design including activities and directives, and therefore others could replicate it. They elaborated on how John responded to each stage of the action ritual. Further, they contacted John's adoptive parents later, who reported that he generally had maintained the gains he had made since therapy, demonstrating that the effects of the intervention lasted over time. The authors concluded that films can be a useful medium for clients of any age who present with limited verbal expression of feelings. However, the authors do not mention having considered that there could have been other contributing factors to John's success in working through his grief in therapy, in addition to the film and action ritual.

Hunt (2006) described the self-selection of books and the use of films in individual therapy with children experiencing bereavement or loss, as a result of divorce, death, or war among others. She described how children use metaphor to process their losses through story, art, and play. Further, children often know which materials or stories to select in their own healing process. Hunt provided a case example in her study which was an eight-year-old girl, Susan, whose mother had died two years earlier. During the first home visit, Susan presented the

therapist with a Harry Potter book and explained that he is an orphan and that the author writes about people who have died. Later, Susan extended the metaphor to her play about a stray pony. Staying within the metaphor of Harry Potter, the orphan, and later the stray pony enabled Susan to feel safe processing her painful feelings within the context of the metaphor. Hunt described the concept of aesthetic distance as discussed by Grainger (1990) which, in this case, applies to the ability of the child to process painful material within the context of the story, increasing feelings of safety.

In a second case, a three-year-old child, Sally, selected and carried a copy of the book *The Snowman* around with her for six weeks after her mother died. She looked at the image of the melted snowman asking repeatedly, "Is he dead?" (Hunt, 2006, p. 41). Hunt found that grieving children have "innate wisdom" and are able to find "healing stories" to help themselves cope with grief (Hunt, 2006, p. 41). The child used the text to help understand and accept the meaning of the loss. Likewise, a child may need to be read a particular story repeatedly while trying to cope with a loss. Sally also gravitated to a nature film shown in her nursery school about a baby squirrel that was cared for by a cameraman after the squirrel's mother was killed by hunters. At the time Sally saw the film, she was in the process of being adopted by her Aunt. The cameraman had trained his nursing cat to also nurse the baby squirrel. Sally became excited during this scene repeatedly saying, "I was born, I was born, I was born" (Hunt, 2006, p. 42). While Sally did not yet have the vocabulary to describe the adoption process, the author stated that the film expressed the metaphor of Sally's experience of adoption after her mother's death.

Children and Divorce

United States has one of the highest divorce rates among Western nations (Thompson & Wyatt, 1999). Nearly half of all first marriages in the United States are predicted to end in

divorce, and the rates are higher for second marriages (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). Therefore, approximately one million children a year experience parental divorce (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000) and twenty-five percent of people between the ages of eighteen and forty-four have parents who are divorced (Wallerstein et al., 2000). Divorce has become a normal and more accepted transition in American family life due to the high rates at which it occurs (Thompson & Wyatt, 1999). Because so many children are impacted by parental divorce, there is a large body of research regarding the impact of divorce on children's development and mental health (Amato & Keith, 1991a).

Preadolescents and Divorce

Children and adolescents are affected by divorce differently depending on their developmental level. Preadolescents (age nine to twelve) often intellectualize their reactions to divorce (Trozzi, 1999). These children often alternate between denial and distress and are often ashamed of the divorce and therefore try not to reveal feelings about it (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). Many children in this age group experience somatic symptoms like stomach and headaches.

Preadolescent children often feel intense anger toward their parents about the divorce (Trozzi, 1999; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996) and the anger tends to up cover for underlying feelings like sadness (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). They tend to be most angry with the parent they blame for the divorce. Children in this age group are most susceptible to align with one parent against the other in expressing anger toward the other parent, which enables them to split their feelings into an all good parent and an all bad parent, making it easier to deal with than ambivalence about both parents (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). Additionally, sometimes children

miss their parents if they spend less time with them, and can be frustrated by parents' self-preoccupation resulting from the divorce process (Trozzi, 1999).

Children's Beliefs about Divorce

Children may possess maladaptive beliefs about divorce including fear of parental abandonment, blame themselves for their parents' unhappiness with each other, believe that their parents may reunite, and avoid peers due to concerns of ridicule about the divorce (Kurdek & Berg, 1987). The presence of many maladaptive beliefs can increase the risk for poorer mental health outcomes. Divorce researchers, Wallerstein and Kelly (1996) reported that children may worry that if their parents' relationship could end, that their own relationship with one or both parents could also end and that they could be abandoned. Some children also worry that they could be replaced by their parents' new friends or marital partners. Furthermore, school aged children often feel that their loyalties are divided by divorce, and that a warm relationship with one parent can be a betrayal of the other. Finally, the authors stated that while most children realize they are not responsible for the divorce, very young children sometimes feel that they are to blame.

Short-term Effects of Divorce on Children

Children's immediate reactions to separation and divorce included shock, fear, and grieving (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). Hetherington found in her Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce that all family members go through a period of "disrupted functioning" after divorce (1993, p. 40). In the first year after divorce, children showed more anxious, demanding, noncompliant, and aggressive behavior with both adults and their peers at home and school. As children adjusted over the second year, these changes typically declined. If not compounded by additional stressors, many showed no more problems than children from intact homes within two

to three years. However, at two years following the divorce, many remained anxious, clingy, oppositional, or had school or social problems (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). By age fifteen, both boys and girls showed more internalizing and externalizing behavior, and had more problems in school and socially than children from intact families (Hetherington, 1993).

Based on a meta-analysis of all studies of divorce between the 1950s through the 1980s, Amato and Keith (1991a) found that divorce can impact children's academic performance, behavior, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, social relationships, and relationships with parents negatively. Some researchers have found that children of divorce have lower levels of well-being than those who have experienced death of a parent (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). However, in other studies, significant differences between many children with divorced parents and those with intact families have not been found (Amato & Keith, 1991a). Amato (2001) updated his first major meta-analysis ten years later by analyzing 67 studies from the 1990s. He found similar results: children of divorce scored lower on academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, and social relationships. Therefore, divorce continues to be a risk factor for negative outcomes for children.

Long-term Effects of Childhood Divorce in Adulthood

Marital conflict and divorce can impact children even into adulthood (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). Zill et al. (1993) analyzed data from the National Survey of Children about the impact of experiencing parental divorce in childhood as children reached young adulthood (ages 18 to 22). They found that these young adults were twice as likely to have poor relationships with their parents, higher levels of emotional distress or problem behavior, and to have dropped out of high school. However, most of these young adults were still in the normal range on most indicators of well-being, other than

having poor relationships with their fathers. Similarly, based on Hetherington's Virginia Longitudinal Study of divorced families for over three decades, it was found that most adults looked back on their parents' divorce as a painful experience, but were successful at establishing careers, intimate relationships, and developing meaningful lives (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

In another major meta-analysis of previous studies, Amato and Keith (1991b) found that adults who had experienced parental divorce as children had lower levels of well-being than adults who had not experienced parental divorce as children. Long-term outcomes associated with parental divorce in childhood included depression, lower life satisfaction, lower marital satisfaction, divorce, and lower socioeconomic and educational status. However, while there were differences on the outcomes listed above, the effect sizes between the groups who experienced parental divorce and those who did not were still relatively small. Furthermore, white adults who experienced childhood divorce tended to have more negative outcomes when compared to white adults from intact childhood homes than did black adults who had experienced childhood divorce compared to black adults from intact homes, especially in the areas of higher level of divorce, one-parent families, and socioeconomic attainment. The researchers hypothesized that because of the larger percentage of single-parent households, and the many inequalities black Americans experience; the additional stressor of divorce did not raise the risks as significantly.

Wallerstein et al. (2000) found that experiencing childhood divorce can impact an adult's ability to trust and his or her expectations about relationships. Furthermore, Summers, Forehand, Armistead, & Tannenbaum (1998) found that adults who had experienced divorce in early adolescence had less secure attachments to romantic partners in early adulthood. Romantic

relationships are often beginning to form in adolescence, and divorce demonstrates that romantic attachments are not always secure.

Multiple Changes

Divorce is not a single event, but is part of a process of multiple transitions to which children must adjust (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Divorce can be stressful for children as they adjust to multiple changes (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Pardeck, 2005) especially over the first two years following the divorce (Hetherington, 1993). Divorce can represent the death of a family, and entails many losses that children need to grieve (Trozzi, 1999). The accumulation of stressful experiences resulting from the divorce process contributes to negative outcomes, as opposed to the divorce as a single factor (Amato, 1993). Children's psychological adjustment and well-being may decline with the number of transitions they must undergo (Amato & Sobolewski, 200). Children may experience changes in their family unit, increase in parental conflict, decline in the quality of their relationship with one or both parents, moving to another home, school, financial status, parental remarriage, and the addition of step-families (Amato, 1993; Amato & Keith, 1991b; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Trozzi, 1999).

Risk Factors and Resiliency

While some children experience negative long-term effects from parental divorce, some have a small decline in functioning that improves with time, and some adjust well or even show improvements from their pre-divorce functioning (Amato, 1993; Amato, 2001; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Hetherington found that some children are able to cope well with divorce and can even "emerge as psychologically enhanced and exceptionally competent and fulfilled individuals" (1993, p. 40). One explanation for the disparate outcomes is the

balance of the children's resources or protective factors and stressors or risks (Amato, 1993; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Risk factors for children's post-divorce adjustment include the number of other stressors such as parental conflict, parenting ability, change in standard of living or moving, mothers returning to work full-time, as well as the number of additional transitions children experience (Amato, 1993; Amato, 2001; Trozzi, 1999; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). Most studies have found no relationship between the children's age at the time of divorce and eventual problems (Amato, 1993).

On the other hand, children can utilize their available resources, like parental support and socioeconomic resources to cope better with the divorce (Amato, 1993). Children who are able to use school, sports, parents, relatives, or their own talents, interests, and inner strength to cope with the divorce are more resilient (Wallerstein et al., 2000). Being enrolled in a stable school environment helps give structure to children's lives and provides a temporary escape from problems at home (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). Until the age of ten-years-old, a positive relationship with the custodial parent remains the most significant protective factor; however, relationships with siblings, teachers, mentors, and peers become increasingly important with age (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Social relationships within and outside of the family are important for children's resilience (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Finally, children who possess individual characteristics such as independence, self-regulation, intelligence, maturity, self-esteem, and social skills and who have achieved in the areas of academics, sports, or peer relationships have less long-term problems following divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

In terms of risk factors, parental conflict during and after the divorce is most strongly associated with negative outcomes for children (Amato, 1993; Amato & Keith, 1991a; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). The divorce is much less disruptive when there is less parental conflict

following it (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). For example, Zill et al. (1993) found that most negative outcomes for young adults who had experienced parental divorce as children were attributable to high levels of parental conflict as opposed to the divorce per se. Further, children in high parental conflict, non-divorced families tend to have similar or worse outcomes than children who have experienced divorce (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). Children often react to parental conflict with fear, anger, and distress (Amato, 1993). Through frequent fighting, parents may also model that aggression is an appropriate way to deal with conflict (Amato, 1993). Furthermore, children sometimes feel drawn into the conflict and pressure to take sides, which can impact their relationships with parents negatively (Amato, 1993). Divorce can improve the well-being of children in high-conflict homes, if the divorce leads to less hostility between parents (Amato, 1993). Children from high conflict homes are more easily able to understand their parents' decision to divorce than children from low conflict homes (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). On the other hand, children from low conflict homes whose parents divorce are more shocked and distressed by the divorce and often have worse outcomes than if their parents do not divorce (Amato, 2001).

Another risk factor which can contribute to negative outcomes for children is the economic decline which often accompanies divorce (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). Children tend to do better when there is not a significant change in economic resources following the divorce (Amato & Keith, 1991b). Some scholars have argued that the negative consequences for children of divorce are primarily related to economic hardship and the "feminization of poverty" which has accompanied divorce and single parenting (Thompson & Wyatt, 1999). Many of the negative changes associated with divorce are caused by a worsened

financial situation, including moving to worse neighborhoods or schools, and parental unavailability through increased work schedule (Hetherington, 1993).

Another important predictor of children's outcome is the quality of the relationship between the custodial parent and the child (Amato, 1993). In the long-run, adults who experienced parental divorce as children, yet maintained positive relationships with their parents have greater well-being and psychological functioning (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Summers et al., 1998). Unfortunately, divorce can disrupt the quality of relationships with parents (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Zill et al., 1993). Parents often have negative moods, including anger or depression stemming from the divorce, and their mood and preoccupation with the divorce can make them less available to their children when the children need them the most (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). Children's well-being is associated with how well the custodial parent ultimately adjusts to the divorce (Amato, 1993). Children often need to take on additional responsibilities to take care of themselves, and sometimes extend their care-taking to a parent who is not coping well as a result of the divorce (Wallerstein et al., 2000). Parentification, when children become emotional caretakers for parents, can be a negative consequence when parenting is diminished by a divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Most young adults are alienated or have a decreased quality of relationship with least one parent as a result of divorce which is cause for concern since positive relationships with parents are protective factors (Zill et al., 1993). While parenting skills tend to decline with the stress of the divorce, they generally improve by the second or third year following the divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Authoritative parenting in which the parent is both warm and sets reasonable limits has a protective effect against some of the stressors of divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

In their meta-analysis, Amato & Keith (1991a) did not find consistent results across studies about how the frequency of contact with the non-custodial parent affects children's well-being. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) found that when there is low conflict between parents, a positive relationship with an authoritative non-custodial father can be a protective factor, especially for boys. While Amato and Keith (1991a) found in their meta-analysis that the presence of a stepfather can often improve the well-being of boys, but either has no impact or a negative impact on girls, Zill et al. (1993) found that remarriage was not a protective factor for children of divorce.

Therapeutic Interventions for Children of Divorce

Children and adults from divorced families are two to three times more likely to receive psychological treatment than those from intact families (Emery, Kitzman, & Waldron, 1999). Most of these individuals do not receive treatment for a psychological disorder, but for help in dealing with the distress caused by the divorce (Emery et al., 1999). Interventions may occur before, during, or after the divorce (Emery et al., 1999). Therapeutic interventions can be a protective factor for children experiencing divorce that can assist in adjustment (Amato, 2000). Due to the many changes associated with divorce which present risk factors for children's functioning, developing and evaluating therapeutic programs is important (Amato, 2001; Emery et al., 1999).

Emery, Kitzman, and Waldron (1999) reviewed research on treatment for children experiencing divorce. Children are treated in individual, play, group therapy, and school-based treatment. Children in school-based groups have shown improved social skills, self-concept, attitudes toward divorce, and classroom behavior. However, the authors found that there is no systematic data on what types of treatment children of divorce typically receive, nor on the

outcomes of individual therapy. Because divorce involves many changes and transitions over time, brief interventions may be helpful, but successful interventions likely will offer a range of services for children and parents and should include follow-up sessions over at least a year.

Four-fifths of young children are not provided adequate explanation of or information about the divorce by their parents, nor are they reassured that their own needs will be provided for (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996). Due to their own distress, few parents are able to provide their children the opportunity to express their own concerns, or explain that while it will be difficult for a while, the family situation should improve (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1996; Wallerstein et al., 2000). Therefore, providing information and psychoeducation and allowing children to express their own concerns about the divorce seems a useful role for therapists.

Bibliotherapy and Children Experiencing Parental Divorce

There have been multiple articles and at least three dissertations about the use of bibliotherapy with children experiencing divorce (Brennan, 1989; Bunting, 1984; Kramer & Smith, 1998; Nuccio, 1997; Pardeck, 2005; Pehrsson et al., 2007). Many authors have described the process of bibliotherapy, literature selection, and recommended appropriate books for children experiencing divorce, but there are fewer case studies (Kramer & Smith, 1998; Pehrsson et al., 2007). Pardeck (2005) provided guidelines for using bibliotherapy with children of divorce, recommended literature, and included an extremely brief case example of an eight-year-old boy who read two books as part of a bibliotherapy intervention. The boy read two books between sessions, and wrote down his feelings in response. In the next session, the boy was encouraged to share what he had written with the therapist. Pardeck reported that the process helped the boy share his feelings about divorce, learn that others also experienced parental divorce, and that his parents would continue to love him despite being divorced.

All three dissertations about the use of bibliotherapy with children of divorce showed mixed results. Bunting (1984) completed a school based study in which 50 second and third graders had one month of group counseling in which bibliotherapy and puppetry were used to increase the children's adjustment to divorce. Measures of the students' attitude, behavior, and emotional expression were taken before and after the intervention. The results were inconclusive, not showing the degree of changes that Bunting had anticipated. He hypothesized that differences in the group leaders' styles, among other variables, impacted the results.

Brennan (1989) also conducted a study of school based interventions using bibliotherapy to improve children's adjustment to divorce. There were 73 children between the ages of eight and eleven, who were randomly assigned to group counseling, interactive bibliotherapy, or a delayed treatment control group. She found that children in both the group counseling and interactive bibliotherapy groups showed fewer problematic beliefs about divorce and showed fewer behavior problems than the control group. There was not a significant difference between the two groups. However, mothers of the children in the bibliotherapy group stated that they understood the children's concerns about the divorce better than the mothers of the group who had experienced only group counseling.

Finally, Nuccio (1997) used twelve different classrooms for her study about the effects of bibliotherapy on the self-esteem and behavior of third grade students experiencing divorce. The classrooms were assigned randomly to one of three groups: treatment, placebo, and control. The treatment group classrooms were read a fictional book each week by the teacher for six weeks, and the reading was followed by an interactive discussion. The placebo group had a similar experience, but instead of being read books about divorce, they were read books by award winning authors. Significant differences between the groups in self-esteem and behavior were

not found; but, the children in the treatment groups reached all three stages of the bibliotherapy process including identification and projection, catharsis, and insight and integration.

<div align="center">Cinematherapy and Children Experiencing Parental Divorce</div>

There have been two case studies about the use of cinematherapy with preadolescent aged children in group therapy for children experiencing parental divorce (Ham, 1988; Hoorwitz, 1984). Both studies involved children creating their own videos about divorce. In the first study, late-latency aged children (which was defined as children ages eight to twelve) in a group for children experiencing parental divorce created their own dramas which were then filmed (Hoorwitz, 1984). First, children were shown videotaped scenes about problems often experienced by children whose parents are divorcing including guilt, reunion fantasies, missing a parent, loyalty conflicts, being a messenger between parents, and adjusting to parents dating new partners. The children were asked what the characters were feeling, and which cognitive and behavioral skills could be used by a character to deal with his or her problems. The children then made their own role-plays about divorce, which were filmed. Hoorwitz (1984) reported that the children were more willing to confront painful feelings and issues when they knew the role-plays were being filmed for a movie, and their dramas were imbued with greater "zest" than when not being filmed. Further, the children's distress decreased from pretest to posttest measures. However, since there was no comparison group, it was not possible to determine which were the most therapeutic factors, or if the improvement was due to other factors besides the movies.

Somewhat similarly, Ham (1988) documented a therapy group in which late latency age children (which was defined as ages eight to ten) whose parents were divorcing created their own videos. The group took place over a twelve-week period, and parents met in a simultaneous parents' group. The group began with some expressive activities which included having the

children fill in details in pictures of children who they were told were experiencing parental divorce. The children also drew pictures of their families before and after the divorce, and shared with the other children how their lives had changed. Next, the therapist suggested that the children make videos, which were described as "a TV show" about some of the problems of coping with divorce. Much like Hoorwitz's previous study, the suggestion of making videos was greeted with a new level of enthusiasm from the children. The children created stories with different plots, and spontaneously developed dialogue. The therapist and children then viewed and discussed each video in order to develop ways of coping based on the dilemmas portrayed in the videos: for example, how to express feelings to parents. Questions to assess the children's functioning and coping were read to the children as a pre- and posttest. Statistically significant results were found suggesting that the children were less stressed, angry, sad, and confused than before the intervention. The author noted that it would be useful to compare a control group if future studies were conducted.

These two studies described therapeutic results with the use of films in therapy with children experiencing parental divorce. Both studies used cinematherapy in a group setting, and showed how films combined with other expressive activities can be used in group child therapy. However, both of the studies about the use of cinematherapy with children of divorce are at least twenty years old. Furthermore, they both studied children in group therapy. Therefore, current individual case studies which explore the use of cinematherapy with children experiencing parental divorce, with recent films are needed. Many authors have recommended following bibliotherapy with expressive activities, and a few have recommended expressive follow-ups to cinematherapy. However, only Christie and McGrath's (1987) case study about a child coping with the death of a parent explored an individual child's expressive responses to a film in a

detailed way. Therefore, greater assessment of expressive activities in addition to discussion in response to cinematherapy with children is needed.

Summary

While bibliotherapy has a longer history of research, there are far fewer studies of the efficacy of cinematherapy. There are still only a few studies of cinematherapy with children in individual therapy, and only one study describes a case in depth. While authors of previous dissertations on cinematherapy have proposed models or treatment manuals, none have been piloted with research participants. Furthermore, many authors have annotated various films which are appropriate for children experiencing parental divorce; however the process and efficacy of using the suggested films with children has not been discussed in the literature. Therefore, research is needed which pilots the use of previously recommended films with clients. Additionally, robust case studies in which the use of cinematherapy with individual children is explored is a needed contribution to the emerging literature.

While the expressive arts are frequently suggested as responses to literature, and occasionally to films, there are few studies in which a child's expressive responses have been explored and documented in any depth. Therefore, another potential contribution to the cinematherapy literature is to investigate individual children's use of the expressive arts in addition to talking responses following the film clips.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants

The cinematherapy intervention was offered to all pre-adolescent aged children in the researcher's group practice who had experienced parental separation and whose parents were in the divorce process. For the purpose of this study, preadolescent was defined as ages ten through twelve. Three children who met the criteria volunteered to be in the study, with parental consent. Three children were selected because this was a multiple-case design, since conclusions are generally considered stronger than in single case studies (Yin, 2003). None of the cases were perceived to be rare or unusual; instead they were selected with the idea of replication logic of non-extraordinary cases (Yin, 2003). All children were between the ages of ten to twelve; were Caucasian Americans living in a semi-rural area; had working parents in the lower middle to middle class yet perceived themselves to be struggling financially to some extent; and had no major mental health or behavioral problems beyond anxiety, depression, and attention deficit disorder. Confidentiality will be assured in that identifying aspects of the cases have been altered.

Zach

Zach was a ten-year-old boy whose parents had separated within the past two months and were beginning the divorce process. Zach volunteered eagerly. Zach had been seen in individual therapy for approximately one year prior to the start of the cinematherapy intervention. He had entered therapy initially due to anxiety and oppositional behavior with mild physical acting out. Those issues were improved, but Zach continued in therapy to assist his adjustment to the impending divorce. Because Zach rarely discussed his reactions to his parents' separation in

therapy, a cinematherapy intervention was considered as a potentially useful adjunct to talk therapy. Zach did not participate in any other type of therapy nor was he on any medications.

Mischa

Mischa was a ten-year-old girl whose parents had been separated for a year and a half and were in the middle of the divorce and custody determination process. Mischa had been seen in individual therapy for eight months prior to the start of the study; she was always receptive to different modalities of therapy and wanted to try cinematherapy. She had entered therapy to help cope with her parents' separation. She had anxiety secondary to the separation that was causing stomach aches, insomnia, and needing to sleep with a parent. Mischa occasionally talked about her parents' separation before cinematherapy; but did not share much detail about events or her emotional reactions to them. When the cinematherapy began, Mischa's stomach aches and insomnia were improved, and she was able to sleep independently. She still had some situational anxiety, which improved by the end of the cinematherapy intervention. Mischa had participated in lunch bunch at school for children whose parents were separated the year before starting therapy. She was not on any medications.

Claire

Claire was a twelve-year-old girl whose parents had been separated for two years and had not begun the divorce process. Claire had begun therapy six weeks prior to the cinematherapy intervention, but knew she would be participating since beginning therapy. She had entered therapy due to a depressed mood, low self-esteem, insomnia, fear of sleeping independently, worries, social concerns, attention deficit, and difficulty coping with parents' conflict regarding the separation. Claire was able to discuss her problems, including her parents' separation from the beginning therapy session. However, Claire wanted to participate in the cinematherapy

intervention. At the time the cinematherapy began, Claire was sleeping better through the night and was able to sleep independently. During the cinematherapy, Claire's social situation and self-esteem started to improve. However, Claire remained depressed, although her affect brightened intermittently. Claire was seen simultaneously by her school counselor, who had referred her to outside therapy. Claire began taking a psychostimulant intended to treat her attention problems and depression the week before the cinematherapy began.

<div align="center">Procedure</div>

Session Format

The participants received six sessions of individual therapy in which film clips were included. Each session was fifty minutes in length. During each session, the participants viewed brief film clips from one film and were asked a series of questions to explore their reactions to the film (See Appendix G for the discussion guide). In response to each set of film clips, the participants were offered the opportunity to respond further using talk, art, drama, role-plays, story-telling, or creative writing.

Theoretical Orientation

The cinematherapy intervention took place within a humanistic and relational expressive therapies orientation. While specific clips and questions were offered, sessions were open-ended and client-centered in that the participant's choices and responses influenced the progression of the sessions. Developing and maintaining rapport in the unique therapy relationship with each which enhanced self-esteem and created a willingness to share difficult experiences was considered paramount. Cognitive-behavioral techniques were also used when appropriate, such as helping the children reframe ways of thinking about their situations and identifying ways of

coping. Finally, psychoeducation about divorce and ways of coping was provided when indicated.

Film Selection

Films were selected on the basis of previous research in cinematherapy in which potentially therapeutic films have been identified for a range of clinical and developmental issues. Multiple articles and books written by mental health professionals include lists of appropriate films to use with specific clinical issues and age ranges (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Grace, 2006; Hesley &Hesley, 2001; Solomon, 2001; Solomon, 2005; Ulus, 2003, and Wolz, 2005). Eleven films related to divorce were identified which had been recommended in at least one book, article, or web site developed by cinematherapy researchers. Lee (2005) identified multiple film clips which include themes related to divorce in her dissertation, on the basis of psychologists' rankings of appropriateness of content. While many films have been recommended by Lee and others; children's reactions to viewing the recommended films have not necessarily been documented. Some of the specific clips recommended by Lee were included in this research.

Because of the participants' ages and the therapy setting, all films other than those with a G or PG rating were eliminated, leaving eight of the eleven films previously recommended. After viewing the eight remaining films, two were eliminated because one was more specifically about a parent's death and the other seemed too dated. The six films were selected on the basis of closeness of the match of issues. Most of the films dealt directly with divorce as a subject matter, however *Finding Nemo* related to loss, though not divorce specifically. Clips from the following six films were included in the study (the sources in which the film was recommended are listed in parentheses after each film title): *Fly Away Home* (Lee, 2005; Solomon, 2005;

http://www.zurinstitute.com/clinicalupdates4.html); *Finding Nemo*

(http://www.zurinstitute.com/clinicalupdates4.html); *Kramer vs. Kramer* (Lampropoulos,

Kazantzis, & Deane, 2004; Lee, 2005; Woltz, 2005;

http://www.zurinstitute.com/movietherapy.html#separation); *The Parent Trap* (Wolz, 2005;

http://www.zurinstitute.com/clinicalupdates4.html); *E.T.* (Lee, 2005); and *Author! Author!*

(http://www.zurinstitute.com/clinicalupdates4.html). A list of the film clips with brief scene

descriptions can be found in Appendix F.

Questions and Expressive Activities

After each clip, the participants were asked a series of questions similar to the following:

What is happening in this scene; How do you think each character [mention by characters'

names] feels about what is happening; What do you think each character is thinking about what

is happening; What might the child do to help cope with the situation; and Do you think other

kids might feel like [character's name] when their parents are divorcing?

The participants were also offered the opportunity to respond to the clips using

expressive activities including art, story-telling, creative writing, and drama. Examples of

expressive prompts which were used include the following among others: Tell what you think

might happen next in the story by writing it down, drawing, or making a play using the props;

and write a letter to [character's name] giving him or her some support or suggestions about how

he or she can cope with this challenging situation.

Materials

The therapy room included the following items: office chairs, a desk, bookshelves

containing art and play materials, and a small table for art-making and writing. Expressive

supplies included various colors, sizes, and textures of paper, crayons, markers, oil pastels,

pencils and pens, children's scissors, glue, model magic for sculpting, and plastic figurines and props loosely related to the films (i.e., plastic fish and sea creatures for *Finding Nemo,* and geese, eggs, and nest for *Fly Away Home,* etc.), among other items. Technical equipment included a laptop for viewing films, DVDs of the films, and an MP3 recorder to record sessions. The laptop was located on the desk and we sat in front of it while viewing the films. There was extra space on the desk to create art and play with the figurines. Art and play supplies were located in a nearby bookshelf, and the children were familiarized with the contents of the bookshelf before the intervention began. It was explained to the children that they should feel free to use any art and play supplies on the bookshelf at any time during the intervention.

Data Collection

This qualitative study was based on a multiple-case study design. Zach's case was an exploratory pilot study, and minor changes were made to the scenes and interview questions based on insight gained from the analysis of the intervention with Zach. The other two participants participated in the study approximately six months later. All three cases are viewed as instrumental case studies, in that the purpose was to contribute to our understanding of cinematherapy as opposed to presenting the cases for their own uniqueness (Berg, 2004; Stake, 2006).

Necessary Authorizations

IRB approval was obtained from Lesley University to proceed with the study. An informed consent form was developed and signed by parents. An assent form was developed and signed by each child. In addition, the intervention was explained to the participants at the beginning and as questions arose during it (See the Appendices J and K for the consent forms).

Additionally, the participants were informed that if they felt uncomfortable discussing certain issues or did not want to participate in a specific activity, they could choose not to do so.

Data Collection

It is generally recommended that multiple types of information are collected about the cases, as an aspect of data triangulation (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2003). Using multiple sources of evidence is utilized to help increase construct validity (Yin, 2003). Therefore, participant-observation, session transcripts, interviews, and art products were included in the analysis in this study. Each of the six therapy sessions and the interview with each participant were audio taped using an MP3 recorder, and then transcribed.

The researcher was a participant-observer, participating as the therapist and therefore, had an effect on the outcome. The researcher also observed events as they unfolded, including the participants' verbal and non-verbal responses to the intervention. The researcher observed the participant's non-verbal responses and body language as he or she watched the scenes. The participant's approach to his or her expressive responses and selection of modalities was also observed. Notes about the sessions were made after sessions and served as a source of data, in addition to transcripts from the sessions. At times, balancing the role of therapist and researcher presented multiple demands and affected which aspects of the therapy were most attended to at different points. Because of the dual roles, there were times when ethically, the therapy focus needed to take precedence over the research. For example, there were times when it was important to meet with a parent based on content which arose in the session. There were also times when there was not enough time to show all clips or do all activities in a particular session, because the child had other issues not related to the divorce or films which were important for him or her to discuss.

In addition, each participant was interviewed about his or her thoughts about cinematherapy one to two weeks after the intervention ended. Interviews can be a useful aspect of case study research, in that the participants can offer insights about the process being studied (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, the process can be seen through the participant's lenses in addition to the researcher's. Interview questions included the participant's general thoughts; which films were more and less helpful; thoughts about using expressive responses; whether a movie could help a child cope with divorce or another problem; and whether he or she might consider using movies in the future to think about a problem. Like the therapy sessions, the interviews were open-ended and conversational, meaning that though specific questions were asked, each participant's own thoughts spurred further questions and influenced the course of the interview (Yin, 2003). These interviews were also audio taped and transcribed.

Physical artifacts, which were copies of art products produced during sessions were also collected and served as another source of data. Art products were scanned and then returned to Zach and Mischa, who both wanted to keep their artwork; Claire did not produce any artwork.

Data Analysis

Generally, in multiple-case study research, the individual cases are explored in depth, patterns are identified within each case, and then cross-case findings are analyzed and synthesized into themes (Stake, 2006). Both the individual cases and the meaning of the cases as a whole are considered important. First there was a within-case analysis in which each case was analyzed, described as a separate unit, and themes were developed (Creswell, 1998). A process called categorical aggregation was used, in which multiple instances of similar occurrences were identified and codes or categories were developed (Stake, 1995). Then, similar categories or codes, with a high degree of overlap were reduced into patterns (Creswell, 1998). A qualitative

analysis computer software program, ATLAS.ti was used to assist with developing codes and analyzing of the frequency and similarity of codes based on session and interview transcripts. Next, themes based on the most frequently occurring patterns were developed. Quotations illustrating each theme were presented for each within-case theme, in order for the reader to see how conclusions were developed; a process intended to increase the reliability of the results (Berg, 2004). While included quotations were analyzed as they pertained to the themes they were chosen to demonstrate, there were more issues which were addressed during the children's therapy than can be detailed in this report. Therefore, in each instance, the quote will be analyzed as it pertains to the particular theme, but not all issues which arose from a particular segment of dialogue, nor how they were addressed in the therapy will always be discussed.

A cross-case analysis followed, in which themes which were relevant across cases were synthesized. Word tables were created in which data from each case were organized under each theme as recommended by Yin (2003). Each word table was analyzed and cross-case conclusions were drawn regarding the similarities and differences on each theme. In a process similar to pattern-matching, the patterns were compared and contrasted with various relevant research and theories in cinematherapy, to determine whether results could be generalized to existing theory (Yin, 2003). Pattern-matching was used to strengthen the internal validity of the study (Yin, 2003). Selecting multiple theories is a method of increasing theoretical triangulation (Berg, 2004). When appropriate, rival interpretations of the data or alternative theories were considered in the discussion as a way to increase the internal validity (Yin, 2003). In themes for which two or more of the cases supported an existing theory, replication had occurred, increasing the external validity of the results (Yin, 2003).

Further, verification as recommended by Stake (2006) occurred through a process called peer debriefing: verifying the methods, analysis, and conclusions with members of the doctoral committee at different stages. Committee members requested clarification, asked thought-provoking questions, and provided feedback (Creswell, 1998). Additional information was provided and methods, analysis, and conclusions drawn from the data were refined based on feedback from the committee. Ideally, in future studies, there would be a formalized peer debriefing process in which a personally uninvolved peer would help uncover additional assumptions or biases, and provide feedback on conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Transcripts from the six cinematherapy sessions and follow-up interviews with Zach,

Mischa, and Claire were analyzed and themes which were observed across multiple sessions

were identified. Each theme which occurred frequently in each participant's cinematherapy

experience will be described. Exemplars demonstrating the themes in the participants' own

words will be presented for each theme.

Zach

"I think it's very, very helpful 'cause you can visualize what other people are going through, and
it can help you to see how they're coping with it."

The following themes were found across many sessions based on analysis of the

transcripts from sessions with Zach.

1. Identifying emotions
2. Projection
3. Identification
4. Interactive viewing
5. Client-centered
6. Increased understanding of divorce
7. Increased value of expression of emotions
8. Enhanced coping

    Themes linked with Expressive Responses:
9. Catharsis: Expression of anger and sadness
10. Metaphor

    Opinions about films:
11. Developmentally appropriate
12. Appropriate language

Identifying Emotions

Zach demonstrated the ability to identify the characters' emotions in an increasingly

specific and detailed way over the course of the intervention. During the first session, when

asked what a character might be feeling, Zach responded with one-word answers. When questioned further over time, Zach began to provide more feeling words, often pointing to body language or facial expressions as cues to identify the characters' feelings. By the third session, there began to be instances in which Zach spontaneously identified a character's feeling without being prompted. One potential interpretation for this finding is that perhaps Zach had learned that identifying feelings was one way he could respond to the film clips, prompted by questions from the researcher during the first sessions, and had began to attend more closely to the character's emotional reactions. Further, the films seemed a vehicle for expression of empathy, because there were instances in which Zach spontaneously stated his own emotional reaction to a character's situation. For example, during *Fly Away Home*, the researcher explained that the geese had left the nest area due to some nearby construction, which is why Amy raises the eggs herself.

Z: See, she's sad, too.
R: What makes you think she sad?
Z: The look on her face, her body language. She's kind of curled up sad.

During the sixth session, Zach mentioned that his father does not acknowledge his own feelings about the divorce; however, he knows his father is sad at times, because of how his father's eyes look. Identifying others' emotional responses based on physical cues was a skill Zach developed further during the discussion of films, and now appeared to be applying in his own life.

Z: My dad doesn't care about feelings... he never cries, if he's sad.
R: Do you think he never feels sad?
Z: He feels sad, of course. But he never expresses it.
R: So how do you know when he's feeling sad?
Z: I can tell by the look in his eye.

Projection

Generally, Zach's attribution of thoughts and motivations to a character occurred when prompted by questions like, "What do you think [the character] might be thinking right now?" Often, Zach's responses seemed highly likely, accurate, and driven by the dialogue.

Additionally, there were instances when Zach offered attributions spontaneously without being prompted, and these may have revealed some of Zach's deeper fears and concerns about the divorce. Projected attributions gave the researcher an opportunity to provide validation and psychoeducation in the context of the character's situation, which would be more likely to bypass resistance and be received by Zach. After the following example, the researcher provided reassurance to Zach that though taking care of baby geese alone was a new experience for Amy's father; he had the concern and skills to be capable of taking adequate care of them (and therefore symbolically was able to take care of Amy).

Z: He probably kills one. [Z is referring to Amy's father in *Fly Away Home*. In the scene, Amy is concerned that her father will have trouble looking after the baby geese while she is at school.]
R: You're worried he's going to.
Z: Does he?
R: No. What made you think he was going to?
Z: He probably didn't want to take care of them. He just didn't want to take care of them.

The above quotation likely represented a projection of Zach's own fear of not being taken care of in the same way during or after the divorce, and that the divorce could mean that his parents were less willing or capable of taking care of him. Zach's fears were explored further on a symbolic level in the context of the characters, and correct information was provided (Amy's father is capable of caring for the baby geese, and will do so because of how much he cares about Amy, etc.).

Identification

Unlike projection which was verbalized usually when prompted by the researcher's questions; identification happened frequently throughout all sessions both in response to questions, and spontaneously in the discussion. It was unnecessary to ask Zach about his own feelings about his parents' divorce; he often identified with the characters' reactions and when asked if he thought other children might feel similarly to a character.

Through identifying with characters' reactions, Zach began to be able to verbalize his own feelings about the divorce, which he had never done before the cinematherapy intervention. Identifying with the sadness of a character, Val, in *Author! Author!* allowed Zach to state clearly his own affective response to the losses associated with the divorce. During the following instance, Zach stated his feelings directly about the divorce in therapy, linking his feelings to the divorce.

R: Yes, she was feeling sad in this scene.
Z: Like me!
R: Is that how you are feeling?
Z: Sad because of my parents' divorce; sad because we're selling the house. And that's the only reasons.
R: Well, that's a lot of sadness. It's a lot of changes all at once.
Z: Too many! [In a strong voice]

Interactive Viewing

A process which will be referred to as interactive viewing occurred 21 times throughout the intervention and in each of the sessions with Zach. Interactive viewing, which will be discussed in depth in the discussion section, is a new concept to emerge in this study and will be defined by the researcher as spontaneously narrating or interacting with a film, its characters, or the therapist while watching a scene. Zach drew the researcher into his dialogue with the film by asking questions and commenting on facts, actions, feelings, and characters' choices. The

researcher was able to provide psychoeducation and validate feelings in a non-obtrusive way through Zach's spontaneous dialogues. The following dialogue is an example of interactive viewing which occurred while we were watching a clip from *Finding Nemo*.

Z: That's a barracuda.

R: Um-hmm.

Z: Oh, that scared me for a second. She's dead [Referring to Nemo's mother]. All the eggs are gone. Did the barracuda eat them?

R: I think so.

Z: Evil barracuda! There's only one egg left, and it's Nemo!

R: Exactly.

Z: He is sad [Referring to Nemo's father]. Didn't one of the eggs drop, and that's Nemo?

R: Yep.

Z: It got deformed, because it fell and was damaged... That's how deformities happen. Something happens to it when the baby's an egg. See? It's cracked.

R: Oh, yeah. That's a good point. Having a smaller fin is also another type of loss that Nemo learns to cope with.

Client-Centered Self-Selection

A process which will be called self-selection occurred in the many instances when Zach requested watching a particular scene, after reading the scene titles or when the researcher described the film to him, as well as discussed excerpts from movies he enjoyed outside of therapy, and these contributed to Zach's processing of his concerns. Self-selection will be discussed in more detail in the discussion section. The researcher opted to follow Zach's requests at times, and this client-centered approach lead to interesting results. In one case, Zach requested that we watch a scene in which Billy falls off the jungle gym and is injured at the playground in *Kramer v. s. Kramer*. Zach did not say why he wanted to watch the scene. The researcher warned Zach that watching that particular scene might be upsetting since Billy is injured. However, Zach persisted in requesting to watch the scene, and stated that it would not be too upsetting for him. In the scene, Billy's father picks him up and runs with Billy in his arms all the way to the emergency room, comforting him. After watching the scene, Zach mentioned that he had had a

somewhat similar injury in which he had needed stitches when he was a young child. Zach had identified a scene he wanted to watch which allowed him to share and process a difficult experience. Perhaps seeing Billy's father caring for his son after the accident provided Zach with a corrective emotional experience which might have been comforting for him. Zach was able to self-select a scene which allowed him to process material for his own healing.

There were also a few instances of Zach sharing the plot from a film or television show he had seen which he then compared to the current film clip we were watching. In one instance, Zach mentioned a film he enjoyed and wondered if we could watch it in a session. As we discussed the film more, it became clear that the film actually related to coping with losses.

Z: It's about a Pokémon, and they are twins, and the town gets threatened by these two evil people. And one of the Pokémon has to risk its life to protect the world, and it lost its life. And the other Pokémon was sad, because they were like brother and sister. So he was kind of sad, as it died. So that's kind of like a loss.
R: It is a loss.
Z: So does that kind of have to do with it?
R: Yes, it definitely has to do with loss because divorce is a kind of loss, separation is a kind of loss, and death is a kind of loss. So you could bring it in and we could talk about it more.

Increased Understanding of Divorce

Zach showed increased understanding of divorce over the course of the intervention coming to understand that a person can still have a meaningful relationship with an important other even when separated at times; though a parent might leave another parent due to anger, she would not leave a child because she felt angry; talking problems through is more effective than fighting; and coping with the multiple changes divorce entails can be more difficult than a single change.

Zach began to realize that a person can still have an important relationship with someone else, even when they are separated at times. During an initial session, Zach seems to be pondering whether a parent could be forgotten by a child if the other parent remarried.

Z: She is worried that they may get married [the father and his girlfriend] and her mother might be forgotten, and she doesn't want to forget her mother.

R: Yeah. I bet she never wants to forget her mother. Well, do you think it's possible that she ever would or could forget her mother?

Z: (Long pause.) I don't think she could.

When discussing *E.T.* in the fifth session, Zach first stated that it is impossible to have a relationship with someone far away. However, when further questioned, he remembered that Elliott and Zach have a psychic connection and compared this to being able to "think each other messages" when you are separated from someone.

In *Author! Author!* one of the children, Spike, is worried that if his mother became angry with him she could leave him, like she left the father. Zach responded that though a lot of kids probably feel like Spike, they should not because mothers are there to take care of children and would not leave them when they get angry.

When further exploring the film *Author! Author!* Zach stated that the character Val never wants to get married when she grows up, because "she doesn't want to have to deal with fighting." Zach mentioned that fighting is a part of every relationship. Through the ensuing discussion Zach realized that while disagreeing is a part of every relationship, it is more effective to talk things through, rather than yelling at each other.

Z: That is part of getting married... fighting. You have to. That's the way the law works.

R: You're right. Not always agreeing about everything is a part of every relationship.

Z: Yeah... but you don't have to yell at each other about it.

R: Right.

Z: You can... talk about it. Just not blaaahh-blahh (makes yelling sound)... That doesn't work.

Zach's statement that fighting in marriage is "the way the law works" revealed one of his deep, not necessarily productive beliefs. The scene and ensuing discussing enable Zach to disclose his underlying belief, making it available for discussion in the therapy in order to develop alternative and more functional ways of viewing disagreeing in marriage.

Additionally, Zach began to realize that it is more difficult to cope with many changes at once. He was frustrated that his parents initiated the divorce while he was beginning to go "through changes" (meaning puberty) which made adjusting to the divorce more difficult.

Z: She knows I'm going through changes, but she could have waited another year until my changes were done. Then she could have done it [gotten divorced].

Later, Zach used the following metaphor to describe his understanding of the cumulative effects of multiple changes at once:

Z: It's like having a lot of balls coming at you... when you're the last player in dodge ball.

Increased Value for Expression of Feelings

As previously stated, Zach rarely expressed feelings regarding the divorce prior to the cinematherapy intervention. Over time, Zach began to realize the value of expressing feelings in coping with challenging situations. Between the third and last sessions, there were multiple occasions when Zach commented on the importance of expressing feelings for emotional and physical health, and to avoid emotions becoming "bottled up" which can lead to explosiveness.

Z: Because modern kids don't like talking about their feelings. They keep them bottled up and then kaboom. KABOOM [Zach acts out a bomb exploding]. They explode.

He also explained in the last session, that while it is okay for a parent to feel angry about a divorce, holding onto anger too long can be unhealthy for the body.

Z: I can see why a parent would get mad over a divorce, but there's no reason to get angry forever because negative energy isn't good for your body, because you'll break out with pimples, yo!

Furthermore, Zach developed enhanced self-esteem and pride related to his increased ability to express his feelings, and stated during the sixth session, "I'm an emotional ex-a-pert! I express my feelings..." During the interview which followed the intervention, Zach stated that talking about his feelings is the most helpful way of coping with the divorce.

Z: But, talking is the most helpful because you get to express your feelings with words and other people can understand it.

Enhanced Coping

Zach identified ways that characters could cope with divorce, including distracting by singing a song or playing a video game. He also suggested using a transitional object, like a stuffed animal. Later, Zach showed enhanced coping himself, by stating though he did not want to move, he really liked one of the new places his family was considering moving because it was nearer to where his friends lived. When interviewed, Zach stated that visualizing what others were experiencing and how they coped with the situation helped him cope better with the divorce.

Expressive Responses

Generally Zach stated a preference to respond to scenes by using talk than with an expressive response. However, sometimes when asked a second time, Zach engaged in an expressive response and became fully engaged. The following example is from the first session, when Zach was asked to imagine his own ending to *Fly Away Home.*

R: So, did you want to draw a picture or do a play or write it down? Or talk?
Z: Talk.
R: So when you do the story. Let's imagine that we're in there...
Z: Can I be the geese?
R: You can be the geese.
Z: And you be Amy... Weep!... [Zach makes a chick sound and hunches near the floor.] I'm a chick. I can't talk.

While Zach immediately responded that he wanted to talk, when the researcher prompted, "Let's imagine..." he became engaged in a drama, choosing to act the part of the chicks and assigning the researcher the role of Amy. He even reminded the researcher that since he was now a chick, he would not be able to talk. However, when interviewed, Zach stated that talking was more helpful than expressive responses, a response that was surprising given the amount of attention and engagement he showed during his artistic activities. At one point, Zach had even requested to bring some artwork home, stating he wanted to continue to work on the project at home.

Based on the analysis of the codes, two themes were linked with expressive responses: catharsis/expression of anger and sadness and metaphor.

Catharsis: Expression of anger and sadness. Every instance in which Zach expressed anger about the divorce was either during or immediately following an art or drama response. Acting out or drawing his destruction fantasies seemed to be cathartic for Zach. In the first instance, Zach acted out a drama in which he pretended to lock his mother outside after he saw a moving sign in front of his house. As with many divorces, Zach's family needed to move from the family home. Zach requested that the researcher play the role of the mother, and he played himself. Zach threatened to destroy the moving sign if his mother and father did not get back together.

Z: And I said, "If you don't get back together with daddy, I'll destroy the sign."
R: You'll destroy the moving sign?
Z: But I don't think she's going to, though. But I'm still going to destroy the sign, though.

At this point, the researcher suggested to Zach that he could also draw the situation. The change in modality, moving from drama to art, was suggested so that Zach could symbolically destroy the sign with art supplies. Zach drew the moving sign, and then symbolically destroyed it in multiple ways. The process of dramatically enacting and then doing artwork enabled Zach to

express and release his anger at his parents about moving, which he had been unable to do previously.

Similarly, in the next session, Zach used tissues from the tissue box and colored papers and a paper-cutter to represent his sad and angry feelings about the divorce. At the end, Zach stated he needed to "bury" the shredded papers, and chose to bury them in the researcher's trash can. Then Zach sat down and calmly requested to watch the next scene. The expressive response seemed cathartic, allowing Zach to express his anger on a bodily level; further, he appeared able to move past his sad and angry feelings by symbolically disposing of them with the therapist.

Since Zach had some difficulty with anger management, these expressive responses were also an opportunity for the researcher to convey the difference between fantasizing about taking a destructive action, which may be a useful way to release angry feelings, and actually carrying out a destructive action, which obviously would not be appropriate.

Metaphor. Zach often used expressive responses in a way that expanded the metaphor from the films. One example occurred in the second session when the researcher asked Zach how Nemo and his father coped with being separated in *Finding Nemo*. Zach at first replied that he did not know, because he felt that he himself could never cope with spending time away from someone he cared about. He later clarified that coping depended on how close a person feels to another person; the closer the person feels, the more difficult the separation would be. Zach then stated that he has a "love o'meter" which he spent the remainder of the session creating with art supplies (see Appendix A). He decided carefully where each of his relationships should be placed on his "love o'meter," placing each person somewhere on a level between love and hate. Zach seemed to be navigating how to be separated from an important other, as occurs with

divorce. Ranking relationships on the "love o'meter" may have served also as a representation of a perceived need to choose loyalties between parents and relatives.

Opinions about Films

In addition to the researcher's observations about Zach's increased understanding and expression of feelings; Zach also stated at times during the process and in the interview following the intervention that using film clips in therapy was enjoyable and helpful. He felt that using clips in therapy helped him to visualize what others were experiencing and how they coped with their problems. That the films be developmentally appropriate and contain appropriate language were important to Zach.

Developmentally appropriate. Finding Nemo, The Parent Trap, and *E.T.* felt developmentally appropriate for Zach: "some [movies] I understood and it helped me cope." However, *Kramer vs. Kramer* and *Author! Author!* felt "too old" for him: "Some movies I didn't really understand."

Appropriate language. Zach occasionally questioned whether there were any swear words in the films, and initially stated that he is not allowed to watch most films with swear words at home. However, during a later session, when he knew there was a swear word later in a film, he repeatedly asked the researcher to play that scene because he wanted to hear the swear word, a request that was denied by the researcher. Therefore, it is probably better to avoid films with any swear words; however, unfortunately it was difficult to identify films about divorce which have no profanity at all. Parents had consented to PG films, which do sometimes have some swear words in them.

Finding Nemo. Zach had an extremely enthusiastic response to *Finding Nemo*, both when it was presented and when discussing the film in the follow-up interview. He felt it was the most

helpful of all of the films because Nemo had to cope with losing a lot of different things, and that was similar to what Zach had experienced with the divorce (moving, etc.). He felt that *Finding Nemo* could help children cope with divorce and the death of a parent.

The Parent Trap. Zach stated that he liked and understood *The Parent Trap.* He felt that this film could help a child cope with a parent who lives far away.

E.T. Zach stated that *E.T.* helped him cope with his parents' divorce, especially when one parent travelled far away, and that *E.T.* could help a child whose parent is travelling or living in another state.

Author! Author!; Kramer vs. Kramer; Fly Away Home. Zach stated that he had a hard time understanding these films because they felt too developmentally advanced. For example, Zach stated about *Author! Author!* that he did not "even get that movie." Therefore, he enjoyed these films less than the previously mentioned three films. Films which are intended specifically for younger children as opposed to those for adults or families were more effective, enjoyable, and comprehensible to Zach.

Mischa

"This was fun… Yeah, there were some cool movies."

The following themes were found across many sessions based on analysis of the transcripts from sessions with Mischa.

1. Projection
2. Identifying emotions
3. Identification
4. Interactive viewing, expressive, and silent viewing of films
5. Increased sharing
6. Highly developed coping skills
7. Deep engagement in expressive responses
8. Opinions about cinematherapy, expressive responses, and films

Projection

Most instances in which Mischa attributed thoughts and motivations to characters were prompted by specific questions asked by the researcher. Generally, Mischa's attributions closely correlated with the story, and seemed to match the data that had been provided in the film so far. There were also times when Mischa attributed thoughts to a character beyond those directly suggested by the film, therefore providing valuable information about what some of Mischa's unstated concerns might be. For example, Mischa focused sometimes on a character being most upset because they had not been told about something. When asked how Amy felt about meeting her father's girlfriend in *Fly Away Home,* Mischa stated that Amy was angry because she had not been told right away that her father had a girlfriend. Mischa had been upset recently with her own father for not telling her about his new girlfriend and she seemed to attribute these concerns to Amy's reaction.

M: She was kind of like... I think she... she was a little bit mad at her
        dad for not telling... for her father not telling her, like, right away,
        like it seemed like a few days till like, and I don't think she, like... like I
        think she was mad at her dad because he wasn't telling her, like right
        away.

Furthermore, while there were many ways that Mischa could have compared *Finding Nemo* to divorce, she focused on Nemo's father and the female fish, Dori, spending time together. Mischa's response again seemed to indicate a concern with parents dating after divorce.

R: So, in what way could the scenes we watched today have anything to do
        with divorce, or maybe you don't think so?
M: Maybe a little bit. Because I remember Nemo's father, him and Dorie
        hanged out a lot, and I don't think they ever got serious, but...

Mischa had been trying to work through her own feelings recently about her father dating a woman after the divorce. *Fly Away Home* and *Finding Nemo* provided a nonthreatening way

for us to talk about feelings kids might have about their parents dating in the context of the characters' situations.

Later, Val, one of the children in *Author! Author!* stated that she never wanted to get married when she grew up. Mischa's response revealed that she might have been concerned about getting married as an adult due to fear of getting a divorce.

R: So how come you think Val says she never wants to get married?
M: Since because her mom and her dad got divorced and her mother got married and divorced and she just might not think… that she doesn't have to get a divorce, because she must know that it was really bad.

When Mischa revealed her thoughts that Val was worried about getting divorced in the future, it provided the researcher with more information about a potential unspoken fear of Mischa's. We were able to talk about whether Val would necessarily get divorced, just because her parents did, hopefully decreasing Mischa's concern and providing her with other ways of thinking about marriage in her own future.

Identifying Emotions

Mischa was able to accurately identify characters' emotions from the first session, and this skill remained stable throughout the intervention She showed an ability that was sophisticated for her age, conveying emotions that were complex and multi-faceted. For example, she described Amy's reaction to moving in with her father in *Fly Away Home* as both "confused" and "uncertain." When meeting her father's new girlfriend, Mischa described Amy as both "a little bit, like, upset, but also angry at the same time." She described Nemo's father's reaction to Nemo being taken by the scuba diver as, "paranoid and worried and angry, so a lot of emotions are going through his tiny fish brain right now, so he might be a little bit like whoo-he-he." Mischa identified Billy's father's reaction to receiving a letter from his mother stating that she is not returning, in *Kramer vs. Kramer* as "kind of disappointed and upset at the same time."

She also recognized that sometimes people might use an emotion to cover for some other emotion or need.

M: And when [Amy] says, "I think I'm tired" to her father... like, I think either she was tired or she just wanted to be alone and kind of think about the past or think about the new things that's going to happen.

Mischa seemed comfortable in the realm of emotions, one of her many coping skills, identifying characters' emotions at times without being specifically prompted.

R: Why do you think Nemo disobeys his father and insists on touching the boat?
M: (Long pause) Aahh... because his father is always nervous and overprotective about his son, fish.

Mischa often used a character's facial and body language appropriately as clues to identify his or her emotions. She identified Nemo's emotion accurately by observing his body language.

M: Like he's pretty excited because he seems all hyper.

Similarly, in response to Billy's father receiving a letter from his mother in *Kramer vs. Kramer*, Mischa stated:

M: I think that he felt upset, but I also think that he felt worried because he seemed kind of worried to tell his son. I don't know, he looked shaky or something.

Identification

There were six occasions throughout the intervention in which Mischa identified directly with one of the characters. For example, in *Fly Away Home*, Amy's father cooked a strange concoction for dinner, burning the food, and causing the smoke alarm to go off. Mischa seemed to have projected herself into the action, spontaneously commenting, "That's my dad a lot... not that bad, but... the smoke alarm goes off." In session four, in response to *The Parent Trap*, we discussed how the twins wish their parents would get back together.

R: So do you think other kids whose parents are divorced or separated want their parents to get back together like these two do?

M: Yes... I do.

R: You want them to or you think other kids want them to?

M: Both.

R: How would that be different from now?

M: Just being like the old days.

Although later Mischa acknowledged that it was impossible that her parents would actually reunite; watching the twins trying to trick their parents into reuniting allowed Mischa to reveal her own fantasy that her parents would get back together.

We discussed how it feels to talk about one parent in front of the other after a divorce, in response to a scene in *E.T.* in which Elliott's mother became upset after Elliott mentioned that his father was in Mexico with his girlfriend. Mischa spontaneously disclosed her own reactions to talking about one parent in front of the other.

M: Well, I feel bad about it. And I don't want to make, like, the other parent upset that I told them. And, like, if I did tell them almost, like, they'll get mad at each other, and I don't like seeing them fight.

The researcher had not previously been aware of Mischa's negative experiences with talking about one parent in front of the other. Mischa went on to describe her feelings of guilt when talking about a problem one parent might have (i.e., financial, etc.) in front of the other parent, especially if her disclosure caused her parents to become angry with each other. Mischa's sharing in response to the scene from *E.T.* created the opportunity to provide Mischa's parents with information about how Mischa was being impacted by their reactions. Further, psychoeducation was provided to both Mischa and her parents about how to handle talking about one parent in front of the other.

Interactive Viewing, Expressive Viewing, and Silent Viewing of Films

Mischa's viewing of scenes from films was characterized by diversity of responses. Often, Mischa watched entire scenes silently, focused intently on the screen in front of her. Her body language suggested that she watched with rapt attention: sitting up straight in her chair, watching the screen without looking away, and later recalling even small details from the scene. She frequently laughed at funny scenes, like when the goslings chase after Amy as she teaches them to fly in *Fly Away Home*. There were also eleven occasions throughout the six weeks in which Mischa either dialogued with or narrated the events taking place. Sometimes Mischa asked questions to clarify what was happening in a scene, showing a strength in her ability to request information as needed to help understand a situation that was not entirely clear. For example, when watching the first scene in *Fly Away Home*, Mischa clarified what was happening by asking questions during the scene.

M: Okay. Is that her own truck or is that her mom's truck?
R: I think that's her dad's truck.
M: Oh... she just met him? [referring to Amy's father]
R: Yeah. For the first time in years.

Later, while watching a scene from *Finding Nemo*, Mischa narrated the action by introducing the characters as they appear, then asserted her opinions about a character, finally identifying with Nemo's father not wanting to get up in the morning being similar to her own father.

M: There's that guy who's all like claustrophobic...
R: Mm-hmm.
M: ... and the prawn... and the guy who blows bubbles... I like the ray, the teacher.
R: What you like about him?
M: He comforts all the fishes on the field trip.
R: Yes, he's very calm.
M: Yes. [Scene plays.] I forgot the beginning. [Scene plays.] Nemo's dad is like my dad [when Nemo's dad does not want to get up for the first day of school].

Through Mischa's dialogue we learn about what type of adults she might like: the ray teacher who "comforts all the fishes." Interactive viewing provided an additional way to interact with and to learn more about what Mischa liked, and what her family life was like. Some of these ideas might not have been raised in therapy without the stimulus of the films.

During the final three sessions, Mischa became more expressive in her viewing of some of the scenes from the films. By session four, Mischa appeared relaxed and expressive as we watched the films together: she waved her arms in the air, as though dancing, as she heard the opening music play. She sang "laahhh!" with the opening music, and she even narrated, "Walt Disney Presents..." She then went to a basket and took out a white seal stuffed animal, asking if he could watch with her. When the researcher asked her who the seal was, Mischa said, "Icebreakers." Through naming the seal Icebreakers, she perhaps indirectly acknowledged that the ice had been broken, and she no longer felt a sense of formality about watching the films together. She said that Icebreakers could help her answer questions after we watched the scenes.

Immediately following the fifth session, Mischa selected an alligator puppet with glasses and a dress to help her answer questions regarding the film. During the final scene in the sixth session, Mischa again selected the alligator puppet and placed it near the screen as though it was intently watching the scene with Mischa. The scene was an emotionally laden one in which Elliott and E.T. part when E.T. returned to his own planet in *E.T.*. The puppet, whom Mischa named Allie in the fifth session, had become a transitional object for Mischa, helped her to express her reactions to the films, and perhaps offered Mischa silent support during a sad scene. Again, it is interesting to consider the name Allie. Of course, Allie is short for alligator, but is also similar to ally: perhaps Mischa needed an ally to help support her as she shared her story. Furthermore, Allie helped Mischa share her concerns about the guardian ad litem, who is

intended to be the true ally for a child. Finally, Allie, the ally, could be a metaphor for the therapy process, and that in some ways the therapist is Mischa's ally as she goes through the divorce.

Increased Sharing

While Mischa had been in therapy and had developed a strong rapport with the researcher for many months prior to the beginning of the cinematherapy intervention, she had never shared the details of what had lead to her parent's divorce, nor her deepest reactions to the changes caused by the divorce. The cinematherapy intervention enabled Mischa to tell the sometimes painful story of her parents' divorce, prompted by the narrative in some of the scenes. Sharing her story, while painful, was likely cathartic and healing for Mischa. In session two, Mischa shared how difficult spending the night at her mother's new apartment had been for her at first. Mischa's responses were prompted by our discussion of how anxious Nemo and his dad were when they were first separated. The researcher compared their being separated to children being separated from their parents for some days each week when custody is shared.

M: But I did get a little bit nervous [when sleeping over at her mother's new apartment].
R: What were you nervous about?
M: Like sleeping over and stuff.
R: At your mom's place?
M: Yeah, it just felt weird. Just kind of like wha-hoo-aahh (sucks in air).
R: Because it was a new place, or was it being with your mom alone?
M: Kind of both because I didn't see her that much at night [previous to the separation], and because it wasn't my house and I'm just used to the house that I live in.

Later in the intervention, during sessions five and six, Mischa began sharing on a deeper level about her parents' divorce. Mischa told the story of her own parents' divorce in response to an emotionally laden scene from *Author!Author!* in which the father, Ivan's step-children discussed with which parent they preferred to live after Ivan and their mother divorce. There are some challenging clips to watch in *Author! Author!* particularly because they are related to

custody and visitation, which was a current issue for Mischa. She watched the first scene quietly

and gave short answers to the questions asked after the first clip. When the researcher began

playing the second scene, Mischa selected the alligator puppet with a dress and glasses and

placed it in her lap, as though they were watching the film together. The alligator seemed to

provide comfort when watching scenes which were similar to Mischa's current fear of being

asked to choose which parent to live with by the guardian ad litem (GAL). While it was unlikely

that Mischa would be asked directly, she later acknowledged that she feared being asked because

she did not want to be "the one to make the decision." Mischa wanted the researcher to ask the

questions about the scene to the puppet, so the researcher complied. When asked how the

children felt when they learned that Ivan and their mother would not be getting back together,

Allie, the puppet, responded expressively, conveying her reaction through body language.

M: Whaa! Whaa! [Makes the puppet flip all around.]
R: Freaking out...
M: Yeah. Just maybe, like bummed out [makes the alligator bent over, slumping down].
R: Head down, slumped over, bummed out.
M: Even though they should be like this [makes the alligator sit up straight].
R: They should be up like that.
M: Instead of going like this [slumps alligator down again].
R: Instead of being all slumped over, they should be able to sit up straight.
       [Mischa continued to make the alligator sit straight up and then slump over.]

Mischa non-verbally expressed the feelings the children in the film might have when learning

that their mother and step-father were getting a divorce. She used the puppet to show on a bodily

level how the news of another divorce made the children feel physically slumped over. Through

crying out, "Whaa! Whaa!" and flipping the puppet around, Mischa expressed the disorientation

the children might have felt at the moment of hearing the news; an experience that may be felt on

the bodily level and defy verbal means of expression. Allie, when slumped over, looked to the

researcher as though she had the wind taken out of her. When slumped over, Allie was bent over

at her stomach, which is perhaps significant. Mischa's presenting concern for entering therapy had been severe stomach aches since her parent's separation. Perhaps by watching a scene in which children verbalized their feelings, and enabled by using a once removed transitional object, Mischa was able to convey how the news of divorce may have impacted her on a bodily level.

Still using Allie as her voice, Mischa told the whole story of the events leading up to her own parents' divorce, and financial problems caused by the divorce. The combination of the appropriate clips for her current situation and the once-removed stance of the puppet enabled Mischa to tell her story. Sharing her story as Allie seemed a pivotal and cathartic moment in Mischa's therapy; from this session forward, Mischa's affect was lighter and more spontaneous, and she reported being more happily engaged in her outside interests.

After telling the story of her parents' divorce, Allie shared her reactions to a recent visit by the guardian ad litem (GAL), who would be assisting in determining the custody and visitation arrangements. Mischa's mother had told the researcher at the beginning of the session that Mischa had been upset about needing to be interviewed about visitation and custody by the guardian ad litem. When the session started, the researcher asked Mischa how she felt about the GAL interview. However, Mischa had minimized her reaction, stating that it was fine, and she did not want to discuss it further. The timing of the scene from *Author! Author!* about whom the children want to live with was ideal. While Mischa had not shared her thoughts and feelings about her own visitation schedule and the GAL's visit initially, after viewing the scene, she was able to share her own feelings through the once removed voice of Allie, the alligator. Allie shared that she was upset about the way that the news about the GAL had been presented to her by a parent. Instead of focusing on Allie's feelings, the parent had expressed anger at the other

parent. Since Mischa had been communicating through Allie, the puppet, the researcher asked her to select another puppet, and to have the puppet say to Allie what might have been more helpful. Mischa selected a soft, wooly sheep puppet and told Allie, "If you are angry... breathe. [The sheep exhaled loudly while saying breathe.] And just know that you'll be okay." We then talked about how what Allie needed was for the sheep to focus on Allie's feelings and what is best for her, and to be told that she would be taken care of and safe, no matter the outcome of the custody and visitation.

Highly Developed Coping Skills

Mischa's coping skills were highly developed even from the beginning of the intervention. In part, this could be because she had already had months of therapy. More likely, however, Mischa was a resilient child who was able to cope successfully with a difficult life event, like parental divorce, by using her coping skills. Significantly there were 58 different instances in which coping skills were coded in the data analysis, and coping skills was the most frequently coded theme throughout the intervention with Mischa. There were many different ways in which Mischa stated that a character could cope, and which were observed in her answers and nature of her expressive responses. Themes which arose frequently were resilience; value of helping others; value of expressing feelings/talking; value of having fun; value of supportive friends; value of connection and caring; usefulness of talking with a parent about concerns; value of pets; value of family; value of "working through it"; and relaxation. Some of these themes will be discussed in greater detail.

There were many cases in which Mischa demonstrated resilience in her answers and expressive responses. When telling a story of how she thought *Fly Away Home* should end, Mischa talked about what would happen after the geese Amy has raised grow older.

M: I guess they become big and she might have to let them go when they've already learned how to fly. And I guess maybe when they migrate; she'll have to let them go.

R: And how do you think that will be for her and for them?

M: Umm. I think it will be a little bit upsetting for her, but she might be able to get something else that she can keep for a while. Like a dog or a cat. Or maybe a horse 'cause they live on a farm.

Mischa did not deny that parting from the geese would be difficult for Amy, but recognized that Amy might cope by getting a pet that it is more appropriate to keep longer. She was able to both identify and express emotions, but recognized that difficult emotions would pass, and that there are ways people can help themselves feel better about difficult events.

Mischa demonstrated frequently the ability to help others. In session two, when asked how the other fish in the tank could help Nemo, who is separated from his father, Mischa also focused on friendship and having fun as ways of coping.

R: So what could the other fish do to help them deal with it?

M: Just comfort him and be his friend.

R: That's something that might help.

M: Yeah, just have fun.

Identifying ways a character could cope provided an opportunity for Mischa to identify coping resources as well as provide assistance to another child, albeit in the imaginary realm. When asked a general question about a scene, she often focused on how a character could be helped to feel better. Helping others has often been shown to be helpful to the helper, and therefore may have provided a benefit for Mischa. In session three, Mischa wrote a letter to a character, Billy, whose mother had left, in *Kramer vs. Kramer*. Mischa's letter to Billy will be discussed in detail in the expressive responses section, but for now, it can be noted that Mischa was able to tell Billy how she coped with her parents' divorce, and gave him suggestions for coping. The following exchange occurred after Mischa wrote the letter to Billy.

R: …so how did it feel for you to write and draw that for him?

M: It felt good.

R: Yeah?

M: I'm helping somebody... because many people helped me too, like... Lisa.

Mischa realized that helping someone else made her feel better, and that writing Billy a letter

also made her feel better. She realized that she could help someone feel better about their

parents' divorce, because her friend, Lisa, helped her through the experience. A frequent theme

was the importance and value of Mischa's friendships, particularly with her best friend who had

helped her cope throughout her parents' divorce.

M: ... when she walked up to me, she was like, "you need to talk?" and I'm like "yeah," or
        I would say "no thanks." And that was helpful. She was just being a good friend at the
        time. That kind of happened a little bit earlier in the school year. But during the summer
        she already knew I had stomachaches, and she would be giving me cards and she'll make
        me feel better and she'll say "breathe," and she gave me one of those stress balls, and she
        gave me another one. And she just helped me a lot and made me feel better. It's good to
        have a friend like that.

Mischa's response demonstrated her recognition that supportive friends, talking about a problem,

and relaxation can all be effective ways of coping with the divorce.

Mischa was able to frame events in a positive way, which influenced her emotional

reactions. For instance, in response to Elliott showing his most important objects in his room to

E.T., the participants were asked to describe or draw the three most important items in their

rooms at their mother's and father's homes, and to reflect on how they were different. Mischa

responded enthusiastically, describing her items with a high level of detail. She asked whether

they had to be items, or it could be a space, or an activity. Ultimately, the expressive response

lead Mischa to reflect about how her activities are different at her mother and father's houses,

and that she was happy about that. Mischa demonstrated her ability to see the positive by

describing how she looked forward to playing with the extra art supplies at her father's house,

and riding her skateboard at her mother's house. Mischa did not feel disappointed that she did not

have all of her belongings with her all of the time. She had the ability to look at the positive

aspects of difficult circumstances, by reframing having different possessions in two households, as getting to look forward to something exciting.

M: Um… what I like about having two different houses is… when you know that you're getting there you have something to look forward to. It's kind of exciting each time: it's like, "Oh my gosh. I want to go play with my webkins, *finally.*" Or when I'm sleeping over at my mom's house, I'm like "I'll get to play with my guitar tomorrow!"

R: That's great.

M: It's just fun to know that something is waiting for you there.

After being shown the scene when E.T. told Elliott, "I'll be right here" and pointed his glowing finger to Elliott's heart, Mischa told a story about how her father wrote that same comment to her through emails when she went on vacation to another state with her mother. Mischa and her father had watched *E.T.* together the week before the vacation. One of the ways that Mischa and her father had stayed connected was through remembering and saying the line from *E.T.* to each other.

M: He means that Elliott will never forget him, and he will never forget Elliott, as when I was in [another state] last year. Like right before that week, me and my dad watched a movie together, *E.T..* And so we were emailing each other one day, and he was like, "I'll be right here,"… He was just like "I'll… be… right here."

The researcher had selected the scene to use with the participants to explore how to stay connected with people when you are not with them, for example, to one parent when it is the child's time with the other parent. Mischa's story showed how *E.T.* had been effective within Mischa's family to provide a way to cope with separation from each other, even without any kind of facilitation process.

Later, Mischa chose to make a sculpture of E.T. with model magic to demonstrate how E.T. and Elliott could cope with being separated, after Elliott returned to his own planet (see Appendix E). She chose the sheep puppet to represent Elliott. When asked how they would cope with being separated she responded, "they might be sad and stuff." Mischa placed the E.T.

sculpture and the sheep puppet next to each other and explained that they could feel like they are next to each other, even when they are not, by using their memories to remember the happy times they had together. Mischa said that they can remember how E.T. said, "I'll be right here" and pointed to Elliott's heart, in order to feel better. Mischa was able to acknowledge legitimate feelings of loss without denying them, like sadness at separation, but also implement an appropriate coping strategy to cope with the sadness. The original coping strategy that Mischa and her father had developed based on E.T.'s famous remark, had been clearly absorbed by Mischa, as she again brought it up in the context of the art response. Mischa was able to use her happy memories and emotional connection to see her through times when she was separated from a loved one.

Deep Engagement in Expressive Responses

Mischa was deeply engaged in her expressive responses to the films. She always chose to do an expressive response when given the option, which differed from the other two children who often preferred talking responses. Furthermore, Mischa selected all different types of expressive activities including drawing, using model magic to create a sculpture, creative writing by making a card, props to create a drama, and storytelling. As previously discussed, Mischa even used music: she sang along with the opening music during a film later in the intervention, and sang song lyrics she had written on the card for Billy, in response to *Kramer vs. Kramer*. By the fourth session, she even started viewing the films more expressively by selecting a puppet to watch the three final films with her, and to help her respond to the researcher's questions following the film. Mischa enjoyed drawing, music, and writing stories in her free time, so the expressive activities were enjoyable and nonthreatening to her.

Due to their frequency, it would be impossible to describe all of Mischa's expressive responses, so a few examples will be used. In response to *Kramer vs. Kramer,* Mischa created a card for Billy, the six-year-old whose mother had left him in his father's care (see Appendix C). While this was a creative writing response, Mischa opted to add art by drawing on the cover of the card. Later, she added lyrics from upbeat songs to encourage Billy. As she wrote down the lyrics, she sang them aloud, asking if the researcher knew of them. Mischa incorporated elements of art and music into her creative writing response, shifting naturally and fluidly from one expressive modality to another. She seemed to gravitate to the modality in which she could best express a particular thought. When Mischa completed her card, the researcher asked her to read it aloud.

M: [sings the front, "Everything is gonna be all right" doo doo doo doo]. Dear Billy, Hello, Billy. My name is Mischa. I heard your mommy sent you a letter in the mail saying that she left to live in her own house. That is called a separation. My parents are separated, too. It is very hard at first, and even this day it is very hard. But somehow I worked through it. Probably because I have my friends, pets, and family to help me work through it. So I know that you will be okay. The end.

The researcher then asked Mischa if the researcher could read the card back to her. The researcher read her the letter, so that she might benefit by being on the receiving end of the supportive and encouraging letter she had written to Billy. After the researcher read her the letter, Mischa asked the researcher to read first one lyric quote, and then the next, following each one by saying, "yay."

Mischa drew a picture to tell the rest of the story of what happened to Amy and the geese in *Fly Away Home* (see Appendix B). During art responses, Mischa showed attention to detail in her drawing, noticed specific images in the film, like how Amy wears a ponytail in *Fly Away Home,* and tried to get the color of the grass just right.

M: Yeah [Draws quietly]. Where does Amy live?

R: Canada.

M: Is the grass green there in the summer or is it dull?

R: It's probably green in the summer.

M: But there are some places like Pennsylvania, where it's like extra green.

R: I don't know. That's a good question.

M: I'll just make it green. [Begins to shade grassy area loudly and purposefully.]

Mischa spent time drawing and often drew without speaking. While Mischa often drew quietly and intently, at times she used her drawing instrument expressively, by loudly scratching the paper when making a repetitive pattern, or by making the sounds of the lines she drew on the paper. She also used specific techniques, like using a dried out marker for a "sketchy" technique for the grass.

M: I always keep my dry markers at home, because if you want to do something that looks kind of sketchy. Like this would be good for grass, but then you would use a really good marker for the sky and then like right now, this is kind of sketchy, so you do it for the clouds. And what I do for the clouds is I sometimes leave a little space, but I'll just make this one blue.

Mischa told the story of her drawing when she finished it. Her story is one of resilience: the geese learn to fly, migrate, and as long they "stay in a pack," "they'll do good." Again, Mischa's response demonstrated how she valued connection with others, "stay[ing] in a pack," as a way of coping with change. As for Amy, she would feel sad when the geese migrate, but could get a more long-term pet like a dog, cat, or horse (this last part of the dialogue was omitted in the following quote).

M: So, Amy... grows... up... to be the geese's... mother and she is teaching them how to fly. Just kind of jumping up and down and stuff.

R: She's teaching them how to fly by jumping up and down.

M: I guess the geese are trying… he is already up in the air. And she's showing them how to flap, I guess. Like little lines for flapping [pointing to her drawing]. But, yeah.

R: Great. So what happens to them?

M: I guess they become big and she might have to let them go when they've already learned how to fly. And I guess maybe when they migrate she'll have to let them go.

R: Yeah, and how about the geese, how do you think they'll do?

M: Umm. I think they'll do good. Maybe if they stay in, like, a pack or something together, they can do pretty good.

During session four, Mischa drew a picture showing what the twins might like to do with each parent in *The Parent Trap* (see Appendix D). In Mischa's drawing, the twins were each disguised as the other twin, so the parent did not realize that they were each with the twin from whom they had been separated since birth. Mischa told the story of her drawing. One twin was reprimanded by her British mother, "Pinky out!" when they drank tea together, since the American twin (disguised as the British twin) did not know the proper etiquette to holding a tea cup. The British twin (disguised as the American twin) played soccer with her American father. Since she did not know how to play, she ended up kicking him instead of the soccer ball, causing him to fall to the ground. In this way, the true identity of each twin was discovered by each parent.

Mischa laughed a few times while drawing the twin's father being kicked by the soccer ball. She then began singing, "la la la la la la" right after drawing this image, perhaps suggesting catharsis of angry feelings. One possible interpretation is that through art, Mischa was able to express feelings of hostility toward a father figure. It was difficult for Mischa to express feelings of anger verbally about her parents for the divorce. It is possible that she did not ever feel angry, but being such a compliant child, it is more likely that she did not feel it was permissible to share these feelings directly. If so, art gave her an outlet to share and release these feelings metaphorically, and have them witnessed by the researcher. Like Zach, Mischa was more likely to share feelings of anger through art-making, than verbally or through any other expressive modality.

Opinions about Cinematherapy, Expressive Responses, and Films

       Opinions about cinematherapy.

M: This was fun.

R: Was it fun?

M: Yeah, there were some cool movies.

Throughout the intervention and in the final interview, Mischa had an enthusiastic

response to cinematherapy. She later added, "I thought it was... fun and I thought it was a good

idea." She said that even if kids in therapy do not do the full cinematherapy intervention, it

would be helpful for the therapist to have or be aware of some movies about a problem like

divorce to which they could refer kids.

M: Or the kid could ask the therapist, like, "Do you know a good movie about divorce that
      could help me live with my mom and being away from my dad a little bit better, like
      being more happy or something?"

Opinions about expressive responses. Mischa particularly enjoyed the expressive

responses to the films. She stated that she was able to express her feelings and "say [my] part in

it, too" when doing the expressive responses. Through the expressive responses, "you can do,

like, actions to show what you feel, or drawing, or like what you think will happen."

Furthermore, drawing helped her "remember more things when I put it on a piece of paper." She

remembered more weeks later about Hallie and Annie's story in *The Parent Trap* since she had

completed a drawing with her own plan for how they should spend their day with each parent

after viewing the film clips. "That one was really fun, and so it's just, I like to express my way in

art."

M: I thought that was actually a really good idea because you have to express your feelings
      about what you think about it. And so you get to say your part in it, too. Besides the
      questions, you can do, like, actions to show what you feel, or drawing, or like what you
      think will happen, or stuff like that.

Opinions about films. Mischa stated that she enjoyed all of the films that were shown.

The only film she did not mention by name specifically was *Kramer vs. Kramer.* During the

sixth session, after we watched the last film, Mischa spontaneously offered some positive

feedback.

M: Yeah, there were some cool movies.
R: What movies did you like?
M: I liked *The Parent Trap*, and of course, *E.T.*... I liked, um, I kind of liked *Author!*
       Author!... and I forget the name of the first one...
R: *Fly Away Home.*
M: Yeah, but I liked the little chickens.

During the interview, Mischa again mentioned that she enjoyed the films, both some of the more

recent releases and some of the older films.

M: I like how you picked good movies, like *Nemo*, was one of my favorites, and *E.T.*. And
       some new ones are cool, too, and some of the old ones, that I wouldn't know about...

Mischa felt that the most helpful films were the ones that were specifically about divorce.

M: Yes, because they do actually use the fact that, like, kids are in the divorce, like *E.T.*,
       Author! Author!, like actually real.

Mischa stated that some movies could help a child deal with divorce, but others would not help if

the child does not "feel the hit in it." In other words, the movie has to be selected carefully for

the child's issue and stage in dealing with it; otherwise it is not that helpful.

M: ...but sometimes you might not just feel the hit in it. You won't feel that it would help
       you that much, but it could. Some movies can and some movies can't.

Although later Mischa added, "I thought they were all pretty important. They were all good

movies to the subject."

   Fly Away Home. Mischa asked what the name of *Fly Away Home* was at the end of the

session in which we viewed it. Mischa and her mother rented the film to watch together at home

later. Her mother said that the film looked really cute and that she thought the project was a good

and interesting idea. The researcher suggested that if Mischa had any thoughts about divorce

when they watched *Fly Away Home* together, that would be a good time to talk about them. The

film had become a bridge from the therapy session to a joint activity that Mischa and her mom could share together.

Finding Nemo. Based on the following dialogue, it is evident that Mischa enjoyed *Finding Nemo* and had watched it many times previously. However, she emphasized that she had watched it when she was younger, suggesting that it might be slightly more appropriate for a younger child. However, through the intervention, Mischa found new messages in the film, which she later shared with her mother.

M: Oh! Is this Nemo?
R: It is!
M: Oh, I love this movie... I own this movie.
R: You do own it. Do you watch it a lot?
M: Umm... sometimes. I watched it more when I was like a kid. I was like seven when it came out, or six. Nemo! [When Mischa sees Nemo]

Mischa's mother told the researcher that Mischa mentioned that we had watched *Finding Nemo* in a therapy session. Her mother said that they had watched *Finding Nemo* many times in the past. She said that Mischa had explained to her how the film could be about separation and anxiety, and how to cope with it. Mischa's mother said that she had never thought about that before with *Finding Nemo* or other children's films, but now realized how it could be the case. Transference from the therapy session to Mischa's home life had occurred, and watching the film served as the bridge between therapy and generating a dialogue about some of the issues with a parent at home.

The Parent Trap. At the end of the session, Mischa stated, "I liked the first scene that I saw and thought it was a good movie." At the beginning of the following session, Mischa said that she had found and watched the entire *Parent Trap* movie on cable over the weekend. She thought it was a good movie, and mentioned, "I did feel bad for Annie/Hallie, because the dad's girlfriend was really mean." While the researcher had not shown scenes with the father's "mean"

girlfriend, Mischa noted them when she watched the entire film. Those scenes may have been particularly noteworthy to Mischa since she was dealing with her father dating for the first time since the divorce.

E.T. Mischa's response to seeing that we would be watching *E.T.* was also enthusiastic.

M: Oh! I know this movie.
R: You've seen *E.T.*. Have you seen it lately?
M: I've seen it, like, three times... I'm a big fan. I own it.

Mischa and her father had seen *E.T.* together before the cinematherapy intervention. Her father had used *E.T.*'s famous line, "I'll be right here" as a way for Mischa and her father to feel connected during Mischa's vacation with her mother. Therefore, the scene in which E.T. and Elliott part served as a helpful coping strategy for this family during a short separation.

Author! Author!; *Kramer vs. Kramer.* Mischa mentioned that she liked *Author! Author!*, but did not go into details. She did not discuss *Kramer vs. Kramer* in the interview.

Claire

"Yeah, cause it always leads to something else. 'Cause we were just talking about the movie, and then all of a sudden it came back to my father [laughs]."

Themes which were found frequently across the cinematherapy intervention with Claire will be discussed.

Themes associated with Projection
1. Not knowing what is going to happen
2. Following through
3. Talking and spending time together
4. Trustworthiness of parenting

5. Identification
6. Identifying emotions
7. Silent viewing of films
8. Increased sharing
9. Difficulty coping
10. Needing to talk
11. Chooses talk

12. Opinions about cinematherapy, films, and specificity of issue match

Projection

Claire attributed thoughts and motivations to characters frequently (41 times throughout the intervention). Generally, Claire's attributions were prompted by the researcher's questions about what a character might be thinking. Sometimes Claire's attributions were consistent with the information provided directly in the film. More frequently, however, Claire's explanations went beyond the information provided in the film, and seemed to consist of her own projected concerns. Claire related many scenes to her difficult relationship with her parents, particularly her father. In the last session in which we watched film clips, Claire recognized that she often ended up talking about her own life when we discussed the scenes.

C: Yeah, cause it always leads to something else. 'Cause we were just talking about the movie, and then all of a sudden it came back to my father [laughs].

The following themes frequently occurred in Claire's attributions of what characters were thinking: not knowing what is going to happen; following through; talking and spending time together; and trustworthiness of parenting.

Not knowing what is going to happen. Claire often thought characters were concerned about what was going to happen to them next. Claire thought that Amy, the girl in *Fly Away Home,* was wondering at first, "After all the changes that's going to happen, what's going to happen next?" After meeting her father's girlfriend Claire thought Amy was again wondering what would happen next.

C: And then her dad didn't say anything about her [the girlfriend] and probably they're going to be confused and don't know what is going to happen.

Later, Claire thought that Elliott in *E.T.* was "scared about... everything that's going to be the outcome, what happens." She also thought that Elliot's mother was concerned about what was going to happen and whether her ex-husband would return from Mexico.

C: And that she doesn't even know what is gonna happen if he does come back, if he doesn't come back... same thing: what's going to be the outcome.

We then discussed how it felt to talk about one parent in front of the other, and Claire focused again on not knowing what the outcome would be.

C: That it's just not something you should say when it's very hard and not everything is finished yet. Like if the dad is going to do anything, like if he's going to come back or not.

The father was on vacation with his girlfriend in Mexico and there was no indication in the film that the father would be returning to the family or marriage in *E.T.* Claire seemed to have projected her own concern onto Elliott's situation: Claire's parents had been separated for two years, but were ambivalent about completing the divorce. Claire's father had moved out, but she was not sure whether the divorce would be finalized, sometimes wondering whether her father might return. During session four, Claire acknowledged that the most challenging part of the divorce was how long it took, and her anxiety about how it would turn out. Furthermore, as can be noticed in the following quote, by Claire's use of the word "we" instead of "they" she felt overly responsible for adult aspects of the divorce, such as finishing the paperwork, which was later addressed by the therapist.

C: ... but I can tell you it's harder... for... what we're going through: we're not fully divorced yet. They haven't done the paperwork. We haven't finished it.

Following through. Another theme was whether an adult would "follow through." For example, after Amy arrived at her father's house in *Fly Away Home*, Claire thought that Amy might be worried about whether her father would follow through with caring for her.

C: And she might... not... know... if her dad is going to follow through... if he's going to... be right on track with her.

After Amy met the father's girlfriend, Claire wondered again whether the girlfriend would follow through. When questioned by the researcher about what following through meant to her, Claire described it as talking and interacting with Amy.

C: So, she's probably nervous about what's going to happen with um, his girlfriend, if she's going to follow through, too.
R: Follow through, in what way?
C: Like actually talking to her and just... basically... just interacting with her and talking.

Talking and spending time together. Claire often focused on whether a character's parent would talk and interact with the character enough. After arriving at her father's house, Claire thought Amy was not sure whether her father would spend time talking with her.

C: ...and um... um.. just [sighs loudly and pauses] just fully talk to her, and [sighs] um, that's basically it.

There was heaviness to Claire's communication of Amy's concern expressed by her sighing twice when wondering whether Amy's father would talk to her.

After watching the scenes from *Fly Away Home,* the researcher asked Claire to tell what she thought would happen if she were to make up the ending. Claire had two alternative endings to her story and in the ending where everything turns out well, it seemed to hinge on the family being able to talk together and get along together.

C: Um, I think the family would finally get, like, they would be able to talk to each other and actually get along. And they'll be able to keep the geese, and they'll take care of it and raise it and then finally when she gets older... then the geese will finally get older [laughs] and so they may have to give it away... So, probably they'll be a great family or it could go the other way round. It could be bad, they wouldn't be able to have the geese, and they will have a bad life [laughs] but then at the end, they'll probably get along, because that's what every movie does [laughs] basically. Um, then they'll be fine as a family and raise more geese or just anything.

The researcher asked Claire what would make the difference between the happier ending and the not so happy ending. Again, she focused on family communication as what would make the difference in the story's outcome (italics added). In the unhappy ending, the girlfriend turns out to be mean, which the father finds out after he has already gotten married to her, leading to another divorce with which Amy has to cope. A repetitive theme for Claire seemed a concern that communication would be lacking and fear that the adult figure (the girlfriend, in this case) would turn out to not be nice or would be untrustworthy.

C: Um, she'll be able to, like, *actually communicate with each other*, that's the good one. Maybe the geese will probably be bringing them together to raise them. And the other way around *the girlfriend is actually mean* [laughs] and then, they have a wedding and get married, then it goes all horrible and then the dad finally finds out that it she's really mean. And then they'll have a divorce *again* so that she'll try to cope with that [laughs] and it will be horrible. And then they'll try to have their own family.

During session two, Claire suggested that Nemo and his father would be able to relax more on the first day of school if they spent more time together.

C: I mean like he could do more open things with him and Nemo. So his dad can do more things... Like you would go places that he might think would be dangerous like, you know how he couldn't go to the open water, 'cause he had a bad fin or something [laughs] and that he could maybe go out in the open and meet other fish.
R: Together.
C: Yeah, and maybe have their own little school of fish, and they can go discover things.
R: That's a wonderful idea.
C: 'Cause then they could be safe all together.

Claire's response showed both a creative and likely effective coping strategy to reduce Nemo and his father's anxiety on the first day of school, as well as her own projected concern about wanting to spend more time with her father. Perhaps Claire felt that if her own father did more with her, she might have been less worried about school, home, and social life.

In the fifth session, we watched a scene from *E.T.* in which Elliott mentioned in front of his mother that his father was in Mexico with his girlfriend. Elliot's mother looked upset and

stated that her ex-husband did not even like Mexico. When asked what the mother was thinking, Claire thought that she was questioning why the father did not go places with her or spend time with the kids. Claire's response went beyond what the mother stated, and while true that the mother seemed disappointed, there is no evidence in the film that the father had not spent time with the mother and children when they were all still together.

C: Um, that why didn't the father do that with her and why didn't he do the things that she wanted to do, like go places and travel and even spend time with the kids, or anything like that.

Claire's projection seemed directly related to her own and her mother's frustration with Claire's father for not taking the children places, and spending little time interacting with Claire.

Trustworthiness of parenting. Claire's responses often showed concern about the trustworthiness of parental figures in terms of providing genuineness, caring, and competency. For example, Amy's father's girlfriend gave Amy a gift when she met Amy in *Fly Away Home.* Claire described the gift as a bribe, seeming to doubt that the girlfriend might have wanted to welcome Amy genuinely. The girlfriend was portrayed as a kind and helpful character throughout the film, therefore Claire's response seemed more a projection.

C: She is there and she's trying to bribe her by giving her gift [Claire laughs] and um.

Furthermore, when asked how Amy can cope with all the changes she was going through, Claire mentioned that Amy should try to do anything she can to make her father and his girlfriend like her. Claire did not realize that Amy's father would naturally love her, but instead believed that Amy had to try hard to make him and his girlfriend even like her. It was evident in the film that Amy's father did care for her, as did the girlfriend, so it seemed more a projection of Claire's own insecurity in feeling cared about by her parents.

C: ...so she's probably going to have to try to... at least listen to the girlfriend and try to talk her dad... try to just [sighs]... try anything that she can to get them both to like her.

In response to *Kramer vs. Kramer,* Claire questioned the father's competence, which made sense considering whether Billy's father is suitable to take care of him is a major question in the film. In one scene, Billy did not like the Salisbury steak his father had cooked for dinner, and began eating ice cream instead. Billy's father became angry when it was difficult to redirect Billy, finally carrying him screaming to his room. When asked what the father might have been thinking, Claire replied:

C: Yeah, he thinks the mom will take care of Billy, but the mom isn't there. So... he's just kind of like, what do I do? Do I get the ice cream from him? Do I put him in his room? Or do I just let him eat it? So I think he has all these things that he has in his head and is just wondering what's going to happen next.

Claire's response seemed possible, though Billy's father did not state any of the above questions, and actually seemed clear that Billy's behavior was not acceptable. However, Claire doubted that Billy's father was capable of finding a way to discipline Billy on his own, and stated, "He needs to go to counseling [laughs]." Claire felt Billy's father needed counseling to develop parenting skills, which was reminiscent of Claire wishing her own father would attend his own counseling to learn how to interact with her better. However, Claire felt uncomfortable with her father joining her in therapy, and he did not want to attend therapy on his own at the time of the cinematherapy intervention.

Identification

There were seven times when Claire identified directly with a scene or character. While a scene from *Finding Nemo* played, the following exchange occurred:

C: He's like a mother, an overprotective mother [referring to Nemo's father].
R: Like an overprotective mother.
C: Yeah, like my mother [laughs]. Like, I'll walk down the street and she'll be like, "call me when you get there."

Later, after we watched a scene from *Kramer vs. Kramer,* Claire talked about how her own father works a lot, similar to Billy's father. She went on to explain that her mother still buys groceries for her father, which is also similar to the scene in which 6-year-old Billy has to show the father which groceries to buy after the mother has left.

C: My dad works. He puts work first, let's just say that [laughs].

R: That's kind of like this dad.

C: Yeah... he doesn't really pay attention... he just asked my mom what to buy at the store, and she'll buy it and he doesn't end up eating it. And he'll just... basically do the same thing... just work and not pay attention about anything else except work.

The researcher asked Claire how Billy might cope with his father working a lot. Claire did not know how Billy could cope, because it was so similar to her situation, and she was having difficulty coping with the same problem.

C: I really don't know because it's more like my situation, too. So I really don't know either [laughs].

When Billy acted out by eating the ice cream instead of his dinner, Claire compared that to her own brother's behavior.

C: Yeah, I was thinking about it as soon... as like... he said, "I hate it," as soon as I heard it. I said, "That's my brother." [Claire laughs.]

Identifying Emotions

Claire did not identify emotions frequently during the intervention, generally describing what a character was thinking, rather than what he or she was feeling. The emotions she did identify, while seemingly accurate, tended to be "worried" or "nervous." In *Fly Away Home,* Claire described Amy as "kind of nervous" and Nemo's father as "worried." She described Billy's emotion as "depressed" in *Kramer vs. Kramer* after Billy received the letter from his mother that she would be leaving him with his father.

C: ... she kind of just left him, just... left him there, just to sob.

R: Mm-hm. Just to sob.

C: Yeah, sob and um... just... basically lay there, and... all depressed.

While Billy did look extremely sad in the scene, it is notable that Claire chose the stronger emotion of "depressed." Further, she stated that Billy's mother left him there to sob. Though he appeared sad, Billy did not cry in this particular scene. Again, it seemed that there may have been somewhat of a projected emotional state, considering Claire had symptoms of both anxiety and depression.

Silent Viewing of Films

Claire watched almost all of the scenes silently. She generally had little facial expression when watching the scenes, at times appearing uncomfortable. There were a few times when Claire appeared to glance at the researcher in the reflection of the laptop screen. Occasionally, Claire laughed at a funny scene, like when the goslings chased after Amy, as she taught them to fly.

Claire dialogued with the film on only three occasions throughout the intervention. On one of these occasions, Claire talked throughout the entire length of the scene, in response to the scene in which Nemo's father drops him off for the first day of school in *Finding Nemo*. Claire began by identifying with Nemo's father's over protectiveness, and stated that he is similar to her mother, and then continued in a lengthy dialogue about her own situation, which will be discussed in a later section. She did not appear to be interested in watching the rest of the scene, as it seemed more important to her to share about her own situation.

Increased Sharing

Claire was able to share about her concerns in therapy, even without the stimulus of a scene from a film. There were times when a scene may have prompted Claire to share an aspect of her life that may not have otherwise arisen. For example, she seemed to engage with Amy

raising the geese in *Fly Away Home* and these scenes prompted further sharing of a positive experience and affect.

C: [Laughs] That's cool. We're hatching geese... or chickens in our school. We just started yesterday.

This sharing was a positive moment, because Claire did not share positive experiences from her life frequently, and tended to relay problems. The scene enabled Claire to recall and express a recent positive experience.

Claire identified immediately with Nemo's overprotective father stating that her own mother often worries about her as well. Claire talked for the entire length of the scene sharing the ways in which her mother both worries about her, and contributes to her worries. Claire and her mother watched crime and ghost television shows, which Claire enjoyed at the time, because this was one of the main ways she and her mother spend together. However, Claire shared that she often felt worried after the shows. Claire shared the plot from a frightening show she and her mother had watched recently. Claire's telling of the plot was an opportunity for the therapist to gain an understanding of what may be contributing to Claire's anxiety (frightening content) as well as a basis for understanding some of her concerns through which parts of the plot she chose to share. Watching the scene with Nemo's worried father provided a prompt for Claire to share some of her worries, and the opportunity for the researcher to provide psychoeducation about how frightening television shows can increase worrying and anxiety. The researcher suggested to Claire and her mother that perhaps they could choose some different types of shows, so that they could still have their bonding time, but that Claire would not be left with additional fears afterward.

In *The Parent Trap,* two girls meet and soon discover that they are actually twins who had been separated at birth, with one going with each of their parents after the divorce. Claire

shared that she thought it would be helpful to have a peer to talk about the divorce with,

specifying that it would be most helpful to talk with a peer who had "the same exact problem."

C: But I think it's a lot easier when you have another person who's going through the same
       thing. And you can talk to them about it and things like that, so. That's what I wish for:
       somebody that could have like the same exact problem. The same exact thing going on,
       so I could talk about it, but...

Claire's sharing helped the researcher to realize how lonely and isolated Claire felt about the

divorce, since none of her friends were going through a similar experience, nor did she have a

sibling close in age. Watching scenes about similar aged children experiencing divorce did not

appear to make Claire feel less isolated. Therefore, based on Claire's sharing, the researcher

thought a referral to a parental divorce therapy group might be most helpful for Claire.

Difficulty Coping

Claire was able to identify ways of coping, however, often perceived a barrier between

herself and accessing those ways of coping in her own life. For example, in response to *Fly Away*

Home, Claire explained how comforting pets can be. Further, when she shared her story about

how the film would end, she even felt that Amy's geese had the power to bring the family

together, "maybe the geese will probably be bringing them together to raise them." Claire

described the comforting quality of pets:

C: It's just comforting, like it is totally comforting. Like you can pet them, you can hold
       them, you can lay with them. You can do basically anything with them, you can play with
       them; you can just do anything. And then you can just [sighs] just have fun with them.

However, Claire explained that she was not able to have any pets since the family might be

moving, and in the past had to give away a pet that she had previously had, because it was

difficult to take care of it. Claire's lack of a pet may explain why she sighed when explaining

how beneficial pets are. However, Claire did show an ability to cope, which was probably

comforting to her, by playing with her friend's cats when she would go to her friend's house.

C: Yeah, that's why I really want one because my friend has cats, and she's always thinking why am I always playing with the cats instead of her. So [sighs] I'm like, well, I don't have any cats.

As mentioned in the previous section, Claire felt isolated in that she did not have any peers with whom to share her concerns about the divorce. Claire recognized that sharing with a peer could be an extremely helpful way of coping. Unfortunately, Claire did not perceive herself as a social person, even though she hoped to have closer friends. At one point during the intervention, Claire shared her perception of herself as not a social person.

C: Um... certain kids that are more into... the social people... I am not social.
R: What do you mean?
C: Like I don't like to go to like... like I'm going to be moving soon and I'm going to be going a new school and I'm very nervous about that. I do not want to go to a new school, like to meet new people... I don't like to meet new people. I'm not very social.

However, in the fourth session, Claire shared the exciting news that she was going to be spending time with a friend outside of school.

C: Like I'm starting to get socialized with my friend.
R: Good!
G: Me and my friend are going to the movies this weekend.
R: Yay.
C: On Saturday.
R: Oh good, how did that come about? Did you ask her?
C: Well me and my friend made it up. And we're thinking about going, so she asked her mom and I asked my mom and my mom said yes, her mom said yes. So we're going this weekend, but my mom and her mom need to talk about it. [Laughs] So it's going to be fun.

Clearly, Claire was excited to spend time with her friend, and hopefully, feeling better about her friendships would help Claire cope better with her family troubles. Claire's affect brightened noticeably when sharing her plans with her friend. It is interesting to note that the shared activity was going to be going to the movies together, which was of course, what we had been doing in the therapy sessions. One possibility is that by watching the films together with the researcher, Claire might have become more comfortable in planning to go to the movies with a friend.

The importance of talking to Claire as a way of coping was evident in many of her responses, although she often wondered whether a parent would spend time talking with a child. While Claire did not want to write a letter when asked, in response to *Kramer vs. Kramer,* she shared what she thought Billy would say to his mother if he wrote her a letter, and what would change as a result of the letter. She explained that Billy could write his mother a letter telling her that he missed her and wished she was there. And she felt that Billy's mother would want to talk with him and call him more frequently after receiving the letter. Further, she had the awareness that talking about feelings could improve Billy's relationship with both of his parents.

C: Um... I think he would say that, I miss you and I wish that you were here. And maybe that when his mom gets the letter that she'll want to talk to him more and probably call him and get more social with him. And then they'll probably feel better about it. And, um... maybe just, like the dad will help him write the letter and just ask him how he feels. And then he can have a relationship with his son also in the same way. [Pause] Just talk about it [laughs].

Needing to Talk

As previously mentioned, Claire attributed wanting to talk and interact more with a parent to the characters in the films frequently. Further, when she told how she thought the ending would go in *Fly Away Home,* she focused on them "finally" being "able to talk to each other and actually get along." In session three, when asked what Billy might write to his mother; Claire focused on how when Billy's mother received the letter "she'll want to talk to him more."

Claire, herself, also had a strong need to talk. She was extremely verbal and had no difficulty sharing her problems with the researcher. As the intervention progressed, Claire shared many concerns about how the divorce was taking so long, her relationship with her father, and social, and school related problems. Claire did not see all of the scenes for any of the films because she tended to give extremely long answers, which lead to discussions about her own

problems. She had a strong need to share about her own problems, so generally the researcher let her continue, instead of suggesting another scene.

Claire recognized that there was a lot of verbal sharing in the sessions, because at the end of one session, when the researcher explained that the time was up, Claire responded as follows.

R: Well, we're all out of time for today.
C: We were talking about stuff, so...

Claire's interest in watching the scenes from the third session forward seemed to lessen. It had increasingly begun to feel like a disruption to redirect her from talking about her problems to watch another scene. By session five, Claire began to focus more of her sharing on her dissatisfaction with her relationship with her father. When asked about the first scene in *E.T.*, Claire immediately related it to her relationship with her father and shared the problems in their relationship for much of the rest of the session. She was upset and tearful about the difficulty in getting along with her father, their frequent arguing, and felt that he did not spend enough time with her either talking or doing activities. The researcher concluded that it was more important to address these immediate concerns, than continue watching the scenes. We needed to discuss ways to try to improve Claire's communication with her father. The researcher also asked Claire if her father could join the session, so that the researcher could help Claire communicate some of her concerns to her father; but, Claire was uncomfortable with that.

As the session neared the end, the researcher identified that Claire seemed to need to talk and questioned whether Claire might not want to watch the film clips for the final session. Claire agreed that she would prefer to talk during sessions than watch the final film.

C: Yeah, cause it always leads to something else. 'Cause we were just talking about the
       movie, and then all of a sudden it came back to my father [laughs].

Claire's statement lead us to discuss how it seemed that Claire's main concern was more about her relationship with her father than with coping with the divorce. Claire responded that she was not upset about the divorce.

C: Yeah, I don't really care if they get divorced. I *want* them to get the divorce.

The researcher terminated the cinematherapy intervention with Claire after session five, but did complete the final interview. The researcher felt that it was more crucial to address the family issues with Claire and her parents, and that additional film clips would not be beneficial at that time. Further, Claire had a strong need to talk, and it was difficult, and probably countertherapeutic to redirect her to the films. Third, one of the main goals of using the film clips was to stimulate dialogue, and this is not necessary with Claire.

During the final interview, Claire explained that she was not normally such a talkative person, but that counseling provided her the chance to talk about what was bothering her. Claire explained that "social" kids may prefer using film clips in therapy, and that she is not a social person.

R: Okay, how you think other kids might think about using movie clips in therapy?
C: Um... certain kids that are more into... the social people... I am not social.
R: So why do you think social kids might like it more?
C: Um, because... they just see it as more like... this is my life. And that... yeah, I have this life, but I can also talk about it with you. Like, I don't want to talk about it with my friends. Like I'll say a couple of words about it and then I'll just be like, okay, yeah. So we'll move on.

Claire explained that "social" kids might identify more with the scenes than she did. Further, since she did not want to talk about her problems with friends, it was important that she talk about it in therapy, as opposed to spending time watching scenes with which she did not always relate. She continued on to explain that outside of therapy, she rarely talked about what bothered her.

C: Not most people. Like I'm always like a one-word person... outside of this place. I don't know why. It just is.

R: Really? Everywhere?

C: So if I'm, like, talking to my dad, and he's like, "You want to do this tomorrow" and I'm like, "Yeah, sure" and then just be silent. And he's like, "Thanks for the talk, Claire." I'm just not a talkative person that way.

Therefore, it seemed important that Claire was able to use therapy as a place to talk as much as she needed to, since she did not have that opportunity frequently in her outside life.

Chooses Talk

Each time Claire was offered the opportunity to respond to a scene with an expressive activity, she preferred to respond by talking. For example, in session three, the researcher asked Claire if she wanted to write a letter to Billy or his parents in *Kramer vs. Kramer*. She said that she preferred to "just say it." She explained that Billy's father could help him write a letter to his mother, and that would help him tell his mother how he was feeling. She felt that Billy and his father could also become closer if his father helped him with the letter. Therefore, based on Claire's story, it seemed that she understood that writing a letter could be helpful, however she did not want to do so herself. The researcher suggested that Claire could write her own father a letter, telling him some of her concerns about the relationship, since she had suggested in her story that it might be helpful for Billy. Claire explained that she would feel uncomfortable writing a letter.

R: When you talk about that, I'm wondering if you ever thought about writing your dad a letter or note to show him some of the things that are important to you or some things that he could do so that you feel like he's trying harder to talk with you and spend time with you?

C: No, I really wouldn't want to.

R: It would feel...?

C: It would feel uncomfortable. I mean like I wouldn't even write a letter to my mom about that. I really don't write letters; I just kind of talk about it.

While Claire stated that she "just kind of talk[s] about it" this statement contradicts her previous conversation about how she rarely does talk about her feelings with her father; however she seemed to have shifted over to discussing her mom, with whom she felt more comfortable talking. For now, she seemed unwilling to try alternative means of communicating with her father, like writing a letter.

Claire was offered multiple opportunities to use art, drama, or writing, but always preferred talking responses. As was discussed in the previous section, Claire was a highly verbal girl, with a strong need to share through talking. Therefore, Claire preferred to spend the time together by talking with the researcher than by engaging in expressive responses. For example, the researcher asked Claire how the twins might spend the day when they each meet the parent from whom they have been estranged in *The Parent Trap*, and she chose to respond with talking.

R: Or you can draw it or tell a story about it...
C: I'll just say it...

Opinions about Cinematherapy, Films, and Specificity of Issue Match

Opinions about cinematherapy. While Claire initially had a positive response to the cinematherapy intervention, by the third or fourth session, her interest in watching the scenes decreased, and she showed a stronger need to talk about her family problems directly. When asked what she thought about using movies in therapy she responded that though she thought "it was kind of cool at first" she really did not think much about the divorce while watching the scenes.

C: Um... for me, it didn't really matter. I thought it was kind of cool at first and then we saw the movies and answered questions and I mean it was just kind of... that. I mean, I didn't really think about it as divorce. I just kind of watched the movie and um, that was basically it.
R: So it didn't make you think about coping with the divorce very much.
C: No, not really [laughs].

Claire also explained that films can "sorta and not sorta" help kids cope with a problem like divorce, depending on their family situation: with some families, like Claire's, the coping strategies presented in the film were not effective because the qualities of the characters and her family members were different.

C: Yeah, I mean in movies they always say, "oh, you can try this way," but it's certain families that it works with. 'Cause with my family, it does not work with. Even if I try to take some things from the movies and stuff like that... it doesn't work [laughs].
R: Because it's a different situation?
C: It's different people, different um… qualities... and who they are... so it's different.

Opinions about films.

Fly Away Home. Claire thought that *Fly Away Home* was the most helpful of all the films, but had difficulty explaining what she liked about it. Further, by stating, "It was just a movie," Claire seemed to minimize how helpful or meaningful a movie could be to her.

R: Were there any movies that you did like or thought were more helpful than others?
C: I think the first movie.
R: *Fly Away Home?*
C: Yeah, I think that was one.
R: What did you like about it?
C: It is that it was kind of... okay. I don't know. It was just a movie. I don't have much more to say about it.

The Parent Trap. Claire had seen this film frequently in the past and stated, "It was my favorite movie when I was younger." The statement that *The Parent Trap* was her favorite movie when she was younger might have implied that she felt too old for it now, though she did not state that specifically. She thought the film was funny, especially when the twins set up the father's girlfriend who had been mean to them.

E.T. Claire had seen *E.T.* "dozens of times" and stated that she "loved" it. She did not share any more thoughts about *E.T.*

Finding Nemo; Kramer vs. Kramer; Author! Author! Claire did not share any opinions about these three films.

Specificity of issue match. Since Claire's presenting concern was her parents' divorce, it seemed that she would be an appropriate candidate for the cinematherapy intervention. However, as the sessions progressed, she did not appear too concerned about the divorce, instead focusing on her relationship with her parents. During the fifth session, Claire acknowledged that she wanted her parents to get divorced, and that the divorce did not bother her. She communicated that her main concern was her relationship with her father, and that it would be most helpful if a friend had a similar problem and they could have talked about it together.

Therefore, one possibility is that the issue match was not ideal for Claire. Perhaps if the film clips had been selected about challenging relationships with parents, specifically fathers, maybe Claire would have found the intervention more helpful. However, this is questionable, since many of the films did portray challenging aspects of getting along with the father figures for various reasons. However, Claire's strong need to talk about her relationship with her father made talk therapy more appropriate for her at the time of the intervention. Further, since Claire had expressed a need to talk about her problems with peers with similar experiences, she was also referred to a therapy group for younger teenage girls.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of a six-week cinematherapy

intervention in individual therapy with three preadolescent aged children whose parents were

divorcing. Research questions included how would the participants respond to the use of film

clips about divorce; what themes would emerge in their responses; how would the themes

compare to the current literature in cinematherapy; and what would the therapeutic outcomes be.

In this section, the themes which emerged from the participants' treatment will be

synthesized and discussed in the context of relevant theories in the cinematherapy and

bibliotherapy literature. The most frequently occurring themes across the participants will be

discussed. Additionally, noteworthy themes that occurred for only two of the participants will

also be discussed. New concepts which emerged in the study, including interactive viewing,

which have not been presented previously in the cinematherapy literature will be explored. The

themes which will be discussed include identifying emotions; projection; identification;

interactive viewing, expressive, and silent viewing of films; increased sharing; bridge from

therapy to home; identification of coping skills; expressive responses leading to catharsis and

expanding the metaphor; sharing of personally meaningful stories from films and television;

opinions about cinematherapy and; opinions about films. First, the potential limitations and rival

explanations for some of the changes undergone by the participants will be discussed.

Limitations

The researcher served in the roles of both therapist and researcher which can introduce

greater bias necessitating an exploration of personal biases (Yin, 2003). My personal bias in

designing the study is that films and stories can facilitate positive self-growth including changes

in attitudes, beliefs, and coping. Therefore it was necessary to approach the transcripts in an open-minded way, coding as themes emerged organically from the dialogue. The purpose of presenting quotes from the dialogue is so that readers can draw their own conclusions about how well sections of transcripts support the themes. Sections were also shared with my doctoral committee as a form of peer debriefing, in which they gave feedback about alternative explanations which were considered and incorporated into the final report.

Furthermore, the researcher is trained as a poetry and expressive arts therapist. Therefore, my expertise is in the area of selecting appropriate stories and films, and analyzing creative writing responses. While the process of the children's visual art responses and play sequences were detailed and analyzed in the report, the visual art products were not analyzed like an art therapist might. The contributions of art and expressive therapists toward designing and analyzing expressive follow-up activities to biblio and cinematherapy would be a useful collaboration for future research.

Another limitation was a lack of diversity in the three cases, other than children of both genders being included. Cases were selected on the basis of some similarities to each other to contribute to replication of findings. However, Caucasian, lower middle to middle class semi-rural children were more accessible to the researcher, which also influenced the selection. It will be important to address diverse populations in future studies. Furthermore, while both genders were represented in the films, all of the characters in the non-animated films were Caucasian Americans, other than Amy in *Fly Away Home,* who had grown up in Australia and Annie in *The Parent Trap,* who was British. It is important to select films on which client characteristics match as closely as possible to promote identification, so it would be even more important to select films with characters of different ethnicity for diverse clients. Furthermore, the films were

all commercially successful, mainstream American films. It might have been interesting to include a foreign or independent film to increase the diversity of experiences. However, it was noted that the children tended to react the most favorably to films which they had heard of before, so it is unknown how including a more obscure film would have impacted the intervention.

In addition, because the participants were also my therapy clients, I was motivated that therapy be effective. Further, when therapy needs unrelated to the research arose, ethically it was necessary that I attend to those before returning to the research protocol.

Rival Explanations

It is also important to consider other potential explanations for any therapeutic outcomes (Yin, 2003). For example, the participants may have changed over time and with increasing maturity.

Furthermore, in Zach and Mischa's cases, the ongoing therapy relationship with the therapist-researcher might have influenced therapeutic change positively. Some of the positive benefits experienced by Zach and Mischa may have been attributable to other aspects of the therapy, like the positive working relationship that they had with the therapist prior to the intervention. Zach and Mischa were generally more receptive to the cinematherapy intervention throughout the entire intervention; whereas as previously stated, Claire decided to return to talk therapy after the fifth session. One possible interpretation is that the amount of time in therapy prior to cinematherapy contributed to the children's enjoyment and efficacy of the intervention. Claire felt she needed to talk through her issues without spending more time watching the film clips. She also had a problematic family situation that required a shift in the therapist's focus to help her address. One possibility is that since the other two participants had already been in

therapy for many months prior to cinematherapy, they no longer needed to talk as much in therapy since some of their presenting concerns had already been addressed.

As previously noted, Zach and Mischa were more engaged with expressive responses that was Claire. It is possible that being slightly older, Claire preferred talking to expressive responses. It is also important to consider the placement of the art and play materials, which were located on a nearby shelf. Perhaps if the materials were more immediately accessible on the desk while the children were watching films, Mischa may have used the materials more readily during or after the film clips.

<div align="center">Discussion of Themes</div>

Identifying Emotions

Hynes and Hynes-Berry (1994) stated that one of the benefits of bibliotherapy is that participants can improve their capacity to recognize and express their own feelings. Sullivan and Strang (2002-03) added that participants can increase the ability to perceive and respond appropriately to the emotions of others, an important socio-emotional skill. Through watching films, Zach became better able to identify characters' feelings in an increasingly nuanced way. Ultimately, he transferred that skill by increasing his ability to identify emotions of individuals in his own life, based on facial expressions.

Mischa was able to accurately identify characters' emotions from the first session, and this skill remained stable throughout the intervention. She showed an ability that was sophisticated for her age, conveying emotions that were complex and multi-faceted. She frequently identified characters' emotions spontaneously without being prompted, often using characters' facial expressions and body language as cues to what the characters were feeling. Mischa's ability to identify emotions was one of her strong coping skills.

Claire did not identify emotions frequently, and at one time used the stronger term "depressed" and "sobb[ing]" to describe a child who appeared sad, but was not crying. It seemed that Claire may have projected some of her own strong emotions onto Billy. While Claire did not improve the ability and frequency of emotion perception during the intervention, the researcher gained information about how Claire might have felt.

Sullivan and Strang (2002-2003) explained how books can be used to help children in schools develop emotional intelligence. They suggest using carefully selected books to have children observe and identify facial expressions and nonverbal behaviors that suggest feelings. In the current study, the researcher used films to assess children's ability to identify emotions accurately. One important finding which emerged from this study is that films have the additional property, beyond books, of showing facial expressions and nonverbal behavior which convey emotion in a constantly moving, life-like way. The films were a powerful medium which helped the participants further develop the ability to identify and express emotions. Therefore, the use of films to promote socio-emotional intelligence by helping children learn to identify and express emotions, by pointing out body and facial cues, is a promising new tool warranting further research.

Projection

Interestingly, when the themes from this study were compared to various theories, they most closely support the original process of change proposed by Shrodes' (1950) in her dissertation: identification, projection, catharsis, and insight (Hebert & Neumeister, 2001; Pardeck, 1990a; Pardeck & Pardeck, 1989). Projection is described as our thoughts and perceptions about the world and people, as well as when we attribute our own motives or emotions to someone else (Shrodes, 1950). Wolz (2005) explains how when viewing films, we

project disowned or unrecognized parts of ourselves onto characters, which sometimes can lead to identification with a character. Through this process we become more whole by integrating both positive and negative aspects of ourselves, which had previously been disowned. All of the children identified thoughts that the characters might be thinking in ways that correlated with the information provided in the films. Additionally, each child also projected his or her concerns onto the characters to a greater or lesser extent. For Zach and Mischa, projection was generally observed in response to the researcher's questions about what a character might be thinking. Usually, Zach and Mischa's attributions closely correlated with the story, and seemed to match the data that had been provided in the film so far. There were also times when Zach and Mischa attributed thoughts to characters beyond what was presented in the film and often these projections contained information about their concerns about their own parents' divorce.

The most frequent theme in Claire's responses to cinematherapy was projection. Claire's explanations of what a character was thinking frequently went beyond the information provided in the film, and consisted of her own projected concerns about the divorce and her difficult relationship with her father. Claire acknowledged the frequency of her projections by stating: "'Cause we were just talking about the movie, and then all of a sudden it came back to my father [laughs]."

The participants' projected thoughts provided information about what some of their own fears or concerns might be and created an opportunity for the researcher to discuss their concerns within the metaphor of the story and characters, increasing the likelihood that they could integrate new knowledge while bypassing conscious resistance.

Identification

Through identification in bibliotherapy, clients recognize similarities between themselves and characters and begin to identify with a character or situation (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1989; Tyson & Tyson, 2000). All of the participants identified with some of the characters' situations, and revealed some concerns that they had not previously mentioned, after seeing a character experiencing something similar. Zach frequently identified with characters he saw, and was willing to discuss feelings in the context of the characters' situations. Berns (2003) stated that children often have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings about a loss. Program facilitators in grief and loss groups using bibliotherapy found that children are often better able to share feelings when talking about them through a character, than speaking about themselves directly (Berns, 2003). When discussing a film in therapy, a therapist has two choices; she can either ask direct questions about the relevance to the client's life, or can ask more indirect questions, keeping the discussion more metaphorical (Sharp, Smith, & Cole, 2002). When the therapist chooses to ask metaphorical questions by inquiring about the characters, client resistance to exploration can be reduced (Sharp, Smith, & Cole, 2002). For Zach, it was easier to talk about his own feelings in the context of the characters'. When asked how a character felt or if other children might feel similarly to the character, Zach often stated how he felt about an issue pertaining to divorce. Prior to the cinematherapy intervention, Zach was reluctant to share his feelings about the divorce, similar to many children his age. The characters' viewpoints provided access to other children's views about divorce, almost like the presence of other children in group therapy would provide. Seeing what other characters were experiencing contributed to a sense of universalization. It is possible that observing similarly aged characters

expressing their own reactions normalized the feelings, making it easier to share with the researcher.

There were six occasions throughout the intervention in which Mischa verbalized that she identified directly with one of the characters. Some of the times Mischa identified with a character unearthed information about some of Mischa's challenging experiences with the divorce. Likewise, there were seven times that Claire spontaneously identified with a character, also revealing some of the problems that were bothering her. All three participants' identification with characters enabled the researcher to provide psychoeducation and support in the context of the films.

Interactive Viewing, Expressive, and Silent Viewing of Films

A new concept to emerge in the study was that of interactive viewing, which brings attention to the way children watch and interact with films and media while. Interactive viewing with films was a theme which had not been identified in previous cinematherapy research. Interactive viewing in cinematherapy will be defined as spontaneously narrating, sharing emotional reactions, interacting expressively, asking questions about or interacting with a film, its characters, or the therapist while watching a scene. The participants watched the films in different ways. Zach and Mischa watched the scenes in more active ways like interactive viewing, while Claire typically watched scenes silently. Zach and Mischa's dialogue with the films occurred naturally and spontaneously at various points in the films. Claire also dialogued with a scene on three occasions.

For Zach, there were instances of narration, in which he verbalized events as they were occurring, much like a narrator would. Furthermore, Zach engaged frequently in a dialogue with the films, in which he spontaneously commented and opined about events and characters'

actions; spoke directly to the characters; stated his emotional reactions to what was occurring; asked questions about the film to the researcher; and interacted with the film in an imaginative way. Through Zach's engagement with the films and characters, he became almost like another character temporarily living within the context of the film. In a few specific instances, he weighed a character's choices and stated whether or not he would approach the dilemma in a similar way.

Mischa showed diversity in how she watched and interacted with the films. She watched some scenes silently and dialogued with other scenes. Mischa provided information about her likes and dislikes as she dialogued. By the final three sessions, Mischa also began viewing expressively, by singing along and waving her arms in the air at times. During emotionally intense scenes, she sometimes selected a puppet to place in her lap, or set up near the screen, as though the puppet was watching the scene with her.

Claire watched almost all of the scenes quietly, with little expression in her face. Claire did laugh occasionally during humorous scenes and there were three occasions in which she dialogued with a film.

The participants, especially Zach and Mischa, also drew the researcher into the dialogue by asking questions and providing facts related to the topic. Through the interactive viewing process, the participants and the researcher were deeply engaged with the unfolding drama. Interactive viewing provided an additional way to interact with and to learn more about what the participants liked, and what their family lives were like. Interactive viewing provided another opportunity for the researcher to respond to the participants' questions about the events and provide psychoeducation in a way that may have been easier to assimilate new knowledge about divorce. One possibility is that it was easier for the children to speak about their concerns to the

researcher when they were both facing forward, watching a film, as this stance may have provided enough distance and a shared activity for emotional safety. Pollack (1998) discussed a concept he humorously called "car therapy" in his book about connecting with boys. Pollack shared the story of one mother who found that her son was much more likely to share what was going on with him when riding in the car together. In the car he could "just stop talking and look out the window if he wanted to- all of it created a setting where he felt more comfortable talking" (Pollack, 1998, p. 101). Pollack explained how boys often feel more comfortable talking when engaged in an activity with a parent. Based on Pollack's research and the concept of interactive viewing which emerged in this study, viewing scenes together may be a more comfortable way for children, especially boys, to open up to therapists.

Some researchers have suggested that viewers enter a somewhat dissociated state while watching films, allowing the films message to be received. Tyson et al. (2000) describe dissociation as the stage of cinematherapy when the client experiences the characters and stories as removed from his own life, and experiences a temporary dissociated state. Sharp et al. (2002) refer to the trancelike state that occurs when people watch films, sometimes forgetting their surroundings, time of day, or daily concerns. "Few other art forms pervade the consciousness of the individual to the same extent and with such power" (Tyson et al., 2000, p. 38). It is possible that this trancelike state can increase receptiveness to the film's messages which bypass normal defenses and resistances (Sharp, Smith, & Cole, 2002). Similarly, Wolz (2005) explains how films can be similar to guided visualization in that there can be an almost trance-like state during which viewers can receive messages and learn for others' experiences. This researcher noticed that additionally, the dissociated state allowed the participants to reveal some of their own concerns, ways of processing and assimilating information, and strengths while interactive

viewing with the films. For example, Mischa revealed that she possessed the construct of and liked a helpful teacher ray that provided comfort to fish that are nervous on their first day of school. Therefore, this researcher proposes that if individuals are more receptive to messages when in a dissociated viewing state, psychoeducation provided during the film may bypass natural resistance, because it essentially passes under the children's conscious radar.

Pritzker defined the term audience flow as "the experience of viewing a play, movie, dance work, television show, work of art, listening to music or poetry, reading a book, or other related activity, in an active and mentally engaged state that may allow insights and new perspectives to develop" (Pritzker, 2007, p. 110). Pritzer based the idea of audience flow on Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow in which a person fully absorbed in an intrinsically rewarding, appropriately challenging, often creative activity, sometimes loses awareness of the passing of time. Television viewing is frequently criticized as a passive, mindless activity, and Pritzer does not deny the potentially negative effects of watching too much television. However, he argues that there can be cognitive and psychological benefits of high quality television programming in which, "a 'conversation' develops between the viewer and the work that is so engaging that all sense of time is lost." While Pritzer described a "conversation" between the viewer and the work that apparently takes place in the viewer's head; the current study demonstrated that the participants externalized the conversation, involving the therapist in the dialogue. Therefore, interactive viewing should be explored further because through it we can offer a third "voice" in children's "conversations" with the media in which we can more deeply understand their concerns, ways of making sense of the events and processing information, and provide psychoeducation, new ways of coping or thinking about problems, validation, and empathy within the context of the film.

Increased Sharing

Films can be a catalyst in therapy, allowing clients to discuss topics they might otherwise feel uncomfortable discussing (Wedding & Niemiec, 2003). Many children find it difficult to verbalize their fears and sad feelings (Christie & McGrath, 1987). When a child is unable to discuss difficult experiences of loss, sometimes films can help the client express the situation (Tyson et al., 2000). All of the participants began to share on a deeper level during the intervention, which was encouraging since one reason for the choice of cinematherapy was because children of similar age to the participants often find it difficult to share verbally in therapy. Zach and Mischa, who had both been seen for months in therapy prior to the cinematherapy intervention, both began to share more specific events related to the divorce and their feelings about those events. Zach developed an increased value for the benefits of expressing feelings and became better able to articulate his feelings about the divorce.

Likewise, the combination of appropriate film clips and use of a puppet enabled Mischa to share the story of the painful events leading to her parents' divorce and her fears about the custody determination process. Sharing her story of the divorce was a pivotal point in Mischa's therapy, and was cathartic for Mischa in that her affect became brighter afterward and she became enthusiastic about her activities and social life following the increased sharing.

Claire was able to share verbally about her life, even prior using films in therapy. However, specific scenes enabled Claire to share aspects of her situation she might not have thought to share otherwise. Claire shared some positive aspects of her life when prompted by situations in scenes, and that seemed helpful since one of her presenting concerns was negative thinking. Sullivan and Strang (2002-03) stated that bibliotherapy can promote optimism among

other socio-emotional skills in the classroom. Likewise, cinematherapy seemed to help Claire identify and state positive aspects of her life, which hopefully brightened her outlook somewhat.

Bridge from Therapy to Home

One potential benefit of cinematherapy is that films are sometimes assigned to be watched at home and if other family members are present there can be increased communication and therapeutic impact on a family system (Calisch, 2001). In addition, the current study demonstrated that even showing film clips in therapy with children can serve as a bridge from therapy to home. For example, Mischa enjoyed the film *Fly Away Home* and that evening she and her mother rented the film to watch together at home. After the following session, Mischa's mother told the researcher that Mischa mentioned that she had watched *Finding Nemo* in a therapy session and that Mischa had explained to her how the film could be about separation and anxiety, and how to cope with it. Though they had watched *Finding Nemo* many times together in the past, Mischa's mother explained that she had never noticed those themes in the film, but now realized how many children's films may have therapeutic themes.

After viewing clips from *The Parent Trap,* Mischa said that she had found and watched the remainder of the movie on cable over the weekend. Mischa commented on the scenes which had most impacted her in the mentioning, "I did feel bad for Annie/Hallie, because the dad's girlfriend was really mean." Therefore, the study demonstrated that generalization from the cinematherapy session to Mischa's home life had occurred in two ways. First, some of the films generated enough interest that Mischa located and watched them at home, discussing the therapeutic themes with a parent. This finding is crucial because through this process Mischa shared content from her therapy with her mother, which she was normally reluctant to disclose. Further, Mischa's mother had begun to observe children's films in a new way, creating the

potential for meaningful dialogue about children's issues between parent and child. In addition, cinematherapy had also generalized to Mischa's home life in that she had begun to use films independently as an additional way to process and cope with challenging experiences.

Identification of Coping Skills

Gladding and Gladding (1991) explained how in bibliotherapy children may identify with characters who can serve as role models on how to handle difficult situations. Characters can provide role models which present ideas for feasible ways of dealing with problems clients have (Hesley & Hesley, 2001). Likewise, Zach believed that cinematherapy was helpful because he saw what the characters were experiencing, and how they coped with their problems.

The participants varied on their ability to identify and access ways of coping with the divorce. While Claire had a difficult time identifying and accessing coping skills throughout the intervention; Mischa had advanced coping skills even when the intervention began. Zach was somewhere in between in regard to coping skills, further developing his coping skills during the intervention. The final stage of the bibliotherapy process proposed by Shrodes (1950) and discussed in Pardeck (1990) is insight, in which a child develops new insight about the problem, and has been helped to come up with different ways of coping with the problem. Gladding and Gladding (1991) stated that children can learn new ways of thinking about their problems through bibliotherapy. Zach developed an enhanced understanding about divorce including more accurate beliefs about divorce. He developed an awareness of the benefits of expressing feelings, and was able to articulate his feelings about the divorce better.

Many authors have identified that one benefit of cinematherapy is that clients may realize that others experience similar problems, and therefore they can feel less alone or isolated with a problem (Berg-Cross et al.1990; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Forgan, 2002; Hesley, 2000;

Hesley, 2001). Hesley and Hesley (2001) state that one of the therapeutic factors in cinematherapy is that films can provide role models. Zach felt that cinematherapy was helpful in that he saw how others had coped with their parents' divorce, and it helped him cope better. Cinematherapy helped Zach identify some new ways of coping based on how characters dealt with problems.

Mischa had many highly developed ways of coping from the beginning of the intervention. She identified at least eleven different ways characters could cope throughout the intervention. Furthermore, she recognized the value of helping others as a way of coping, often spontaneously providing support or ways a character could feel better about or address a problem. While Claire was able to identify ways to cope, she often perceived a barrier to accessing ways of coping in her own life. For example, she identified that snuggling with a pet can be comforting; however, her family had gotten rid of their pet because it was difficult to care for. Through cinematherapy, the researcher could assess all the participants' ability to identify coping skills as well as perception of access to those ways of coping within their own environments. Therefore, cinematherapy can increase therapists' knowledge of children's coping skills and perceived barriers to those ways of coping. A next step is to either help the children identify new ways of coping or to help them remove the perceived barriers to ways of coping that they have identified.

Expressive Responses Leading to Catharsis and Expanding the Metaphor

Many authors have encouraged the use of expressive activities in response to bibliotherapy (Jackson, 2001; Mazza et al., 1987; Pardeck & Markward, 1995; Prater et al., 2006; Pardeck, 1990a; Pardeck, 1990b; Sullivan and Strang 2002-03). Pardeck (1990a) recommended expressive activities after reading books in therapy, since children can be reluctant

to express their difficulties verbally in therapy. In cinematherapy research, Hebert and Neumeister (2001; 2002) recommended creative follow-up activities after the film and discussion, in order to process emotional reactions which may have been elicited through the film and discussion. Despite these recommendations, few studies have explored children's expressive responses in any depth. Therefore, one of the goals of the current study was to explore the participants' responses to the expressive activities in greater depth. While Zach and Mischa engaged productively in many expressive responses, Claire preferred talking over expressive responses. Therefore, it is important that therapists allow for choices in expressive or talking responses, since children will gravitate and be better able to express themselves in some mediums (including talk) than others.

Mischa enthusiastically tried all types of expressive responses which were offered to her including art, sculpture, writing a letter, drama, and even music. She stated that she enjoyed all of her expressive responses, engaged deeply, and spent a lot of time during the sessions processing her reactions to the scenes expressively. Many of Mischa's expressive responses involved multiple modalities, between which she shifted fluidly, without being prompted by the researcher. For example, Misha wrote a card to a character, then added drawings, finally adding upbeat song lyrics, which she sang aloud. Mischa felt that through the expressive responses she could better express herself by "action." Mischa felt that the expressive responses provided the opportunity to "say [my] part in it, too." She stated that drawing and art helped her remember the films better.

Like the other participants, Claire was offered opportunities to use art, drama, or writing, however, she always preferred talking responses. Claire had a strong need to share through talking and preferred to spend the time together by talking with the researcher than by engaging

in expressive responses. Claire was also two years older than Zach and Mischa, and the age difference (twelve verses ten-years-old) might have contributed to Claire's preference for talking over expressive activities. However, Claire was willing to "tell" what she thought might happen to the characters, which was a form of story-telling, and Claire revealed some of her attitudes and concerns through some of the "stories" she told about what she thought would happen to the characters.

Catharsis. It has been proposed that during the catharsis stage of cinematherapy, clients experience empathic or emotional responses similar to those of the characters (Hebert & Neumeister, 2001; 2002). In bibliotherapy, interactive dialogue and an expressive activity can potentially lead to catharsis and insight, the two final stages of bibliotherapy proposed by Shrodes (Pardeck, 1990a). Zach sometimes empathized with characters' situations while watching a scene, making comments like "that's sad," though it was not always evident whether Zach experienced catharsis.

Another unique finding in the current study is that Zach and Mischa reached the catharsis stage of cinematherapy only through their expressive responses. Catharsis occurred in that Zach generally appeared calmer after expressing his feelings verbally and artistically while using art and drama. Likewise, Mischa was more likely to share feelings of anger through art-making, than verbally or through any other expressive modality. Furthermore, through using a puppet to respond she shared an emotional response of deep overwhelm and sadness, on a bodily level, by the news of the impending divorce. At times Mischa's affect brightened after her expressive responses, perhaps because she had experienced catharsis of some of her angry or sad feelings that were difficult for her to share verbally. Expressive responses enhanced Zach and Mischa's benefit from the cinematherapy intervention, in that the arts provided an opportunity for catharsis

of difficult emotions associated with the divorce that were raised by the films. Therefore, providing opportunities for children to respond expressively to scenes can be viewed as a crucial component for many children in achieving the catharsis stage of cinematherapy.

Metaphor. Films can create therapeutic metaphors which can express a client's dilemma indirectly (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Heston & Kottman, 1997). Metaphor in the form of the story or narrative can be used to help clients address difficult areas, sometimes reaching beyond conscious material (Calisch, 2001). The therapeutic metaphor can help elicit cognitions and emotions of which clients are not consciously aware (Heston & Kottman, 1997). "Metaphors have been used to convey meaning to the symbolic, creative parts of our brain while bypassing the more analytic and logical parts of our brain" (Sharp et al., 2002, p. 273). Sharp et al. describe a trancelike state as we watch films which can increase our receptiveness to the film's messages through metaphors which speak to our creative minds, bypassing our normal defenses and resistances (Sharp et al., 2002).

Christie and McGrath (1987) used the film *The Never Ending Story* as a therapeutic metaphor with an eleven-year-old boy who was grieving his mother's death. They extended the therapeutic metaphor from the film by developing an action ritual, in which the client could deal with his grief by undergoing certain actions based on the hero's journey from the film. While Christie and McGrath prescribed the stages of the action ritual; in the current intervention, the researcher gave open-ended expressive prompts, in which the participants could explore the films further in any way they chose. Zach and Mischa's expressive responses (and occasionally Claire's) often expanded and adjusted the metaphor from the story contained in the film, so that they could continue processing the issues most relevant to them more deeply. Through their expressive responses, Zach and Mischa continued the story of the film, altering it in ways that

more accurately represented their own stories, while affording the opportunity to work through their concerns on a symbolic level. Zach and Mischa's cases show how the metaphor of the story in the film can be expanded naturally through the process of providing opportunities for children's expressive responses to films. The children expanded and altered the metaphor from the film in their expressive responses, making it available to be worked through in the participants' unique ways.

The medium the child chooses for his or her expressive response can also communicate symbolically aspects of the child's experience. For example, Zach destroyed tissues by shredding and littering them on the floor, stomping on them, and then disposing of them in the therapist's waste basket. Langer's (1953) philosophy or art describes how the choice of art medium and expression can become a symbol of an emotion; the artwork itself symbolizes an emotion that cannot be described in words. "Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling" (Langer, 1953). Zach's selection of tissues as the art medium may be viewed as the symbolic medium to express his anger at the sadness caused by the divorce.

Self-selection: Sharing of Personally Meaningful Stories from Films and Television

One more unique finding to the current study with relevance to cinematherapy is that all three children shared the plots from films or television shows they watched outside of therapy in response to certain scenes. Zach did so far more frequently than either Mischa or Claire. When the researcher followed the participants in a client-centered way, they sometimes shared excerpts which related to some of their concerns including fears, coping with loss or separation, or working through a difficult past experience. In addition, Zach self-selected a particular scene to view while watching one film, which allowed him to reveal and discuss a mildly traumatic injury he had had as a child. Mischa shared how she and her father had used a scene from *E.T.* even

prior to the cinematherapy intervention to help her cope with being separated from him while travelling to another state. Claire shared sections of the plots from frightening television programs she watched with her mother, acknowledging that these contributed to her anxiety.

Hunt (2006) describes how metaphors are often chosen by grieving children who often choose stories and play intuitively to help them work through painful feelings at a safe distance (Hunt, 2006). She posits that children use metaphor to process their losses through story, art, and play. Further, children often know which play materials or stories to select in their own healing process. One example was an eight-year-old girl, Susan, whose mother had died two years earlier. During the first home visit, Susan presented the therapist with a Harry Potter book and explained that he is an orphan and that the author writes about people who have died. Later, Susan extended the metaphor to her play about a stray pony. Staying within the metaphor of Harry Potter, the orphan, and later the stray pony enabled Susan to feel safe processing her painful feelings within the context of the metaphor (Hunt, 2006). Hunt described the concept of aesthetic distance proposed by Grainger (1990). The concept of aesthetic distance refers to the ability of the child to process painful material within the context of a story, increasing feelings of safety. This writer proposes the term self-selection to refer to the phenomenon identified by Hunt that children often know which stories and play materials will be helpful to them, and extend the definition to include children's ability to select excerpts from film and television in ways that can contribute to their own healing.

Wedding and Niemiec (2003) presented a case study which demonstrated the benefit of involving a client in the selection of films. The case study explored the dialogue between client, a 53-year-old man with depression, and therapist regarding many Ingmar Bergman films. The therapist suggested that the client view films directed by Bergman due to the client's cultural

background, intelligence, and depressed mood. The client had already seen many Bergman films and the suggestion was a catalyst for a deepened connection between therapist and client, and increased enthusiasm and motivation which had been completely lacking during the prior six months of therapy. The client began to suggest many Bergman films to the therapist, and through the client's choices, the therapist gained awareness of the client's experiences and attitudes. The authors report that the client showed increased assertiveness, greater community involvement, and greater exploration of feelings and insight. On the basis of the case study, the authors concluded that it is most helpful to include clients in the selection of films for viewing.

The participants sharing of films can be viewed as form of story-telling which conveyed their concerns and contributed to healing. For example, as Zach discussed films he enjoyed outside of therapy like a Pokémon film and *WALL-E*, the segments of plot he shared ultimately related to coping with losses. Likewise, Claire shared the plot from a frightening show she and her mother had recently watched, in response to the scene in which Nemo's father worries about dropping Nemo off at school. Claire's telling of the plot was an opportunity for the therapist to gain an understanding of potential contributions to Claire's anxiety (frightening content) as well as a basis for understanding some of her own specific concerns through which parts of the plot she chose to share. Therefore, when participants respond to clips by sharing the plot from a show, movie, or book, it should not necessarily be viewed as a waste of therapy time. The sections of plot selected by the child can increase the therapist's understanding of what is salient to a child, may reflect themes in the child's own experience, and can provide a safe, once-removed vehicle for providing psychoeducation and support to a child in the context of the characters or plot of the show. Sometimes children and adolescents are more likely to accept

information when they do not feel it is directed to them specifically, and instead occurs as a discussion about characters.

Opinions about Cinematherapy

The participants' reactions to cinematherapy differed. While all three had valuable experiences through cinematherapy, Zach and Mischa enjoyed the intervention more, and seemed to demonstrate more growth. Zach enjoyed cinematherapy and said he thought it was helpful because seeing how other kids were going through divorces and coping with it, helped him cope. He developed new insights, coping skills, and increased sharing with the researcher.

Mischa thought that cinematherapy was "fun." She said that even if kids do not do the whole cinematherapy program, it would be helpful for therapists to know of films about different issues to suggest kids watch. Lampropoulos, Kazantzis, and Deane (2004) surveyed psychologists and found that 67% had recommended that a client view a film. Mischa also enjoyed the expressive responses, stating they helped her put her own feelings into action, and to remember the content from the films. Mischa was able to tell the story of her parents' divorce when prompted by scenes, and this was a pivotal moment in her therapy, leading to a brightened affect.

On the other hand, Claire initially had a positive reaction to cinematherapy, but as the sessions progressed, she had a greater need to talk about her problems than watch the scenes. She said that she did not always think about divorce as she watched the scenes. Furthermore, she felt that while some kids might benefit from cinematherapy, her family had different characteristics than the characters in the films; therefore she did not think the ways of coping presented in the film would work with her family. Ultimately, we stopped watching films after the fifth session, because Claire needed to spend the whole session talking about her family situation, and the

therapist needed to involve her parents in the therapy. Hesley (2000) stated that one caveat with using films in therapy can be that too much time discussing the film can leave less time for the issues the client's presenting concerns.

Claire had many deep concerns about her family situation and her social problems. She saw the therapist as one of the few people in her life with whom she could spend time talking. Claire felt she did not spend enough time talking to her parents or friends. Claire spent a great deal of time watching television alone at home, lacking interpersonal connection. Therefore, one possibility is that showing film clips in therapy could potentially replicate the lack of connectedness and interpersonal feedback Claire experienced in her life. An important consideration in cinematherapy came from Claire's case: if a child watches too much television at home and lacks significant interpersonal connection, cinematherapy may not be the preferred modality. Although, it is also possible that cinematherapy could, at a minimum, be a way to help these children learn skills to use media for psychological and emotional growth, role modeling, and comfort.

Opinions about Films

Fly Away Home. Opinions about *Fly Away Home* varied. While Claire thought this was the most helpful of all of the films; Zach stated that he had a hard time understanding this movie. Mischa liked the film so much that she and her mother rented the film to watch at home together later.

Finding Nemo. While Claire did not share any opinions about *Finding Nemo,* Zach thought it was the most helpful of all of the films. Zach felt he understood this film and stated that it helped him cope. He said that Nemo had to deal with a lot of losses and that was like what Zach had to deal with the divorce and moving.

Likewise, *Finding Nemo* was one of Mischa's two favorite films from the intervention. Mischa had watched *Finding Nemo* many times in the past, which suggested that it might have been more developmentally appropriate for a younger child, however she began to discover new meanings in the film during the intervention, such as coping with separation anxiety.

Kramer vs. Kramer. Neither Mischa nor Claire commented on *Kramer vs. Kramer* in the interview. Zach stated that this movie felt "too old" for him and he had a harder time understanding it.

The Parent Trap. All three participants had positive reactions to *The Parent Trap.* Zach felt he understood this film and stated that it helped him cope. He said that it could help a child who has a parent who is far away.

Mischa liked this film so much that she found it on cable and watched the rest of the film over the weekend. After watching the full film and returning to therapy the following week, Mischa discussed another scene about the father's mean girlfriend, which we had not watched in therapy session. Claire stated that *The Parent Trap* was her favorite movie when she was younger, which perhaps suggests the developmental match might have been slightly young for Claire. However, she stated that she thought the film was "funny," also mentioning the scenes with the father's mean girlfriend specifically.

E.T. All three participants also had positive reactions to *E.T.. E.T.* was one of Mischa's two favorite films from the intervention. Claire stated that she had seen *E.T.* "dozens of times" and that she "loved it." Additionally, both Zach and Mischa commented on how helpful it had been. Zach understood this film and stated that thinking about it actually did help him cope when one parent travelled during the intervention. He stated that it could help a child whose parent lived far away or travelled somewhere. Likewise, prior to the intervention, Mischa and her father

had used the scene when E.T. said to Elliott, "I'll be right here" and pointed to his heart as a way for Mischa to cope with being separated for a vacation.

Author! Author! The participants' responses varied about *Author! Author!* Mischa "kind of liked" this film and thought it was helpful since it was specifically about divorce. Zach stated that this movie felt "too old" for him and that he did not "even get it." Claire did not share any opinions about this film.

Film selection. While Zach enjoyed cinematherapy, he preferred and responded better to films which were produced specifically for children, as opposed to for families or adults. Films that were geared toward children were more understandable, enjoyable, and helpful to Zach. However, it was challenging to identify recent developmentally appropriate films relevant to divorce. Additionally, though rated PG, some of the films had profanity, so clips needed to be selected carefully to avoid exposing the participants to inappropriate language. Therapists should make sure the language and content, including profanity or violence, is appropriate within the community's values (Hebert & Neumeister, 2001; Sharp, Smith, and Cole, 2002).

Mischa stated that she enjoyed all of the films, both the newer and older releases. She thought the most helpful films were the ones that were directly about divorce like *Author! Author!* and *E.T.* She thought they were all "good movies to the subject." She explained that not every kid is going to "feel the hit" in a particular movie, and feeling the hit in it is what makes a movie helpful.

In regard to the films, Claire stated late in the intervention that she was not bothered by the separation, but was more affected by her relationships with her parents. There were some films that portrayed challenging adjustments in the parent-child relationship. However, showing

films mostly about divorce was probably not the most ideal issue match for Claire, and therefore might have affected her perception about cinematherapy.

Berg-Cross et al. (1990) encourage a thorough assessment process in which the therapist should choose films based on the client's problems and goals, strengths, ability to understand the film and similarities of characters, and diversity issues. The participants' comments support Berg-Cross et al.'s criteria for film selection and remind of the importance of the careful selection of movies based on issue match, developmental level, and similarity of characters' backgrounds. While there was a lot of overlap to how much the participants liked and felt helped by particular films, there were also distinct differences. Furthermore, whenever possible, the best matches should take into account each child's unique qualities and interests.

<center>Recommendations for Future Directions</center>

Many directions for future research emerged as a result of this study. There are many questions remaining after this study: For example, do children's reactions to films which they have seen multiple times differ from films they have never seen before? Are there gender differences in the way children react to cinematherapy and particular films and how do age and gender impact interactive viewing? Whether there is a qualitative difference between children's responses to animated films with human or non-human characters verses realistic films with human actors could also be an interesting exploration.

Researchers should begin to define who the most appropriate candidates for cinematherapy are and what are the contraindications to using it with particular types of children or problems. Further, what is the best stage of therapy in which to show film clips? For example, future studies should explore the effects of showing film clips in the beginning, middle, or end phases of the therapy process. Another consideration could be which stage of the parental

separation and divorce process was the child coping with, and how might the stage impact the cinematherapy process. Claire's case is an important reminder that cinematherapy is not the preferred modality for every child, at all stages in therapy. Like other modalities, some children will gravitate to using films in therapy, and some might benefit more from talking or another modality. It is important that the therapist puts the child's needs and preferences above the therapist's preferred modality.

Finding films which match a child's developmental level is crucial though challenging, since children of similar ages may differ on their ability to comprehend or enjoy different films. Furthermore, it is important that the therapist knows the child well enough to select films which are the closest match in terms of issues. The most ideal matches should take into account each child's unique qualities and interests. It would be useful for researchers to develop a database for films which can be used in therapy, which could include appropriate age ranges, themes, and socioeconomic and cultural characteristics. The database might include an interactive portion in which future researchers and clinicians could add their experiences with using particular films with clients, so that we are able to select the most effective films for a variety of problems. Pehrsson and McMillen (2005) have developed a web-based tool in order to more systematically evaluate appropriate literature for bibliotherapy materials on the basis of specific categories like developmental level and theme, which may serve as a model. The Bibiotherapy Evaluation Tool can be located at http://www.library.unlv.edu/faculty/research/bibliotherapy/index.php.

This study demonstrated that catharsis occurred through the expressive responses. Future research should explore at what stage catharsis occurs in cinematherapy, and if providing clients with opportunities for expressive responses is crucial for obtaining catharsis.

Another potential direction is to begin to research the use of both television and videos found on You Tube in therapy. Further, adolescents with the interest and access to video recorders could be assigned therapy homework of making brief movies about clinically relevant topics, to explore later in therapy sessions.

Conclusion

A number of new themes which are relevant to cinematherapy emerged in this collective case study and may be avenues to be pursued by future researchers. First, by using film clips therapists can assess children's ability to identify and express emotions accurately, important socio-emotional and coping skills, and help them learn to identify emotions when clinically necessary. Films convey character's facial expressions and nonverbal behavior effectively. **The use of films to promote socio-emotional intelligence by helping children learn to identify and express emotions and develop empathy, through pointing out body language and facial cues and increasing their awareness of identification with characters**, is a promising tool warranting further research.

While the themes from this study generally supported the original process of change in bibliotherapy proposed by Shrodes' (1950): identification, projection, catharsis, and insight; however, in this study, catharsis, especially of angry and sad feelings, occurred for the children through the expressive responses. **I found that catharsis in cinematherapy is enhanced by the use of creative activities following film clips. Because catharsis is seen as a crucial stage in cinematherapy, leading to insight, children should be provided with the opportunity to respond to films with creative activities, such as writing, story-telling, art, drama and play.** On the other hand, another finding from the study was that not all children will want to respond

expressively, and that therapists should provide a range of options for responding including talking about the scene.

Another new concept to emerge in this study was interactive viewing, which occurred for each participant. **I define interactive viewing as a child interacting with a film or television and/or the therapist or parent while viewing through narrating, disclosing thoughts or emotional responses, commenting on the film and any associated thoughts, or interacting expressively through drama, puppetry, singing, story-telling, or art.** Through interactive viewing, the participants spontaneously interacted with the therapist, provided information about their likes and dislikes and family life, interacted with the film creatively, and enabled the therapist to respond and provide psychoeducation in a way that may have been easier to assimilate new knowledge about divorce. Therefore, future research should explore how interactive viewing can be used to understand children's concerns, ways of making sense of the events and processing information, and provide psychoeducation, new ways of coping or thinking about problems, validation, and empathy within the context of the film.

Based on the concept of self-selection which emerged in this study, a further application of cinematherapy would be to have children select their own films or television shows related to problems they experience to discuss or show in therapy. **I define self-selection as a child sharing the plots from films or television shows he or she has watched outside of therapy or selects a particular scene to view in response to certain scenes, and when these relate to some of his or her concerns including the presenting therapy problem, home or school life, or working through a challenging current or past experience. Self-selection can enable a child to work through an important or difficult personal experience through sharing the scene or plot in a supportive therapeutic context which can lead to a corrective emotional**

experience. Through self-selection, the children's sharing of films can be viewed as form of story-telling which can convey their concerns and contribute to healing. An interesting study would be to analyze the content in the plots that children in therapy share regarding the television shows and films they are most impacted by, and whether and how these relate to their therapy issues. Creative interventions could then be developed such as having children develop alternative solutions or endings to their own self-selected plots. Furthermore, the ways in which cinematherapy can produce corrective emotional experiences should be further explored in the future.

Furthermore it was found that cinematherapy generalized to Mischa's home environment in two ways. First, Mischa and her mother began discussing therapeutic themes in children's films which had never occurred before. Second, Mischa sought out films from which she had seen clips in therapy, watched the full films at home, and independently began reflecting on scenes which had been most relevant and meaningful to her. This researcher proposes the term filial cinematherapy, modified from the play therapy research. **Filial cinematherapy can be defined as a child and parent watching films or television together at home or in a therapy session to initiate dialogue about family or developmental issues with which a child is struggling.** Much like in filial play therapy, it may be a useful extension of child cinematherapy to begin to demonstrate to parents in a therapy session how to engage more meaningfully with children while viewing films and television, drawing out therapeutic themes. **Filial cinematherapy can give both children and parents a useful tool for addressing children's concerns at home by helping parents learn more about their children's thoughts and concerns; helping children develop socio-emotional skills; assisting parents in**

communicating their own thoughts and guidance to their children in the context of the characters and plot, and lead to an enhanced relationship between child and parent.

Finally, it is also important to realize that cinematherapy is not always the most clinically appropriate modality of treatment for every child. While two of the participants had a positive response to cinematherapy, the third ultimately felt talking would be more helpful to her at the current time. She had begun therapy more recently than the other participants, had few people that she talked to, and saw the therapist as someone with whom she could share. Furthermore, she spent a lot of time watching television at her home, feeling that she did not get enough attention at home. In similar circumstances, it is possible that spending time watching film clips may not be the preferred modality.

Through watching films in therapy three preadolescent aged children were helped to express their feelings on a deeper level, experience catharsis of anger and sadness, develop new coping skills for dealing with parental divorce, and feel less alone in dealing with the potentially isolating experience of parental divorce. Furthermore, one child was generalized the experience and began to watch films at home in more therapeutic ways, providing her with a useful tool for healing a self-growth. Cinematherapy is a useful tool in therapy which presents interesting directions for future research.

APPENDIX A
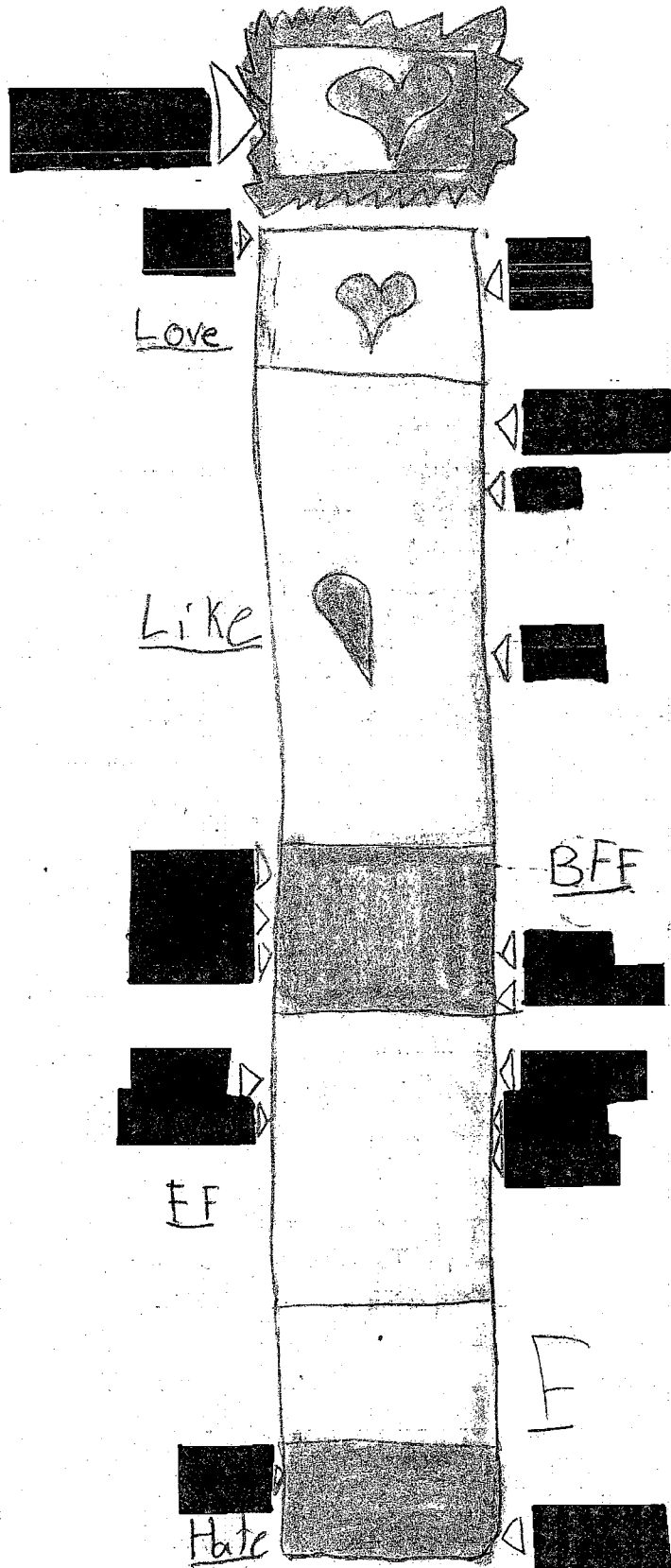
ZACH'S LOVE O'METER
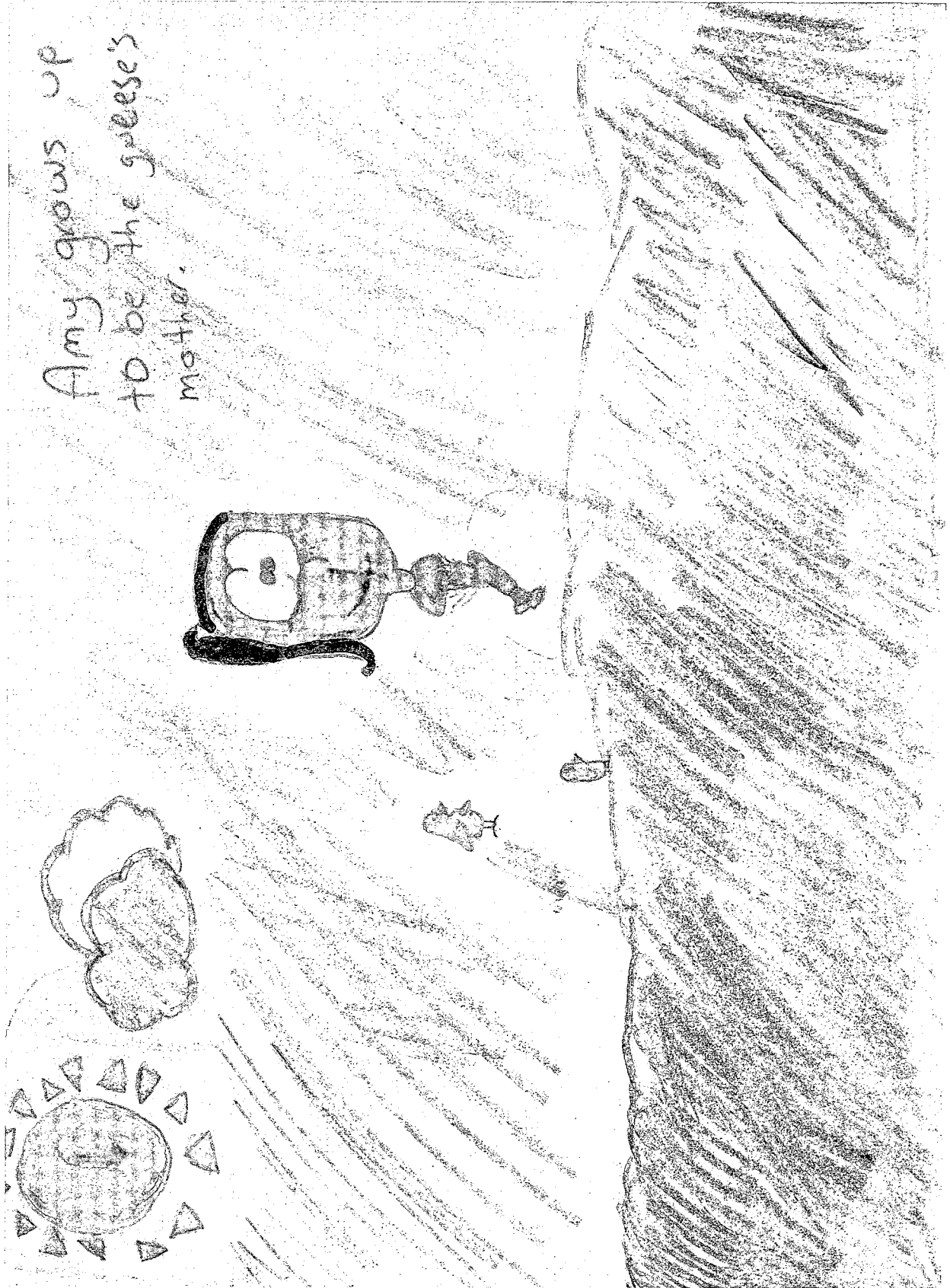
Love

Like

BFF

EF

E

Hate

L O V E O M E T E R

APPENDIX B

MISCHA'S RESPONSE TO *FLY AWAY HOME*

Amy grows up
to be the geese's
mother.

APPENDIX C

MISCHA'S RESPONSE TO *KRAMER VS. KRAMER*

Dear Billy,

Hello Billy, my name is ___

I heard your mommy sent you a letter in the mail saying that she left to live in her own house. That is called a separation. My parents are separated too. It was very hard at first and even to this day it is very hard. But somehow I worked through it. Great friend because I am probably going to help you through it. So I know friends pets and family to help me work through it. So I know that you will be okay.
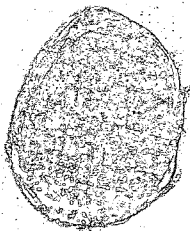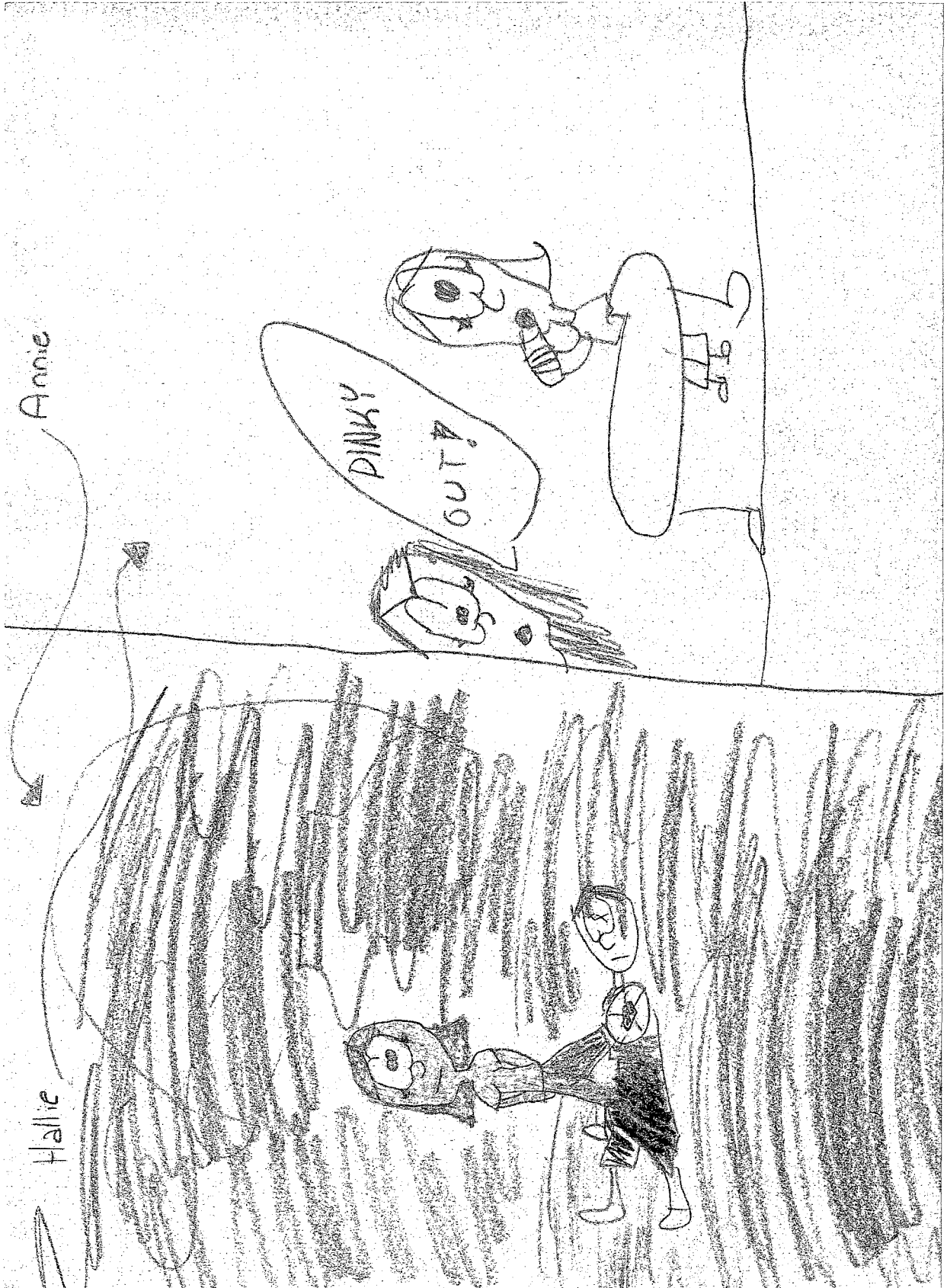
Every little thing is gonna be alright

APPENDIX D
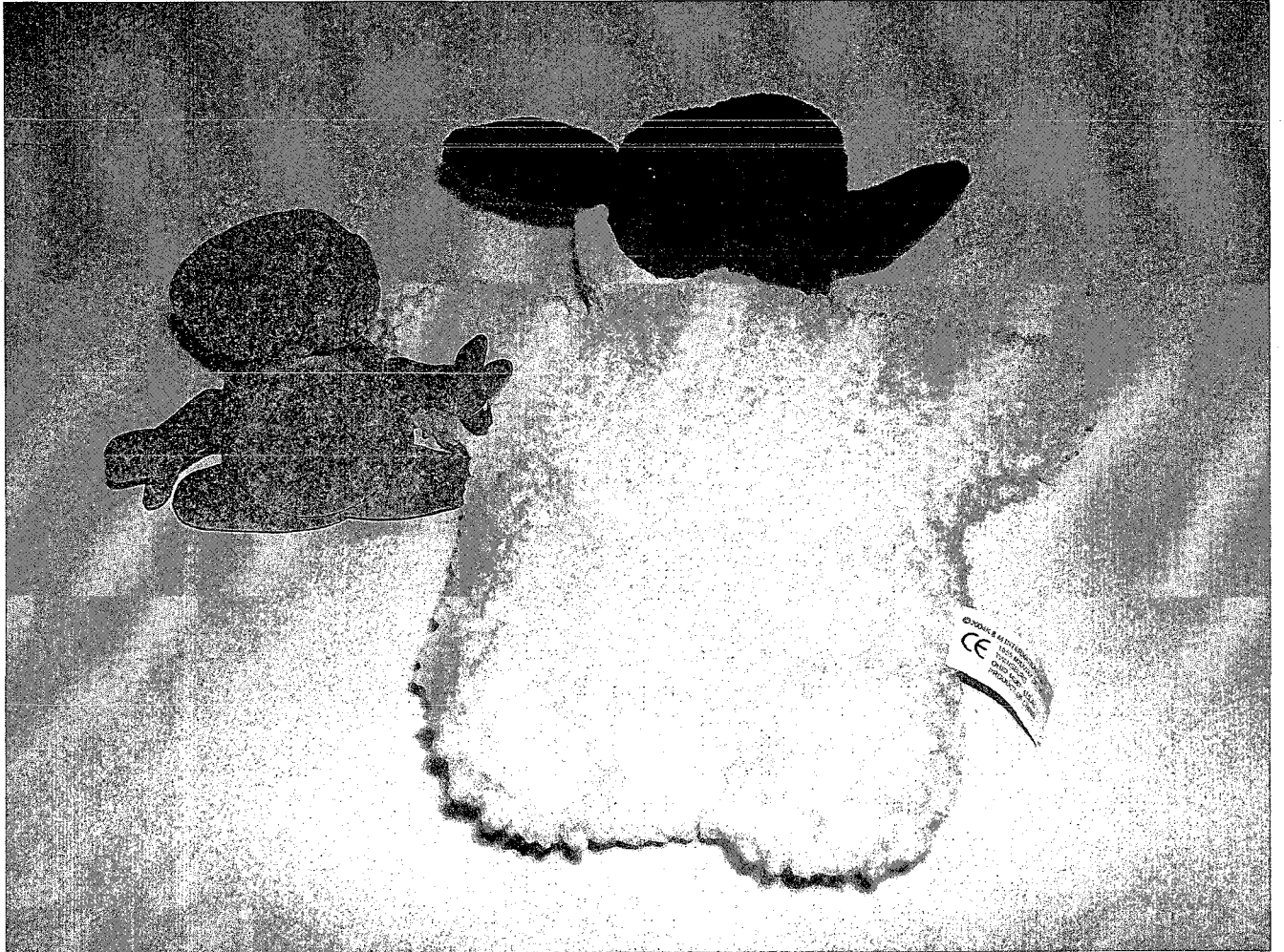
MISCHA'S RESPONSE TO *THE PARENT TRAP*

APPENDIX E

MISCHA'S RESPONSE TO *E.T.*

APPENDIX F

FILM CLIPS AND SCENE DESCRIPTIONS

Following is a list of the film clips with brief scene descriptions; the numbers represent the minute at which the clip can be found.

Fly Away Home

0:05-0:07	Amy has gone to live at her father's house after her parents' divorce. She has not seen him for a long time.
0:12:20-0:16:04	Amy has had to adjust to many new things at her father's house, including his unusual cooking, and then she meets his girlfriend…
0:20-0:23	Amy finds a nest of geese eggs which have no parents due to nearby construction.
0:30-0:35	The chicks imprint on Amy, since she is the first creature they see.

Finding Nemo

0:4:01-0:5:18	Nemo's mother was eaten by a barracuda before he is born, so Nemo's father raises him on his own. His father promises that he will never let anything bad happen to Nemo.
0:5:18-0:7:45	Nemo's father is nervous when he drops Nemo off for the first day of school.
0:12-0:16:15	Nemo has met some friends at school and they swim out to an area called "The Drop Off" which they have been told not to go near.
0:25:10-0:29:25	After being captured and separated from his father, Nemo is dropped into a dentist's fish tank, where he meets new fish.

Kramer vs. Kramer

Though this film is rated PG, there is some language which may not be appropriate for children in a therapy session. Therefore, it is important to carefully screen the clips to be shown, to avoid exposing children to inappropriate language.

0:21:45-0:24:15	Billy is a six-year-old boy whose mother leaves when his parents separate. Billy's father is now responsible for taking care of him. In this scene, Billy receives a letter from his mother rafter not having talked to her for some time.
0:0:35:56-37:46 and 0:39:10-0:42:11	Billy does not want to follow the rules; he does not want to eat his dinner and wants to eat ice cream instead and Billy's father becomes angry at Billy. Later, Billy begins crying because he is afraid that his mother left because he behaved badly sometimes.
1:36:20-1:38	Billy's father discusses with Billy the custody arrangements that were determined by the judge.

The Parent Trap

0:22:30-0:29:46	This movie is about two girls who meet each other at camp and are surprised by how much they look alike; one is from London and one is from Washington state. They have not been getting along at all and as a consequence, the camp directors put them together in their own bunk to try to work things out.
1:13:15-1:15:49	Hallie, who has been pretending to be Annie, admits to their mother that she is actually Hallie, and they meet each other officially for the first time. Their mother had raised Annie previously, and their father had raised Hallie until now.

E.T. the Extra Terrestrial

0:17:22-0:19	Elliott tries to explain to his family the strange creature he saw; but they do not believe him. Elliott tells them that he thinks his father would believe him; however his father is on vacation in Mexico with his girlfriend.
0:27:30-0:30	Elliott shows E.T. to the most important objects in his room.
0:56-0:58:13	Elliott is shocked because his little sister has taught E.T. how to speak while he was at school. Now, E.T. wants to "phone home."
0:1:50-1:53:37	E.T. and Elliott say goodbye because E.T. needs to return to his own planet. Though they will not see each other in person anymore, E.T. points to Elliott's heart and says, "I'll be right here."

Author! Author!

There is some profanity in this film, despite having a PG rating. Therefore, clips need to be carefully selected, to avoid exposing children to inappropriate language in therapy. Further, there is more than one scene with mild aggressive content, which would not likely be appropriate viewing for a young child. Therefore, scenes should be selected carefully for viewing in therapy.

0:35:09-0:40:14	A father and his 2nd wife separate, therefore the father, Ivan, takes care of his own son, and his four step-children. In this scene, Ivan has a family discussion at the dinner table, and the children talk about their feelings about going to live at their fathers' houses.
1:31:15-1:35:48	Ivan tells the children that their mother is not returning, and that they are getting divorced. They also discuss where the children want to live.

APPENDIX G

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Not all clips were shown depending on how much time a child spent processing each clip. Each child was reminded in each session that he or she could respond to the questions using play, art materials, writing a story, or talking.

Fly Away Home

0:05-0:07   Amy has gone to live at her father's house after her parents' divorce. She has not seen him for a long time.

1. What do you think Amy thinks and feels when she arrives at her father's house?

0:12:20-0:16:04   Amy has had to adjust to many new things at her father's house, including his unusual cooking, and then she meets his girlfriend...

1. How do you think Amy reacts to all of these changes?
2. How does Amy feel about meeting her dad's girlfriend?
3. What do you think the dad's girlfriend thinks and feels about meeting Amy?
4. Do you think other kids might feel like Amy feels?
5. What can Amy do to help herself cope with all of these changes?

0:20-0:23   Amy finds a nest of geese eggs which have no parents due to nearby construction.

0:30-0:35   The chicks imprint on Amy, since she is the first creature they see.

1. What do you think happens in the rest of the story? You can tell the story, write it, draw it, or make a play using the props...

Finding Nemo

0:04:01-0:05:18   Nemo's mom is eaten by a barracuda before he is born, so Nemo's dad raises him on his own. His dad promises that he will never let anything bad happen to Nemo.

0:05:18-0:07:45   Nemo's dad drops Nemo off for the first day of school.

1. How does Nemo feel about going to school for the first time?
2. How does Nemo's dad feel about Nemo going to school? What might some of his fears be? How come?

0:12-0:16:15   Nemo has met some friends at school and they swim out to an area called "The Drop Off" which they have been told not to go near.

1. Why do you think Nemo disobeys his father?
2. How does Nemo's father feel when Nemo is taken away on the boat?
3. What is his father thinking?
4. How can his father cope with being separated from his son?

0:25:10-0:29:25   After being captured, Nemo is dropped into the dentist's fish tank.

1. How might Nemo feel when he is dropped into the tank, and meets new fish?
2. How do the other fish feel about Nemo joining them?

3. How can Nemo cope with being separated from his father?
4. Tell what you think might happen in the rest of the story by writing it down, drawing, or making a play using the props.

Kramer vs. Kramer

Though this film is rated PG, there is some language which may not be appropriate for children in a therapy session. Therefore, it is important to screen carefully the clips to be shown, to avoid exposing children to inappropriate language.

0:21:45-0:24:15	This is a movie about a six-year-old boy named Billy. Billy's parents get separated and his mom leaves the home. Billy's dad is now in charge of taking care of him. In this scene, Billy gets a letter from his mom after not having talked to her for a while.

1. What do you think Billy feels and thinks when he hears the letter?
2. How do you think Billy's dad feels? What does he think about the letter?
3. What does Billy's mom mean when she says, "I'm not going to be your mommy of the house, but I'm going to be your mommy of the heart?"
4. Billy's mom wrote him a letter. Would you like to write a letter to the mom or the dad from Billy with any thoughts or feelings that you think Billy might have? Or you could write a letter to Billy about how he can cope with this difficult situation.

0:35:56-0:37:46 and 0:39:10-0:42:11	In this scene, Billy doesn't want to follow the rules; he doesn't want to eat his dinner and wants to eat ice cream instead. Later, Billy cries because he is wondering if his mother left because Billy behaved badly.

1. How do you think Billy is feeling during this scene? What do you think he is thinking?
2. What do you think Billy's father is thinking or feeling?

1:36:20-1:38	Billy's dad discusses the custody arrangements that were determined by the judge.

1. Tell what you think might happen in the rest of the story by writing it down, drawing, or making a play using the props. Or you can respond to the scene in any way you wish.

The Parent Trap
0:23:30-0:29:46

This movie is about two girls who look exactly alike and who meet each other at camp; one is from London and one is from Washington state. So far they have not been getting along at all. So the camp directors put them together in a bunk to try to work things out.

1. What do you think about the twins' plan to switch places to try to get their parents back together?
2. Do you think other kids want their parents to get back together like the twins do?

1:13:15-1:15:49   Annie, who is actually Hallie, admits to their mother that she is Hallie, and they meet each other officially for the first time ever. Their mother had raised Annie previously, and their father had raised Hallie until now.

1. Hallie and Annie are going to meet their mother/father for the first time. Use any of the art materials, talk, or tell a story to describe how they should spend their first day together.
2. If Hallie or Annie could plan a new visiting arrangement with their parents, what do you think it would be? Create a plan for them using any of the art or play materials?

E.T. the Extra Terrestrial

0:17:22-0:19   Elliott tries to explain to his family the strange creature he saw, but they do not believe him. Elliott tells them that he thinks his dad would believe him; however his dad is on vacation in Mexico with his girlfriend.
You can answer these questions using talking, art, or play materials.

1. How does Elliott feel in the scene?
2. How come the older brother reacts the way he does to Elliott?
3. How does Elliott's mom feel and what is she thinking?
4. How do you think other kids might feel when they talk about one parent in front of the other, or when a parent talks about the other parent in front of the child?

0:27:30-0:30   Elliott introduces E.T. to the most important objects in his room.

1. If you had found E.T. and were showing him the three most important things in your room at your mom's house, draw or describe the three most important things.
2. Now imagine that you are showing E.T. the three most important things at your dad's house: draw or describe the three most important things.
3. How are your favorite things at each house different or similar?

0:56-0:58:13   Elliott is shocked because his little sister has taught E.T. how to speak while he was at school. Now, E.T. wants to "phone home."

1. What is happening in this scene?
2. Who do you think E.T. wants to call?
3. What or whom do you think E.T. misses there?
4. Do you think it's hard for E.T. to be in this new place?

1:50-1:53:37   E.T. and Elliott say goodbye because E.T. needs to return to his own planet. Though they will not see each other in person anymore, E.T. points to Elliott's heart and says, "I'll be right here."

1. What do you think E.T. means when he says, "I'll be right here?"
2. Do you think you can remember someone in your heart, and still have a relationship with that person, even when they're not there all the time?
3. Use the art or play supplies to show how E.T. and Elliott can deal with being separated from each other.
4. Use the art or play supplies to show a person or place you feel connected

to even when you are not there.

Author! Author!

There is some profanity in this film, despite having a PG rating. Therefore, clips need to be carefully selected, to avoid exposing children to inappropriate language in therapy. Further, there is more than one scene with mild aggressive content, which would not be appropriate viewing for children. Therefore, scenes should be selected carefully for viewing in therapy.

0:35:09-0:40:14   This movie is about a father and his 2nd wife who separate, and therefore, the father, Ivan, takes care of his own son, and his four step-children. In this scene, Ivan has a family talk at the dinner table, and the children talk about their feelings about going to live at their fathers' houses.
You can respond to these questions using play, art materials, writing a story, or talking.

1. How come Val says she never wants to get married?
2. Ivan tries to listen to his step-kids feelings about divorce. Is it helpful for them?
3. Do you think kids feel comfortable talking with their parents about the many feelings they have about divorce?
4. Spike feels that if his mom ever became angry with him, she would leave him, because his mom left his father when she was angry with him. Do you think other kids might feel like that?

1:31:15-1:35:48   Ivan tells the children that he and their mom are getting divorced. They also discuss where the children will live.

1. How do you think the kids feel when they learn that Ivan and their mom are not getting back together?
2. What do you think is important to kids about where and with whom they live after a divorce?

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CINEMATHERAPY RESEARCH PROJECT

1. What did you think about using movie clips in therapy?

2. What was the most interesting, helpful, or memorable part about using the movie clips?

3. Were there some movies that were more helpful than others?

4. Were there any movies you did not like or were not helpful?

5. What did you think about using art, drama, writing, or talking to explore the movies?

6. How do you think other kids might feel about using movie clips in therapy?

7. In what ways can movies help kids learn to cope with problems like divorce or another issue, if at all?

8. Would you ever use movies in the future to help you think about a problem?

APPENDIX I

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Participate in a Research Study!

Children between the ages of 10 and 12

Is your child coping with divorce?

Does he or she enjoy movies?

Does he or she like creative activities like art, creative writing, or drama?

Children who choose to participate will have six sessions of individual therapy in which appropriate movie clips (rated G or PG) are used to help your child express feelings and develop coping skills related to divorce.

Sessions will be offered by a therapist/researcher with ten years of experience providing therapy to children.

Emily Marsick, CAGS, LMHC, CPT

APPENDIX J

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent for Participation in a Research Project
Lesley University
29 Everett Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138

Researcher:
Emily Marsick, CAGS, LMHC

I will be conducting a research project for my doctoral dissertation. In this form, I will explain the purpose of the study and describe your child's role and rights as a participant should you choose to participate. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and if you choose not to have your child participate it will not affect his or her ability to begin or continue therapy with me. The information gathered from this study will be used as a case study in a series of case studies on the effectiveness of cinematherapy. The study will be published in the form of my doctoral dissertation, and possibly research articles. My research is being supervised by my doctoral advisor, Dr. Michele Forinash, Professor of Expressive Therapies, at Lesley University.

This project is about the use of cinematherapy in counseling to help children express their feelings and develop coping skills to deal with parental divorce.

Cinematherapy is an intervention in which the therapist uses film clips about a topic to help clients explore that issue in their own lives. All of the film clips that I will select will be rated G or PG and will be appropriate viewing for a young child.

Your child and I will also explore the film clips through discussion, with your child being encouraged to draw connections with his or her own life if he or she sees a connection. We will also sometimes use art work, role-plays, and journaling in response to the films.

Your child will participate in six individual cinematherapy sessions with me; sessions will be of regular length which is approximately fifty minutes. Each session will be audiotaped. Occasionally, I may photocopy your child's art work. In addition, I may interview your child about his or her thoughts about cinematherapy and whether it helped him or her cope with the divorce.

The confidentiality of your child's therapy is of the utmost importance to me. I will never identify your child or any family member. His or her real name will not be used, and identifying information will be changed in order to disguise his or her identity. No one other than me will have information regarding your child's identity. The records from this study will be kept confidential. All audiotapes, transcripts, and summaries will be stored separately from your child's name or any other identifying

information. Audiotapes will be used only for the purpose of this study, and will be destroyed after the research report is complete.

There are no known or foreseeable risks to participation in this study beyond what are typical risks for psychotherapy. Your child's sessions will be similar to our regular therapy sessions, with the addition of the film clips. If your child feels uncomfortable discussing certain issues or does not want to participate in a specific activity, he or she can choose not to do so, the same as in typical therapy sessions with me.

The benefits of participation in this study are the same as for traditional psychotherapy, but in addition, your child may have the opportunity to work through his or her concerns and grow from the addition of films in therapy. Another anticipated benefit is that your child will have the opportunity to contribute to furthering our understanding of effective treatment methods for children's therapy.

If you do not choose to have your child participate in this study, he or she will begin or continue in therapy with me as the case may be. If your child does participate in this research, he or she can withdraw from the study at any time. After withdrawing from the study, or at the conclusion of the research, there will not be an interruption in regular therapy sessions.

You and your child are welcome to ask me any questions about this study at any time. If you have any further questions, you can also contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Michele Forinash by calling her at 617-349-8166.

There will be no cost for participation in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I agree to have my child participate in this research study according to the above terms.

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX K

CHILDREN'S ASSENT FORM

Children's Assent for Participation in a Research Project
Lesley University
29 Everett Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138

Researcher: Emily Marsick, CAGS, LMHC

I will be doing a research project over the next few months. Research means to study something carefully. You can choose whether or not you want to be a part of my research project. If you do not want to be a part of the study, that is completely fine with me. We will still continue with or start counseling as usual.

I am studying whether using parts of movies in counseling can help kids talk about and start to feel better after their parents separate or get divorced. We will watch short sections of movies and then talk about them together. We might also do art, role-plays, or journaling after watching the movies.

We will watch the movies during six sessions. I will audiotape our sessions, and if you want to hear a part of the tape, I will play it for you. If you do artwork, I may photocopy it to use as part of my research. I may also ask you questions about what you think about using movies in counseling and whether you think it might help other kids with their problems.

Just like in regular counseling, I will never tell anyone your name or anything about you that might let someone guess who you are. I do not think that being a part of this study will hurt you in any way. In fact, I hope it will help you start to feel better about the things that bother you.

You are free to choose not to continue in the study, and we will continue with therapy as usual. You should ask me any questions you want about the study and your part in it. I will do my best to answer all of your questions at any time during the project.

I agree to be a part of this research study.

Child's Name _____   Date _____

Researcher's Name _____   Date _____

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