

Transferring Blame: The Covert Role of Scapegoat

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Transferring Blame: The Covert Role of Scapegoat**

Stephanie Watson

The main purpose for this research was to provide pre-adolescent females the opportunity to explore their understanding and personal experience of social aggression with similarly-treated individuals. A common practice among girls, social aggression damages a peer's social status and self-esteem through direct and indirect means (Galen & Underwood, 1997). Due to a lack of qualitative research attending to the narratives of socially aggressed girls, an art therapy group composed of four pre-adolescent females who had experienced some form of social aggression was implemented in a metropolitan elementary school. For 15 sessions, the group members congregated for lunch and creative exploration. Preplanned art activities enlightened facets of social aggression in the interest of augmenting the confidence and self-esteem of the participants.

Following the completion of the group, investigation into group roles led to the scapegoat archetype. Though suggested to be a prominent role in group therapy, nominal research has focused specifically on the scapegoat role in therapeutic groups. Conscious and unconscious mental mechanisms compound group interactions, affecting the role one assumes. A retrospective examination of the group's proceedings showed that one member's conduct encapsulated facets of the scapegoat archetype, and it seemed that this group member covertly adopted the scapegoat role. The following case study subsumes an elaborate investigation of six group art therapy sessions. I discovered that the group member's covert identification with the scapegoat role materialized in her behaviour, art, and interaction with the other girls.

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## TRANSFERRING BLAME: THE COVERT ROLE OF SCAPEGOAT

### Introduction

#### *Bullying*

Although aggressive acts have long occurred within the school sphere, empirical investigations were relatively scarce prior to the 1970s (Griffin & Gross, 2004). In an effort to understand the bullying phenomenon, an influx of large-scale social and psychological research in Scandinavian countries began to emerge in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1978 an innovative book written by Scandinavian researcher Dan Olweus entitled *Aggression in the schools: Bullies and whipping boys* became available to the public. Recognized as a key contributor to the field, Olweus exposed the harmful reality of school-bound aggression (Smith & Brain, 2000). As a result Olweus was responsible for a number of studies which enhanced the breadth of knowledge in the field. For instance, a study conducted by Olweus in Norway in 1983 found that approximately 15 percent of students from ages 7 to 16 were identified as either bullies or victims (Olweus, 1999a). Furthermore, approximately seven percent were identified as bullies; nine percent were considered victims. Upon examining all cases, Olweus found that five percent represented more serious accounts of bullying. Although the above findings correspond to the bully/victim problem in Norway, additional studies in other regions of the world suggest similar or even higher prevalence rates (Olweus, 1999a).

With the preliminary study underway, a gradual interest and examination has ensued in 16 European countries, the United States and Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and areas of the developing world (Smith, et al., 1999). Although findings



suggest a corresponding structural mode of bullying across cultures, discrepancies in the operational definition of bullying presents a constraint in deciphering accord and discord between cultures (Griffin & Gross, 2004). For instance, preliminary studies in Scandinavia employed the term “‘mobbing’ (Norway, Denmark) or ‘mobbing’ (Sweden, Finland)” (Olweus, 1991, p. 412) to connote the bully/victim issue. In Japan, “‘ijime’” (Morita, Soeda, Soeda, & Taki, 1999, p. 311) is the Japanese expression to signify the equivalent of bullying. Although commonalities can be found between the terms bullying and *ijime*, Morita et al. have delineated subtle distinctions that should not be omitted when employing the Japanese expression. Yet in spite of individual research efforts focused on understanding the incidence of bullying, greater appreciation will only be gained when concerted time and effort are directed toward establishing a reliable and valid term for cross-cultural use. Nonetheless, according to Griffin and Gross, the majority of researchers concur that in general, bullying transpires in a social milieu; in the presence of peers.

### *Definitions*

#### *Bullying and direct aggression.*

Human aggression is a vast area of study that cannot be simply confined to one succinct definition. A predominant feature inherent in the majority of aggressive episodes is the underlying intent to cause harm (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Buss, 1961). Since bullying is a component of the larger concept of aggression, it is no surprise that the aim to inflict physical or emotional injury is also a defining feature of the term (Griffin & Gross, 2004). In an attempt to encapsulate the bullying trend, three defining features are often included in the definition. According to Olweus (1999b) bullying entails (1)

“aggressive behavior or intentional ‘harm doing’; (2) which is carried out ‘repeatedly and over time’; (3) in an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power” (p. 11). Olweus (1999b) suggests that the discrepancy in power may represent a perceived and/or actual disparity. For instance, in terms of physical strength the target may be factually weaker, or may perceive himself or herself to be physically or emotionally deficient. Despite the fact that, in the case of social aggression, it may be more difficult to identify the original source responsible for inflicting harm upon the victim, an imbalance of power can still be found. Since the perpetrator’s identity is often concealed in social aggression, the target becomes inferior as the perpetrator cannot be readily confronted. Although Olweus is noted for his distinct contributions to the field of bullying, it is important to stress that his primary focus concerns physical aggression among male youths.

*Indirect aggression.*

With a concerted effort to understand direct modes of bullying behaviour in the form of open attacks on the victim (Olweus, 1991), concealed and indirect forms of bullying have generally received less attention. Prior to Olweus’ seminal study, Buss (1961) was the principal figure to describe and include gossip and damage to one’s personal objects or values into the construct of indirect aggression. Subsequently, Feshbach (1969) examined gender differences in children’s aggressive responses, with a particular interest toward understanding indirect social means of inflicting pain. Although empirical investigation of indirect aggression was instigated in the 1960s, comprehensive research did not really commence until the late 1980s. In 1988, a Finnish research team led by Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen found that girls were inclined to use indirect

aggression, while direct means of attack were more characteristic of boys. In defining indirect aggression, Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Kaukiainen (1992) state that it “is a type of behaviour in which the perpetrator attempts to inflict pain in such a manner that he or she makes it seem as though there has been no intention to hurt at all” (p. 118).

Therefore, impelled by the desire to remain unidentified in the act, the aggressor is liable to escape retaliation from the target (Lagerspetz, et al.).

*Relational aggression.*

Subsequently, in another geographical location, a separate research team proposed a different term to describe aggression found among girls. In an attempt to understand aggressive behaviour for female children residing in the United States, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) proposed the term relational aggression. Based on the premise that aggressive female behaviour reflects the social concerns of girls, Crick and Grotpeter defined relational aggression as “harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of their peer relationships” (p. 711).

*Social aggression.*

In an effort to focus on the intent to cause social harm, Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson and Garipey (1989) coined the term social aggression to entail “the manipulation of group acceptance through alienation, ostracism, or character defamation” (p. 323). Several years later Galen and Underwood (1997) expanded on the preliminary definition proposed by Cairns and colleagues. As a result, the definition set forth by Galen and Underwood states that “social aggression is directed toward damaging another’s self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take direct forms such as verbal rejection, negative facial expressions or body movements, or more indirect forms such as

slandorous rumors or social exclusion” (p. 589). Although the nuances of all three terms are subtle, Underwood (2003) maintains that the term social aggression is better suited. Consequently, Underwood feels that the construct of relational aggression excludes nonverbal behaviour, and forms of indirect aggression can be rather direct in their execution. Nonetheless, the main difference between indirect, social, and relational aggression are categorized by the different strategies employed to inflict harm upon the target (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 2004).

#### *Gender Differences in Aggressive Behaviour*

With nominal indication of physical bullying among female children, the opinion that girls are not as aggressive as boys is a pervasive belief found in the literature. Nonetheless, in accordance with an increase in naturalistic observations, Galen and Underwood (1997) suggest that the prevalence of aggressive behaviour in both male and female children is directly related to the way aggression is defined. Therefore, slight discrepancies in the definition used between studies have led to inconclusive statements regarding aggressive behaviour among genders. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) have found that on average both girls and boys are aggressive. However, they maintain that the form of aggressive behaviour is generally believed to be gender specific: boys are more overtly belligerent, while girls are more likely to be relationally aggressive.

With the realization that female children also engage in aggressive behaviour, the belief that girls utilize more indirect forms of aggression soon became a universal truth for many in the field (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 2004). Therefore, in an attempt to understand this form of aggression, research endeavours soon began to focus on this particular phenomenon. Even though social aggression is still believed to be a strictly

female occurrence, findings remain inconclusive. For instance, Olweus (1991) has found that girls are more readily exposed to indirect forms of bullying in contrast to flagrant attacks. However, in extension to the above claim, approximately an equal percentage of boys and girls were found to be bullied in this indirect fashion. Although aggressive girls predominantly use indirect means to inflict harm, on the whole boys tend to engage in more physical, verbal, and indirect aggressive behaviour (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen). Therefore, the belief that only females engage in social aggression is not a claim found in many studies conducted in the field. The following report is not intended to advance gender disputes regarding aggressive conduct. Instead the primary area of interest concerns the qualitative experience of socially aggressed girls.

### *Victims of Aggression*

#### *Classification and characteristics.*

To understand the victim character, research efforts have explored the academic, social, mental, physical, and interpersonal characteristics of victims of bullying (Ma, 2004). Reluctant to undermine the impact of an individual's personal story, a profile of a typical victim has emerged in the literature (Olweus, 1978; 1991; 1999b). Victimized students have been found to possess a more anxious and insecure disposition than the common student. With an often cautious and quiet demeanour, the victim's response to an attack is likely to reveal a tendency to withdraw. As sensitive individuals with low self-esteem, victimized students tend to view themselves as stupid, unattractive, and inherently deficient. Though this general sketch is believed to personify both male and female victims, it must be stipulated that less research has focused on bullying among

girls (Olweus, 1999b). Therefore, in his description of a typical male victim, Olweus (1991) denotes an anxious personality pattern and a disadvantage in physical strength.

Although a general portrait of a victim can be found in the literature, characteristics that exceed the above qualities have lead to a subset of victim classifications. Upon examining the recipients of school bullying, Olweus (1978) identifies two discrete types of victims: passive and provocative victims. To begin, passive victims typically personify a fearful nature in that his/her behaviour reflects a cautious interchange with peers (Besag, 1989; Olweus, 1978). Such individuals tend to avoid confrontation and aggressive encounters, finding themselves helpless in the event of an attack. In addition, passive victims display physical weakness, poor coordination, and low self-esteem in relation to their peers. For the next type of victim, Olweus (1978; 1999b) assigns the term provocative victim to encapsulate the anxious and aggressive reaction patterns of these victims. Although a smaller number of victimized children are subsumed under the category of provocative victim, such individuals often exhibit concentration difficulties coupled with restlessness and hyperactivity. Additionally, provocative victims are regarded as antagonistic for they are believed to deliberately incite hostility in their peers (Besag). Though found to taunt their colleagues at school, provocative victims are deemed quick-tempered with an inclination to fight back (Olweus, 1978). Although additional research is currently directed toward another type of victim group referred to as bully-victims, the complexity of this dual role is beyond the scope of this text.

*Characteristics of victims of social aggression.*

Although research addressing female victims of social aggression is relatively sparse, preliminary findings suggest that female peers consider the victim at fault (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000; Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2000). While the tendency to blame the victim is a convenient strategy to alleviate the aggressors' responsibility, peer reports reveal that victims are ultimately held accountable for their own victimization. In the above studies several teachers were less inclined to support the view that the victim is at fault, while other teachers concur that a number of victims instigate their own persecution. A significant distinction between peer and teacher reports is that the majority of teachers attribute continued victimization to a lack of social skill and a paltry display of conflict resolution within the home. Another feature of victims of indirect aggression is a susceptibility to victimization in general. Both female peers and teachers propose increased vulnerability when a student is new to a school, possesses few friends – if any at all, is known to be unassertive, and displays a visible 'peculiarity'.

*Rationale for victimization.*

Although it is not difficult to grasp the bully's desire and scheme to overpower and control the victim, the bully's method of selecting a target is not nearly as clear. Even though a number of research efforts have suggested a few predisposing characteristics to account for the victimization of some children, concrete findings have yet to provide sufficient ground to explain the persecution by fellow peers (Besag, 1989). In an attempt to maintain a superior status and to thrive at suppressing a sense of inadequacy, a potential option may be to project blame onto a separate entity. In an effort to understand grounds for the victim role, Olweus (1978) makes reference to the scapegoat complex. In

extension of the scapegoat theory Olweus states that “aggressive tendencies are aroused but cannot be directed against their natural target – they are then displaced on an innocent and usually less dangerous victim, a scapegoat” (1978, p. 9). In contemporary practice, name-calling via direct and indirect methods is a predominant form of bullying within the school sphere. Frequently the assigned labels exemplify non-human names, which succeed at dehumanizing the victim (Besag). Once the mockery extends beyond the scope of humanness, guilt and remorse are appeased as the scapegoat process persists.

Although a clear rationale cannot account for the repeated victimization of some children, a visible mark of difference is often the observed trigger. Though Besag (1989) suggests that a victim is not solely bullied due to obvious physical abnormalities, once the victim is identified they may become predisposed to continued provocation and attack. Given that bullying is a social phenomenon likely to occur within a group context, a name or derogatory label instigated by one individual group member is liable to catch on. Furthermore, children report that name-calling is often deemed one of the most distressing and frustrating modes of attack associated with bullying. Since the act of labeling can begin in the formative years of a child’s life, the effects can often be pervasive and long-term. Provided a child is repeatedly exposed to derogatory labeling, Hargreaves (1967) suggests two options available to the child: they can either conform to the norm in order to escape alienation, or they can deviate from the norm and suffer rejection from the group. Besag adds a third option: the child can accept the label as part of his/her identity. Thus, when confronted with the above circumstances, is a victim likely to succumb to the role of scapegoat?



### *The Scapegoat*

And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. (King James Version, Leviticus, 16:21)

The image of a goat sent into the wilderness to bear the sins for the Children of Israel is found in the scriptures of the Old Testament. Evidence of this ancient archetype is the sanctioned act of scapegoating, and can be traced back to an array of primitive societies (Perera, 1986). In reference to the belief found in the varied sects of Christianity, Jesus Christ was crucified and died for the eternal life of others. Christ became the bearer of sins and the scapegoat for His believers. In Europe, during medieval times, the trepidation of demonic spirits thought to inhabit the bodies of the mentally ill served as the unfortunate scapegoat that contained the community's fear (Toker, 1972). In Western society minority groups are regularly assigned the scapegoat role (Perera).

In the realm of social psychology, Allport (1954) classifies scapegoating under the prejudicial umbrella; with the belief that minority groups unjustly bear the brunt of societal problems. Due to society's proclivity to cast blame, Douglas (1995) states that the tendency to scapegoat has worsened over the last 30 years, as problems readily become the fault of an external source. In light of the human tendency to assign blame, is scapegoating therefore an essential ingredient of social behaviour?

### *The Scapegoat Archetype*

In reference to a Jungian approach, Perera (1986) presents the scapegoat complex as an individual's shadow that is scorned and repressed. According to Perera "What is seen as unfit to conform with the ego ideal, or with the perfect goodness of God, is repressed and denied, or split off and made unconscious" (p. 9). Although the shadow tends to be clearly seen in projection, the level of consciousness involved in expelling one's faults onto an external source is ambiguous in society today. The act of scapegoating in modern times radically differs from the ancient Hebrew practice of the sin offering. Due to the decline in current spiritual practice, Perera suggests that our skepticism to believe in the power of the gods and to form a transpersonal connection may propel the search for a scapegoat. As a result, with a shift in the contemporary understanding of the scapegoat archetype, animals, other people, and even inanimate objects can be reassigned the evil, guilt, and pain that individuals cannot contain (Scheidlinger, 1982).

The dynamic exchange in any social system inevitably amplifies the complexity of the situation. Although the scapegoat on average is granted the mark of innocence, Toker (1972) claims that the scapegoat insignia does not simply imply blamelessness. Individuals may behave in a particular manner in order to incite the scapegoating process. Although a discreet explanation cannot adequately account for an individual's propensity to stimulate his/her own victimization, further rationalizations will be explored. Therefore, as the question of innocence is difficult to assess, the fundamental reason for an individual to seek out negative attention and blame can be traced back to their early life experiences. For example, in order to maintain the status quo of the family a child

may have been assigned the scapegoat role early in life (Pillari, 1991). Allport (1954) suggests that the level of innocence needs to be assessed along a continuum as scapegoats “always attract more blame, more animosity, more stereotyped judgment than can be rationally justified” (p. 245-246). As a result, an in-depth examination of each scapegoat scenario is needed in order to adequately evaluate the situation.

### *The Scapegoat*

#### *Characteristics.*

As cited in the literature, the most common feature of the scapegoat archetype is one's failure to adequately contend with aggressive conduct (Garland & Kolodny, 1973). Individuality cannot be easily dismissed while discussing features of the scapegoat archetype; a submissive and masochistic mode is commonly observed. It is as if the archetypal pattern requires an individual's assent and passive compliance in the sacrificial role. Additionally, identification with the scapegoat role tends to incapacitate one's ability to openly express anger – scapegoats repeatedly seek disdain and rejection from others. Riddled with guilt, the scapegoat identifies with the negative forces imposed upon his/her character in an attempt to maintain mental and emotional stability. If a scapegoat-prone individual abruptly occupies a self-assertive stance, the sudden role shift could lead to psychic dissonance and guilt. As a result the willing identification with the scapegoat role may appear masochistic, even though the strength to withstand emotional discord is far greater than the energy required to defend against an entrenched sense of self-hate.

*Self-perceptions.*

Since the innate aggressive drive cannot remain perpetually concealed, a sudden outburst is the expected manifestation. In turn, the behaviour of the scapegoat-identified individual often leads to disbelief, resulting in a daunting feeling of guilt and shame for their actions. In the family context scapegoated individuals frequently struggle with a guilty conscience, being held responsible for their family's misfortune (Pillari, 1991). With an overriding sense of guilt, the ability to maintain a coherent identity is compromised. With little trust in their own perceptual abilities, the scapegoat is easily influenced by the changing evaluations derived from the collective (Perera, 1986). As the ego seeks acceptance, the scapegoat may be tempted to adopt a persona that encapsulates the collective's ideals. However, in an attempt to satisfy the collective, the scapegoat assumes contrasting personas that do not reflect the scapegoat's personal talents and strengths. Being that self-esteem and a sense of identity are aspects first established within the family of origin, it is no surprise that manipulative patterns of communication and interpersonal relations will have a negative effect on a person's sense of self worth (Pillari). The family is not the sole influence upon a person's self-esteem. According to Pillari, job success and social acceptance are important aspects that contribute to and maintain one's sense of worth.

In connection to distorted perceptual abilities commonly found in scapegoat-identified individuals, the awareness of one's body image is also skewed. Society as a collective instills a romanticized body ideal that becomes a focal point for those unable to make the mark. The flaw or physical attribute that is less than perfect provides the scapegoat-identified individual with a reason for his/her own sense of alienation (Perera,

1986). Scapegoats believe that other people notice and engage in exclusionary tactics due to acne or a little extra weight – these imperfections present a tangible means to account for the condemnation and increased level of shame. In essence, Perera construes that the physical flaw “becomes the scapegoat’s scapegoat on the body level” (p. 41). Although it may be assumed that the visibility factor inherent in body imperfections would present greater ease in addressing issues of self-esteem; the focus on physical traits is not easy to overcome. As a result, the physical and symbolic power of feeling held and touched is believed to affect the fragmented parts of the self.

*Effects and consequences.*

For children selected as the scapegoat early in life, it is astonishing to witness their exceeding capacity to uphold the pain and responsibility (Pillari, 1991). For children who are convinced that they are to blame, their perceptions inevitably become skewed as everything is perceived as either good or bad – never neutral. Perera (1986) states that the scapegoat complex alters one’s perception and consciousness, the ability to persevere in the face of suffering, the ability to assert oneself, and one’s ability to satiate personal needs. With compromised ego strength, scapegoat-identified individuals have learned to fear assertion. When an individual is continuously punished for initiating a firm stance, the victim’s self protective instinct is threatened and abuse likely to follow. Therefore, in order to conceal one’s ‘afflicted evils’, the development of a false self veils suppressed aggression. Perera expands further on the process of veiling by acknowledging a series of passive-aggressive distortions which enable the indirect and unconscious expression of split off impulses. For individuals that internalize negative projections, aggressive drives are not only detached from conscious awareness, but the slander is often turned against

one's own victim-ego. However, Perera identifies another form of veiling, which she terms "baiting" (p. 56). In essence, this means that a scapegoat-identified individual manages to mask his/her own aggression by provoking the scapegoater to react instead. In this particular instance, intent is involved in the baiting process. The act of baiting can also reflect an unconscious process. In this particular event the aggression is projected and experienced by the therapist and other members in the group. Once the anger is released, therapeutic work can gradually begin to address the defensive behaviour.

### *The Family Scapegoat*

The scapegoat phenomenon is not a novel concept for anyone who has lived in the midst of a social system. With the multiple levels of interpersonal exchange coupled with a fluctuating intrapersonal state, the first encounter with the scapegoat pattern is often within the family setting. Given the significance of the parental role in an infant's life, the lack of a containing embrace is believed to be a fundamental occurrence for scapegoat-identified individuals (Perera, 1986). With difficulties in forming a secure bond with a child, it is plausible for the infant to feel detached from a dependable being. The burden imposed upon a young child to fulfill the psychological or physical needs of the parent is believed to be common among scapegoat-identified individuals. However, an innate sensitivity is also considered a contributing factor in the selection process (Pillari, 1991). As the child is expected to bear emotionally-laden material, the child's need to be physically and symbolically held is not likely to occur in the caregiver's arms. As a result, the parental figure's inability to reconcile overwhelming feelings in themselves leads to insufficient holding of the child (Perera). In this regard there are a number of serious implications that may arise in the child's ego development. With a fragile ego, a

child's capacity to endure internal and external discomfort may compromise their sense of identity. Nonetheless, it is believed that exposure to a strong holding environment at the pre-ego stage will enable the child to adapt at phase-appropriate levels.

*The parent.*

Although parental figures are often the recipients of blame for the mishaps of their child, divesting judgment and fear onto parents can be deemed an analogous act. In fact this is precisely the case. The vicious scapegoating cycle is set into motion. According to Pillari (1991) many scapegoating parents had been assigned the scapegoat role as children in their own families. In response to their own victim status, these parents tend to have relatively weak egos coupled with a repressed sense of guilt. Families that do not seek professional help in response to transgenerational scapegoating may find a psychological decline in each succeeding generation. Of course, the irony of the matter is that parents of difficult children believe that they are the victims in the situation, rather than their children (Vogel & Bell, 1964). Although both parties may be able to identify with the victim status in transgenerational scapegoating, the important issue is not who is to blame but how to heal the affected members.

*The child.*

Though nothing can be truly gained in the blame game, it is inevitable that the impetus to understand leads to seizing one explicit rationale. A parent's wish for a child to behave in a certain fashion may be implicitly encouraged, whereas the child may unconsciously engage in the role he/she feels expected to play (Vogel & Bell, 1964). With complementary expectations between parent and child, it is difficult to discern at which point the parents begin dealing with the child as if he/she were problematic, and at

which point the child has truly developed internalized troubles. Since inconsistency has been identified as the most prevalent means to stimulate a child's identification with the scapegoat role, the most common inconsistency lies in the discrepancy between implicit and explicit messages conveyed by the parents (Pillari, 1991; Vogel & Bell). Another challenge for the child is to mediate conflicting parental guidance. The child can become trapped as one parent supports one type of behaviour while the other parent condemns it. As the child struggles with the unpredictable nature of their parents' exchange, the main culprit is the implicit message: the child is never right (Vogel & Bell). With relatively weak mental mechanisms, children are unconsciously encouraged to carry their parent's wish to violate social norms. Therefore, the need to maintain consistency in the therapeutic context is of utmost importance for scapegoat-identified child.

Although the family scapegoat is mainly portrayed as a dysfunctional role within the system, some authors do attest to the functional qualities of the position. In the event that marital conflict poses a threat to the family dynamic, the scapegoat may serve as a stabilizing force that manages to preserve the marriage (Pillari, 1991). Although it is mandatory for the scapegoated child to sacrifice his/her own interests and growth, the pain and anxiety experienced by the child is deemed relatively low considering the gains acquired by the family unit. However, Pillari states that the rewards achieved by assigning a family scapegoat are only temporarily helpful, for the child's emotional health and ability to adapt to the outside world is likely to be compromised. Furthermore, once a child is deemed the scapegoat of the family, the role typically becomes permanent as long as the child continues to live in the home. Once the child flees from the family



setting, the child may be temporarily freed as the role is assigned to the next available child.

### *The Scapegoat in Group Therapy*

A child's first encounter in a social sphere can be traced back to his/her position within the family. Upon entering the school milieu the child is exposed to additional methods of social conduct. Particularly in the latter stage of latency and extending into pre-adolescence, peers have an enormous influence on one's social behaviour in a group. Although scapegoating is a prominent premise within family therapy, to date minimal research has focused on the scapegoat phenomenon in the realm of social and therapeutic groups (Clark, 2002). According to Toker (1972), the scapegoat "provides an area into which aggressions can be channeled and focused without presenting a threat to the psychic integrity of the individual or a threat to the stability and unity of the group itself" (p. 320). As group members collude and channel group tension toward one member who deviates from the norm, conscious attention is not readily available to scrutinize the other group members (Clark). Due to the fear of contagion within the group context, Colman (1995) suggests that there is a function in assigning a group member the scapegoat role. Only on the rare occasion would group members challenge the role of the scapegoated member, for fear that they may become the next target.

In the preliminary phase of therapeutic contact, the fear of the unknown is liable to cause increased anxiety in a client. Since scapegoat-identified individuals find it difficult to objectively endure discomfort, anxiety-laden situations cause the scapegoat to react in an impatient and concrete fashion in an attempt to exert control (Perera, 1986). Given that scapegoats are believed to possess poor coping abilities, defense mechanisms

are naturally summoned. In highly anxious states scapegoaters may succumb to projective identification in an attempt to detract from the fretful condition. Intrinsic to projective identification Grotstein (1985) identifies two separate states of anxiety. The original source of anxiety is stimulated by the separation experience, while the second cause of anxiety is a consequence of employing projective identification. It is ironic that the defense mechanism used in an attempt to alleviate anxiety manages to produce more anxiety in the person.

*Role selection.*

According to Vogel and Bell (1964) the child selected as the scapegoat of the family is not necessarily a random act, for these authors maintain that one child represents the best symbol – the child embodies the source of tension that is intended to be repressed. However, in deciding upon a scapegoat within a therapeutic group, Foulkes and Anthony (1965) state that group features in association with individual traits of the chosen member facilitate the scapegoat selection process. In the event that group members are afraid to attack the original member responsible for the maddening feelings, the scapegoat in the group becomes the recipient of blame. Consequently, as group members experience difficulty in communicating anger and guilt in an unguarded fashion, concealed aggression may be aimed toward the scapegoat who is likely to succumb to the projections because of personal afflictions: the need to punish is met by the need to be punished. Therefore, in response to the innate cyclic dynamic of social interactions, the source of the cycle is often concealed. It is therefore difficult to determine whether the victim's behaviours are instrumental in initiating the acts of scapegoating, or are the consequence of being assigned the victim role (Douglas, 1995).

*Rationale for role selection.*

Even though an impending scapegoat does not possess an identifying mark that automatically makes him/her distinct from other group members, the element of difference is believed to be the main determinant. A common aspect of all small groups is the intrinsic level of visibility for each member of the group (Douglas, 1995). As a result, due to increased visibility, discrepancies increase in magnitude and lead to an obvious division between group members. The type of difference is another contributing factor: variations in age, sex, religion, class, and race are definable features that may complicate the interaction within a group (Foulkes & Anthony, 1965; Garland & Kolodny, 1973). Another consideration is the level of hostility and aggression that the difference provokes in the scapegoaters, as intense emotion is likely to fuel the scale of scapegoating (Douglas). A final component that affects the candidates for scapegoat is the manner in which the potential scapegoat's appearance and behaviour engenders the basic premise of the group. In addition to the theme of difference in the assignment of roles within a group, the distinction between conscious and unconscious behaviour on the scapegoat's part is worthy of mention. According to Earley (2000) a group member may unconsciously be different or defiant in order to fulfill the scapegoat role. To the notion of an "'innocent' bystander" (Toker, 1972, p. 321) explored in the first section of this manuscript, Douglas adds that some scapegoats may promote their own victimization. Douglas suggests that even a shameful and antagonistic relationship may seem valuable for an individual who has experienced a limited breadth of positive social interactions.

### *Methods of scapegoating.*

With the element of difference as the driving force behind the scapegoating process, the distinction between group roles is conveyed via direct and indirect modes of conduct between members. The group may ostracize the scapegoat in order to attain a level of control over them. According to Garland and Kolodny (1973), ostracism involves “driving out the symbol of that which is distasteful or threatening to the group equilibrium and image” (p. 67). These authors also identify “institutionalization” (p. 67) as a means to contain the scapegoat in a permanent position by not encouraging movement or the change of roles within the context of the group. The third manner to maintain a member within the scapegoat role is through “encapsulation” (p. 67), which means that he/she is isolated within the structure of the group as the emotional outpost for the group’s guilt.

### *Explanations for the Scapegoat Phenomenon*

As a simple explanation is readily sought to account for the scapegoat phenomenon, the situation increases in complexity when both conscious and unconscious aspects are considered. As both known and unknown factors amalgamate within a social context, a scapegoater’s conscious intent to discharge blame may be masked by the tendency to rationalize behaviour (Douglas, 1995). Although the purpose of consciously propelled scapegoating is relatively straightforward, unconscious actions that are intended to escape blame are much more complex. Pent-up energy generated by personality traits, unexpressed anger, and frustration is abruptly discharged in unexpected situations. Projection and projective identification are unconscious mechanisms that enable the release of one’s bad parts onto another (Douglas; Grotstein, 1985). Although

unconscious means cannot be denied, Douglas suggests that in modern scapegoating there is an increase in conscious attempts to avoid blame by deflecting attention onto a scapegoat.

*Projection and projective identification.*

In an attempt to understand abnormal behaviour and the dynamics of personality, the comprehensive notion of defense mechanisms manages to provide a channel for discussion (Rychlak, 1981). However, since these devices do not solely denote atypical psychopathology, the term “adjustment or mental mechanisms” (Rychlak, p. 60) may be more appropriate. Due to the vast number of mental mechanisms identified in the literature, only a select few are relevant in terms of the scapegoat complex. For example, a person projects specific mental concerns onto another individual, leading to change in the target’s behaviour (Horwitz, 1983). Although projection is believed to play a substantial role in the scapegoat process, Horwitz is inclined to believe that another mechanism may be better suited in order to shed light on this complex process. The term projective identification, first defined by Melanie Klein in 1946, addresses the earliest stages of a child’s relation to objects. With a preliminary grasp of the concept, Wilfred Bion in 1959 extended the fundamental elements of projective identification to encompass the dynamic of group behaviour. Due to the restricted context in which projective identification first became recognized, many people fail to acknowledge the concept as a universal phenomenon that need not be confined to the workings of a psychotic mind.

According to Horwitz (1983), “projective identification refers to efforts by persons to rid themselves of certain mental contents by projection and to the anxiety that

those contents arouse when they are returned in kind” (p. 260). As the striking complexity of this premise is conveyed in the excerpt above, Horwitz proposes several factors that contribute to the ambiguity and confusion between projection and projective identification. For instance, Horwitz states that projective identification is not solely motivated by the desire to purge oneself of the aggressive and sadistic impulses commonly affiliated with the act of projection. Instead, the drive to dominate, berate, and control the target is what defines projective identification. Also, the identification component of the defense is essential to its understanding. The lack of clarity, however, in being able to discern the subject from the object adds to the complexity. Horwitz also notes that “projective identification is not simply a defense mechanism involving internal or intrapsychic transformations, as is true of most other defenses; rather, it is both an intrapsychic mechanism and an interpersonal transaction that involves transformations in both the projector and the external object” (p. 261). Therefore, there are two general processes involved in projective identification. The first concerns the subject and the influence that the projected material has on the subject once the content is re-introjected from the external target. The second addresses the impact that the projected material has on the external object, as identification with the projected content will naturally alter the target’s behaviour.

Due to the intricacy of any psychological theory, an inevitable impasse is the subtle distinction inherent in the work of each contributing author. For instance, while Horwitz (1983) clearly states that projection and projective identification are markedly different mental mechanisms, Grotstein (1985) states otherwise. In effect, Grotstein acknowledges that projection without identification cannot exist; the terms are

interchangeable. Another author in support of the difference between the two terms is Scheidlinger (1982) who suggests that projection is an expected defense mechanism during the formative phase of group development, while projection and projective identification are readily visible in the latter stages of a group's progress. Projection is mainly characterized as a short-lived defensive process, while the inherent complexity of projective identification enables its persistent occurrence in a group over time. Although an in depth discussion into the variation between authorship and the presentation of terms is beyond the scope of this manuscript, the disparity is worth mentioning.

*Mental mechanisms in scapegoating.*

As a group participant, the defensive means to dissipate anxiety seems to be through the act of scapegoating. In psychodynamic terms, the mechanisms involved in dispelling heightened emotion are through various forms of displacement or projection (Scheidlinger, 1982). According to Scheidlinger, scapegoating that connotes ordinary group-level disturbances, such as the introduction of new members and a general threat to a group's sense of well-being, is more characteristic of projection. The behaviours of group members that engage in projective identification as a means to scapegoat fellow group members is highly suggestive of severe pathological patterns in the scapegoater – perhaps indicative of borderline tendencies. Furthermore, integrated in the domain of projection and projective identification is the primitive process of splitting. Grotstein (1985) explores the working of these two mechanisms by declaring that “projective identification acts as an adjunct to splitting by assigning a split-off percept or self to a container for postponement or for eradication” (p. 131). Although the occurrence of projective identification may be more difficult to identify in the scapegoating process,

displacement is another powerful defense within a group dynamic (Horwitz, 1983).

Propelled by intense emotion or fear of confronting an individual in a group, a member may be unconsciously driven to displace negative emotions onto another person (Garland & Kolodny, 1973). Therefore, the target of the displaced aggression readily becomes the scapegoat; perceived to be weak and less likely to retaliate (Clark, 2002). Within the context of a group, Horwitz notes that a patient's aggressive drive toward another group member is actually in response to the patient's fear of being belligerent with the therapist.

Regarding displacement, Allport (1954) distinguishes between two renderings of the scapegoat theory. The sequential telling of the Biblical version functions analogously, beginning with an act of personal misconduct that arouses a sense of guilt. This guilt is then abated through displacing blame upon a goat's head. In reference to the frustration theory, Allport provides an alternative view in that frustration leads to aggression, which is then displaced upon a defenseless recipient, and then the transfer of hostility is rationalized through the act of projection. The distinction between these two representations of the scapegoat complex lies in the role of frustration. Even though the basic need to evade blame and consequence is the fundamental drive of the scapegoat complex, no single theory can adequately account for the phenomenon. In addition, due to the expansive scale of the frustration theory, numerous details cannot be explained. For instance, Allport remarks that the theory cannot answer:

Why some people respond to frustration in an aggressive manner; why some types of frustration are more likely to induce displacement upon out-groups; why some people persist in displacement in spite of its complete failure as a mode of



adaptation; or why, on the other hand, some people hold the displacement tendency in check. (p. 352)

Although each case needs to be considered on an individual basis, the above explanations provide potential means to intercede and deter the scapegoat pattern.

### *Group Roles*

As social beings, group participation is inevitable. Therefore, to understand the social determinants of a group member's role, social role theory emerged (Feldman & Wodarski, 1975). Given that individuals occupy positions within social structures, the behaviour of group participants is largely influenced by role expectations held by other group members. This is not a random matter – role expectations are believed to be contingent on “members’ prior role performances, functional interdependencies, shared norms, reward and sanctioning systems, and liking for one another” (Feldman & Wodarski, p. 190). Although a number of roles are unofficially recognized in group theory, Dunphy (1968) distinguishes between five discrete role types: “instructor, aggressor, scapegoat, seducer, idol” (p. 215). According to role theorists, individuals that occupy a specific position in a group are believed to exhibit common attributes, behaviours, and reactions within a group (Feldman & Wodarski). For instance, an empirical study conducted by Feldman (1969) examined social attributes of intensely disliked group members at a children's summer camp. The above study found that children occupying the scapegoat role “tend to express relatively weak commitment to group norms, contribute negligibly to the performance of basic group functions, express low liking for peers, and are attributed extremely low social power” (Feldman & Wodarski, p. 190). In addition, Feldman and Wodarski claim that the remaining group

members are more prone to convey extreme dislike for the individual that holds the scapegoat position.

### *Covert Group Roles*

Within a group setting the interaction between group members can be considered on multiple levels. Both overt and covert roles emerge within the context of a group. Gemmill and Kraus (1988) refer to conscious thoughts and feelings shared through verbal and behavioural means as overt roles. Unconscious opinions and views that reflect hidden emotional themes of a group signify covert roles. Therefore, in order to appreciate unconscious desires and emotional variance amongst group members, it is important to consider both overt and covert roles that emerge in a group. Without attending to the group dynamic, concealed emotions can escalate to an insurmountable level, creating a group shadow that obstructs a group's progress. For group members who are unable to accept his/her own imperfections, Gemmill and Kraus suggest that another group member unconsciously adopts a covert role in order to absorb the group's deflected emotions. Due to unconscious covert role assignment, the outcome for individual group members and the group as a whole is difficult to determine.

To further one's understanding of group roles Redl (1963) proposes the concept "group psychological role suction" (p. 144) to account for a group member's desire to satisfy a group need. In an effort to understand covert role assignment in groups, Gemmill and Kraus (1988) suggest that role suction accounts for certain group members' instinctual tendency to fulfill a group's masked needs. In addition to role suction, Gemmill and Kraus associate the development of covert roles with the mechanism of collective projective identification. Extending the description offered above, collective

projective identification is the process by which mental attributes common to the group are disowned and projected onto a group member who unconsciously identifies and contains the group's rejected feelings. The group member who becomes the target of the group's projections and seemingly accepts the covert role is typically the member most transparent in conceding to the 'dreaded trait'. Therefore the problematic group member believed to be resistant in confronting his/her so-called problem is also credited for inhibiting the group's progress. As the problematic group member becomes the recipient of blame, the group scapegoat is chosen.

### *Art Therapy*

#### *Definition*

The unification of both art and therapy are the central components intrinsic to the function of art therapy (Rubin, 1984). Within the safety of a therapeutic space, art therapy is believed to enhance one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. The creative process is intended to facilitate free expression in order to provide a tangible means to access the realm of conscious and unconscious thought by exceeding the constraint of words (Case & Dalley, 1992). To encourage personal growth and understanding, the client is provided with simple art materials to facilitate creativity (Landgarten, 1981). The exploration through visual means reduces one's anxiety and defenses, allowing concealed thoughts and feelings to emerge in the art form.

#### *Art Therapy and Bullying*

There are a number of constraints that arise with the intent to abolish bullying in schools. In response to increased attention to bullying behaviour, aggressive conduct is likely to occur via indirect means or in the absence of authority. With concerted efforts to

put an end to bullying, how are the victims attended to? According to Besag (1989) children who have been bullied are often reluctant to verbally discuss details of bullying episodes, mainly because the victim is ashamed of his/her social inadequacy. Instead of relying solely upon verbal means of communication, Besag has found that some victims are more inclined to draw pictures in an attempt to convey their distress. Even though Besag is not a qualified art therapist, I propose that utilizing art therapy with victims of school-bound aggression may be a viable option worthy of further study.

Thus far only one study has proposed the use of art therapy with school-aged children that have been bullied. Ross (1996) implemented an art therapy approach within the school context as a means to provide children who had been bullied the opportunity to express their feelings, increase self-esteem, and develop ways to become assertive. Ross had worked with a group of seven children: three girls and four boys between the ages of 9 and 10-years-old. In the interest of averting further isolation, the project was presented to the participants as a group focused on rights. Although Ross did not include an elaborate discussion concerning the various forms of aggression, she did allude to overt acts of aggression amid exclusionary measures. Even though the discrete type of aggression experienced by each participant was not discussed, Ross did report a gender difference in the emotional content of the bullying experience. Specifically, boys expressed humiliation whereas girls expressed feelings of helplessness. With the completion of the group, the class teacher reported observable changes in the behaviour of six of the seven children. As a result, within the context of the group, art therapy provided a tangible means for the children to attend to their distress.

### *Art Therapy and the Scapegoat*

Fundamental to any scapegoat ritual is the mythical belief that attributes and emotional states can be reassigned to a separate entity. In essence, the relation between cause and effect serves to reinforce and sustain scapegoating behaviour (Schaverien, 1992). As previously mentioned, scapegoating can be deemed a form of splitting; the good is severed from the bad with the intent to relinquish the bad. Perera (1986) highlights the unconscious element involved in the disposal of one's shadow; however, unconscious denial can be viewed as detrimental for both the individual and the community at large. As a result, Schaverien is in support of owning the shadow, instead of neglecting its existence. In response to this quandary, Schaverien proposes analytic art psychotherapy as a means to develop credence and conscious awareness for facets that have been split from the psyche.

Schaverien (1992) proposes that the picture in analytic art psychotherapy is liable to become a scapegoat within the therapeutic relationship. Schaverien claims:

The scapegoat picture, like the goat in the ritual, is subject to a series of events which can be divided into three stages. The first is the ritual whereby the sins are transferred to the goat (or the picture). Subsequently the goat (or the picture), which is now magically invested, is experienced as empowered and so it might be considered a talisman, an empowered object. In the final stage the goat (picture) is disposed of in a manner compatible with the affect which it embodies. (p. 30)

The involvement in art therapy allows the client to dispose of his/her distress through generating marks on a peripheral art form. In the act of creating and disposing of the art, the client becomes unburdened and is likely to obtain temporary relief. Additionally, the

process occurs within a therapeutic context; with a therapist who is capable to contain the picture and the patient. The therapist's goal is to stimulate a conscious dialogue so that the patient can accept both the good and bad parts of the self.

### *The Present Research Rationale*

An influx of empirical investigations, set forth to impart an accurate portrait of the bullying problem, has led to commendable efforts to remediate the bully/victim issue worldwide. Rigorous work initiated by quantitative researchers has allowed for extensive study of aggressive childhood behaviours that were idly deemed typical of child's play. Also, controversy concerning aggressive styles related to gender has led to a general consensus that boys predominantly engage in direct modes of physical aggression, while girls tend toward more social and indirect means.

Due to an increased interest into the process of childhood aggression, bullying is no longer exclusively deemed a dyadic dispute but has gained credence as a group phenomenon. With the involvement of multiple participants, group roles are consciously and unconsciously performed. Although the emergence of roles depends upon the structure of the group, several types of roles consistently appear in a group's progression. For instance, the group member who becomes the recipient of blame is readily assigned the scapegoat role. Although research examining the scapegoat complex is limited, an individual's identification with the scapegoat role is believed to entail overt and covert patterns of behaviour. Mental mechanisms such as projection and projective identification provide the scapegoat as well as group members the means to sustain the scapegoat role.

Although commonalities exist between bullying and scapegoating, one specific distinction sets these two acts apart. Bullying is characterized by the intent to inflict harm upon the victim, whereas scapegoating is not necessarily impelled by conscious intent. Therefore, the current area of interest lies in the interplay between conscious/overt and unconscious/covert behaviour performed by the victim in the scapegoat role. Due to the complexity of the scapegoat role coupled with minimal qualitative reports of female victims of social aggression, the following study explores the scapegoat complex through the behaviour and artwork of a pre-adolescent girl.

### *Research Questions*

According to Berg (2004) “case study methods involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions” (p. 251).

Given that the current study was conducted prior to concretizing a research question, the following inquiry subsumes an exploratory case study design with particular focus on a single group member. Therefore the primary research question guiding this case study was:

*How does the covert role of scapegoat materialize in an art therapy group of female victims of social aggression?*

The subsidiary questions furthering the study were:

- a.) What visual themes emerge in the art work of a scapegoat?*
- b.) How does identifying with the scapegoat role affect one's behaviour and interaction in a group?*
- c.) What differences can be found in the verbal versus the visual content of the image?*

## Methodology

### *Setting*

The following therapeutic encounter stems from working at an inner city elementary school within a large urban center. Nestled within a relatively secure financial area of the city, the school demographic consisted of children from economically average to slightly below average neighbouring districts. The school featured a multicultural community that focused on the diverse needs of all its students. With educational instruction provided from kindergarten to grade six, efforts were directed towards obtaining a child's full potential in a school environment that fostered respect, cooperation, and a commitment to learning.

Due to an increase in episodes of bullying and aggression, an influx of strategies to enhance awareness was incorporated into the school sphere. An extensive bullying awareness program was implemented in the school early in the month of December. Therefore, bullying in this school was not an unfamiliar theme, as anti-bullying posters lined the walls of the stairwells. In addition to the school-wide awareness program, supplementary bullying programs were instigated by concerned school staff. For instance, an awareness program to increase the understanding of social aggression among girls was made available for a select number of senior students. The aim of the group was to foster awareness and discussion for female students who had been identified as bullies, victims, or bystanders of social aggression.

Even though the extent of aggressive acts within the school milieu was undeniable, I found that concern for the emotional well being of the victims was relatively sparse. Therefore, I proposed the implementation of an art therapy group in



order to facilitate social interaction and the sharing of personal experiences among a select group of girls affected by social aggression (see below for selection criteria).

### *Recruitment*

The preliminary step prior to recruiting participants for the art therapy group was to present a proposal to staff members at a school personnel meeting. Staff members in attendance consisted of the principal, vice principal, social worker, nurse, and core resource teachers. I also met with child care workers – specifically the child care worker who implemented the social aggression awareness program. Due to limited social resources available in the school, the original intent was to provide services to as many students as possible.

The primary delimitation was to establish a group of four to six female children enrolled in either grade five or six. The rationale for restricting group admittance to senior level students was to address issues of self-esteem prior to entering high school. The children were required to have experienced at least one episode of social aggression by at least one other female peer at school. However, measures were not taken to control the type or degree of social victimization. Therefore, the potential range of aggression was left relatively open. Additionally, the children needed to possess a fluency in English and agree to be possibly removed from school activities if the group's timetable required it. With the assistance of child care workers, a list of potential female victims was drawn. However, an inevitable limitation in establishing the group was the difficulty in identifying children that had experienced social aggression, for many episodes go undetected. It was challenging to find female children who were willing to acknowledge and confront the feelings associated with being bullied. Due to the unexpected difficulty

in getting sufficient participants, two of the girls involved in the awareness group facilitated by the child care worker were also given the opportunity to participate in the art therapy group.

I first met with each of the four girls independently, asking them a few general questions to assess their knowledge and experience with social aggression. For instance, I asked whether they had ever heard someone call another person mean names and then try to spread rumours. I asked what kids usually did when this happened. I also asked what they thought kids should do. I explained the basis for art therapy, as well as the premise for the group. I provided each girl the opportunity to ask questions if she required clarification. Although the length of the first interview varied according to the individual needs of each girl, the duration ranged from 15 to 30 minutes. I gave each prospective participant an envelope containing a cover letter (see Appendix A), one consent information form (see Appendix B), two blank consent forms (see Appendix C), one school authorization form, and an envelope to ensure ease in the retrieval process. With parental consent from all four students, the group was set to commence.

### *Participants*

The first female was a 12-year-old Caucasian girl enrolled in grade five. Olivia (the assigned pseudonym) had a younger brother and lived with both biological parents. With a stocky prepubescent stature, Olivia identified herself as one of the boys – the majority of her friends were male. The next group member, given the name Nadia, was a meticulous and conscientious grade six student of African descent. Nadia lived with her mother and a number of siblings. A concise depiction of Nadia's family was difficult to obtain due to a multifaceted family system with a wide range of members inhabiting

different parts of the continent. Often at recess Nadia was found alone with minimal interaction and exchange with peers. The third female of the group was ‘Michelle’, who was also of African descent. Michelle was 12-years-old and had just been moved from a regular grade six class to a class with a lower pupil-teacher ratio. Although a switch in classroom required some adjustment, Michelle appeared to adapt to the change relatively well. Michelle lived with both of her parents and she was the eldest of three children. The final member to submit parental consent to participate in the group was ‘Adrienne’. A heavyset Caucasian girl, Adrienne had recently turned 13-years-old and was enrolled in grade six. Adrienne’s parents were divorced, though her father had remarried. Adrienne’s mother passed away when she was approximately eight-years-old, at which point she began living with her father, stepmother and stepsister. Adrienne was the only group member exposed to previous therapy.

#### *Rationale for Selecting One Group Member*

The research was intended to provide social support to pre-adolescent females victimized by social aggression. Due to the exploratory nature of the case study, the inquiry was determined retrospectively upon the completion of the group. Having examined progress notes, artwork, and engaging in extensive scrutiny of relevant areas of study, the notion of group roles was drawn to my attention. Although the art therapy group consisted of four female children deemed victims in their individual peer groups, each girl presented a different story with distinct experiences. Although I did not restrict the emergence of individuality, I had not fully conceived that each participant would adopt a dissimilar group role. I suppose my expectations and assumptions of the victim role initially affected my goal to achieve objectivity.

Even though I was not fully conscious of the different roles that emerged while conducting the art therapy group, my attention was continually drawn to one particular member. Adrienne appeared to adopt a role distinct from the others and at times I found her behaviour troublesome. By troublesome, I mean that her actions diverted the group's focus, and then disrupted the group's progress. Therefore, impelled to understand Adrienne's interaction, behaviour, and art, I sought to understand her divergence from the other group members. Upon examining group positions, I discovered that elements of the scapegoat role echoed Adrienne's behaviours in the group. Thus, the following case study examines Adrienne: a victim among school peers and a scapegoat within the art therapy group.

### *Case Study Methodology*

According to Stake (1995) the essence of a case study "is particularization, not generalization" (p. 8). Even though the distinct features of a case essentially become the reader's focus, a researcher's primary interest lies in obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the case itself. A researcher is drawn to a case for various reasons; Stake classifies case studies according to three distinct purposes: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. In an intrinsic case study the researcher is not interested in obtaining general insight into an issue. Instead, the details of the case are of prime interest. Compelled to discover the essential elements of a case, the researcher does not set out to test abstract theory or forge new theoretical domains (Berg, 2004).

Conversely, an instrumental case study is impelled by a need to understand and obtain insight into a particular matter (Stake, 1995). For an instrumental case study, the investigation becomes a vehicle to understand something else. In this regard, the actual

case becomes secondary – background for the real focus of research (Berg, 2004). The case provides the researcher a means to understand a peripheral theoretical question. Furthermore, Berg identifies the extensive study of several instrumental cases as a collective case study. Although a researcher's multiple interests often make it difficult to define a case as either intrinsic or instrumental (Berg), Stake claims the researcher's approach to the case will be different. The greater intrinsic interest in the case, the more attention is directed toward understanding specifics – less attention to gratifying tentative curiosity. In reference to the art therapy group, my initial interest in group members' personal experiences of social aggression would have lead to an intrinsic approach. However, following the completion of the group, the need to understand group level proceedings resulted in further research. As I came upon the scapegoat motif, the case became an instrument in guiding the investigation of the scapegoat archetype.

Although Stake identifies three purposes for utilizing the case study method, Guba and Lincoln (1981) acknowledge four distinct functions of case studies:

- (1) to chronicle, that is, to develop a register of facts or events in the order (more or less) in which they happened; (2) to render, that is, to depict or characterize; (3) to teach, that is, to provide with knowledge, or to instruct; and (4) to test, that is, to 'prove' or to try. (p. 371)

Even though Guba and Lincoln acknowledge that a particular case may be composed of several purposes, the content and approach to the case will be shaped by the researcher's underlying goal.

Inherent in any research methodology are advantages and disadvantages. In reference to positive features of naturalistic evaluation, Guba and Lincoln (1981) identify

six benefits of case study research. First, a fundamental component of the case study is a “thick description” (Guba & Lincoln, p. 375), which enables one to assess the study’s relevance based on the information provided. Second, a case study is grounded in that the data is derived from an observable context. Third, findings are “holistic and lifelike” (Guba & Lincoln, p. 376), meaning a tangible picture can be garnered from the comprehensive report. Fourth, the case study condenses an enormity of data into a simplified and accessible format, resembling a conversational design. Fifth, the study is intended to present the reader with an integrated summary that explicitly delineates the intended meanings. The sixth benefit of a case study is that information is not solely acquired from the written text, but “builds on the ‘tacit knowledge’ of its readers” (Guba & Lincoln, p. 376). Therefore, exceeding the constraints of words, case studies stimulate the activation and emergence of implicit knowledge.

In contrast to the above advantages, methodological constraints of the case study also apply. The most common drawback of a case study design is the lack of scientific evidence and impartial data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Since quantitative rigor is frequently equated with the calibre of research, case studies are often criticized for being non-representative of the population at large. Also, case study reports often insinuate a comprehensive whole even though a partial picture can only be presented to the reader. Guba and Lincoln acknowledge that since some elements of a case study are oversimplified or embellished, the reader may be drawn to false conclusions. As a result, the writer’s interpretation of the case study may give rise to biased and inaccurate claims. Since case study design consists of both positive and negative elements, the case study

research method should not be dismissed but understood according to its inherent limitations.

### *Group Structure and Procedure*

The art therapy group convened on a weekly basis for 15 consecutive weeks – except for one week in the month of March due to school vacation. The sessions occurred on the same day each week for approximately an hour and 15 minutes. I gathered each participant from her respective classroom roughly fifteen minutes prior to lunch time dismissal. The girls were instructed to bring their lunches into the art therapy room in order to foster social interaction and exchange between group members. The room was superficially divided into two sections – one area for dining and the other for art-making. According to Prokoviev (1998), separating the room assists children in the transition between tasks. Thus, each session began with all group members gathered around a circular table to eat lunch and discuss weekly events. Depending on the session, I would either describe the art task while the girls were eating or would wait until the end of lunch. With each session consisting of an hour and 15 minutes, I presumed food consumption would cease within 15 minutes – allowing approximately an hour for producing and processing the artwork. However, due to random occurrences within the school setting coupled with varied eating rates of each participant, the time regime fluctuated from session to session. Nevertheless, the basic group structure entailed an opening segment for lunch, a middle segment for art, and a final segment to clean-up and perform the closing ritual.

For the first six sessions the closing ritual consisted of an activity entitled the ‘magic box’. With use of one’s imagination, each group member had the opportunity to

‘leave’ something in the imaginary box, and ‘take’ something in return. Since group participants found it difficult to fully engage in the task, the magic box was discontinued and replaced with a sign-in/sign-out activity. The objective of signing-in/signing-out was to provide each participant the opportunity to make a mark via an image or word on a large piece of paper. Without imposing pressure to perform, the act of signing-in indicated the beginning of the group, while signing-out signified the time to depart. Although I do not feel that the participants fully exploited the sign-in/sign-out method, the ritual succeeded at marking the start and finish of each session.

### *Themes*

According to Owens, Slee, et al. (2000), the most common reaction and reported theme of socially aggressed girls is a heightened sense of confusion. With the intent to surpass facets of confusion, victims attempt to deny the existence of pain, anxiety, and weakened self-esteem. The activities for the art therapy group provided each participant the opportunity to explore personal experiences as victims of social aggression. Although the discussion that occurred during the lunch segment was not structure-bound, art activities were preplanned in order to attend to bullying themes (see Appendix D for an overview of the weekly themes). Though a number of art activities were generated from my mind's eye, ideas for art tasks were primarily drawn from art therapy publications. For instance, creative endeavours inspired by the work of Ross (1996, 1997) and Liebmann (2004) provided participants the opportunity to express feelings, increase self-esteem, and develop means to become self-assertive.

Another important focus of the group was to foster social interaction within a safe environment. Therefore in addition to providing group member's an exclusive forum to



exercise their independent voice, several tasks were designed to promote group interaction. Owens, Shute, et al. (2000) suggest capitalizing on a female's tendency to seek out peers with similar interests and experiences by facilitating peer mediation within female groups. Although studies have yet to explore the use of peer intervention, a core theme in the art therapy group was to promote group participation and social support among its members.

### *Researcher Role – Ethical Issues and Reflexive Practice*

Ethical research protocol set forth by the university was strictly adhered to, as all consent forms and art produced in the sessions were stored under lock and key. Although the art therapy group has lead to a tangible research report, it is worthy to note that the primary objective and focus was to provide therapeutic services to the group members.

Reflexivity is a concept in qualitative research which entails a “self-aware analysis of the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and the researched” (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p. ix). Since the researcher's assumptions and expectations can influence the research process, reflexivity requires thorough examination of one's self. For the present case study my dual role as both therapist and researcher required continuous reflection on my behaviour in both roles. Although reflexivity is a challenging practice, it is an essential process to prevent subjective bias and unconscious reactions from negatively impacting the outcome of a study (Finlay, 2003). Even though the researcher's disposition and intent cannot be denied, the reflexive process provides a way to recognize a personal slant. Stake (1995) acknowledges that “research is not helped by making it appear value free. It is better to give the reader a good look at the researcher” (p. 95).

Although I obtained a solid contextual background of bullying prior to commencing the group, my limited experience in conducting art therapy groups became a daunting reality. Even though I became familiar with elements of group theory, the roots did not fully take hold until I embarked upon an in-depth analysis of theory following the completion of the group. Due to an expectation of reserved and fragile behaviour among the members, the purpose of the group was to provide a safe social system devoid of discrimination – my preconceptions in this matter proved to be inherently flawed. This unreal assumption stemmed from my own personal bias and experience with the bully/victim role at a young age. To facilitate the group I needed to acknowledge, accept, and abandon my deep-seated notions of a victim. My research advisor became critical at this early juncture, for she provided guidance and consultation during this essential process.

In order to maintain an objective stance, I needed to become aware of potentially shameful reactions and countertransference to members in the group. To begin, I found I involuntarily equated difficulties in the group to Adrienne's disruptive behaviour. I initially believed that if Adrienne would cease her acting-out behaviour, then the group would calmly proceed. Needless to say, as I became aware of my own need to contextualize group events, I began to blame myself for the group's demise. As the group therapist I was ultimately responsible for problems that occurred in the group. I was reminded of my own inadequacies as an art therapy intern and as a group leader. However, once I approached the group as a researcher, I stumbled upon the scapegoat archetype. I discovered that Adrienne's behaviour in the group echoed features of the scapegoat role. Furthermore, the scapegoat archetype reached a personal depth, for I was

also personally familiar with the role. In the art therapy group Adrienne did not overtly identify with the scapegoat archetype. Instead, the scapegoat role seemed to manifest covertly. Thus, I became intrigued with Adrienne's unconscious embrace of the scapegoat role.

### *Trustworthiness and Credibility*

As previously mentioned, due to the exploratory nature of the case study, it is important to note that the research question was formulated following the completion of the art therapy group. Therefore, retroactively gaining access to a personal profile for each participant was restricted. As a result, a large portion of the data compiled for the case report was gathered through direct observation of group sessions. As a qualitative researcher in a naturalistic setting, however, a number of criteria were required in order to demonstrate the trustworthiness of my claims. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as the four criteria employed to establish the trustworthiness of a study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose "prolonged engagement" (p. 301) as the first criterion to ensure credibility. In order to gain familiarity with the setting and the developmental level of the children, I interned at the elementary school for approximately four months prior to the group, which was followed by 15 weekly group art therapy sessions with the participants. Subsequent to prolonged engagement, Lincoln and Guba identify "persistent observation" (p. 304), which is to allow adequate time to attend to the most significant elements in detail. In reference to the art therapy group, discussions reflecting the victim role were readily pursued in order to reap the profundity of the victims' experiences. The third credibility check, referred to as "triangulation" (p. 305),

involves the need to triangulate between sources, methods, and investigators. Stake (1995) identifies data source triangulation as a means of evaluating the stability of observations established under distinct circumstances; methodological triangulation regards data from at least two different methodological approaches. The final form of triangulation entails gathering separate conclusions from external investigators exposed to the same phenomenon. The main form of triangulation in the present study was obtained by introducing a third element: the art medium. Reference to prior research studies and discussions with the supervisory team facilitated triangulation between method and investigator.

The next applicable credibility technique proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is referred to as “peer debriefing” (p. 308). This essential process provides an open forum for the researcher to reflect upon implicit and explicit facets of the study with an unbiased peer. Regarding this particular case, two separate supervisors offered extensive time and thought to aid my queries. Subsequent to peer debriefing, Lincoln and Guba identify the practice of “member checks” (p. 314), which provides participants the opportunity to clarify, correct, augment, and summarize data obtained from the research process. Although statements and accounts were not obtained verbatim, I relied upon paraphrasing to ensure that the essence of each member’s contributions was understood. Detailed notes were recorded following the end of each session to ensure an accurate record of group events.

Transferability by way of a “thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316) is the next criterion to ascertain trustworthiness. A thick description consists of comprehensive interpretations provided by the most knowledgeable contributors in the

field (Stake, 1995). According to Lincoln and Guba this is intended to provide a sufficient structural frame, enabling an individual to follow the connection being made (Lincoln & Guba). To fulfill the requirement of transferability, I immersed myself in as much information as possible to succeed at presenting a succinct summary of theoretical claims set forth by experts in the field. Thick description also refers to the inclusion of quotes or material that allow the reader an opportunity to ‘hear’ the participant’s ‘voice’. Throughout the findings section, images and words produced by Adrienne can be found. The final technique attending to all four criteria to warrant trustworthiness was the use of a diary format referred to as a “reflexive journal” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 327). After each session I would diligently record group proceedings with particular attention to each participant, followed by my own reflections.

### Findings

Amidst the awkwardness, silence, and anxious skepticism among the participants, the first session, the most decisive session in group therapy (Foulkes & Anthony, 1965) is believed to denote the direction for future therapeutic encounters. To appease heightened anxiety, mental mechanisms are instinctively summoned to the defensive. Regression, splitting, displacement, and projection are a few select means to enable one to withstand an unfamiliar situation. In an interconnected social system, conscious and unconscious communication propels the dynamic interaction within a group setting. While conscious intent can be perceived in one’s overt behaviour, unconscious emotional forces are often muddled amid inadvertent acts. Therefore, to pacify one’s unconscious fears, wishes, and anxieties, group members espouse covert roles (Gemmell, 1989).

For the following case study the role of scapegoat is my guide of query. Since the scapegoat role is believed to subsist beyond conscious awareness, Gemmill (1989) claims that the role tends to be covertly assigned and assumed. According to Cohen and Schermer (2002) the scapegoat process is believed to transpire in the early phase of a new group's development. As the group scapegoat becomes the recipient of either overt attack or covert negative projection, the scapegoat manages to establish group norms and future goals.

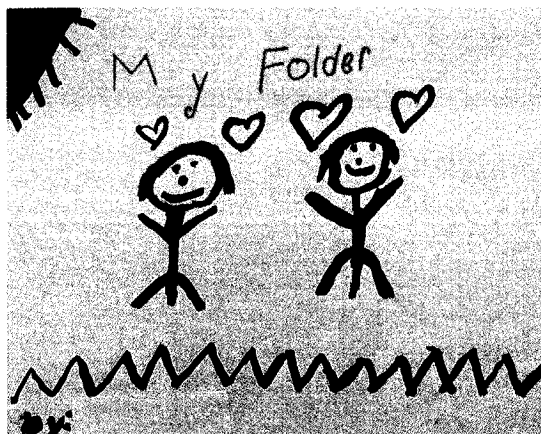
To facilitate the analysis of the scapegoat role, the following segment will provide an in depth look at six art therapy sessions. Although the art therapy group consisted of 15 sessions, Adrienne was absent on two occasions. Upon examining Adrienne's behaviour, art, and group interaction in the following six sessions, covert identification with the scapegoat role emerged.

### *First Session*

The first session began in the designated art therapy room as Olivia, Nadia, Michelle, and Adrienne gathered around a circular table to eat lunch. After the introductions the participants became acquainted with facets of social aggression, art therapy, and confidentiality. As a nervous energy infiltrated the group, my efforts to defuse anxiety were not especially effective. Amid the consumption of food and the informal lunch time discussion, Adrienne reached her hand into a plastic bag of carrot sticks enclosed by a staple. As she grasped a carrot to withdraw from the bag she discovered that the staple was lodged in the tip of her index finger. My attention was drawn to Adrienne as she tried to discreetly free her finger. Upon close examination it became clear that medical expertise would be required. I took Adrienne to the school

nurse, but without a co-therapist to proceed with the group, I left her in the nurse's care. In a slightly frazzled state I returned to the room where the remaining group members waited. I informed them of the actions taken, which appeared to relieve their alarm. However, with the unexpected turn of events, group level anxiety could no longer be denied. I professed feeling apprehensive before launching the group. However, when presented with an open forum, Olivia was the sole member to acknowledge worrying about the group prior to today.

Once Olivia, Nadia, and Michelle finished consuming their lunch, I explained the art activity for the session. To emphasize safety and containment, the first task was to create a personalized folder to house two-dimensional images produced over the course of therapy. With a wide array of art materials, the sole request was for each member to include her name somewhere on her folder. Shortly thereafter Adrienne returned from the nurse's office eager to show the other girls her bandaged finger. Without carrots to plunge into the remaining carrot dip, Adrienne drank the dip and proceeded to join the others in the art activity. Adrienne quickly painted a sun, a jagged ground line, two stick figures, and four hearts on the front cover. She identified the folder with the words "My Folder" followed by her name (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1*

Upon reminding Adrienne of the second piece of paper required to complete the folder, Adrienne stated she had another venture planned. As a result, Adrienne transferred the remaining paint from her palette onto the second piece of paper. She poured additional paint from the large paint containers while the other girls watched in disbelief. As Adrienne reached for another bottle of paint, I insisted that that would be the last colour added. Adrienne did not negatively react to this constraint – she simply changed her final colour choice. Adrienne folded the paper in half as she proceeded to add pressure in a rubbing fashion, voicing a desire to keep the final product. However, continuous pressure and manipulation caused the paper to rip. As the paint began to seep beyond the edges of the paper, Adrienne ultimately decided to discard the remains in the garbage. This led to the clean-up portion of the session. However, when Adrienne was at the sink washing paint from her hands she intentionally splashed Olivia with water. Olivia did not splash back but verbally expressed her frustration. Once the clean-up was complete, the session came to a close and the girls placed their folders in the locked storage space.

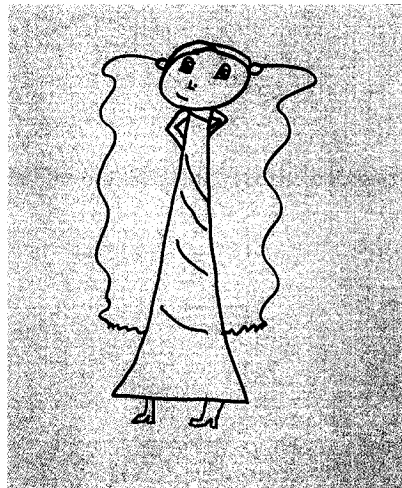
According to Foulkes & Anthony (1965) the first session is believed to provide a glimpse into the group's imminent direction. The stakes were high as group members agreed to enter the unfamiliar domain of group therapy. While Adrienne's rapid consumption of food appeared to comfort her, her anxious disposition could no longer be masked as the staple became lodged in her finger. Although the incident did not appear deliberate, the episode managed to summon group level anxiety. According to Kahn (1980), the group member to expose unacceptable aspects of the group's internal struggle is prone to be assigned the scapegoat role. As a result, the inadvertent staple incident may



have cast Adrienne as the recipient of projection, and the scapegoat for the group.

Furthermore, within a group setting the tendency to regress to an earlier developmental phase often occurs (Malcus, 1995). Malcus proposes that group members may approach a group as if the group is a surrogate mother. Since a mother is expected to sooth and tend to her infant's desires, the group as a whole or the mother group can become a holding ground for group level projections. Therefore, the tendency to discharge emotionally laden affect into the mother group may cause the most sensitive member to aptly introject feelings projected into the group. Adrienne may have been the most susceptible to the group's level of anxiety, leading her to assume the nervous energy of others.

The nature of the first session did not allow me to become familiar with each member's artistic skill. Therefore, when Adrienne's rendition of the human figure mirrored a child's drawing level, I was hesitant to assess its meaning. In a subsequent session Adrienne did manage to portray the human figure in an age-appropriate manner (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2*

The discrepancy in the first task may have embodied regression to an earlier developmental stage. Rychlak (1981) notes that impingement early on may result in

unconscious regression in an attempt to fulfill a disrupted phase. Another interesting element of Adrienne's composition was the two figures suspended in space. With the violent, agitated line quality of the baseline (Betensky, 1995) I wondered whether the hovering figures signified Adrienne's unconscious acuity of not feeling grounded. In addition, Adrienne's reluctance to construct a containing entity intrinsic to the folder may have further accentuated the feeling of suspension. Adrienne may not have fully grasped the notions of structure and boundary due to insufficient holding and protection as a child.

Nonetheless, the second piece of paper became the surface for Adrienne's first inkblot. She began by pouring a vast amount of paint onto the fragile surface that exceeded the boundaries of the paper when folded in half. By applying force to the paper's surface Adrienne covertly sabotaged any attempt of succeeding at the task. Furthermore, Adrienne's first-session need to introject as much as possible from external sources became evident. Her need to ingest sizeable amounts of food and incorporate large quantities of paint in the creative endeavour could relate to impingement at the oral stage; the inkblot may signify Adrienne's attempt to enter the anal stage. However, due to insufficient gratification at the oral stage, Adrienne will not progress to the next developmental level (Rychlak, 1981). This can be seen in Adrienne's inability to wield control of the paint in her attempt to create an inkblot. However, since limited insight into Adrienne's childhood could be obtained, the above interpretations need to be cautiously understood.

Although a physical record of Adrienne's first inkblot did not withstand her manipulation, the impulse to create such an image was likely to stem from the depths of

the unconscious. In connection to the Rorschach, a well recognized projective technique developed to assess personality (Feder & Feder, 1998), Adrienne's inkblot became a tangible means to facilitate group level projection. In 1954, Allport proposed that a scapegoat could be deemed a living inkblot that becomes the target of repressed negative projections. As scapegoat-identified individuals are prone to masochistic tendencies, provocative behaviour is likely to lead to projection. Douglas (1995) proposes that the innate visibility of members within a small group often means that any difference is immediately perceived by the group. Therefore, if a group seeks someone to blame, low status and deviant behaviour may become sufficient grounds for scapegoating. As Adrienne poured the large quantity of paint onto the paper, the other group members watched in surprise. Baffled by Adrienne's deviant behaviour, group members did not conceal their bewilderment. Instead, Adrienne took notice of the shock in their eyes and she basked in the attention. Olivia and Nadia conveyed their disapproval by openly questioning Adrienne's motives. Adrienne snickered in response, signifying her identification and introjection of their projections. As a potential scapegoat in other domains of life, Adrienne may have recognized the disparaging looks – provoking her behaviour. Upon reintrojecting the projected content, Olivia, Nadia, and Michelle may have derived relief and a sense of power over Adrienne.

Due to a combination of conscious and unconscious transactions within the group, the role of scapegoat was assigned. By observing group-level behaviour and interaction, Adrienne may have been unconsciously drawn to the scapegoat role. Although Adrienne appeared willing to accept the role, the weight of any burden would inevitably lead to aggressive undertones. With a tendency to veil aggressive impulses, scapegoats often

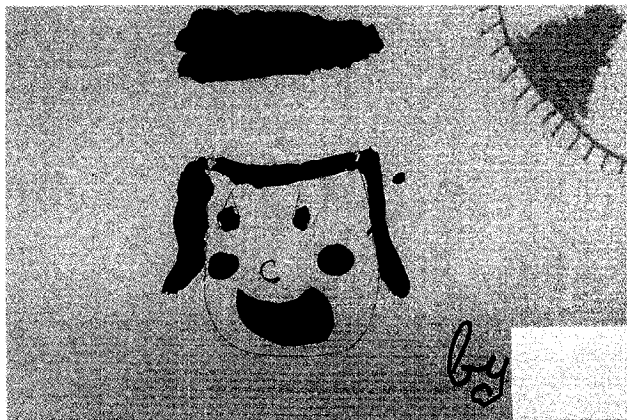
engage in passive-aggressive behaviour – enabling the indirect release of destructive drives (Perera, 1986). At the end of the first session, Adrienne engaged in a form of baiting characteristic of scapegoats. With the intent to mask her own aggression Adrienne provoked Olivia by splashing her with water. Hoping Olivia would take the bait and respond likewise, Adrienne's covert plan backfired for she instead received the blame.

### *Third Session*

For the third session the group consisted of Adrienne, Nadia, and Michelle – Olivia was absent from school that day. Nadia and Michelle were still eating when Adrienne finally arrived for the group. Although there was no external pressures to finish eating, Adrienne desperately inhaled her lunch as if she were an empty vessel. With a focus toward reducing her waistline, Adrienne's teacher took it upon herself to monitor her food intake at school. In spite of Adrienne's compulsion to eat, an underlying need to satiate ego development at the oral stage may account for her eating behaviour (Perera, 1986). Early childhood experiences within the family have an enormous impact on a child's development. The capacity to endure discomfort is often associated with the early experience of touch (Perera). Without being physically and symbolically held, a child's identity and ego development may be compromised. This is frequently the case with scapegoat-identified individuals who have problems assimilating food.

Inspired by the work of Ross (1997), I proposed the art activity entitled "inside/outside portraits" (p. 33) for our third meeting. I supplied the girls with the same directive presented by Ross (1997), instructing them to "draw or paint two portraits of yourself, one how you look on the outside, the other how you look from the inside" (p. 34). Adrienne was the last member to begin the task, for she began by creating a

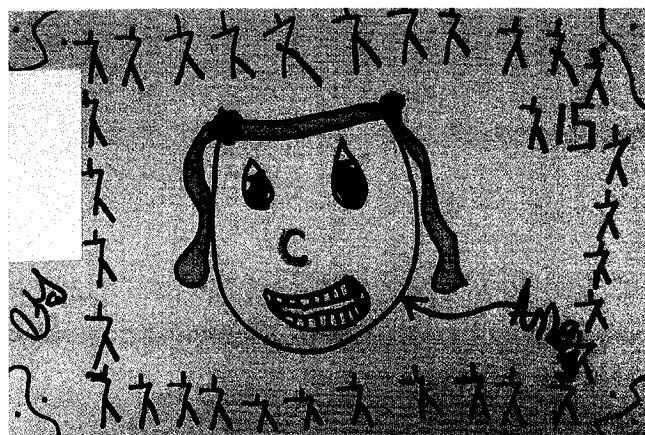
green/grey mixture of paint. With an air of delight Adrienne showed each girl the colour she created. Then Adrienne began to draw her outside portrait with pencils, markers, and a hint of the green/grey paint (see Figure 3).



*Figure 3*

Even though Adrienne mixed a large sum of paint, she only used a small amount to complete her image. As Nadia and Michelle approached the task differently, Adrienne incorporated elements from both of their drawings. Specifically, the sun and cloud were elements adapted from Michelle's picture, while the mask shape was derived from Nadia's sketch. Upon completion of the outside portrait, Adrienne lapsed into another mixing frenzy as she combined red and blue paint in a separate container. At this point I quietly prompted Adrienne to begin the inside portrait. She began by drawing a sun and one cloud at the top of the page. Shortly thereafter the topic of conversation turned to the Chinese symbol of yin and yang. Although I cannot recall the sudden impetus for the change in discourse, the dichotomy between yin/dark and yang/bright accurately contrasted the task at hand. The group discussion of the Chinese symbol motivated Adrienne to illustrate a border of a Korean character she learned from a friend. Although she could not recall the symbol's meaning, Adrienne erased the sun and cloud to complete the border of characters. Adrienne then drew a mask-like shape complete with

two eyes, a nose, and a tooth-filled mouth. An arrow pointing to the mouth labeled “angry” substantiated Adrienne’s internal voice (see Figure 4).



*Figure 4*

Although all three girls identified similar sentiments for the outside portrait, personal variation emerged for the internal representation. For instance, Michelle utilized “happy” and “sometimes sad”, while Nadia integrated the phrases “laugh now” and “cry later”. Although Adrienne identified “happy” for the outside portrait, she did not acknowledge an internal feeling of sadness. Instead, Adrienne revealed a degree of anger that was distinct from the other girls. For the closing ritual, Adrienne decided to leave in the magic box the angry feeling she disclosed to the group. At the end of the session Nadia and Michelle promptly returned to class, while Adrienne momentarily lingered in the room. I checked with Adrienne to see whether she was okay following the session’s proceedings. Adrienne stated she was fine – just reluctant to return to class because of a mean supply teacher.

Although the inside/outside portraits may have been a challenging task for members of group, the art materials were intended to provide a non-threatening means for self exploration. Initially drawn to the mixing of paint, Adrienne appeared to derive great pleasure in the blending of colours, and she would fervently show the other group

members her mixtures. The mixing of colours may have also served as a vehicle to delay the time spent in an emotionally laden task. Betensky (1995) suggests that the blending of colours is believed to provide clients a means to alleviate tension. Furthermore, the mixing of paint offers the client an element of control, as the colour choice and method of creating the colour is under their command. Although Adrienne frequently lapsed into mixing frenzies and supplementary tasks to postpone her involvement in the assignment, I do not feel that she was deliberately trying to defy the norm. Instead, it appeared as though Adrienne covertly engaged in such tasks to escape internal examination.

Even though Adrienne tried to preoccupy herself with other activities, the art materials provided an accessible projective surface. In the first session Adrienne spontaneously created an inkblot – a readily recognized projective medium. As Adrienne poured the paint onto the piece of paper, she metaphorically transferred her own anxiety and that of other group members onto an external surface. Fundamental to the scapegoat ritual is the belief that attributes and states are transferable entities (Schaverien, 1992). Schaverien proposes that “the picture could be seen as such a vessel, in which diverse elements from the psyche of the patient are mixed” (p. 42). In essence, the image becomes the covert scapegoat of projected material. Similarly, in the third session, the art medium enabled Adrienne to express emotional content that may not have emerged by any other means. Adrienne managed to channel and transfer personal burdens onto a tangible surface. The scapegoat transference continued as Adrienne wrote the word “angry” on the piece of paper. Written in a distorted fashion, the word would have been difficult to decipher if Adrienne had not verbally confirmed the sentiment. Potentially the first time voicing her anger, Adrienne did not seem prepared to consciously acknowledge

the emotion. Furthermore, Adrienne's desire to leave the angry feeling in the group may confirm her reluctance to own the emotion. Scapegoat-identified individuals have been noted to struggle at directly expressing feelings of anger, as ridicule and rejection are readily sought from others (Garland & Kolodny, 1973). Without the skill to defend against anger, scapegoats unconsciously take the blame.

#### *Fourth Session*

For the fourth session, the art task was to provide group members the opportunity to create a puppet representative of a bullying role. The bully, victim, bystander, vice principal, and recess monitor were the five roles that were collectively identified and assigned. Although all of the girls aspired to create the victim puppet, only one group member could be assigned the task. Since Olivia was the first to voice her request she was appointed the responsibility to encapsulate the victim character. With little enthusiasm, Adrienne agreed to create the puppet for the bully. Nadia volunteered to generate the principal character, while Michelle preferred to create the puppet for the bystander. I assumed the remaining role as the recess monitor. Given the opportunity to select the puppet of choice, I wondered whether group members were unconsciously drawn to a particular character. With a victim status common to all group members, it seemed as though the victim role was the most desired character. With considerably less interest in bestowing form to the bully, Adrienne was the only member to accept responsibility for the task. Perhaps by accepting the burden to generate the bully puppet, Adrienne was covertly fulfilling her role as group scapegoat.

While group members created their puppets, Adrienne became exceedingly loud and silly. At first I could not identify an overt cause for Adrienne's childishness.



However, Olivia's attention and reactive laughter did not deter her disruptive behaviour. Nadia and Michelle appeared rather disturbed by Adrienne's boisterous conduct, and both girls moved to another table on the opposite side of the room. Adrienne's laughter progressed to the magic box, at which point I became firm in insisting her to stop. In this particular session it seemed that Adrienne was overcome by nervous energy that was difficult to allay. Adrienne willingly accepted the emotionally laden role of bully amid a group of socially victimized girls. By adopting the bully role, Adrienne epitomized the archenemy of victims. Covertly responsible to withhold group level projections pertaining to the bully, Adrienne may have felt heightened anxiety and increased pressure to perform. Overwhelmed by angst, Adrienne's behaviour became progressively more aberrant as the scapegoat cycle was set into motion. In reference to therapeutic groups Earley (2000) claims that a group member who consistently acts in deviant and bizarre manners will likely be ostracized from the group. Adrienne's inappropriate behaviour in the fourth session may have perpetuated her role as scapegoat.

Even though the scapegoat phenomenon is too complex to permit a checklist of underlying principles, recurrent elements are often found in the literature. Douglas (1995) insists that the choice of scapegoat in a group is primarily due to the presence of difference. The second element according to Douglas occurs when:

difference is compounded by other factors such as dislike, inadequate performance, unacceptable behavior in regard to group norms, then the selection of such a member as a victim is almost assured. The third compounding element occurs when the appearance, behavior and difference of a member bears some close resemblance to the basic dilemma of the group. (p. 147-148)

This third element is especially interesting considering victimization was the constituent unifying the art therapy group. Each participant had experienced episodes of social aggression that warranted the attention of school personnel. The supposition of a passively compliant victim may have propelled group members to unconsciously fulfill this role, for the obedient victim may have thrived in concealing her own suppressed fury. Therefore, the group member to assimilate forbidden impulses of others in the group may have been assigned the scapegoat role. In reference to the presenting case, Adrienne agreed to construct the bully puppet. With the focus of the group directly related to the harsh effects imposed by the bully, the puppet may have provided group members a vessel to contain their negative projections.

The puppets were revisited in the fifth session to facilitate the enactment of a bullying scene. The victim character, portrayed by Olivia, was alienated by her peers due to the colour of her hair. The bully, performed by Adrienne, instigated exclusion of the victim, and the bystander followed suit. An obvious physical difference, such as the colour of one's hair is often sufficient grounds for scapegoating a peer (Douglas, 1995). The puppets were intended to provide group members an indirect means to recount experiences of social aggression. However, since group members found it difficult to converse via the puppets, the girls ultimately opted to discuss personal encounters in their own voices.

Up until this point in the therapeutic process, all creative activities were designed to accentuate individual expression. Therefore, to encourage group interaction, the directive for the sixth session was to create a group mural. Olivia assumed the leadership

role as her suggestion for a beach scene was embraced. Adrienne offered to paint the sun, but in completing the task, a blob of yellow paint dripped from her paintbrush and landed in the centre of the composition. Olivia immediately blamed Adrienne for ruining the mural, and stated a yellow tree would need to be added to conceal the visible blunder. Then Adrienne accidentally dropped her palette of paint which descended on to Olivia's leg. Olivia blamed Adrienne for the mishap and explicitly steered clear of her for the rest of the session.

For the seventh session I introduced group members to a fictitious short story. The story described the exclusionary tactics employed by a group of female peers at a fictional elementary school. The story was divided into six segments which were sequentially read aloud. The girls were instructed to create a storyboard of images to encapsulate the essence of the story. Calmness infused the room as group members focused on the task at hand. Even though Adrienne divided her attention between the storyboard and the crafting of snowflakes, her behaviour did not disrupt the other girls. An interesting element of Adrienne's drawings was the manner in which she approached and numbered each square. Commencing on the far right-hand corner and proceeding down to the bottom right-hand corner, Adrienne's story unfolded in an unusual zigzag pattern. Although Adrienne did not explain the motive for the arrangement of squares, her approach differed from the other girls.

In the eighth session Adrienne managed to maintain her distinct status. In this meeting the girls were instructed to complete response drawings for the story introduced in the seventh session. Olivia, Nadia, and Michelle all utilized words to formulate their reactions. Adrienne, however, was the only member to sketch her response. Adrienne did

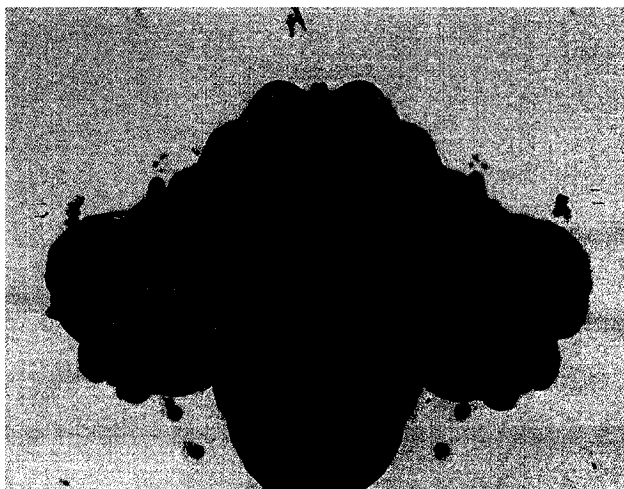
not complete her two drawings, as she spent the majority of her time re-sharpening coloured pencils. While using the pencils Adrienne would place direct pressure on the point, causing the tip to break repeatedly. Therefore, to avoid becoming emotionally invested in the task, it seemed that Adrienne spent most of her time sharpening.

### *Ninth Session*

Following the end of each session Olivia, Nadia, and Michelle would promptly depart whereas Adrienne consistently delayed leaving the therapeutic space. At the end of the seventh session a landscape drawing fastened to the wall caught Adrienne's attention. This led Adrienne to inquire whether members of the group would ever have the opportunity to create what they desired, without having to illustrate their feelings. In response to Adrienne's request I proposed an open theme for the ninth session. Although social aggression was the fundamental thread connecting verbal and creative endeavours for the duration of the group, the open session was to provide free rein of expression. Nonetheless, without overtly proposing the victim theme, underlying tones of victimization did emerge in Adrienne's verbal and artistic expression. Adrienne cited an incident at recess in which she felt deliberately slighted by Olivia. Also, Adrienne mentioned being mocked and ridiculed by her twenty-two-year-old stepsister. Adrienne did not offer a detailed account of the incident, but in subsequent sessions referred to additional problems with her stepsister.

Once the girls finished eating lunch I encouraged them to utilize the art materials in a manner they found fit. With an array of art supplies Adrienne decided to use paint. She began by making two separate palettes – a pale blue and a pale pink colour – which she offered to share with the other girls. Shortly thereafter, Adrienne poured a large

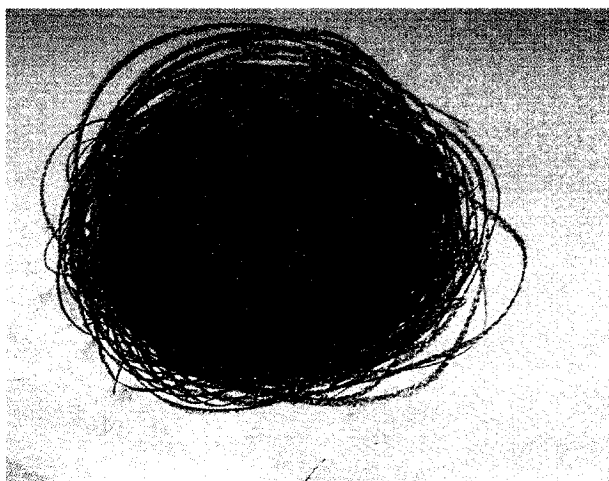
quantity of paint into the centre of a piece of white Bristol board. I patiently watched as Adrienne added two more colours of paint, at which point I intervened to prevent excessive overflow. Adrienne proceeded to fold the Bristol board in half. However, in contrast to the first session, Adrienne did not use excess force when she rubbed the two sides together. As the mixture of paint began to seep from one side of the paper I offered assistance to prevent further destruction of the image. Adrienne opened the paper and held it up for others to see, causing the paint to continually drip from the bottom end. To prevent further dripping and blending of paint, I placed the paper on a separate table to dry (see Figure 5).



*Figure 5*

Once Adrienne completed the inkblot she took another large piece of white paper and a black oil pastel. She drew circle upon circle resulting in a densely-filled circular form. While Adrienne sustained the methodical motion she began to discuss a movie entitled “The Ring”. I recognized the title of the film, but had yet to view the movie for the genre was not to my liking. Upon my request Adrienne offered a vague description of the movie, which entailed a dead girl who lived in a dark well beneath the ground. The session drew to a close as Olivia and Nadia cleaned up and returned to class. Adrienne on

the other hand disregarded my request to clean-up, as she did not want to leave until she completed the black hole (see Figure 6).



*Figure 6*

Once the black circle was complete, Adrienne proceeded to make a smaller black circle on the sign-out sheet, acknowledging her departure.

In her characteristic fashion Adrienne had selected paint as her medium of choice and began by devising a pale blue and pale pink colour. Of her own volition, just beyond the midpoint of therapy, Adrienne created a second inkblot. With pink and blue as the preliminary colour scheme, Adrienne added orange and green paint directly from the bottles. The mixture of complementary colours resulted in a vivid image unlike Adrienne's other muddy-coloured endeavours. With memory of Adrienne's first inkblot in contrast to her second attempt, a remarkable distinction could be made. The inkblot created in the first session was a dark brown muddle that exceeded all edges of the plane. Conversely, for the second inkblot Adrienne demonstrated perseverance and control as the paint only extended beyond one edge of the frame. The completion of the second inkblot may have indicated gradual development and growth, as Adrienne managed to resist destroying her own creation. Furthermore, as I tried to model a relationship based

on guidance and support, my involvement may have had a positive impact on Adrienne's process.

Betensky (1995) states that two fundamental elements pertaining to any artistic endeavour are colour and form. In the context of art therapy, colour and form provide clients a means to capitalize upon his/her inner experiences. By not explicitly asking clients to respond to these basic components, the therapist gains a glimpse into the client's affective state by noting the choices made. Furthermore, Betensky reports that clients are readily drawn to nonrepresentational forms as "abstract shapes possess the fascinating and soothing double quality of both concealing and revealing" (p. 65). As abstract forms emerge from the recesses of the unconscious, art provides a tangible means for the submission of covert thought. Furth (2002) claims that "when pictures emerge from the unconscious, they bear a tremendous amount of psychic information. Through the picture we can follow the journey of the psyche and where it is at the moment of the picture's inception" (p. 12-13). Although this tends to be a lengthy process within the context of therapy, art provides a forum that transcends the restrictions of consciousness.

Immediately following the completion of her vibrant composition, Adrienne had reached for a black oil pastel to begin her next endeavour. In an erratic pattern Adrienne had drawn continuous loops – a black circular scribble. According to Levick (1983), regression, projection, and denial are defense mechanisms readily associated with scribbling. A relatively common mark in Adrienne's work, the scribble gesture first emerged in the sixth session and then again in the seventh, ninth, tenth, and thirteenth sessions. Although the appearance and movement of the scribble differed in each

instance, the repetitive and inappropriate manifestation was a compelling element in her drawings. Levick suggests that scribbling and the drawing of shapes within shapes is a common feature of sketches completed in late oral and anal stages of development. As a result, Levick claims that an extensive return to scribbling at an older age is believed to be a sign of regression. Although the motivational force impelling one to scribble cannot be easily discerned, the gesture seemed to provide Adrienne a covert means to release anxious energy onto an external surface.

#### *Tenth Session*

All four girls were present for the tenth session. However, the length of the group was condensed due to school-wide testing. As a result, the lunch time discussion was kept brief; without delay I introduced the art task for the session. I posed two questions to the girls: "Have you ever wondered why some people get bullied?" followed by "Why are some people a target?" Once presented, these questions provoked an interesting discussion. Olivia identified low self-esteem, jealousy, and peer pressure as reasons for being a target. Adrienne added physical differences such as chubbiness, looking and dressing oddly, and the wearing of glasses. Shortly thereafter Nadia declared that friends should not be the focus of school. Olivia concurred stating that friends were just a distraction from the real point of education. I found Nadia and Olivia's claims rather shocking, and I wondered whether social victimization caused them to renounce the importance of school peers.

Although Adrienne briefly contributed in the early phase of the discussion, her capacity to attend gradually declined. Adrienne began to interrupt, adamantly desiring to know when the art would begin. In a desperate attempt to change the direction of the



group, Adrienne would lapse into anxious patterns of behaviour. Constantly bound by nervous energy, Adrienne's heightened anxiety would drive her to hysterical fits of laughter. In the midst of emotionally intense discussions Adrienne would often begin to laugh compulsively. Although this may have been Adrienne's means to cope with intense situations, she would begin to laugh while other group members were acknowledging serious claims and retelling sensitive stories. Though possibly an unconscious mechanism to evade emotionally charged situations, Adrienne's behaviour did succeed at disrupting the group.

With the opportunity to reflect upon social victimization, the art activity for the tenth session was to explore emotions conveyed facially. As an observable channel for communication, a vast amount of information is inadvertently transmitted through facial features. Therefore, the art task provided group members a means to contemplate emotional transaction. Prior to the session I gathered a mass of photographic portraits with various facial expressions. I spread the images on a table and instructed group members to select pictures that captured their attention. Once the girls arranged and glued the images onto their white piece of paper, they were to summarize in words the facial expression for each picture. Even though Adrienne selected the fewest images, she spent a considerable amount of time gluing the pictures onto the left-hand side of the paper. The first image that captured Adrienne's attention was a large portrait of a girl with a subtle line dividing her face – a result of the printing and binding of the magazine. It was the first image Adrienne selected and identified with a caption: "I have no!! personallity". I found Adrienne's word choices rather striking. What did she mean by the word

‘personality’? As I prompted Adrienne for an additional explanation, she proceeded to write “I don’t!! exist” (see Figure 7).

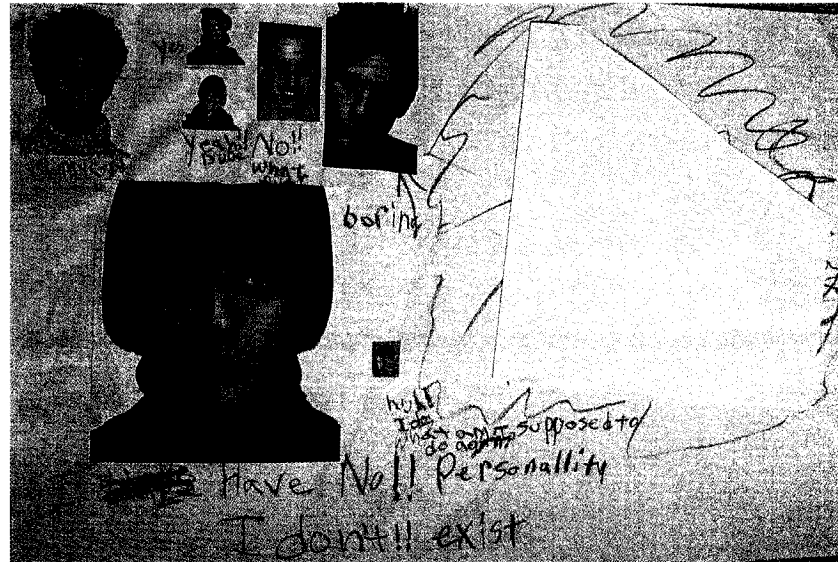


Figure 7

Although Adrienne did not elaborate further, I found the statement rather compelling. Could Adrienne relate to the emotion conveyed in the face of the young girl? Did she feel that she had no personality and did not exist? Nevertheless, if Adrienne’s projections stemmed from her unconscious, she may not have had the answers to these questions.

Due to the nature of the task, the vast collection of portraits presented group members an accessible means for projection. As group members were prone to unconsciously project emotional matter onto a separate entity, a slightly altered form of projective identification could be recognized in this task. Although the inanimate two-dimensional surface of the collage would not permit a bi-directional exchange intrinsic to the process of projective identification, I propose that a one-sided projection and reintroduction would still occur – Adrienne would have inadvertently projected her own emotional reaction in response to the facial expression found in the photographic image. By encapsulating the essence of the image in written form, I would anticipate greater ease

in reintrojecting the emotional content initially projected onto the image. As the written words blatantly stare back at the projector, I propose new meaning would be derived from the symbiosis of image and word. Although similar in vein to the scapegoat transference set forth by Schaverien (1992), a significant distinction could be made. According to Horwitz (1983) the unconscious psychic process of reintegrating the projected content is fundamental to projective identification. However, Schaverien's notion of the scapegoat transference does not involve reintroduction. The art medium provides a transferable surface for the containment of split-off parts. Therefore, the picture becomes the scapegoat for the client's afflictions. As unconscious mechanisms propelled Adrienne's response and reaction to the art task, the art medium became the covert scapegoat.

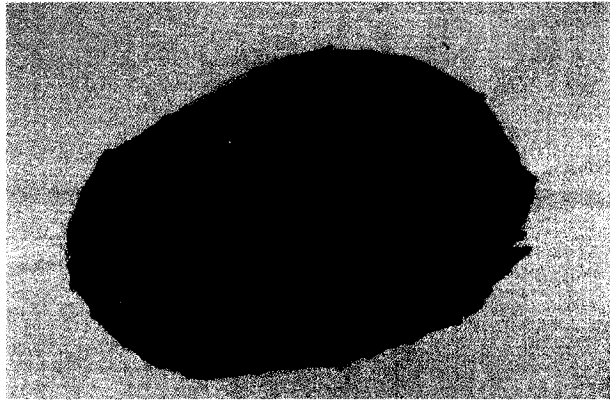
Another interesting element of Adrienne's collage was the limited scope of expression found in the faces. Upon close examination I discovered that the images could be separated into two discrete categories; happy and mad. In three of the portraits the eyes conveyed an unyielding watchfulness, while the closed mouth imparted an air of disappointment. The other three photographs, squeezed between the subdued expressions, communicated happiness (open-mouthed smiles and lively eyes). Adrienne's attraction to the image of the young girl with the line dividing her face may have unconsciously captured the split between good and bad. Acknowledging that scapegoating entails a form of splitting (Schaverien, 1992), a scapegoat is often prone to divide units into separate parts. If a child is held in the scapegoat role for an extended period of time, Pillari (1991) claims that the child learns to view all things as either good or bad – never neutral. In Adrienne's collage the dichotomies between good and bad, and happy and mad,

materialized in her selection and arrangement of images. Within a border of scribbles, Adrienne wrote her name in large cursive letters, on the opposite side of the paper. Again Adrienne was the last to leave the session, lingering much longer than the others.

### *Eleventh Session*

With the end of the therapeutic period rapidly approaching, the goal for the final phase of the group was to provide members the opportunity to gain awareness of their own resources. Therefore, for the eleventh session, the girls were to create a sacred space in which they felt safe. I instructed group members to close their eyes and image a place of comfort, devoid of negativity. Prior to commencing the session I moved the tables to the periphery of the room. To create a grounded feeling, I proposed working on the floor. I encouraged the girls to draw a circle and to stand directly on the paper – to make this easier. However, none of the girls literally stood on the paper to delineate their sacred space. Olivia acknowledged feeling safest in her bedroom, so she recreated her room. Michelle included elements of her bedroom, her house, and the school. Adrienne began the task in typical fashion, producing a large amount of dark purple paint. Once Adrienne was content with the colour of paint, she approached each member in order to show the colour she created. Characteristic of child-like behaviour, Adrienne's desire to show-and-tell may represent her need for the approval of others. With the death of her biological mother, Adrienne may instinctively affiliate the therapeutic group as a surrogate mother (Malcus, 1995). According to Malcus, a member's response to the group as a whole may indicate the manner in which they experienced their own mother. As a result, Adrienne may have sought maternal affection and affirmations that she never received, or no longer could receive, from her own mother.

Adrienne began to create her safe space by pouring the deep colour of paint onto the white piece of paper positioned on the floor. As the thick pool of paint saturated the paper, Adrienne maneuvered the paint into a large oval shape (see Figure 8).



*Figure 8*

With paint on the paper, Adrienne announced that she wanted to create The Ring (in connection to the movie of the same name). Unsure if Adrienne understood the task, I emphasized the notion of a safe space. In response, Adrienne claimed to obtain comfort and safety from the movie – she was fond of the young girl in the film. Within the context of the group it was difficult to fully attend to the atypical elements Adrienne brought forth. With limited knowledge of the movie, I could not fathom Adrienne's connection to a girl responsible for the death of others. Perhaps Adrienne was drawn to the self-assertive traits of the film character, as the girl in the movie did have command over death. Maybe the film stimulated the release of repressed anger, an anger that managed to materialize on the surface of the page. Once Adrienne proclaimed to be finished, she yearned to finger paint; proceeding to do so in regressive fashion (Levick, 1983). Adrienne poured the remaining amount of paint onto a fresh piece of paper and continued to play until the end of the session.

Although I found myself struck by Adrienne's representation of a sacred space, several facets of the image were drawn to my attention. In reference to the scapegoat transference in a single picture, Schaverien (1992) describes the image as a vessel for one's bad split-off parts. Furthermore, Schaverien claims that the transference "may be a conscious act, or it may be totally unconscious, but in either case, the bad is then in a tangible, substantial form, whilst the 'good' remains unseen, kept within" (p. 51). As a result, the shock value in exposing the bad naturally detracts from having to reveal material that puts one in a vulnerable position. To this end the scapegoat transference may be viewed as a defensive act to preserve oneself (Schaverien). In Adrienne's case I wondered whether creating something adverse was a defensive means of evading the acknowledgment of a place devoid of safety. Therefore, to avert confronting this daunting reality, it may have been easier to position herself within the context of a frightening film. Many difficult patients and scapegoats readily request and repel help in therapeutic groups (Gans & Alonso, 1998). Therefore, it can be a long and arduous journey to uncover and understand the role one assumes.

As Adrienne and Nadia were both absent for the twelfth session, I decided to postpone the preplanned activity. In its place I offered Olivia and Michelle an open session for free expression. For the thirteenth session I wanted group members to reflect on personal learning within the group. The art activity entitled "past, present, future" (Ross, 1997, p. 108) prompted the girls to consider past reactions, current responses, and future actions in the face of bullying. Over the course of the session Adrienne's behaviour repeatedly disrupted the group's progress. For instance, devoid of a direct

cause, Adrienne erupted into frantic laughter. In an attempt to dispel anxious energy I granted the entire group one minute to laugh out loud. However, Adrienne was the sole member to take advantage of this opportunity. Shortly thereafter, Adrienne instigated a new behavioural pattern I had yet to see: repeatedly asking “why” following everything I said. Adrienne’s disruptive conduct gradually ceased as I stopped attending to her juvenile behaviour. For the art segment Adrienne was adamant to sit at the same table as Olivia. However, Olivia blatantly denied Adrienne a seat at her table, leading to a game of musical chairs. Authors Garland and Kolodny (1973) acknowledge that scapegoats typically seek out their own rejection, which may encapsulate Adrienne’s unconscious behaviour in the group. Adrienne’s identification with the scapegoat role may covertly push her to seek persistent dismissal and blame in social groups.

An issue that arose over the course of the group was the constraint in taking the artwork home. Even though each girl was aware of this stipulation prior to commencing the group, the constraint did not register until the artwork became a concrete entity. With this in mind, the art task for the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> sessions was designed to fulfill the desire to take artwork home. The proposed activity was to make a two-dimension shield that contained a memento from each group member. The front surface of the shield was divided into four equal quadrants. With the use of signs and symbols each group member was responsible to complete one quadrant on each shield. Therefore, each member’s shield consisted of three quadrants with personalized messages from the other group members; I completed the fourth quadrant. In the centre, where all four quadrants united, each member was to create a personal symbol. The shield signified a tangible reminder of the group and was intended to provide comfort and strength. The girls held their shields

in high esteem – particularly Adrienne who stated that she could not wait to hang it on her bedroom wall. In recognition of the last session, I held a celebratory lunch as group members completed their shields.

### Discussion

The objective of the group was to provide pre-adolescent females the opportunity to explore personal experiences with like individuals. The art therapy group was devised with the intent to augment a lack of qualitative research pertaining to female children victimized by social aggression. Through discussion and creative endeavours, group participants were provided a safe forum to share personal feelings. Also, the group had been designed to provide a positive and supportive social structure for individuals who felt isolated. The research question which guided my subsequent inquiry was: How does the covert role of scapegoat materialize in an art therapy group of female victims of social aggression?

Although all four participants possessed a common social status, personal narratives and childhood experiences set each girl apart. Nonetheless, it was not until puppets entered the creative space in the fourth session that I became consciously aware of group roles. Upon completion of the group I encountered the role of scapegoat in literature pertaining to group therapy. I became intrigued by the scapegoat role, and likened victims of bullying to scapegoats within peer groups. With a group specifically composed of socially aggressed females, I automatically presumed that each member's behaviour would echo their victim status. The group proved to be much more complex.



Through retrospective examination I found that only one group member embodied the spirit of the scapegoat archetype.

In the literature concerning the scapegoat complex, attention to conscious and unconscious elements of the role were evident. In re-evaluating my comprehensive notes composed following each session, it did not seem that group members overtly assigned Adrienne the scapegoat role. Instead, unconscious mechanisms seemed to have played a significant part. Prior experience in the contexts of home and school may have contributed to Adrienne's covert identification with the scapegoat complex, thus granting her the role. As a result, the focus of the following case study was to explore the covert emergence of the scapegoat role. In general I found that the role emerged through three distinct channels. Firstly, unconscious mechanisms in the group may have positioned and sustained Adrienne's status as the group scapegoat. Secondly, Adrienne's inadvertent behaviour in the group may have perpetuated her own victimization. Finally, the art materials provided Adrienne with an external surface that became her own covert scapegoat.

Research is relatively sparse considering the scapegoat's prominence within therapeutic groups (Clark, 2002). As an essential group phenomenon, scapegoating provides group members with a means to release aggressive energy without jeopardizing the psychic integrity of the individual or unity of the group (Toker, 1972). Without a clear rationale to account for the selection of scapegoat, Douglas (1995) proposes a dichotomy between conscious and unconscious mechanisms. However, since conscious and unconscious emotional forces underlie group level interactions, the interplay between overt intent and covert impulse further complicates matters (Gemmell, 1989). To gain a

better grasp of these underlying psychic states, Gemmill and Kraus (1988) acknowledge that all group members occupy both overt and covert roles. While overt roles are primarily cognitive and propelled by reason, covert roles typically stem from the unconscious via inadvertent behaviour. According to Gemmill, the scapegoat role is one of many group roles that are unconsciously assumed.

In a dynamic group situation, the therapist's attention is naturally directed toward overt behaviours. Subtle acts that occur beyond conscious awareness may go unnoticed until there is an in-depth examination. Although a group therapist may struggle to be present with all group members at all times, Malcus (1995) claims that therapeutic groups are "a rich stimulus for evoking and containing members' splits, projections, fantasies, and primitive modes of mental functioning" (p. 62). In reference to numerous mental mechanisms that can covertly arise in a group milieu, projective identification is regularly associated with the scapegoat process (Gemmill, 1989). A group's collective projective identification occurs when one group member, the scapegoat-identified individual becomes the receptacle for the denied emotions projected by other group members. For instance, even though group members did not overtly cause Adrienne to catch her finger on the staple, the incident did provide the group with an outlet for their own anxious energy. The group members may have unconsciously displaced pent up worry onto Adrienne, who covertly identified with the projected feeling. This may have also been the case in the fourth session when Adrienne accepted the responsibility for creating the bully puppet. Although I did not get the impression that group members directly and consciously placed Adrienne in the scapegoat position, it seemed Adrienne unconsciously placed herself on the receiving end of negative projections – reinforcing her role as group

scapegoat. According to Gemmill, “group members who are covertly assigned to scapegoat roles are often *willing victims* who have been socialized to experience guilt at not fitting into the social system of the small group” (p. 410). In Adrienne’s case I wondered how and when this pattern had begun in her life.

Adrienne was not unaccustomed to the victim role. Adrienne’s teachers were privy to her struggles: her concentration swayed, her weight fluctuated, and her friends changed. Although I was unable to obtain a comprehensive depiction of Adrienne’s childhood and home life, the dramatic loss of her mother and profuse changes at a young age would have had an undeniable impact. The separation and divorce of Adrienne’s biological parents, the death of her mother, and the remarriage of her father were extensive burdens for a child to bear. These unfortunate events at such a young age would have greatly influenced her grasp of the situation. Furthermore, guilt, remorse, and continuous change may have hindered the development of a complete sense of self. Nonetheless, without adequate means to acquire an incisive picture of Adrienne’s past, literature concerning group behaviour and roles was an important guide in assessing her conduct in the group. Resultantly, the scapegoat archetype became my lens for analysis.

Noted for an inability to deal with aggression, scapegoats struggle with expressing anger in a direct fashion (Garland & Kolodny, 1973). For instance, scapegoat-identified individuals tend to possess a masochistic manner of living. Burdened by immense guilt, potential scapegoats are known to seek out scorn and rejection. Since the scapegoat complex is believed to stem from within the family sphere, early identification with the scapegoat role is likely to carry over into subsequent social systems (Pillari, 1991). As a

result, the scapegoat complex can affect one's perception, facility to tolerate suffering, proficiency in self-assertion, and the ability to satiate needs (Perera, 1986).

Over the duration of the group Adrienne's behaviour seemed to secure her role as group scapegoat. In the first session, Adrienne's pervasive level of anxiety came into view as the staple lodged in her finger. In connection to the staple incident, Adrienne's overwhelming nervousness was manifested in her manner of eating and approach to food. Although Adrienne's external body shape reflected a need to over indulge, on an unconscious level it seemed that Adrienne derived great comfort from the consumption of food. Furthermore, Adrienne's weight may have signified a vital feature of her identity – a tangible attribute to justify her alienation (Perera, 1986). As well, Adrienne's unusual and sometimes bizarre behaviour contributed to her position as group scapegoat (Earley, 2000). It seemed that many of Adrienne's outlandish thoughts were propelled by a desire to shock. According to Perera, individuals with a weak ego and fragile identity would readily adopt personas in order to be accepted by the collective. Over the course of the group, Adrienne's many facades met with varying degrees of success.

In extension to Adrienne's bizarre undertakings, she would erratically lapse into hysterical fits of laughter. Although Adrienne's sudden eruptive behaviour may have produced a surplus of anxious energy, her behaviour granted her the undivided attention of the group. Since the process of scapegoating is believed to satisfy both individual and collective needs (Garland & Kolodny, 1973), the scapegoat may employ attention-seeking strategies to have these needs met. Douglas (1995) states that "perhaps the victim, if given a choice, would not have chosen to gain some relief of his or her needs in exactly this way, but it is most likely that he or she had discovered in the past no other

successful gambit” (p. 81). Even if Adrienne was overtly searching for attention, I do not think she was consciously aware of what she needed filled. I found that the majority of Adrienne’s attention-seeking behaviours echoed childish patterns. For instance, in the discussion portion of the session Adrienne, without being fully cognizant of what she was trying to say would blurt out anything to surpass the others.

In contemporary use the scapegoat motif does not solely involve transposing blame onto animals or other people. According to Scheidlinger (1982), evil and guilt can also be released onto inanimate objects such as the art material. Although consciously imposing blame onto fellow human beings is not an endorsed practice, imposing emotional burdens onto inanimate objects is an acceptable form of sublimation. Schaverien (1992) proposes that the picture can become the scapegoat within the context of therapy. Comparable to the goat sent off into the wilderness, the scapegoat image retains a client’s transgressions. As the client endows a tangible object with adverse feelings, the client takes control of its disposal. This may account for Adrienne’s first inkblot that was discarded in the garbage. In extension to the projective feature intrinsic to an inkblot, the art medium provided Adrienne a concrete surface to contain conscious and unconscious projections. As Adrienne projected onto the two-dimensional surface of the paper, the materials became the covert scapegoat.

Another common mental mechanism utilized in blocking or rerouting mental energies comes from the act of splitting (Rychlak, 1981). Unconsciously subsumed by both scapegoats and scapegoaters, splitting is intended to separate the good from the bad; with the intent to cast away the bad (Schaverien, 1992). On various occasions, Adrienne’s badness could be seen in her use of art materials. For instance, with both inkblots and

Adrienne's rendition of a black hole, large quantities of paint were poured onto fragile surfaces of paper. On other occasions, features of Adrienne's badness emerged in the actual image. Although disposing of the bad is of primary interest in the act of splitting, Schaverien claims that this may not always be the case. Schaverien acknowledges that a split between good and bad often appears in the duration of a single session. In the first session, the contrast between the cover of Adrienne's heart-adorned personalized folder and the brown brimming inkblot that ended in the garbage could exemplify such a split in the duration of one session. Schaverien states that "one picture will be experienced by the patient as containing all the good, whilst the other is felt to hold all the bad" (p. 52). This notion of a transferential divide between two pictures could be seen in a number of Adrienne's creative endeavours. Although I encouraged an overt split with the inside/outside portraits, Adrienne did manage to represent a division between good and bad. Furthermore, two dichotomous pictures were created in the ninth session – positive energy emanating from the colourful inkblot; negativity stemming from the black hole. As well, in the tenth session's collage of facial expressions, a melding between good and bad was contained on a single surface.

The art medium provides clients with a vehicle to channel emotionally laden content. The intrinsic tendency to split and project onto an external entity is facilitated in the process of art psychotherapy (Schaverien, 1992). Within a safe therapeutic forum, the scapegoat transference to the picture is believed to offer clients some resolution. Schaverien states, "that analytical art psychotherapy offers a distinct way of developing a conscious attitude and so owning the split-off elements of the psyche through their

disposal in the picture” (p. 33). As the picture becomes the covert scapegoat, art facilitates conscious recognition of unconscious parts.

### *Limitations*

As a pilot study exploring the use of art therapy with pre-adolescent girls exposed to social aggression, a number of limitations emerged – particularly those related to the school setting. With academic learning as the primary focus of school, teachers’ agendas occasionally made it difficult for the girls to attend the group regularly. Furthermore, it was a challenge to preserve the confidentiality of participating students, as each girl had to physically leave in the middle of a class. Another obstacle was that the group members were familiar with each other prior to commencing the group. Although the acquaintance level differed between them, the girls knew more about each other than I did. As well, due to widespread knowledge of other students in other grades, names that surfaced in conversation managed to detract from group discussions. Even though I tried to restrict the use of factual names, the girls would automatically return to using real names. Moreover, since the group consisted of fellow peers, group members may have been hesitant and reluctant to divulge personal encounters that had occurred at school. Group participants were also in contact between sessions, which may have either hindered or facilitated group interaction. There was no way to check. Since group participants were in contact prior, during, and following the completion of the sessions, role assignment within the group may have been influenced. For instance, first-hand knowledge of individual members before commencing the group may have impacted the choice of scapegoat. If privy to each other’s past experiences, group members may unconsciously pigeonhole others based on this previous knowledge. In a daunting and unfamiliar

situation like a therapeutic group, instinctual mechanisms involuntarily emerge. Old habits are difficult to break – especially those embedded in a common past. Another constraint within the school was limited access to a student's background information. Since the selected participants were not disruptive students, their student files were relatively sparse.

Without a concrete focus for the paper prior to commencing the group, I did not interview the parents for additional background information. I wish I had done so. I would have inquired about the dynamics of the family system, the child's behavioural and emotional patterns, and their developmental milestones. Another limitation was my student status, which had a definite impact on my approach and management of the group. As a student I did not feel I had enough experience to adequately attend to the needs of the group. My confidence swayed as I tried to figure out my role as therapist. Furthermore, I conducted the group without a co-therapist. In retrospect, I think a co-therapist would have benefited the execution of the group, providing an additional outlook. Also they would have increased the trustworthiness of the study.

The following was a qualitative case study which entailed similar constraints surmised under the general umbrella of qualitative research. For instance, the findings are exclusive to this particular therapeutic group – the above statements cannot be generalized to other groups or to the population at large. Furthermore, without concrete facts to attest to the preceding claims, it must be remembered that the scapegoat archetype was the retrospective lens by which the group was analyzed. I did not have this knowledge of the scapegoat role prior to the group. Thus, my interpretation may be



skewed to fit. Nonetheless, familiarity with the scapegoat archetype would certainly enhance a therapist's approach within a therapeutic group.

### *Future Recommendations*

Although there has been an influx of research addressing school-bound bullying, less attention has been paid to indirect social forms of aggression. According to the bulk of research conducted thus far, the number of qualitative studies that present personal stories of socially aggressed girls is considerably small. Needless to say, a safe environment to facilitate the development of appropriate social skills would definitely increase the self-confidence and self-esteem among victimized students. Since aggression is such a pervasive phenomenon in the schools, greater use of therapeutic methods such as art therapy would greatly benefit the students.

Even though the scapegoat archetype is believed to be a common group role, an in depth discussion of the complex is not easily found. As a result, greater understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the scapegoat role is needed. Although research endeavours have yet to equate the victims of bullying with the scapegoat archetype, further study exploring the similarities and differences between these two social positions could prove valuable. As well, an interesting project may be to compare and contrast different types of victim groups within the scapegoat archetype. By becoming more aware of the scapegoat role in group therapy, a therapist may be more able to assist potential scapegoats. A recommended therapeutic goal for individuals who adopt the scapegoat role is for them to become consciously aware of their disposition. Since art psychotherapy facilitates the emergence of splitting and projection, scapegoat patterns

may become more consciously accessible. Further study exploring the use of art therapy with seemingly helpless scapegoat-identified individuals is needed.

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## Appendix A

### *Cover Letter for Information Package*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

School Name/Address

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Dear Parents,

My name is Stephanie Watson and I am enrolled in the Master's program in Creative Arts Therapies at Concordia University. I began my internship at \_\_\_\_\_ *school name* \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ *date* \_\_\_\_\_ and will continue to be a member of the school team until \_\_\_\_\_ *date* \_\_\_\_\_. In my final year of study I am required to complete a research project that will contribute to the field of art therapy.

The following package contains information concerning an art therapy group. A description of the project outlining the structure of the art therapy group is provided, accompanied by a consent form requesting your permission for your daughter's participation in the group. As well, in accordance with school regulations a school authorization form is required to be signed. Therefore, contents of the package consist of:

- ~ 1 consent information form (2 pages)
- ~ 2 blank consent forms (4 pages)
- ~ 1 school authorization form (1 page)
- ~ 1 envelope

Please read the following information and return one copy of the consent form along with the school's authorization form in the envelope provided. I ask that the envelope be returned with your child to the school by \_\_\_\_\_ *date* \_\_\_\_\_. The remaining pages are to be kept for your own reference.

Thank you for your time and co-operation. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ *school name and phone number* \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Watson

Art Therapy Intern  
Concordia University

## Appendix B

### *Consent Information Form in Information Package*

## An Art Therapy Exploration of Social Aggression

**Art Therapy Student:** Stephanie Watson

*School Name/Address*

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**Research Supervisors:** Suzanne Lister: Full-time faculty at Concordia University;  
Research supervisor

Diana Ilnicki: Social worker; On-site supervisor at  
Elementary School

### **PURPOSE:**

As you may be aware bullying has become a prominent concern within schools. Recently the students at your child's school participated in a bullying awareness program which focused on addressing physical and verbal aggression on the playground and in the classroom. However, there is another form of bullying that many children use which is intended to remain hidden from adult view. This type of aggression, referred to as social or relational aggression, tends to be used more by female children. The intent of social aggression is to damage the friendship between peers either by spreading rumours, gossiping or excluding peers. For the children that experience these indirect forms of aggression, the hurt and isolation may be difficult to cope with alone.

As a result, this pilot project will provide a select number of female children the opportunity to learn how to identify female aggression, and ways to handle it if it does occur. With the use of simple art materials female children will be given the chance to explore their understanding of social aggression by participating in an art therapy group. The themes that emerge in the artwork and in group discussions will be used to identify and relate themes found in existing research literature.

### **PROCEDURES:**

A series of weekly art therapy sessions, each one-hour long, will be led by Stephanie Watson for a maximum of three consecutive months. In a small group of female peers the participants will be invited to explore their experience and knowledge concerning female aggression through open discussion and art making.

Participants' confidentiality will be respected in every way possible. Their names and identifying information will be kept under lock and key. Consent is requested from the guardian of the participants for the photography of the child's artwork for future

educational presentation and publication. The guardian may withdraw their consent for photography of their child's artwork without penalty, and the child can still participate in the remaining sessions of the research study. The guardian may withdraw the child's consent to participate in the study at any time, without giving a reason, by phoning the facilitator at the telephone number above.

The facilitator will keep the artwork for the duration of the art therapy sessions in a locked cabinet. At the end of the study the facilitator will keep the artwork for a minimum of seven years, in which art therapy ethical guidelines permit an appropriate disposal of the artwork.

The final research paper will include a description of the sessions, describing aspects of the children's experiences using pseudonyms, in keeping with confidentiality as described above. Bound copies of the paper will be kept in the Resource Room for the Department of Creative Arts Therapies, as well as in the Concordia University Library.

### **RISKS:**

To the researcher's knowledge, participation in this group holds no risks for the children. However, certain children could find that they have reactions or feelings that are uncomfortable due to the personal nature of the exploration. If a child finds that these feelings persist, the facilitator will be available to discuss these concerns and provide a referral, if needed, in consultation with the research advisor.

### **BENEFITS:**

The aim of the series of sessions is to provide a supportive group setting in which children can discuss and make images about their experiences of being bullied by female peers. This may help participants to accept and understand their feelings and learn more about their experience and the experience of others who have also been bullied. Participants will also learn to use their creative abilities as a means to communicate with others, and to promote personal growth. Through sharing their experiences in this research inquiry, participants can feel that they are contributing to the emerging knowledge that deals with female children's experience and understanding of aggression.

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

**If at any time you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call Adela Reid, Compliance Officer, in the Office of Research.**

Adela Reid, Compliance Officer  
Office of Research, GM-1000, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8  
Phone: 514-848-7481  
Email: [adela.reid@concordia.ca](mailto:adela.reid@concordia.ca)

## Appendix C

### *Consent Form in Information Package*

## An Art Therapy Exploration of Social Aggression

**Art Therapy Student:** Stephanie Watson

*School Name/Address*

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**Research Supervisors:** Suzanne Lister: Full-time faculty at Concordia University;  
Research supervisor  
Diana Ilnicki: Social worker; On-site supervisor at  
Elementary School

I hereby give my daughter \_\_\_\_\_ (print name)  
permission to participate in the research inquiry conducted by *Stephanie Watson*, entitled  
*An Art Therapy Exploration of Social Aggression*, as part of her Master's studies in the  
Creative Arts Therapies Program at Concordia University.

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

I understand that my daughter will participate in one-hour weekly art therapy  
sessions for a maximum of three consecutive months. I understand that my daughter's  
identity will be kept confidential, and that my daughter agrees to protect the confidentiality  
of the other participants by not mentioning their names, the experiences they have shared,  
or their artwork to persons outside the group.

I understand that my daughter's identity and the setting where the art therapy took  
place will be kept anonymous and that no identifying information will be given. The final  
research report will include a descriptive account of the sessions, describing aspects of the  
participants' experience, with identities kept confidential.

Artwork produced in art therapy sessions will be used; however, my daughter's  
name and identifying information will not be disclosed in the research paper, or in any  
future presentations or publication of the research. No artwork will be photographed  
without my written permission. I understand that at the end of the project my daughter's  
artwork will be kept by Stephanie Watson for a minimum of seven years, in which it may  
be appropriately disposed of according to art therapy ethical guidelines.



I understand that I have the right to withdraw my daughter's consent at any time. I understand the purpose of this study and that there is no hidden motive of which I have not been informed.

I understand that copies of the research paper will be bound and kept in the Resource Room for the Department of Creative Arts Therapies, as well as in the Concordia University Library.

I freely consent and voluntarily agree to give my daughter permission to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ In addition, I authorize *Stephanie Watson* to photograph my daughter's artwork under the conditions of confidentiality outlined above.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### *Overview of Art Therapy Activities and Weekly Themes*

## Art Activities and Themes

### Session One and Two

Art Activity: Personalized folder

Theme: To create a personal storage space for two-dimensional images created in the art therapy group.

### Session Three

Art Activity: Inside/outside portraits

Theme: To consider how one feels on the inside in contrast to what one shows on the outside.

### Session Four and Five

Art Activity: Puppets

Theme: To create puppets of characters typically involved in school-bound bullying. The puppets were to facilitate greater ease in disclosing emotionally laden experiences with social aggression.

### Session Six

Art Activity: Group mural

Theme: To facilitate and assess group interaction and communication between group members. To become aware of age-appropriate social skills that could be transferred to other social situations.

### Session Seven

Art Activity: Storyboard

Theme: To facilitate greater ease in discussing concepts of social aggression through the use of fictional characters. Group members' were provided the opportunity to consider reasons for the character's exclusion in the story.

### Session Eight

Art Activity: Storyboard response drawings

Theme: In reflecting on the girl victimized in the story, the response drawing was to provide group members the opportunity to conceptualize hurtful feelings external to one self. The goal in devising a conclusion for the fictional story was to offer group members control over how the story would end.

### Session Nine

Art Activity: Open session

Theme: To provide group members free expression without limiting subject matter or the use of art materials.

Session Ten

Art Activity: Portrait collage

Theme: The objective of the task was for group members to become aware of emotion conveyed in their own face and that of others. To become conscious of indirect means of communication, and to facilitate better function within a social system.

Session Eleven

Art Activity: Safe space/sacred circle

Theme: To create a safe space where one can symbolically escape intense emotion. By identifying or creating a personal space devoid of negativity, one can feel grounded and centred.

Session Twelve

Art Activity: Open Session

Theme: To encourage personal exploration and the release of one's creative spirit.

Session Thirteen

Art Activity: Past, present, future drawings

Theme: To contemplate change in one's perception and understanding of bullying over time. To explore how the art therapy group altered one's past understanding and future approach in the face of social aggression.

Session Fourteen and Fifteen

Art Activity: Shield

Theme: A tangible memento of the group for members to take home. The girls were provided a means to give and receive personal sentiments from fellow group members.