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Title: **Art therapy, resilience, and adolescents in alternative learning environments : case study of 15 year old boy's creative journey**

Abdallah, Samantha (2009) *Art therapy, resilience, and adolescents in alternative learning environments : case study of 15 year old boy's creative journey*. Other thesis, Concordia University.



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Abstract

This research paper explores the struggling adolescent population found in alternative high schools, focusing on how the creative act of making art within art therapy may play a role in discovering, highlighting, and encouraging resilient characteristics. In addition, focus was also placed on the client-therapist relationship within art therapy. The adolescents found in alternative high schools are often deemed to be unsuccessful, disadvantaged, marginal, or at-risk for negative

internal consequences and future life events (Gross & Capuzzi, 2004; Raywid, 1998). Resiliency is a characteristic or set of characteristics that can act as a 'shield' to protect people, like these adolescents, from the great adversity in their lives so that they may flourish (Hauser & Allen, 2006; Thompson, 2006). Using a single descriptive case study design, I present the case of "Travis", a 15 year old boy who was referred to art therapy because the school staff felt he was having difficulty adapting to the new school, was isolated, bullied, and in need of a place where he could express himself. Through the use of a non-directive art therapy approach, significant steps were made towards the development of resilient characteristics related to Travis' sense of identity and his relationships with others. Focus will be placed on the less threatening nature of making art, the power of symbolic and metaphorical expressions, the parallel processes of art therapy, and the presence of both flexibility and structure found within art therapy, as well as the relationship between Travis and myself, the art therapy intern.

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