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**Understanding group process and the creative act: How do children see their world,
and how do their interactions with others and with art media impact on the child's
mediation of inner and outer experience**

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A Research Paper

in

The Department

of

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ABSTRACT

Understanding group process and the creative act: How do children see their world, and how do their interactions with others and with art media impact on the child's mediation of inner and outer experiences?

Frederique Roy

In conducting my research I have been motivated by one main question: how does group process and the art process affect the child's ability to mediate between inner and outer experience? I begin by stating my basic assumptions and offer literature focusing on theories of human development and creativity to support my views. I then explore literature pertaining to theories concerning "self and other" that have led to contemporary perspectives on socialization, group psychotherapy and group art therapy.

I go on to explore different constructs for understanding group dynamics and therapeutic factors of group therapies, and focus on interactive group therapy, group art therapy, and group therapies with children.

For the practical portion of my research paper, I also present an art therapy group case study, in which I focus on the experiences and artwork of three latency age boys, aimed at illustrating how group process and the creative process can facilitate effecting change and fluidity to one's relationship with self and other, seen as key to human development and mental health.

Finally I attempt to synthesize my finding, both theoretical and practical.

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I would also like to thank all the children I worked with during my second year practicum for all they have taught me about love, life, and hope. Further I wish to thank my parents for teaching me to be myself, to care for others, and to strive for the best.

Finally I would like to thank all the staff, students and clients I have worked with during my studies at Concordia University, and leave you this bit of wisdom I have picked up along the way- it is not so much what life throws at you but how you catch it-

Table of contents

Introduction	1
1. Basic Assumptions: <i>Where I come from</i>	4
Identity and Self-esteem	6
Developing Empathy	8
Creativity	11
2. A Historical and Theoretical Overview:	
<i>From self as individual to self as relationship</i>	16
3. Group Therapies: <i>All for one and one for all</i>	21
Interactive Group Therapy	23
Art Therapy Groups	29
4. Working With Children in a Group Setting: <i>Special considerations</i>	33
Historical Overview	33
Referrals for Group Therapy	35
Role of the Therapist Working With Children	35
Efficacy of group therapy for children	37
Art in schools	39
Conclusion of Theoretical Overview	41
5. Case Study: <i>Part one</i>	
Methodology	43
Environment	44
Population	45
Developmental considerations	46

My approach and overview of group process	47
Case study: <i>Part two</i>	
Individual Progress and the Artwork	52
Termination of Therapy	68
Review of Case Study	71
6. Synthesis: <i>The reunion of theory and practice</i>	75
Conclusion	81
References	93

Introduction

In my first research paper, Between two worlds: Therapeutic uses of art appreciation (Roy, 1998), I argue that sharing and discussing our perceptions of pictures is an important aspect of the therapeutic process in art therapy. While in this earlier exploration I focused on how art appreciation can be therapeutic, I have since come to realize that at the root of this first paper was my assumption that interaction and sharing between persons, as facilitated through art, enriches one's ability to mediate between inner and outer experiences. Thus my interests have migrated from examining the uses of art images in the individual's self-development, to exploring issues surrounding social construction, the "self and other" dichotomy, and how they have impacted on the fields of group psychotherapy and art therapy.

The goal of my research, then, is to illuminate and elaborate on historical and contemporary theories about and leading to group psychotherapy and art therapy. As a budding creative arts therapist, I am also interested in the process of creativity and self-expression in art in terms of how these experiences enrich therapeutic group dynamics and, more generally, human development and the understanding of self and other.

While I present comparisons between individual and group therapy, and verbal and art therapies, it is not my intention to imply that one modality is superior or that another is more relevant. Rather, I seek to pursue my interests in group dynamics, socialization theory, the social construction of self, and the role of art and creativity in all these concepts.

With this research paper:

- 1) I begin by stating my basic assumptions and offer literature supporting these

views. I focus on theories concerning human development and creativity; especially issues surrounding identity, self-esteem and empathy, which I believe to be core to understanding mental health issues.

2) I explore literature pertaining to theories concerning self and other that have led to contemporary perspectives on socialization, group psychotherapy and group art therapy. To complement the case study portion of this research paper I will focus, but not exclusively, on issues involving child psychology.

3) Taking a psychodynamic approach, I review the work of various authors who explore constructs for understanding group dynamics and the process of group therapy. I focus on two modalities of group therapy: the first is very broad, and can be loosely referred to as “interactive group therapy”. This refers to all group therapies that grapple with interpersonal learning, interaction and integration of experience, and other group phenomena. The second modality that I will explore is group art therapy; more specifically, I look at two approaches: analytic group art therapy and experientially based art therapy in a group setting.

My aim in this section is to illustrate how group process and the creative process can facilitate changes in how the individual experiences and mediates between inner and outer experience.

4) I focus on literature pertaining to children and group psychotherapy and attempt to expose special considerations for working with this population. I also explore the role of the group therapist working with children.

5) To complement and substantiate the theoretical portion of this research paper, I share my practicum experiences working with eleven- and twelve-year-old boys in an art

therapy group that took place in a hospital setting. I begin by reviewing developmental theories concerning latency-age children and the specific issues and stages of development they face. I then offer an overview of my general observations of the group, which took place over a seven-month period.

For part two of the case study, I describe and present reproductions of the children's artwork over a four-week period. While the activities were not designed to complement my research, I feel the images and sharing that took place during and after their completion illustrate the complexity and potential of group art therapy with children.

I hope to illustrate how group art therapy can help children to better integrate subjective and objective experiences.

6) Finally, I offer a synthesis of the ideas and experiences presented, in which I attempt to detect and create links between theory and experience.

On a technical note, to simplify the ideas I present, I will refer to the feminine case for the theoretical portion of this research paper. For the case study I will refer to the masculine case, which will complement my descriptive analysis of a group of eleven- and twelve-year-old boys.

1. Basic Assumptions- *where I come from*

I believe that understanding who we are and what our impact is on the world- as well as the world's impact on us- is key to human development and mental health.

Accordingly, I feel that it is through social interactions that people develop a sense of identity and self-esteem. Further, developing a healthy sense of empathy is key to and dependent on these processes; thus I contend that one of the main goals of therapy is to help clients develop a sense of empathy.

As will become more apparent in the next section, Identity and Self-Esteem, one of the main tasks of the child is to understand that she is separate from her environment and from other people, and that other people have their own thoughts and feelings. This allows the child to begin identifying with her parents as people, and to embark on a journey to eventual individuation.

On the other hand, a later developmental task for the child is to understand that others are also similar to her, and that she is not only an individual but also a member of different groups and a part of society. Hence, a child's emotional and cognitive development unfolds in parallel to her relationships with 'other'. "The growing child must, at every step, derive a vitalizing sense of actuality from the awareness that his individual way of mastering experience (his ego synthesis) is a successful variant of a group identity" (Erikson, 1950, p. 212).

Thus a person is understood to constantly be mediating between inner and outer experiences. While empathy is more often associated with sympathy and altruism, or is suggested as a therapeutic technique, I use the term to mean the distinct yet inter-linked experiences of self and other. In my first research paper I write, "...empathy describes the

ability to relate to others while remaining in contact with one's own feelings and responses" (Roy, 1998, p. 21).

One can begin to see how all these issues are interdependent: can one understand "self" without understanding "other"? Can one experience feelings of self-esteem without validation, support and feedback from others? And finally, can one feel empathy- the harmonious recognition of the feelings of both self and others that is free of distortions- without constructing healthy relationships and a validating sense of self?

My experiences as a developing individual and as a student art therapist have led me to see how deficiencies in the subjective construction of a sense of identity, and healthy relationships with others, can lead to many difficulties in everyday life. My experiences as a member and leader of art therapy groups, have instilled in me the belief that group therapy is particularly pertinent to exploring self and other and how the two intersect in daily life as a social process of meaning making.

In particular, my practicum experiences working with children have convinced me that group work allows children to learn from one another and to experiment with different ways of interacting with their environments and peers. Further, I feel the art process allows these goals to be attained by encouraging creativity and self-expression, also understood to be of paramount importance to human development.

While any of these assumptions could be developed into a lengthy research paper, I will offer a few brief arguments in support of my claims. While I realize that my scope of interest is rather wide for a paper of this duration, I feel it necessary to at least acknowledge many of the threads I picked up while weaving this tapestry. Each one seems to be a colorful and structurally pertinent aspect of human understanding and

experience, relevant to my own development as person, daughter, friend, artist, therapist and member of a society. In the next section we see how individual psychology and social psychology are, in many ways, one and the same.

Identity and Self-esteem

Abraham Maslow writes that at the root of psychological health is a congruent self-concept; he asserts that congruence, or consistency, sprouts in accordance with a sense of personal worth, which in turn, stems from childhood experiences with parents and others (Weiten, 1989).

According to Erik Erikson (Shaffer, 1994), identity integrates the private self and the public self, which are unified by a sense of consistency between subjective experience and feedback from others. For the remainder of this section I will focus on identity only in terms of its relationship to self-esteem, but I will return to the issue of identity in terms of self and other in section 2.

By self-esteem we refer to the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself. It expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy.

(Canadian Education Association, 1994, p. 3)

Although succinct in its description, this definition seems incomplete without the acknowledgement of the role others play in the individual's construction of self and feelings of self-esteem.

Irvin Yalom (1985) differentiates two kinds of "esteem"; he describes 'self-esteem' as "...the individual's conception of what he is really like, what he is really

worth, and is indissolubly linked to his experiences in social relationships...”(p. 66). He refers to ‘public esteem’, on the other hand, as the individual’s perception of “...the evaluation given by the groups to which he belongs” (p.67).

Similarly, social psychologist, Dorothy Miell (1995) proposes two main factors that influence the development of a sense of self-esteem: the individual’s perception of herself and, secondly, the individual’s perception of how others see her.

For example, William James (1890) postulates that people construct a sense of self according to their interactions with important others, but he assumes that our own self-evaluation is the main factor determining our sense of self-esteem (Miell, 1995). (In section 2 of this text we will further explore the work of James and other early Western conceptions of the human consciousness of self.)

At the other end of the spectrum, Geraldine Williams (1977) stresses the impact of one’s perception of how others see one. She writes that children develop a sense of self-esteem between the ages of six and twelve, during which time they are becoming increasingly interested in being accepted by their peer group. Williams implies that positive group experiences are important to the developing child’s sense of self -esteem.

If the image of himself that he sees reflected back to him in his mother’s eyes, in his family’s attitudes, in the way he is treated by other children, is warm and positive, he will see himself as a ‘good’ person. (Spencer Palaski, 1980, p. 137)

Social learning theorist, Albert Bandura (Shaffer, 1994), suggests that self-esteem not only affects and is affected by self-image, he further contends that our behavior also reflects our sense of self. Thus our behavior is also a product of our feelings of self-

esteem which, in turn, develop through and are influenced by our interactions with others.

While many of our behaviors seem clearly affected by the approval or disapproval of significant others, this does not mean that our behavior and growth are completely at the mercy of environmental influences. Bandura suggests that self-concept is constructed, instead, according to “reciprocal determinism”; thus human development reflects an interaction between the person, the person’s behavior, and the environment (Shaffer, 1994).

From a psychotherapeutic perspective, Yalom (1985) writes that all individuals who pursue assistance from a mental health professional have in common two predominate issues: “(1) a difficulty in establishing and maintaining meaningful interpersonal relationships and (2) a difficulty in maintaining a sense of personal worth (self-esteem)” (p. 66). Yalom (1985) further suggests that for individuals experiencing difficulty sustaining meaningful relationships and who have low self-esteem, group experiences can offer motivation and a means for change and self-growth.

The more attracted an individual is to the group, the more he respects the judgment of the group, the more he will attend to and take very seriously any discrepancy between his public esteem, and his self-esteem. A discrepancy between the two will place the individual in a state of dissonance and he will initiate activity to remove the dissonance. (p. 67)

The developmental perspective offered by Lois Hoffman seems relevant to our developing theme of self and other.

Developing Empathy

Hoffman (Davis 1994) describes the development of empathy as a snowballing of

“distinctive empathic” experiences. According to Hoffman there are four different levels of empathy that lead to the development of self-identity as well: 1) ‘global empathy’ occurs during infancy when the child has no clear sense of herself as distinct from others, especially her primary caregiver. “ The self-other fusion existing at this time means that the child is in fact often unsure as to who exactly, self or other, is experiencing...” (p. 42).

Towards the end of this first stage of development, the child begins to grasp the concept of “person permanence” (similar to Piaget’s theory of “object permanence”), and begins to recognize that her primary caregiver is separate from herself (Davis, 1994).

2) “Egocentric empathy” sets in at around two years of age, and lasts for about one year. While the child in this stage is beginning to recognize that she is separate from other human beings, and can sympathize with others; she is not yet aware that each person is different and feels differently than herself (Davis, 1994).

Hoffman (Davis, 1994) argues that person permanence allows for the emergence of “sympathetic distress”, understood to mean feelings of compassion for another. She cautions that sympathy and empathy are not to be confused. “ Empathic distress continues to result from witnessing others in pain, but the possibility now exists for a compassionate response to that other as well” (p. 43). At this stage, children respond to the distress of others but in ways that sooth themselves more then the other person. For example, a child might respond to an adult’s distress by offering her favorite toy.

3) “Empathy for another person’s feelings” begins at approximately two or three years of age and continues until late childhood. In this stage, the child develops increasingly sophisticated role-taking skills. “The effect on empathic responding is to make children more able to interpret the wide variety of cues, expressive and situational,

available in social settings” (p. 44). Hoffman adds that the development of language, also occurring at this time, further reinforces this process (Davis, 1994).

4) “Empathy for another’s general condition” is, according to Hoffman (Davis, 1994), the final stage of development of empathy, and results in the acquisition of a sense of personal identity. As the person becomes increasingly aware of others as “...persons with stable histories and identities...” (p. 44), the person also begins to perceive her own unique experience of and approach to life.

From Hoffman’s perspective, empathy is a fundamental part of human psychological development with stages and conflicts to resolve along the way, and results in a stable and healthy sense of identity (Davis, 1994). Conversely, then, obstacles in the path towards empathy can result in confused, fragmented, or undifferentiated relationships between an individual and her environment.

For example, Hoffman (Davis, 1994) stresses the importance of ‘environmental cues’ for the developing child, which inform her evolving relationships with others. This implies that if, during infancy and early childhood, the child does not receive sufficient or congruent responses and feedback from caregivers she will not develop a healthy sense of herself and of her relationships with others.

On a related note, Jungian analyst Mary Watkins (McNiff, 1992), suggests that forms of psychosis seem related to marked egocentricity and an inability to relate to others. Similarly, Mildred Lachman-Chapin (1987) explores the role of empathy from a “self psychology” standpoint:

Failure of empathy in the earliest months of life has a causal role in the pathology of self-cohesion, as well as affecting the development of later

libidinal and aggressive conflicts. And, for the most part, it is through empathic response in the therapeutic relationship that a cure is achieved.

(Lachman-Chapin, 1987, p. 75)

Returning to Hoffman (Davis, 1994), her theory of “role-playing” and its importance in the empathic experiences of young children, relates nicely to my view that group therapy can address inadequacies in early interpersonal experiences. As will be elaborated on later, group therapies offer clients opportunities to observe, and to experiment with, different roles in a group setting that can improve the development of empathy.

Lachman-Chapin (1987), an art therapist, further suggests that through the art process the artist can project aspects of her own subjective experiences onto the work, allowing others to then empathize with her via her artwork. “Art can be used as a form of exhibition, as a way to create, to be magic, to be understood, admired, and affirmed” (p. 80). Lachman-Chapin’s description of art in a group as both a self-satisfying and empathic experience leads nicely into the exploration of creativity and self-expression and how making and appreciating art also contributes to self-development.

Creativity

To begin, what is creativity? Humanist Rollo May postulates that creativity is the “...process of bringing something new into being” (as cited in Garai, 1987). May contends that ‘authentic creativity’ is characterized by a sense of intensified awareness, a heightened state of consciousness, and feelings of joy or elation during creation (Garai, 1987).

May (1975) proposes that the creative act can be understood as an encounter

between two poles; one subjective, the other objective. He contends that the creative act always comes with feelings of anxiety; "...the shaking of the self-world relationship" (p. 93). May further suggests that changes in our perception of self-other triggered by creative acts can be felt as threatening to one's sense of identity.

As we saw in the section, Identity and Self-esteem, consistency between inner and outer experiences are seen as key to a solid sense of self. The creative process, on the other hand, requires that we tolerate ambiguity and change. During and after the creative act, "...the world is not as we experienced it before, and since self and world are always correlated, we no longer are what we were before.... Past, present, and future form a new Gestalt." (May, 1975, p. 93).

Likewise, Carl Rogers (1970) writes that the creative process is "...the emergence in action of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people or circumstances of his life on the other" (p. 139).

Anton Ehrenzweig (1967) offers an enlightening theory of the creative process that seems echoed in the work of these two humanist thinkers. Ehrenzweig's work, which clearly draws from the theories of object-relations analyst Melanie Klein, portrays the creative process as the oscillation between fragmentation- the "schizoid position", and acceptance of loss and change- the "depressed position". Where his ideas seem to stray from Klein's is in his emphasis on the creative process.

Ehrenzweig (Case & Dalley, 1992) claims that there are three phases involved in creative work: projection onto the work; unconscious scanning and integration of one's process while manipulating the materials; and finally, one's encounter with the finished product.

From this perspective the creative person is seen as projecting fragmented aspects of herself onto the work she is about to make- the schizoid phase. In the second phase, she begins to unconsciously 'scan her psyche via her interaction with the materials and her desire to express herself; thus bringing more material to consciousness which she is now ready to integrate. Ehrenzweig (Case & Dalley, 1992) calls this "the manic phase" of the creative process.

Finally, the person is faced with her finished work, and she must accept the discrepancy between her inner experience of the object and the actual outer object she has created; fantasy and reality clash. "This is a depressive phase as one must come to terms with the gap between the ideal and real, mixed with acceptance of imperfection and hope for future integration" (Case & Dalley, 1992, p. 124).

More recently, Mark A. Runco (1996) also implies that creativity involves the interplay between inner and outer experience, but goes on to introduce another aspect: discretion. Runco states that creativity can be divided into three main mechanisms: the intention to transform something; the actual transformation of something in the outside world; and the use of discretion to know when to be creative and when to conform to norms. Thus, for Runco, creativity involves developing a sense of discretion: knowing how to balance one's behavior between conformity and deviation from the norm.

The assumption of multidimensionality is necessary for the definition of creativity as manifested in the intentions and motivation to transform the objective world into original interpretations, coupled with the ability to decide when this is useful and when it is not. (Runco, 1996, p. 4)

Runco (1996) suggests that whenever we interpret the world we are taking part in

its transformation, but cautions that not all transformations are creative. To be creative, a transformation of the objective world must be original and useful, but must also rely on the individual's own criteria for usefulness and originality.

Runco (1996) seems to suggest that by mediating between inner and outer experiences, creativity can be understood as akin to empathy, as the person is empathizing with the work she is completing. Runco implies that creativity involves intentionally transforming something outside of the self to somehow improve it according to one's own sense of aesthetics or values. This involves relating to the characteristics and potential of a given object, material, or idea; yet at the same time, remaining in touch with one's own characteristics and preferences so as to successfully improve the object to one's satisfaction.

Similarly to my proposed definition of empathy (Roy, 1998), Runco (1996) suggests that creative acts also involve relating to 'other' while remaining in touch with self. Thus creativity, like identity, self-esteem and empathy, can be seen as developing in the mediating space between inner and outer experiences, and 'self' and 'other' constructs.

In support of my hypothesis that self and other relationships are the basis for identity formation and the development and maintenance of self-esteem and empathy, I have presented research by many influential and talented authors and therapists. The work of William James (1890), Lois Hoffman (1987), and Irwin Yalom (1985) stand out as particularly relevant to my assumptions and goals for this research paper.

As we have seen, these three authors along with many others whose works have guided me in my inquiries, offer various descriptions for how inner and outer realities are

constructed by self and other interactions. Finally, with the help of Ehrenzweig (Case & Dalley, 1992) it becomes evident that creativity and self/other relationships are also inseparable, as creativity is dependent on self-regard, and vice-versa. On a similar note, Lowenfeld & Brittain (1975) write, “ The attitude that one has developed toward oneself and the worth that one feels about one’s own contribution influences the creative process” (p. 62).

As we move closer to understanding how self/other explorations inform all human experience, it becomes more evident how these ideas relate to interactive group therapies. But first, let us look, in more depth, at the socially constructed dichotomy: self and other also understood as “inner and outer” experiences.

2. A Historical and Theoretical Overview:

From self as individual to self as relationship

Beginning with the work of William James, often considered to be the father of psychology, I will investigate Western conceptions of self and other, and how these have impacted our understanding of human psychology, and more specifically, have led to present social constructionist thought on identity and society. These ideas seem important to understanding the development and philosophy of group therapies.

James (1890) postulates that human consciousness of 'self' can be understood in terms of an empirical "I" and an experiencing "me". James describes "me" as the accumulation of feelings and thoughts a person experiences that correlate with other memories of me. According to this perspective, a person can be understood to construct a sense of self via a process of accepting and rejecting thoughts and sensations that do or do not seem to fit the ongoing construction of me.

Freud and later Adler were among the first to apply psychoanalytic thought to social development. Although like James (1890) Freud also focuses on the individual in relation to society, Sigmund Freud's ideas strongly support the concept that interpretations of 'other' play a crucial role in the human development of identity (Shaffer, 1994).

Based on his well-established understanding of human levels of consciousness, Freud suggests that people experience innate drives that are in conflict with the superego-whose structure is based on social standards and norms for behavior and social interaction. Evidently, Freud perceived our personal interactions with our environments as fraught with conflict as we struggle to satisfy our ego needs in a world that aims to

repress us. "As biological creatures, we have goals or motives that must be satisfied. Yet society decrees that many of these basic urges are undesirable and must be suppressed and controlled" (Shaffer, 1994, p. 41).

While James (1890) and Freud (1912) focus on internal events- sensations, emotions, urges, and conflicts- caused by our perceptions of our environments; Alfred Adler (as cited by Garlock, 1987) depicts human experience as the interactive and dynamic relationship between self and other.

Adler stresses that all aspects of personality can be understood as reactions and responses to other people (Garlock, 1987). He further describes the person as part of a "cosmic experience" and stresses that an individual can only resolve problems and continue to grow as a person by "...immersing himself in social rather than personal goals" (p. 139).

Comparably, Kenneth Gergen (1991) writes that construction of self can be seen in terms of 'relationship'; he argues that just as language and meaning are constructed through dialogue, so is the concept of 'self' dependent on this interplay between 'self' and 'other'.

In Gergen's (1991) The saturated self, he attempts to track the journey that has led to present Western conceptions of self. In the process, he also uncovers "...a newly emerging sense of self" (p. 146) under the rubble of present constructs for understanding human experience.

Until recently, most people lived within a community where members knew one another, and a "...firm sense of self was favored" (p. 147). Gergen suggests that industrialization, expanding business and neighborhoods, and the explosion of mass

media have led to 'social saturation'. He presents interesting and evocative examples of how Western societies have been inundated with multiple perspectives, choices, role models and social criteria.

In the same vein, Waller (1993) writes, "...problems engendered by the pressures of change [and the] breakdown of secure networks in modern day life- not only in the West but world-wide-.... [have led] people to feel alienated and unable to make close relationships" (p. 6).

Gergen explains that with the modern age came the birth of the first phase of self-development he proposes, "the strategic manipulator". In this phase the individual realizes that she must take on different roles in different contexts, but is also cognizant of the superficiality of her actions. From this perspective, human behaviors are seen as instrumental for social gain rather than as unique expressions of self. Gergen writes that with the realization that self must then be a product of society, comes "...a sickening sense that one's true emotions are being lost in the charade" (p. 148).

Gergen (1991) suggests that with time this phase abates as we begin to embrace the idea that self is a social construct; thus "the pastiche personality" emerges. This process gives rise to self as a social chameleon reflecting the environment. Gergen borrows from the work of Louis Zucker (Gergen, 1991), who describes this new socially constructed self in terms of process over object; an "essential" sense of self becomes the very process of constructing a 'persona'.

Gergen points out that while the modern era and the concept of objectivity seem to be experienced largely as the gradual destruction of the idea of a core self, the perception that one is playing a role in society assumes that there is still a "core self" with

which to measure one's authenticity.

Gergen suggests that while we must continue to accept that we play roles to communicate and get along in the world, we must also let go of the concept of self as separate from society. He proposes that if we can let go of the impulse to grasp at concrete constructions of ourselves, here and now, we can expand on our constructions to include more progressive tools for communicating, relating to others, and understanding our culture, our lives and ourselves.

Gergen writes that the traditional understanding of reality is giving way to a relational sense of existence. As we begin to see our life stories, interpretations and overt expressions of emotion and senses of morality as "cultural possessions", we can further understand how these constructs impact our lives, our decisions, and our perceptions of ourselves and of others.

Ann Cattanach (1997) explains this shift in focus from "self" to "relationship" quite nicely: "Gergen (1991, 1994) suggests that the self is not an object to be described once all for all but is taken to be a continuously changing and fluid history of relationships. The kind of person you are exists not within people but between them" (p. 13).

Consequently we witness in this section, a gradual shift from self as individually constructed and maintained, to self as the relationship between the individual and her environment. From this vantagepoint, addressing group dynamics is crucial to our understanding of individual psychology, and ensuing concepts in clinical practice. "The philosophy underlying all group therapy is that man is a social being.... Therefore, a basic knowledge of group theory is essential for all therapeutic work.... to aid our

understanding of our own and our clients' experiences" (Case & Dalley, 1992, p. 195).

3. Group Therapies: *All for one and one for all*

Irvin Yalom (1985) claims that since its formal introduction in the 1940s, group psychotherapy has undergone a multiplicity of developments and adaptations to changing needs and perspectives in clinical practice. "The multiplicity of forms is so evident today that it is best not to speak of group therapy but of the many group therapies" (1985, preface).

As was seen in section 2, theoretical concepts of self and other have evolved and influenced psychotherapeutic understanding of socialization, identity, self-esteem, and self-actualization; correspondingly, group work as a modality of therapy has also matured with time. While early conceptions of group therapy seem to focus on treatment of the individual in the group, contemporary understanding of psychodynamics has led to a focus on the group itself as a means of therapeutic change and human growth.

Accordingly, a therapy group can be structured to treat individuals within a group setting, or it can focus on *being* a group as the main approach to treatment. "In the treatment of the individual, neurosis is displayed as a problem of the individual. In the treatment of a group it must be displayed as a problem of the group" (Bion, 1959, p. 11). For the purposes of this paper I will focus on theories of group therapy that emphasize group dynamics and the therapeutic benefits of peer interaction and interpersonal learning.

W. R. Bion (1959), who focuses on object-relations theory and group phenomenon, suggests that the group can be seen as "...the interplay between individual needs, group mentality, and culture" (p. 55). Adding weight to his claim, Bion defines 'group mentality' as "...the unanimous expression of the will of the group.... to which

individuals contribute anonymously” (p. 59); this phenomenon causes conflict in the individual, whose personal needs and desires will differ from the group’s collective movement. Bion explains that ‘group culture’ is thus created by the behaviours exhibited by members when conflicts arise between self and group needs.

Bion (Case & Dalley, 1992) adds that there are several basic assumptions or unconscious processes that occur whenever a group of people comes together:

1) ‘dependence’ as members look to the therapist for solutions. 2) ‘Fight/flight’ as members either engage in or avoid confrontations. 3) ‘pairing’ as members bond to create meaning and find hope for the future.

Yalom (1985) seems to expand on Bion’s early ideas; and today the concepts developed by both these men continue to influence psychotherapeutic understanding of groups, and individual and social development.

To understand group dynamics, Yalom (1985) introduces the concepts of ‘front’ and ‘core’ aspects that permeate all group therapy approaches. While the front of a group consists of the form, techniques, and jargon used by a particular school of thought; the core consists of aspects of group experience that are seen as intrinsic to the therapeutic process. “Disregard the front, consider only the actual mechanisms of effecting change in the patient, and we will find that these mechanisms of change are limited in number and remarkably similar across groups” (preface).

Yalom (1985) develops eleven inter-linked ‘therapeutic factors’ seen as core to group psychotherapy: instillation of hope; universality; imparting of information; altruism; the corrective recapitulation of the primary family group; development of socializing techniques; imitative behavior; interpersonal learning; group cohesiveness;

catharsis and existential factors (p. 3). (These are described in relation to art therapy in my first paper (Roy, 1998, pp. 25-26). Yalom implies that while not all groups will actively focus on these factors, these group phenomena are nonetheless present in any group situation.

Art psychotherapist Judith Rubin (1987) beautifully describes the group as a collage in progress:

[A group] is not unlike a collage or construction, where the final product includes each component part in its original form. And, like a collage, a group represents the creation of a new gestalt, wherein each component appears differently from when it is seen in isolation from the total work.

(p. 177)

Finally, and perhaps most succinctly, Case & Dalley (1992) write that group therapies are based on one or more of three assumptions. 1) Human beings exist within families and social groups. 2) Conflicts during early object-relations experiences have a bearing on later relationships in adulthood. 3) We go through a series of institutions- schools, hospitals, workplaces- where we encounter groups and peer pressure, and where our social education reaches a peak.

Having briefly looked at general definitions of group therapy, let us consider more closely the work of Yalom and others who stress the importance of interaction in group therapy.

Interactive Group Therapy

Waller (1993) defines “group interactive psychotherapy”, as focusing on “...the actions, reactions and characteristic patterns of interaction which constrain people in their

everyday lives and for which help in modifying is sought in the group” (p. 22).

A main assumption behind interactive therapy is that people construct inner worlds that are continuously being reconstructed via interactions with others. Thus interactions construct and reconstruct a person’s view of herself and others; and also affect her expectations from herself and others. “Exploration of these patterns and willingness to modify them in the safety of the group enables the person to try out new ways of relating in the ‘outside world’ ” (Waller, 1993, p. 22).

Waller (1993) points out that in interactive group therapies, such as Yalom’s concept of group psychotherapy, members do not only talk about their problems but actively enact them in the here and now. Through interactions with others, members reveal their styles of relating to others, coping with the environment, and consequently learn from the responses of others to their behavior. “ Feedback from members of the group illuminates aspects of the self which have become obvious to others but which are not recognized by oneself” (p. 23).

Yalom (1985) suggests three main stages of group therapy which reflect an emphasis on group interactions. In the initial stage, members seek orientation in the group; they are concerned with being accepted, and participation is hesitant as feelings of dependency on the leader are high. In the second stage, conflicts arise as members try to establish dominance in the group and others rebel. In this stage, members seem critical of one another and express hostility towards the leader. Finally, in the third stage, a sense of mutual trust and self-disclosure allows for the development of cohesion. Once cohesion is established in the group, there is a sense of group consciousness and shared goals and values; a group microcosm evolves.

To this, Rutan and Stone (1993) add the “termination phase”; characterized by a painful yet sometimes joyous period that occurs whenever a member leaves or a group disbands. On a practical note, Slavson and Schiffer (1975) caution that “...closings in all forms of therapy should be made strictly on the indications of the needs of patients, based on a thorough study of each case” (p. 215).

Getting to the point of the matter, Yalom (1985) asks what is the task of a therapy group? He suggests several core goals: first, members achieve a sense of acceptance that they are in therapy. Once more acquainted, members move towards self-disclosure; members learn to share feelings honestly, and to respond to others nondefensively, thus cultivating an interest in and acceptance of others. Finally they begin to feel mutually supported and validated, culminating in personal improvement.

Yalom (1985) asserts that two main therapeutic factors are at the base of all of these tasks: group cohesion and interpersonal learning. He writes, “... ‘group cohesion’ in group therapy is the analogue of ‘relationship’ in individual therapy” (p. 48). As in one-on-one therapy, clients in a group setting wish to feel safe and accepted; accordingly, a sense of belonging is of central importance to group therapy and to the progress of group cohesion. “...It is the affective sharing of one’s inner world and then the acceptance by others that seems of paramount importance” (p. 58).

Yalom (1985) refers to the work of Carl Rogers who also explored the role of acceptance in group therapy. Rogers writes (as cited in Yalom, 1985): “Other group members, after all, don’t have to care, don’t have to understand, they’re not paid for it, it’s not their job”.

Looking next at Yalom’s (1985) theory of interpersonal learning, group cohesion,

and many of the ideas presented thus far on concepts of self and other, inner and outer experiences, come together to describe contemporary issues of group psychodynamics.

Interpersonal learning is similar to clinical concepts of insight, working through the transference relationship, and corrective emotional experiences as used in individual psychotherapy (Yalom, 1985).

In relation to insight and corrective emotional experiences, Yalom (1985) looks at our perceptions of others, highlighting Harry Sullivan's "systematic interpersonal theory of psychiatry". Sullivan developed a theory to describe the individual's inclination to distort her perceptions of others. Similar to the psychoanalytic concept of transference, understood as the transferring of subjective experiences from past relationships to present interactions with a therapist; "parataxic distortions" refer "...not only to the therapeutic relationship but to all interpersonal relationships... " (p. 21).

Sullivan argues that inadequate interpersonal relationships, which are in turn caused by parataxic distortions, cause psychic maladaptations. To correct such subjectively experienced distortions one has to modify them via a process of 'consensual validation' and by comparing one's inner experiences with those of others (Yalom, 1985).

Having substantiated his claim that interpersonal relationships and emotionally corrective experiences are key to personal insights, Yalom (1985) goes on to explore a third, and fascinating, assumption behind his own theory of group therapy: the group as a 'social microcosm'. Similar to Bion's (1959) theory of 'group culture', Yalom (1985) describes a social microcosm as developing with time and beginning when members start to act as they do in their daily lives with significant others. "[One] will create in the

group the same interpersonal universe one has always inhabited” (p. 30).

Once group members have established some consensual feelings of acceptance trust, and a sense of cohesion they begin to behave less self-consciously thus exposing their styles of interacting with others and with their environment. Hence maladaptations and parataxic distortions are exposed and, furthermore, are dealt with as a group issue (Yalom, 1985).

Gradually an adaptive spiral is set into motion, at first inside and then outside the group. As one’s interpersonal distortions diminish, one’s ability to form rewarding relationships is enhanced. Social anxiety decreases; self-esteem rises; there is less need for self-concealment; others respond positively to this behavior and show more approval and acceptance of the patient, which further increases self-esteem and enhances further change.

(Yalom, 1985, p. 45)

Another group phenomenon that can occur during interactions within the group microcosm, are roles that evolve in the group; that are created by, and sustained by, the group. Yalom (1985) suggests that members may begin to behave according to growing patterns of interaction that can evolve into a set role that they fulfill in the group; he calls these “recurring behavioral constellations”. The “monopolist”, for example, tends to be dramatic and compulsive, and leaves others feeling frustrated and angry.

Yalom (1985) explains that while these roles are related to characteristics of the individual, members support such behavior and actively encourage members to settle on a role that they feel comfortable with. This “role lock” impedes therapy, and the group must unlock such patterns. “Role-fluidity”, on the other hand, promotes flexibility of

affect, personal growth and creativity as members experiment with different roles, but abandon them for new ones.

Diane Waller (1993) looks at the flipside of interactive therapy, and suggests possible 'anti-therapeutic' processes that may occur in interactive group therapy.

1) "Taking turns" in sharing verbally in a group can force members into premature self-disclosure or may provoke extreme feelings of anxiety as their turn approaches. "It is up to the therapist to manage the group dynamics appropriately so that their therapeutic effects will predominate and help members gain insight into their own and other's behavior" (Waller, 1993, p. 33).

2) "Scapegoating" or other forms of victimization can occur in an interactive group (Waller, 1993). Sarra (1998) writes, "scapegoating and other manoeuvres that project out unwanted aspects of self; has one of its aims the spurious accomplishment of wholeness and integrity" (p. 73). As suggested by Yalom (1985), role-fluidity is encouraged in interactive groups and it is up to the individual, the leader(s), and the group as a whole to break such role-locks.

In this section we see that group therapy offers a contained space to explore who we are and how we behave with others; to learn from others and find self-validation; to become aware of social patterns and styles of interacting; and to experiment with new strategies and perspectives. We also see that like the individual, the group goes through developmental stages that must be successfully resolved for growth and change to occur.

In many ways Yalom's (1985) description of a group invites therapists to perceive group therapy in a creative and flexible manner, while Waller's (1993) work reminds us of the possible volatility inherent in group dynamics as well.

Next we will see how art therapy has developed in parallel to many of these concepts of group dynamics and therapeutic processes. Note that theoretical literature on group process in art therapy appears to be sparse; most references found focus on individual therapy and on practical applications of art therapy activities.

Art Therapy Groups

Case & Dalley (1992) propose that at the root of the difference between verbal and art group therapies is that at some point in group art therapy each member becomes separated from the group to work individually on her own process. They assert that this difference has profound effects on group dynamics.

As suggested by Bion (1959) and later Yalom (1985), Case & Dalley (1992) contend that in any group experience there is tension between the desire to be a part of the group- dependency, and an equally powerful desire to break from the group, thus satisfying individual needs- separation. They suggest that group art therapy, conversely, not only allows members to explore both realms but invites the exploration of conflicts that arise from the coming together of inner and outer worlds.

On this topic, Lachman-Chapin (1977) writes that while conflicts between personal needs and group needs are unavoidable, art therapy allows members to withdraw at times without actually leaving the group. Art activities also permit expression even if words or direct interaction are avoided; allows for acting-out of group process in a contained environment via art exploration; helps contain feelings of anxiety in individuals; and encourages collective decision-making and problem solving.

On the other hand, Wadeson (1987) points out that making art privately and then sharing it with others involves risk as well and may create feelings of performance

anxiety and fear of self-revelation in members. Yet these experiences in a group also offer opportunity for emotionally corrective experiences, as risk-taking leads to validation from the group which, in turn, leads to further risk-taking and feelings of accomplishment and self-esteem.

Diane Waller (Cooney, 1995) suggests some factors involved in the use of art in group therapy that seem to go to the heart of the matter: 1) making art in therapy is akin to “free-association” as it taps into material that is not consciously acknowledged by the artist. 2) Art objects are rich with symbolic meaning both for the artist and for the other members in the group. 3) The artwork is created and resides in the here-and-now and also provides a group metaphor of the life of the group. Waller suggests that the artwork produced in a group becomes the focus for projection and for group interaction.

According to Wadeson (1987), Waller (1993), and Cooney (1995), two main directions of group art therapy stand out in the literature: an analytic approach in which group process, as facilitated by art exploration, is the focus of therapy; or a theme-oriented approach- art as therapy.

The group dynamics approach to art therapy is founded on the work of psychotherapists such as Irvin Yalom and Harry Sullivan (Waller, 1993). Margaret Naumberg and Edith Kramer were among the first to apply psychoanalytic understanding of human experience in their respective approaches to art therapy. Naumberg, for example, believed that art is a means to express mixed and poorly understood feelings in an attempt to bring them into awareness (Case & Dalley, 1992).

According to Wadeson (1987), dynamics-focused groups work in the here and now; members are expected to learn from one another through self-observation and feedback

from other members. As was also stressed by Yalom (1985), trust and cohesion are seen as essential components of group development and individual treatment, and take on an added dimension when art is the group's main activity.

A very special intimacy develops as a consequence of... risk-taking and trust-building... Through this sharing, those in an art therapy group come to know one another's imagistic symbols, styles, themes, and to be known by the others for the characteristics of their visual expression. (Wadeson, 1987, p. 143)

From this perspective, art therapy allows members not only to relate with one another, but also to relate to one another's artworks. "Sharing of images, whether around specific problems or pervasive feelings, can be a dramatic revelation of commonality" (Wadeson, 1987, p. 146). Hence, art therapy enhances group process by encouraging sharing, trust, commonality and sense of cohesion.

The experiential approach, on the other hand, seems akin to the studio-based approach used by art therapy pioneers in the forties. For example, Edward Adamson (1970) offered an open studio for patients on a psychiatric ward in the early forties, and Rita Simon, an artist and advocate of Adlerian psychology, worked with Joshua Brier in a "social club" for inpatients (Waller, 1993).

In her description of experiential group art therapy, Wadeson (1987) emphasizes the development of art images and collective sharing of them afterwards. She stresses that the group focuses on the artworks overall rather than sharing individually as would be common in an analytically based group. The sessions are largely intended to encourage self-exploration, creativity and integration of new experiences.

More recently, Diane Waller (1993) writes that interactive group art therapy involves using both group interaction and the art process as therapeutic material for the group. The interactive model of group therapy encourages members to interact, and to become "...aware of the symbolic, metaphoric messages arising both from the images and the relationships among members themselves" (pp. 40-41).

In this section the role of art in group therapy becomes more evident; as the process of making art bridges the gap between inner and outer experiences, so does group art therapy join individual and group needs, concerns and issues. In fact, in many ways the art process experienced in a group environment creates a forum to explore common conflicts between inner and outer experiences of the world, both verbally and visually.

Like interactive group therapy, art therapy in a group setting encourages group cohesion and interpersonal learning through sharing materials, techniques, and finished art products. In my first paper (Roy, 1998), Between two worlds: The therapeutic uses of art appreciation, I argue that the artwork provides here and now material for the group to work with. I contend that looking at and sharing verbally about art encourages members to share their subjective experiences with one another, and to relate to the perspectives of others.

Similarly, Shaun McNiff (1991) writes that, "...people are often unaccustomed to meditating on images and expressing to others what they experience" (p. 97), and tend to assume that there is one right way to interpret images. Thus sharing images collectively allows members to explore how their perceptions differ and agree, and come to see that their experiences are both unique and yet similar to those of others.

4. Working With Children in a Group Setting: *Special considerations*

While many of the issues presented thus far are relevant to group psychotherapy with children, we will contemplate special considerations of clinical work with this population.

Historical Overview

Paul Kymissis and David Halperin (1996) confirm my own conclusions that there is little available literature on group therapy with children. Accordingly, I found Group therapy with children and adolescents, edited by Kymissis and Halperin (1996) to be the most relevant and concise source of information about group psychotherapy with children.

Kymissis (1996) writes that while it seems obvious that group therapy is ideal for the developing child, who is struggling to find her place in the world, there is an inexplicable shortage of research on the topic of child group therapy.

Despite the importance of group process as a central aspect of the individual's transitions, psychotherapy for children and adolescents is seen in primarily individual terms. The therapist attempts to replicate a parenting situation that might have been or should have been, without recognizing that after the child's entry into schooling, the group plays an increasing role in maturation. (Kymissis, 1996, p. xvii)

In the same text, Irvin Kraft (1996) traces group psychotherapeutic work with children back to the early years of the twentieth century. Kraft writes that while there appears to be little or no literature on group psychotherapy for children before the late thirties, there were recorded instances of group psychotherapy with children before this

time.

In 1909, for example, Moreno implemented an early form of psychodrama with groups of children. Moreno apparently went on to form a children's 'theatre for spontaneity' in 1911. Similarly, in the 1930s Bender and Woltman published some of the earliest research on their work in group psychotherapy with children in hospitals in which they used puppet shows and art activities as therapeutic devices (Kraft, 1996).

Kraft (1996) reports that according to his research, the mid-forties mark an increase in articles on psychologically based observations and treatment of children and adolescents in groups. He names Hewitt and Gildea (1946) and Margolis (1946) who targeted children in summer camps, and Redl (1944) and Bollinger (1945) who worked with children in community centers.

By the seventies group therapy approaches were being implemented in schools to help children with learning disabilities, to offer counseling, and to develop preventative mental health activities. Much of this work involved short-term work stressing behavior modification. Kraft (1996) writes that since then literature on group psychotherapy has waned.

More recently, interest has reawakened in the face of major cutbacks to most forms of health services and an increasing demand for affordable therapeutic services. Kraft (1996) cautions that while our growing interest in group therapy may allow group psychotherapy for children to mature as a field, we must not allow economics to govern the use of group psychotherapy. Thus, children should be included in therapy groups only if their personal strengths and individual needs warrant it.

Referrals for Group Therapy

Frances Prokofiev (1998) suggests that while the reasons for referring children for group therapy are much the same as for adults, there are at least five additional reasons to refer children to art therapy: 1) art promotes creativity and playfulness, allowing more inhibited children to feel stimulated. 2) The examples of others may encourage less integrated children to become more productive and imaginative. 3) Group work allows children to be part of a collective "...with its own culture, which is dependent on the contribution of all its members..." (p. 51). 4) Children who have achieved some social autonomy are more open to feedback from their peers. 5) The group creates a stronger container for children's projections of repressed feelings of hostility.

Robin Goodman (1998), who promotes the use of art therapy in working with children in group situations, lists five main uses of art in group therapy with children: 1) art used for assessment. 2) Art used to establish an alliance or therapeutic relationship. 3) Art used to help the child to verbalize feelings and conflicts. 4) Art used to help the child deal with unconscious material via symbolic means. 5) Art used to develop the children's other interests, thus improving psychosocial development.

Role of the Therapist Working with Children

Play therapist Ginott (1961) focuses on the role of the therapist working with children. He suggests that the main role of the therapist is to create an atmosphere that encourages children to wonder about themselves and the world. From this perspective, the main function of the adult is to encourage the child to feel safe enough to explore her environment unselfconsciously. This is achieved by maintaining an attitude that makes the child feel unconditionally accepted and safe. This view paints a portrait of the group

therapist as a parental figure that can be depended on and trusted.

Art therapist Edith Kramer (1959) cautions that while the personality and beliefs of the therapist will certainly influence the group, "...actual leadership, the emergence of styles and trends originates among the children". Yet, it is also important that the group has a sense of structure; "without any structure, communication becomes impossible. The individual is isolated and helpless and easily regresses" (p. 51). Thus the task of the art therapist is to create a space where there is potential for self-expression, and sufficient feelings of containment.

Hilde Meyerhoff (1977), writing during the same period as Kramer, also describes group art therapy work with latency-age children. Like Kramer, she finds that children need a certain amount of guidance in group situations. She goes on to postulate that despite the necessity for structure, the children's personal sense of self-expression and growth do not seem adversely affected. "In a group setting, even when a subject is given and the art therapist does not interpret, the child unconsciously portrays his own problem, works on his own problem, and solves his own problem" (p. 135).

Corroborating the views of Kramer (1959) and Meyerhoff (1977), Prokofiev (1998) writes on the subject: "Because children have weaker defenses than adults and regress more quickly, the art therapist (like the psychotherapist) has to be more active when running groups for children and provide more structure" (p. 66).

Thus, in terms of group therapy for children it is more widely accepted that the therapist takes on an active role and that therapy sessions are structured rather than self-directive. For this reason, therapists actively participating with children must create a fine balance between providing direction and structure and offering freedom for self-

expression and exploration.

Ann Cattanach (1998) cautions that it is crucial for therapists working actively with children, acknowledge their own preconceptions and constructions of childhood, and consider the diversity of childhood experiences. She cautions that the Western portrayal of childhood is not universal; and it is important that we as adults - parents, therapists, and others working with or interacting with children - recognize that children's experiences are various and diverse.

Efficacy of Group Therapy for Children

Play therapist Haim Ginott (1961), whose ideas seem applicable to group art therapy with children as well, writes that the efficacy of group therapy for children can be evaluated according to whether the method facilitates or hinders the establishment of a therapeutic relationship; whether it promotes or encumbers the evocation of catharsis; whether it helps or obstructs the attainment of insight; whether it improves or diminishes opportunities for reality testing; and finally, whether it opens or blocks opportunities for sublimation.

Considering all of these issues in relation to his own practical experiences working with children in activity based therapy groups, Ginott (1961) writes that:

1) Group therapy seems to facilitate the establishment of an alliance between the therapist and each child. He suggests that individual therapy can be threatening at first and that the group context can ease the anxiety of participants and may in fact speed-up group formation and cohesion.

Similarly, Rubin (1987) writes, "...some children, for example, are painfully self-conscious when alone with an adult; often they have lost faith in grownups, but are still

optimistic about trusting peers” (p. 172).

Ginott (1961) further suggests that the role of identification is crucial to the therapeutic process in group work. Group experiences allow each member to experience relationships with a number of others; thus, “...in addition to an accepting and respecting parent surrogate, the group also offers the patients other identification models” (p. 4). (In the case study portion of this paper we will further explore the role of identification in child development during the latency period).

2) Ginott (1961) stresses that catharsis is always grounded in relationship. If the group members feel safe and there is mutual trust in the therapist at least, children feel free to regress and to relive and express early environmental failures.

3) Ginott (1961) indicates that self-knowledge is developed through relationships with others. He writes that even in a group where no interpretation is used, members are building a repertoire of adaptive responses to the world learned through group experiences. “Through growth in inner security, children acquire a keener awareness of themselves and of their relations to the significant persons in their lives. This insight is frequently derivative and non-verbal and attained without the aid of interpretations and explanations” (p. 10).

4) Ginott (1961) points out that unlike individual therapy, group experiences provide a tangible social setting for discovery and experimentation with different modes of interacting. “The group constitutes a milieu where new social techniques can be tested in terms of reality mastery and inter-individual relationships” (p. 11). He suggests that, by its very nature, group therapy ties therapeutic experience with everyday life.

5) Ginott (1961) writes that activity oriented group therapy allows members to

teach each other to employ a variety of materials and to engage in a variety of activities that thus increase each member's choice of sublimatory outlets.

Ginott's (1961) ideas clearly promote the use of activity based group therapy for working with children. Like play therapy, art therapy invites children to explore their inner world through outward expressions. Rubin (1987) writes, "...there is a close relationship between art and play: playfulness is often part of a creative process, and, there is much artistry in good play therapy" (p. 295).

Art Therapy in Schools

Another issue only briefly mentioned is this paper deserves further mention and possibly points to future directions in art therapy research. As was suggested by Schank and Childers (1988), school children are in need of creative experiences, opportunities for self-expression, and group experiences to grow and develop as individuals and as members of society. Similarly, "...the importance of using the art process in the communication of the inner world of the child is central to our work in art therapy" (Case & Dalley, 1990, p. 1).

In the same text, Tessa Dalley (1990) explores the use of art therapy in a school setting based on her experiences using art therapy in an urban elementary school. Dalley argues that art therapy practiced within the school can facilitate, and work in conjunction with, educational processes. For example, in art therapy the art materials provide a concrete medium with which to express oneself; "...and can be a central means of working with the child's emotional needs to help the achievement of learning potential" (p. 161).

Dalley (1990) contends that with the advent of re-integrating children with special

needs back into main stream classrooms, art therapy can be of further service within the education system. She stresses that while teachers are equipped to deal with special learning needs they do not have the time or experience to address emotional and behavioral difficulties in any depth.

Thus children with emotional and behavioral difficulties that cannot be addressed in the classroom can be referred to an ongoing art therapy program within the school. In practical terms, the child being referred to group therapy during class time has a break from the classroom environment and can express herself more freely and perhaps return to the classroom more able to work. Conversely, the other children in the classroom have a break from the child who is possibly disruptive or drains the teacher's energy (Dalley, 1990).

Furthermore, my own experience running art therapy groups with children implies to me that making art in a group setting promotes learning, creative problem solving, cooperation, self-direction, self-esteem and improves attention span, motivation and social skills.

Conclusion: *Summing up of a theoretical overview*

Before moving on to the group case study, let us review what has transpired within these pages thus far. In the theoretical portion of this paper I have focused on psychoanalysis, social psychology and social construction theory to illuminate issues of 'self' and 'other' which I postulate to be key to many difficulties that cause people to seek therapy.

I also reviewed historical and contemporary theories leading to and about group psychotherapy, art therapy and more specifically, children in group therapy. During this process I examined various theories concerning identity, self-esteem and empathy that emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationships, and the individual's subjective mediation between inner and outer experiences. Remaining faithful to my interests as a novice art therapist, I also looked at theories of creativity and its impact on the individual's development of identity, self-esteem and empathy.

I then explored literature pertaining to issues of self-identity and the role of the self and other dichotomy, and attempted to illustrate how such ideas have led to the development of a social constructionist perspective of self in terms of relationship between inner and outer experience.

Having established a foundation for understanding group dynamics, I offer a theoretical exploration of group psychotherapy. More specifically I focus on interactive group therapy and group art therapy, in terms of interpersonal understanding, interactions, and integration of inner and outer experience.

Finally, I focus on research pertaining to children and group therapies in which I stress the role of art therapy in schools. With recent cutbacks and radical changes to

school curriculum and environmental conditions for learning across the Western world, the question remains, how can art therapists remain in or even enter the school system and continue working with children and their families?

5. Case Study- *Part One*

Methodology

Having reviewed qualitative theoretical research, I now turn to my own practical experiences co-leading an art therapy group with children. For this section I draw from my practicum experiences as a student art therapist working on an outpatient child psychiatry unit this past year. The group ran for a total of seven months, which I divide into two parts, as there was an extended holiday break at the midpoint in the group's life.

In part one of the case study, I begin by describing the setting I worked in and the population I worked with; this includes an important section on developmental considerations. I also offer a description of my approach to group therapy, as well as my impressions of the group's overall process.

In part two of the case study I focus on three activities which took place during the second half of the group sessions. My aim is to highlight how group art therapy helped the boys I worked with to better mediate inner and outer experiences by developing a more cohesive sense of identity and self-esteem, and to begin relating and empathizing with others.

Throughout the case study I will rely heavily on the process notes I wrote after each session, in which I focused on two main aspects of therapy: Interactions and responses between members, and interactions between members and the art materials and art products.

While I separate the interrelational dynamics of the group from the art process, these two spheres of experience often interweave and should not be understood as mutually exclusive. "...When approaching therapy through art in a group context, one is

taking advantage of the potency of both art and the group” (Rubin, 1984).

My experiences, both as a member of art groups and as a student art therapist, lead me to believe that all interactions with the environment involve relating and responding to others. While group therapy offers the opportunity for members to relate to one another in the here-and-now, the art therapy process further encourages relating to one’s artwork as “other” as well. Similarly, art therapist Shaun McNiff (1992) writes, “...the image gathers people together around a common focus” (p. 59).

As group dynamics are rather elusive and difficult to describe, like Bion (1959) I feel compelled to offer a subjective account of my group experiences as my contribution to research into group therapies.

Environment

The art therapy group took place once a week for one hour at a day treatment center situated on a child psychiatry unit of a large metropolitan hospital. The unit is staffed with a team psychiatrist, a family psychologist, a social worker, and several childcare specialists, therapists, nurses and special needs educators. The program is designed according to a behavioral model; thus structure and social learning are highly valued by staff.

The group took place in a large multi-purpose room with a storage closet for art materials. Several large folding tables were available, including two, which were pushed together in the center of the room to create a communal meeting point. As the room is used for various activities throughout the day, there was little available wall space and nothing could remain in the room after the group had left.

Population

The children admitted to the hospital program attend classes and various forms of therapy but remain outpatients. The children range in ages from seven to twelve years, and generally attend the hospital program for seven months to a year. They are referred to the hospital program by their school principals, their parents or guardians, or the Department of Youth Protection (DYP). The children referred to the program are often considered to have high stress factors at home, and to be unable to function productively or appropriately in school. Many are also considered at high risk for school dropout, running away, or hurting themselves and/or others.

Most of the children referred have poor relationships with others at home and at school, and are not performing well in school. Hence, these children are often low in self-esteem but have well-honed defensive strategies for dealing with the world. All the children on the unit see individual and family therapists as well as attending group therapies; this intensive approach attempts to support and help the entire family unit.

Developmental Considerations

Referring back to Freud, the children I worked with all fall into what he terms the 'latency period' of development. Freud believed that children in the latency period of psychosexual development have outgrown the 'phallic period', during which oedipal conflicts such as the young child's desire to win his mother's love by replacing his father, were poignant. Successfully resolving these urges allows the child to identify more fully with his parents, and later with others. "The sexual traumas of the phallic stage are forgotten, and all available libido is channeled into socially acceptable activities..." (Shaffer, 1994, p. 45).

Freud believed that identification is a psychological mechanism through which a

person adopts the attitudes, beliefs and behavior of other people. He believed that once children successfully resolve oedipal conflicts, they are able to identify with their same-sex parent more positively and thus begin to develop gender-roles, and to accept and reflect social norms (Shaffer, 1994).

Turning to Erikson's (Shaffer, 1994) theory of development, the children I worked with should be in the midst of the fourth of eight crises we all apparently face in life. This phase, called 'industry versus inferiority', also begins at the age of six and ends at around twelve years old. Children entering this stage have come to understand that resolving conflicts between their need to fulfill urges and the need to be loved by their parents often comes with some feelings of guilt. Successful resolution of such conflicts will allow the child to retain a sense of initiative and yet learn to respect the rights of others; the process of socialization is thus fully under way.

According to Erikson, the child in the 'industry versus inferiority' stage has entered the school environment, and begins to compare himself to others and hopes to be successful and productive in his school environment. Teachers and peers become significant social agents as children begin to grapple with issues of self-identity and social roles, and seek validation of their existence (Shaffer, 1994).

Williams & Wood (1977) describe the development of behavior, communication, socialization, and academics (or thinking) of children in the latency period, which they believe culminate in the formation of self-image and self-esteem.

During the early years of schooling, children must move from being members of their families to members of a peer group. This transition involves an expansion of the child's world to include identifying with other people, accepting that one is both an

individual and a member of a group, and valuing oneself as a significant member of a group. Thus the child begins the long process of individuation from his parent(s) and comes to distinguish between peers and authority figures (Williams & Woods, 1977, p. 77).

Children in this developmental phase are beginning to understand the relationship between feelings and behavior and are able to better regulate impulsivity, to interact socially and talk about their experiences. They are apt to participate spontaneously in group situations, and to yield personal will to the group as a whole. Conversely, as the child begins to develop the ability to identify with others, his sense of self awareness also improves and he begins to value a potential or ideal self as well as exploring his 'real' self (Williams & Wood, 1977).

Children between the ages of six and twelve move from the "schematic stage" of symbol formation, and are approaching "dawning realism". The schematic stage is typically characterized by linear drawings along a single ground line; forms tend to be stereotypical and are repeated. The same pattern may develop different meanings for the child, as his concepts may become more complex than his skills in expressing them (Williams & Wood, 1977).

Dawning realism begins when the child's skills and cognitive awareness of his abilities have developed and producing representational images becomes increasingly important. "At this point, inability to make it look 'right' is a frequent problem for children" (Williams & Wood, 1977, p. 80).

My Approach and Overview of the Art Therapy Group

As a student completing my last year practicum, I was assigned a co-leader and a

group of boys all aged between ten and twelve whom functioned as a group throughout the day. The seven boys came from diverse backgrounds, neighborhoods, and schools.

While my co-leader and I ran the group together, I was responsible for designing and implementing art therapy activities. My co-leader, a psychiatric nurse and counselor, focused on addressing behavioral difficulties the children might be having, and maintaining general rules of conduct set by the program's mandate; she sometimes participated in the activities as well.

In my approach to group therapy, I begin by assessing the dependency level of the group to gauge the level of participation I will engage in as a leader. Believing strongly in the work of Irvin Yalom (1985) and Diane Waller (1993), I feel that the group can heal itself through the creation of mutually satisfying relationships and emotionally corrective experiences via group interactions and the creative process.

Yet practically, I also believe that individuals have different needs, as do groups as a whole. While I strive to encourage autonomy and self-direction in groups of which I am a part, I feel that it is necessary for me to take an active role at times. This seems especially true working with children who have not yet developed the tools to be self-directive or socially effective.

Most of my interventions in the group presented here were geared toward facilitating interactions between members, and between individuals and their artwork as well as the artwork of others. I tended to emphasize group decision-making, interpersonal learning, and encouraged a sense of community.

My co-leader, on the other hand, came from a behavioral school of thought and focused on directly helping members adjust behaviors that were deemed inappropriate.

While our two approaches were not always compatible, we eventually established a rhythm of working together that involved separating the activities into structured and non-structured activity-time.

While my co-leader and I were active in encouraging sharing and a sense of community in the group, I feel that our direction as a collective was a joint venture with the children.

The first three months of the group were quite unstable and it was difficult to sustain feelings of trust or continuity in the group. Although technically the group met once a week, many school holidays and other program cancellations caused the group to meet virtually every second week for the first half of the sessions.

Furthermore, there was a significantly high level of turnover in the group, as some members graduated from the program or were discharged for other reasons. Waller (1993) writes, "...[an] anti-therapeutic element which could apply to any group is premature termination of members caused by external pressures..." (p. 33).

Unfortunately this was often the case for members of this group; children were occasionally discharged from the program suddenly, usually due to violent behavior on the part of the child, or the parents' lack of cooperation with program regulations. During the second half of the sessions, the group membership stabilized at six boys, who spent a total of four school days together as a group.

During early sessions the children seemed to experience performance anxiety and were critical of one another's artwork; in response I suggested experimental projects that focused on process rather than product, and I modeled ways of responding verbally to the artwork of others. Over time, the group seemed to evolve from an experientially-based

activity group to a more analytically-based group, as members grew to know one another and to achieve a sense of trust in themselves and one another, in the co-therapists, and the therapeutic process itself.

Consistent with Bion's (1959) and Yalom's (1985) descriptions of group development, the group seemed to go through a series of stages. During early sessions, members seemed to feel dependent on the leaders and on outwardly imposed structure. Later members seemed more rebellious towards the leaders and, similarly to what Schultz describes as the "top or bottom stage" (cited in Yalom, 1985), they seemed increasingly competitive towards one another.

In time, exploring group conflicts through discussion and creative art exploration seemed to culminate in a growing sense of cohesion in the group. While members continued to have altercations between themselves and with the leaders, they were able to work through these processes as a group.

The children seemed to develop a more satisfying vocabulary for talking about art and about their feelings and opinions; sharing insights about the artworks produced seemed to become increasingly important to the children. Accordingly, the group shifted from focusing on process and experimentation to exploring meaningful and pertinent issues in the group and in their individual lives.

The termination process was quite difficult for the group as a whole; most of the children seemed ambivalent about their discharge from the hospital program to return to their regular schools. My impression was that the month-long break during the middle period of the group's life, as well as the high rate of turnover, seemed to cause members to feel more anxious and dependent and may have triggered an early shift into the

termination process. While, arguably, all groups exist with the nagging reminder that it will one day end; in this group the fear of separation sometimes seemed to covertly permeate the group's experiences.

Case Study- Part two

The activities presented here were not designed to gather evidence for this research paper, but are none-the-less offered as a cluster of experiences in group art therapy that, I hope, shed some light on the complexity of group dynamics and therapeutic processes. I also offer the reproductions of the children's artwork as their contribution to the case study presented here.

My underlying goals during the sessions presented was to improve self-concept and self-esteem in members; to encourage a sense of community; and to offer children opportunities to relate to and empathize with one another.

Individual Progress and The Artwork

For the first activity, presented soon after the holiday break, I suggested that everyone begin by writing their initials on an 8 x 11 sheet of paper; then continue by filling in the negative spaces with things, shapes or colors that represented something about them. (These drawings are not presented as they contain images that may threaten the privacy of the participants.)

My intention in introducing this project was to begin guiding the group towards greater self-exploration. While during the first half of sessions we focused more on experimenting with media and on offering constructive verbal feedback to one another, I felt that the group as a whole seemed more cohesive and accepting, and that members were ready to delve more into intrapersonal and interpersonal explorations.

Carl.

'Carl' was a popular boy in the group and on the unit; while he seemed to experience difficulty controlling his temper, he was well-spoken and often offered

insightful opinions and observations. He seemed to have a lot of nervous energy and developed several small body tics during the course of his enrollment in the program.

Carl lived with his mother and younger brother and saw his father only occasionally; such visits were apparently strained as Carl harbors resentment towards his father for not remaining with the family. His mother describes Carl as her 'best friend' and admits that she expects a lot from him at home. Although Carl seemed close to his brother and worried about his welfare, the two often fought and sometimes became verbally aggressive with one another.

Not long after the conception of the group, Carl seemed to take a leading role in forming group norms. He tended to be outspoken but supportive of group members, with a dramatic flair for sharing stories and ideas. Behind this boy's mature and independent attitude seemed to lurk a lonely and insecure individual with many responsibilities at home and a keen need for support and validation.

During early sessions Carl often seemed to approach art as a skill-testing activity. He often attempted drawing 'realistically', but seemed to feel discouraged easily despite the group's support of his drawing skills. Later he seemed less negative about his work, but also seemed to take fewer risks and to invest less in his process.

My impression was that Carl tended to undervalue his abilities and to underestimate himself in order to avoid disappointment in his final product, and by extension, disappointment in himself. As was suggested by Ehrenzweig (Case & Dalley, 1993), when one interacts creatively with materials, an interplay occurs between one's experience of an inner imagined object and one's perception of the actual outer object created. This process can be experienced as a clashing of two worlds, causing one to feel

fragmented and disillusioned; eventually, with acceptance of the ‘actual’ object, one has developed the ego strength to imagine a future self.

For these reasons, I tried to encourage Carl to push his ideas and to really grapple with the materials. I felt that if Carl could ameliorate his relationship with his own art productions, his relationships would also improve and his self-esteem would grow accordingly.

Activity 1- Carl

After drawing his initials in accordance with the first activity, Carl drew a large basketball and then a large basketball hoop that does not seem quite big enough for the ball; these two objects were familiar icons in Carl’s work. While drawing he stressed the importance of getting the lines on the basketball just right.

Jay

‘Jay’, another member of the group, had lived in an orphanage until the age of four when a middle-aged couple with an adolescent daughter adopted him. His relationships with his mother and sister seemed strained and conflictual; while they sometimes seemed to be over-protective of Jay, other times they seemed overly critical of him. Jay’s adoptive father seemed more accepting of Jay but was often away on business and spent little time with him.

Jay was a complex boy who seemed to have little sense of identity and tended to respond defensively towards others. While he seemed eager to please adults and peers alike, he tended to boast and tell extravagant stories and developed a reputation for being untrustworthy. He was often treated poorly by peers in the group, who perhaps unconsciously identified him as a threat to the group’s potential.

From a theoretical perspective, Bion (1959) suggests that groups often develop a collective need for an identified threat to the life of the group; thus group members will sometimes project unwanted or threatening feelings onto one specific member. With time Jay was able to overcome this reputation and became a more cohesive member.

Activity 1- Jay

For the first activity, Jay created two elaborate figures that seem to be interacting. The first figure has a long arm that stretches behind the second character, and is holding a circular orange object- later identified as a basketball. The two seem to be tilting toward each other but are looking in opposite directions; and both seem to bear some form of protection. While the first figure has a rectangular grid-like shape above his features like a hat, the second figure has red spikes protruding from its head as seen in profile.

The background of the image is then filled in with various specks from colored markers. Interestingly, this was the first image Jay made that involved two characters. This drawing seemed to mark Jay's dawning but ambivalent recognition of the importance of relationships. The inclusion of a basketball may have been a reflection of Jay's desire to fit in as all the other members, without exception, drew sports equipment in the negative spaces of their drawings.

Don

'Don', lived with his mother, stepfather, older sister and younger brother; he visited his biological father every second weekend. Don seemed unusually close to his mother yet estranged from all other members of his family. He tended to act competitively towards his siblings for his mother's attention, yet seemed to resent his mother for being so close. Don did not get along with his stepfather and claimed that he

behaved aggressively towards Don and his siblings.

Don tended to be hostile and competitive towards his peers during early sessions but sometimes showed the capacity to relate to and sympathize with the feelings of others. While during early sessions he seemed sarcastic towards everyone and spoke to me deliberately like a three-year-old, later he seemed to feel less threatened in the group and became an active and supportive member.

While Don acted tough and spoke his mind, he seemed quite dependent on the attention of others and tended to hoard art materials, finding sharing difficult. This behavior seemed reflective of his interactions with siblings at home as he tended to compete for his mother's attention. In time, he came to wait his turn during verbal sharing, and divided materials evenly between members at the start of sessions; accordingly, the maintenance of group rules became important to him. While Don's social skills and sense of self-awareness seemed to be improving during the course of the group, his family situation continued to worsen and his attendance slackened.

Activity 1- Don

For the first activity Don also drew a basketball and hoop, like most of the members he seemed influenced by Carl's lead. Comparatively, Don's drawing seems more awkward; the basketball is more oval than round and has the words, 'NBA ROCKS' written on it in black letters. The hoop is smaller and densely marked with crisscrossing brown lines. A hockey stick is positioned between the two letters as though holding up the first letter.

My sense was that while Carl approached art as a skill testing activity with which to measure his own worth, Don felt more concerned with getting a message across than in

improving or testing his drawing skills.

In terms of relationships, Carl and Don's objects are all clearly separated from one another, creating a sense of compartmentalization. Jay's drawing, on the other hand, is more fragmented and depicts people rather than objects. This seems to imply that while Don and Carl rely heavily on intellectualization and structure to make sense of the world, Jay's sense of relationships is more fragmented and affective in nature.

During sharing time the boys compared interests and seemed to bond while talking about sports teams and famous players. In contrast to earlier sessions, it seemed clear that the information offered in the images was more important to the boys than the aesthetic or technical qualities of the artwork.

For the second activity, I suggested that children use large paper bags and construction materials to create a puppet, mask or other expression of how they see themselves. Once completed, children were asked to represent on the other side of the bag how they would like to be. This activity was based on an article by Evelyn Virshup (1975) who worked with latency age children and attempted to teach socialization skills through art.

Activity 2- Carl

Carl seemed particularly talkative and fidgeted restlessly in his chair during sharing time at the start of the session. During the activity he chose to stand while he drew, and talked to others as he worked. Despite his apparent lack of focus, he seemed to relish the thought of creating a powerful image of himself (figure 1). Interestingly, while this figure- later identified as a body builder- is muscular looking, his arms are quite short and his hands are small, perhaps indicating repressed feelings of powerlessness. Carl

stressed the height of the body-builder by drawing a measuring stick on the right side of the figure, and added the pipe cleaners later. This seemed to indicate Carl's wish to be a grown-up; in fact he often stressed his desire to be a successful and independent athlete.

While drawing the second figure (figure 2), Carl seemed increasingly agitated, and it seemed obvious that something was troubling him; yet he continued to talk animatedly with the others while drawing. While it seemed possible that Carl felt anxious about the nature of the theme I suggested, he seemed clearly disturbed about something outside the group. Although not discussed in the group, I was aware that Carl's mother was in hospital and I suspected that Carl was worried about her.

The second figure seems far more distorted than the first; rather than muscular, the character (a basketball player) looks obese. After drawing this figure Carl seemed to laugh self-deprecatingly, saying that the character looked like a fat lady. At this point he began to add pipe cleaners on top of his drawings; to me the pipe cleaners seemed to provide protection for the characters, and by extension, protection for him.

Carl did not share verbally about his artwork, instead, while others were sharing he persisted in making distracting sounds until the co-leader confronted him and a heated argument ensued. The other members and I watched in stunned silence, and the session ended without resolution. Tension had been brewing between the co-leader and Carl from the start of the group and seemed to come to a head during this activity. Interestingly, after this incident the relationship between the co-leader and Carl seemed to improve; my sense was that both had become enmeshed in their own transference and counter-transference process.

Subsequently in the following session the co-leader and I recalled this incident

and the group discussed feelings and concerns broached by the dispute; my co-leader shared with group members that she felt she had acted inappropriately and apologized for losing her temper. I encouraged members to voice their concerns and shared that I had felt unsettled myself during the incident. It is difficult to say to what extent this altercation affected the group's sense of safety, but it was my feeling that the group had become cohesive enough to sustain a breach of this magnitude.

Activity 2- Jay

For the second activity, Jay began by drawing an entire figure with a large flat head and a short squat body (figure 3). The figure has large eyes and wears glasses (interestingly, while Jay does not wear glasses, both the leaders of this group do); there is no evident gender-identity and the figure appears to be wearing a lab coat, perhaps indicating an authority figure. Jay drew a large red area where the bag folds over, creating a mouth that opens and shuts like a puppet. The line and dots running down the center of the figure's body may represent coat buttons, but also seem reminiscent of sutures.

At this point Jay seemed to look up for the first time to see what others were doing; many were making masks instead of puppets and had cut off the lower part of the bag. None of them had used the flap where the bag folds as a mouth as Jay had, and many were using pipe cleaners.

As though deciding to imitate the others midway through his work, he cut the body of his own puppet in half, removing the hands and legs. Then he taped the large mouth he had made shut, and seemed to make another mouth by cutting a strip out of the bag in an upward curving semi-circle. He then attached two joined pipe cleaners creating

what seems to be a three-dimensional extension of the mouth. Finally, Jay cut out the eyes of the figure, creating a fragmented and fragile end product. Interestingly, each transition of this work involved removing something and adding something else. For me, this process seemed to represent Jay's struggle with irreconcilable tensions between a desire to express himself and an equally urgent need to fit in.

Based on my observations and understanding of Jay, his process seemed to perfectly reflect his desire to gain admiration and acceptance by taking on the creative styles and characteristics of others. Although similar to identification, Jay's attempts to imitate others seemed based on a need to replace others rather than be like them. In this way, Jay seemed to struggle with oedipal conflicts, indicating that he had not successfully resolved this developmental stage.

Having invested most of the available time in the first figure, Jay quickly reused the eyes he had cut away from the first figure, and glued them down on the other side of the bag (figure 4). The effect is a rather disturbing face with large staring eyes and a gaping mouth. My feeling was that this was how Jay truly experienced himself- empty and with little sense of identity. Like Carl, he chose not to share about his artwork verbally, seeming to respond to Carl's frustration and the group's general sense of tension over a dispute between Carl and the co-leader.

Activity 2- Don

Don seemed quite invested in making his mask but worked slowly and often asked me for help. My impression was that Don was accustomed to competing for the attention of adults, but did not actually need assistance. With encouragement Don always seemed open to experimenting and developed a playful attitude towards making art.

For this activity Don cut a paper bag in half, deciding to make a mask, and used pipe cleaners and tape to create a face complete with swirling black and white eyes, a silver mouth and six wide protruding teeth (figure 5). He explained with a big, somewhat false looking smile on his face reminding me of the mask, that this character was 'mad' and represented how he would like to be, rather than who he is.

He created the second face on the other side of the bag very quickly using scissors and tearing pieces away to create holes for eyes and a nose (figure 6). While the first figure seems all mouth, the second has no mouth at all and seems strangely anonymous. Don said this one represented how he actually is and he put on the mask to show how we could still see his features.

During discussion, Don was asked to elaborate on these two masks. Some members seemed skeptical about Don's representation of how he would like to be, which implied that he wanted to be angry. Don explained that being angry was better than being sad like he actually feels. While Don did not elaborate, it seemed evident that members were aware of his difficulties at home and related to his feelings of sadness and anger in silence. Like Don, many of the children seemed to feel that they were improving since their admission to the program, but felt that their family situations were not changing at the same speed. While these feelings seemed understandable they also implied that the children were all experiencing difficulty individuating from their parents.

We took this opportunity to talk about feelings generated by tensions between personal needs and family situations. The co-leader stressed to the children that while it is difficult to accept and sustain personal triumphs when other members of our families continue in old patterns of relating, it is important to realize that one is also a individual

with personal needs and potential for growth.

For the third and final activity to be presented here, I distributed large sheets of blue construction paper pre-cut in a circle. I suggested that children use magazine cut outs and other collage materials to fill the circle with things that expressed something about themselves. Once completed, the children were given large sheets of white paper and were asked to glue their circular collages in the center.

It was suggested to them that while the circle represented them, the framing square of paper could represent their environment. We talked a bit about different places people could live and the children's responses seemed to indicate a preference for imaginary or unusual places, so instead the group decided to create imaginary environments where they would feel safe and happy. This shift in theme seemed to indicate growing feeling of group cohesion and sense of autonomy, and I welcomed the children's suggestions.

Many types of materials were available for this activity and I proposed that some members could work on the wall. These mixed media projects took three sessions to complete and were then all hung together and appreciated collectively.

At the start of this activity, the boys immediately began arguing over the two sports magazines available, and nothing much seemed to be accomplished. This behavior seemed to testify to an underlying feeling of competition in the group, but may have also reflected anxiety caused by the more personal nature of the activity.

The boys seemed to be bonding over the topic of sports, as had occurred previously, and seemed increasingly independent of the leaders. My sense was that while the boys' growing sense of independence from the adults was an age-appropriate attitude

that promotes individuation and self-motivation, members also seemed to be testing the therapeutic frame and the co-leaders. The next session, members seemed more focused and cooperative.

Activity 3- Carl

Carl began with some sports images, but eventually only glued one of them down on his blue circle. He then chose images of animals, a car, a flashlight and a camera. This was the first piece Carl made that did not feature sports exclusively; and seemed to indicate a less defensive stance (figure 7). My co-leader, on the other hand, felt that Carl had chosen these objects randomly and so felt that he was continuing to respond defensively to the activity.

While at first Carl seemed excited by the prospect of drawing his imaginary place, he seemed to grow rapidly disinterested and quickly finished his drawing ahead of the others. My feeling was that Carl again feared that his drawing would not live up to his expectations, and so preferred not to try. When I asked Carl about his apparent lack of investment in his art process, he denied that he was disinterested in the activity, and accused me of undervaluing his work and of suggesting boring projects. This seemed clearly to be a projection of his own feelings of inadequacy, but I respected his opinion and suggested that he do another activity of his choice. Carl refused this suggestion, but seemed invested in helping others with their collages, offering creative and useful feedback.

While many of the sources presented in the section on group art therapy suggest that art activities allow the client individual time for self-needs (Case & Dalley, 1993; Williams, 1977), Carl seemed to prefer to immerse himself in the group process to avoid

such an encounter with himself. Unlike the other boys, Carl seemed more comfortable in group situations than during individual tasks.

Carl may have also felt overwhelmed by his influential role in the group and by the self-reflective and revelatory nature of the explorations I was encouraging in the group. A final possibility is that Carl was testing the structured approach we had adopted, and perhaps resented my directives. His relationships with authority figures were often strained and he seemed to shift from idolizing teachers and therapists on the unit to verbally abusing them in the hallway. This seemed to indicate that Carl was struggling to accept his emotional ambivalence, but continued to judge himself and others as unconditionally 'good' or 'bad'.

Jay, who had been 'hovering' around Carl all session then placed a sticker he had earned in the classroom that day on the lower right hand area of Carl's collage. If one looks carefully one can see that Carl responded to Jay's gesture by drawing a shark jumping out of the water and aimed at the figure on the sticker. While Carl outwardly claimed to enjoy Jay's attention and obvious idolization, Carl's shark may indicate more covert feelings in response to Jay's violation of Carl's personal boundaries.

During sharing time, Carl affirmed that he did in fact like cameras and flashlights and other black and shiny objects; he added that he also liked animals because they are cute. Another member of the group pointed out that Carl had not talked about the picture of a car almost in the center of the collage. This member suggested that Carl must like cars, to which he assented, explaining that he would like to have a car so he could be independent. The others agreed, listing places they could travel without their parents, and seemed to get quite excited about the possibilities. During this discussion the members

again seemed to bond over their mutual need to feel independent from adults and empowered by their peers. Underlying these grandiose fantasies seemed to be a collective sense of powerlessness and fear.

Activity 3- Jay

Jay chose to work on the wall facing Carl, and talked to him about basketball throughout; he seemed intent on establishing a relationship with Carl outside of the group, suggesting that Carl transfer to his school and join Jay's team.

Consistent with Bion's (1959) description of common group assumptions, a 'pairing' pattern seemed to develop between these two boys. Bion suggests that members in a group may form alliances designed to give them hope; "...the feelings thus associated in the pairing group are at the opposite pole to feelings of hatred, destructiveness, and despair..." (p. 151). Yet on the other hand, 'pairing' can be anti-therapeutic as "...responsibility gets delegated to two members in the hope that out of their union will arise the solution to everyone's problems" (p. 33).

In this group, while I felt that one-on-one interactions between members could be beneficial and offered good learning experience for these boys who seemed to share a difficulty in maintaining friendships, the pairing of Carl and Jay seemed potentially detrimental to everyone. While both boys clearly felt validated by their twinship, their respective self-growth seemed to stagnate and other members seemed to feel excluded. While my attempts to bring my observations to light were met by collusive denials from Carl and Jay, with time both boys seemed to move on while remaining supportive of each other.

For the last activity, Jay began by choosing sports images like the others, and

tended to behave competitively with others for the pictures. I reminded the group that this activity was a good opportunity to practice sharing and cooperation.

Perhaps compensating for the seeming rigidity of the group's ongoing theme, the co-leader began to point out interesting pictures of animals and nature. Jay seemed to respond to her suggestion, covering his previously glued images with a large two-page image of a pink flamingo. Then, like another boy Jay seemed to have developed a friendship with, he covered the other side of the circle with various pieces of fabric, creating a padded and colorful end product.

As with the puppet from the previous activity (figures 3 & 4), Jay's process seemed to reflect his attempts to imitate others at the cost of his own self-expressive needs. On the other hand, this piece seemed more solid and less fragmented than the puppet he had made previously.

In creating an environment around his circle, Jay drew a basketball and hoop and wrote his and Carl's names all over the surrounding surface (these are now covered to protect the identity of the members). While drawing he verbally acted out a competitive sounding game between himself and Carl in which he wins at the end.

During sharing time Jay said that he liked sports and animals and nature and all things. He seemed shy about showing the fabric-covered side of his circle, and said simply that he liked soft things. Other members contributed suggestions that Jay's collage seemed to suggest that he is creative and imaginative, but has difficulty making up his mind. The co-leader pointed out that many of the images are hidden from view, and that Jay seemed to base his choices on the interests of others.

Taking a more supportive stance to complement the more critical but equally

productive feedback offered him, I suggested that, like Jay himself, the flamingo in the center of the image needs a lot of space to move around and likes to be noticed. Jay agreed with this, saying that he wanted to be able to fly away. I suggested further that the padded side suggested that he also needed a warm and safe place to go afterwards.

Based on this image, it also seemed evident to the group that Jay felt competitively towards Carl, which broached a group discussion about friendship and competitiveness. Members could not agree as to whether or not it was appropriate to act competitively amongst friends. While the issue was not resolved, I realize in hindsight that members seemed to be grappling with one of the main themes of the dynamics of the group. Also, it seemed evident that black-and-white thinking made it difficult for the group to resolve such issues.

Activity 3- Don

During this activity Don worked quietly and seemed invested in making his collage. He chose from among a wide range of hockey pictures, as the others preferred basketball, and then spent a long time cutting out guns he found at the back of a sports magazine (figure 9). He seemed increasingly distant and angry, but managed to remain a cooperative member of the group. It seemed clear that Don's affect was related to family stresses at home. Another member became interested in the images of guns Don had found and together they read about the weapons and shared the pictures.

Note that while I felt uncomfortable with their choice of imagery, I did not feel it appropriate to censor their works, as this would inhibit the potential to discuss important issues as a group.

For his imaginary space Don decided on 'Candy Land' and said he would draw a

land made of candy. After carefully writing the words, he drew a candy cane and then began to carefully copy pictures of guns with a thick black marker; Don explained that in keeping with his theme, the guns were made of licorice. He seemed proud of his collage and wanted us to leave them all up on the wall for other children in the program to see. I suspect that Don thought others would find the weapons in his images exciting and quite daring; but also, approaching termination of the group may have inspired a desire to leave a mark behind in the room we had shared for seven months.

Don's subject matter seemed to clash between guns and candy, violence and play, dependency and rebellion. My feeling was that Don was struggling with a desire to regress, to remain an innocent child- not responsible for his own actions and personal growth; and yet also wanted to rebel and to feel powerful.

During verbal sharing of the images, members questioned Don's use of gun images; some suggested the collage implied that he liked violence. Others suggested that one could like guns without liking violence. The question arose as to the difference between a picture of a gun and acts of violence. While no answer was found, the group seemed to explore the issue in a mature and objective manner.

Don seemed uncomfortable acknowledging the violent edge to his collage, and was perhaps surprised by the ambivalent reactions of the group. The barren quality of the collage also seems significant, but then Don was absent for two sessions due to personal difficulties.

Termination of Therapy

About one month after they completed their collages, Don, Carl and Jay graduated from the program and returned to their regular schools; at the same time my practicum at

this site ended. During our final session we reviewed the works we had made and shared goals the children had achieved as a group and individually. Although the boys seemed to feel ambivalent about termination, they also seemed motivated to make this last session a positive experience.

The children agreed that the group as a whole had successfully worked towards a common goal: to *be* a group. The boys reminisced about early sessions and group conflicts they had overcome. For example, Don pointed out that during early sessions members had difficulty coming to a consensus about the importance of verbal sharing before the activity. While members continued to have different opinions on the matter by the end of the group's life, all agreed that they had grown more comfortable sharing verbally with peers.

During this session the boys remembered members who had come and gone over the seven months. They reassured one another that they would not be forgotten and made tentative plans to meet independently. This seemed to indicate some feelings of denial, but also seemed to indicate feelings of hope that they were more equipped to sustain relationships with others.

While all three seemed clearly ambivalent about leaving the program, all seemed to leave with more self-respect and hope than they had when they first enrolled. This session proved validating for all of us, and I continue to recall with affection the feeling of respect, friendship and a sense of connection between members.

Carl

During our last session Carl said that he felt he had accomplished his main goal which was to learn to control his temper, adding that he still had work to do but felt he

had improved. This seemed to indicate a relatively realistic attitude about his progress, but also reflected Carl's tendency to understate his achievements. Don reminded Carl of how critical he used to be of himself and pointed out that now Carl was able to accept compliments and wasn't as negative about himself.

Carl accepted these suggestions but seemed unconvinced; I sensed that he did not feel ready to leave and had grown attached to many staff members. I further suspected that unresolved feelings of abandonment by his father were surfacing, and that Carl was retreating into himself in response.

My general impression was that while his social skills and his ability to tolerate disappointment and anger improved, Carl's relationship to his artwork seemed to indicate continued feelings of low self-esteem. Carl was the only one of the three who seemed to be approaching realism in his drawing abilities, yet he seemed unshakably ambivalent towards his creative process and defensive in his self-expression.

Jay

Jay said that he learned about friendship and that he was a creative person. Interestingly he did not seem to single out Carl or any other member, but referred to the group as a whole. Jay seemed markedly more adept at expressing himself and owning his actions.

Overall I feel Jay made great strides towards understanding himself and his impact on others; compared to early sessions when he boasted and acted falsely in the group, Jay later seemed more authentic in both verbal and artistic expression. For example, during early sessions Jay seemed intent on pleasing others to gain their friendship, while later he seemed increasingly invested in understanding others and in

communicating his inner world via his artwork.

Don

Don pointed out that all three of them had worked hard and had made gains in their lives. Don said that he had learned that art could be fun, and had improved on his social skills. My impression was that Don was proud of the progress he had made and seemed eager to test his wings in his regular school. Moments before the end of the session, Don mentioned that he had a 'girlfriend' and seemed proud of himself. While this news indicated that Don's social skills and emotional development had improved, my sense was that he was also in a way replacing the group by joining with another person.

Don came to the group with very little art background; during early sessions he seemed to experience performance anxiety and invested little in his process. Later, as his confidence in himself improved and the level of acceptance in the group rose, Don seemed to enjoy making art and did not seem bothered by his lack of technical skill. For example, while Don's mask (figure 5) is very simple, the task of fastening the pipe-cleaner features to the paper bag was quite a challenge and Don seemed pleased with his final product.

Review of Case Study

At the start of the case study I stipulated that my underlying goal for the children was to offer group experiences that would facilitate changes in how they mediated between their inner experiences and their interactions with the outer world.

Ehrenzweig's (1970) work, explored in section 1, on the clash between fantasy (inner life) and reality (environment) experienced by school age children illustrates how these two realms can be mediated via the creative process. "Unconscious phantasy does

not distinguish between opposites, fails to articulate space and time as we know it, and allows all firm boundaries to melt in a free chaotic mingling of forms. Art, on the other hand, appears the embodiment of rigorous organization” (p. 3).

Accordingly, my retroactive impression is that in a sense all three boys presented in the case study struggled with the discrepancy between their inner and outer worlds. Carl seemed to wrestle with conflicts between his hopes and dreams and his perception of a reality without options. Jay, on the other hand, seemed to struggle to resolve tensions between narcissistic needs for self-satisfaction and validation of his feelings of grandiosity, and the equally powerful but incongruent feedback received by others. Finally, Don seemed to experience this discrepancy in terms of an imbalance between his sense of inner development and persistent destructive family patterns.

Developmental theories concerning attachment theory and the process of individuation also seem pertinent to this topic, as children are particularly vulnerable to issues of dependency and separation. Returning to the developmental considerations mentioned at the start of the case study, Freud (1912) and later Erikson (Shaffer, 1994) suggest that children go through stages of development that involve a gradual process of individuation from their parents. Thus it seems reasonable to assume that group therapy, which naturally creates tension between feelings of dependency and a need to separate from the group, can offer children a safe and contained environment to resolve conflicts that are impacting on their relations with parents or guardians.

Reflecting back on the goals of this case study, did group therapy address developmental and social considerations? Did art and the creative process help further group process, and the development of identity, self-esteem and empathy? Did group

process aid members to effectively mediate between their inner experiences and feedback from their environments?

As a group (I include the leaders here as well, for I feel we learned a lot from the children) we explored uses of art materials and images to express ourselves and to communicate both visually and verbally. Such interactions allowed us to more clearly understand how we perceive and interact with others and how others perceive us and behave. Members seemed to grow increasingly sensitive to the impact of their words and actions, and developed better skills for communicating their own perceptions, needs, and opinions.

This process was particularly noticeable during activity 3 when the group discussed the nature of Don's collage, which featured several pictures of guns. While Don seemed to feel his collage was daring and "cool", members offered mixed opinions of Don's choice of imagery. Some members wondered aloud why Don thought guns were cool, and whether that indicated that he also liked violence. For Don, this provided an opportunity to see the symbolism of guns from a different perspective, and to consider his own reasons for choosing this imagery.

Another noteworthy example occurred during the same activity; as described earlier in the case study, Jay chose to create an environment that featured Carl's name in opposition to his own: "Jay VS Carl". While Jay indicated that he did this because Carl was his friend, other members suggested that Jay seemed to feel competitively towards Carl. This offered both Carl and Jay opportunity to see their interactions from another perspective, and for Jay to consider the nature of his feelings for and actions towards Carl.

Interestingly, after this session Jay seemed more independent and made other alliances with members in the group that seemed more productive to his self-growth. Carl, on the other hand, seemed more dependent on pairing with others and appeared to replace his relationship with Jay by befriending a new member in the group who seemed quite emotionally fragile and dependent; much the way Jay had seemed during earlier sessions. Perhaps this continued pattern of relating was in part due to the fact that other members validated Carl's 'helper' role and did not encourage him to invest this energy in himself.

Having explored the experiences of these three boys as well as my own experience, I feel it necessary to bridge the gap between my theoretical and practical research. In the next section I attempt to synthesize my findings, and I take a more critical look at the theories have presented thus far.

6. Synthesis: *The reunion of theory and practice*

Overall, I found many of the theories concerning group psychotherapy and art therapy to be applicable to my own experience. Ironically, Bion's (1959) work- the most difficult to process and accurately portray- proved the most helpful in improving my interpretations of group process. While Bion's approach seems greatly influenced by his work with soldiers during and after World War II, some of his hypotheses about group process seem relevant to group therapy with diverse populations.

As postulated by Bion (1959), I found that the group went through phases of dependency, with periods of 'fight/flight', and later displayed 'pairing' behavior as some members began to spontaneously work in twos during activities. While Bion and later Waller (1993) assert that these are anti-therapeutic phenomena, it has been my experience that such overt defensive strategies can be explored and treated as a group problem and can be overcome via emotionally corrective experiences.

For example, in the case study presented, Carl and Jay developed a twinship or pairing pattern. While at first their interactions seemed to dominate the attention of the other members, later Jay seemed to 'individuate' from Carl and formed more supportive and diverse relationships with various members of the group. Thus Jay's interactions with Carl in a group setting created an emotionally corrective experience for Jay, allowing him to experiment with new ways of interacting with peers. Carl, on the other hand, was not yet able to gain such insight and so moved on to another member of the group with which he bonded.

From a social constructionist perspective, Jay and Carl's processes offer a succinct example of how relationships within the group reflect similar patterns in

everyday relationships. Jay, who was able to break away from a pairing pattern that seemed to stifle his creativity and self-growth, also seemed to individuate more from his sometimes overprotective and critical family and began to initiate and sustain relationships with peers.

Although Carl had good social skills and artistic ability from the start of the group, these strengths seemed invested in pleasing others; thus Carl seemed dependent on others for constant validation. Carl, who continued to pair with other members and to invest in their artwork rather than his own, seemed unable to shake the feeling that he was entrenched in the lives of his family members.

Looking at Don progress for a final example, we can more clearly see the process of individuation in action. During early sessions Don seemed very needy and even acted like an infant, speaking in a small voice and asking for assistance at every turn. While Don did not often pair with his peers, he seemed to attempt bonding with me by asking for help and feedback regularly. He also seemed to feel competitive about getting my attention and hoarding the materials I offered. This seemed similar to his relationship with his mother and siblings. Don seemed unusually attached to his mother for a boy of his age; during the program screening of his family, Don sat leaning on his mother and actively tried to hurt his brother, who sat on the other side of their mother.

While in the group Don seemed to respond to my gentle encouragement that he experiment and solve artistic problems on his own, he continued to seem merged with his mother, who was perhaps equally dependent on their merger. Towards the end of sessions this symbiosis seemed to come to a head; Don's mother was not attending family therapy and thus according to program rules, Don's enrollment was at risk of being prematurely

terminated, as family participation is mandatory.

At first Don seemed to respond to this by acting out; his teacher on the unit reported that he seemed to be regressing and was not manageable in the classroom. My sense was that Don was losing hope, as his mother seemed to threaten all that he had accomplished. While Don's feelings were certainly understandable, it was the group's task to convince Don that his personal gains could not be erased by the actions of another and that he should feel proud of himself.

Eventually Don seemed to realize that his behavior would not ameliorate his situation; although more fragile and angry, Don returned to the group after a two-week absence and seemed to come to terms with his situation. While his artwork depicts violence and rage coupled with regressive tendencies, as a group member he seemed increasingly supportive towards his peers and confident about his own gains. My sense was that Don was able to sublimate the feelings of despair, powerlessness and rage in his artwork, freeing him to relate more openly with his peers.

From this perspective, role-playing as described by Yalom (1985) and Hoffman (Davis 1994), seemed key to the establishment of emotionally corrective experiences. The roles children took on, Jay as "scapegoat" for example, allowed the group to explore the roles they take on in their daily lives, and to experiment with different roles that were more productive to their individual growth. In the example presented here, Jay was eventually able to shed the role of group scapegoat and learned to interact more sincerely and respectfully with peers.

Thus, as Hoffman (Davis, 1994) suggests, taking on different roles seemed to help Jay to develop a more sympathetic approach towards others. Also in relation to

Hoffman's work, we see in this example that group process can offer a child environmental cues for his behavior and attitude that may have been lacking during early childhood development.

Reviewing some of the theories presented in section 3 on art therapy groups, correlations with my practical experience are more varied. While I agree with Lachman-Chapin (1977) and Wadeson (1987), who postulate that art therapy in a group setting allows for the satisfaction and union of individual needs and group process; I found the children's responses to this process to be varied.

For example, while Don and Jay seemed to look forward to individual art time, Carl seemed to feel anxious about individual time and tended to prefer interacting verbally with others. Thus while others would work individually, Carl tended to maintain dialogue in the group through the activity and often assisted other members. These observations lead me to two insights on the matter:

1) While the children I worked with did make several individual projects, none were actually separate from the group during this process. Anyone who has made art alone, and has also participated in an art group, would probably agree that making art in a group environment is not like making art alone. Even if members work quietly they are aware of one another's presence and are influenced by the art process of those around them.

2) Some members in a group may prefer group interactions, and feel threatened instead by individual tasks; thus while often the art process is a venue for catharsis, communication, and self-reflection, sometimes making art can become too threatening to the individual with a fragile ego and low tolerance for incongruence.

In relation to the presence of the art object as explored in a group setting, I found Waller (1993) and Wadeson's (1987) explorations of how the art image influences group process most valuable. As proposed by Wadeson, I found in my experience leading the group presented in the case study that the art object seemed to encourage members to relate to one another and to develop a sense of cohesion. Over time members seemed increasingly comfortable sharing verbally about their artwork, and often exchanged artistic ideas and techniques.

To Waller's statement that art therapy encourages free-association, I would add that as well as sharing about finished pieces in a group, the process of making art and free-associations generated by a group of individuals encourages members to bring unconscious material to light.

For example, in activity 3 of the case study, group members began by offering Carl feedback on his collage, then shifted to exploring the symbolism of a car, to voyages to new places, to being independent and free. While members did not directly discuss common feelings of isolation, helplessness and desire to escape, free-associating with their images allowed the boys to air these feelings and to recognize that they were not alone in their experience.

As a result of these interactions in the group and encounters with the artworks, members seemed to develop a better sense of identity and self-esteem. This progress seemed most evident in the boys' changing relationship towards their artwork. While all three boys presented in the case study seemed critical of their work and tended to conform to stereotypical images involving sports, later the boys seemed to experiment more and seemed more open to sharing their work with peers.

Although I did actively encourage exploring issues of identity and relating during sessions, I feel that the positive developments in the group were more a product of the children's vested interest in each other and in growing as people. In this sense, I agree with Edith Kramer (1959) who argues that while the group therapist offers structure and containment, it is the members of the group who set themes and create group norms.

As Prokofiev (1998) suggests, I often found it necessary as group leader to take an active role when working with children, who need more guidance and structure than adult clients. Thus one of my primary tasks as a art therapy group leader was to maintain a fine balance between offering structure and yet allowing the children space to explore and to express themselves spontaneously.

At the start of this paper I proposed that group art therapy enriches group dynamics, interpersonal learning, and individual development of identity, self-esteem, empathy and creativity. As seen in the above case study, the children indeed seemed to become more self-aware, and to develop a better understanding of themselves and of others, and of their similarities and differences. Self-confidence seemed to grow in the group as a whole through the art making and sharing, presumably improving self-esteem in individuals as well, and members seemed increasingly able to offer and receive constructive feedback. For example, members became increasingly agile at sharing meaningful insights with one another and spoke and acted more spontaneously.

But perhaps most remarkably, this group as a whole seemed to move from a position of acute narcissistic fear and defensiveness, to being able to relate to one another, and to offer meaningful, and sometimes empathic, responses to others.

Conclusion

I began this paper with one main question: how does group process and the creative process affect and reflect the world, both inner and outer, of the developing child? Foundational to my query were three main assumptions: 1) the construction of self-concept and the development of self-esteem are dependent on self and other interactions. 2) Empathy is the harmonious mediation of inner and outer experience (Roy, 1998), and can be understood as a developmental process (Davis, 1994) involving individuation from, and relating with, others. 3) Creative processes simultaneously expose and enrich one's mediation of inner and outer experience by inviting the artist to externalize his or her perception of the world.

Based on these perspectives I argued that if self and other are interdependent constructs for understanding one's experiences, then the development of empathy, or understanding how others feel while remaining in touch with one's own feelings, is key to psychological growth and emotional health. It also follows, then, that creativity, which can also be understood as a form of empathy between inner experience and an outer object of our creation, is equally important for the developing child. These three assumptions carried over into the literature review and group case study.

For the literature review I offered differing and evolving psychological concepts for understanding self and other in terms of a gradual shift from focusing on the inner life of the individual to exploring self-concept in terms of the relationship between self and the environment. I presented early ideas by James (1890) and Freud (1921) as foundational to later concepts, but as also limited by their focus on the individual as separate and secondary in the psychological understanding of human experience.

Offering a more contemporary view that is also in keeping with my interest in group therapies, I focused on the work of Kenneth Gergen (1991) who describes the Western conception of identity according to a developmental process that involves slowly relinquishing one's grip on a concrete and stable sense of self- also known as the core or essential self. He suggests that by embracing the realization that self-concept is socially constructed, one can shed useless social roles and experiment with various and diverse roles that remain fluid and interactive. Further, Gergen argues that by relinquishing our focus on the individual, we can begin to more fully explore the nature and dynamics of relationships.

Along this vein I explored perspectives for understanding group dynamics that focus on interaction among members, the development of group culture and exploration of roles, and the tension between individual needs and the group's overall process. I relied heavily on the work of Bion (1950) and Yalom (1985) to illustrate how the group forms a "microcosm" that mirrors the everyday relationships members have outside of the group.

In retrospect I realize how Yalom's (1985) conception of interactive group therapy is reflected in the later work of Gergen (1991). For example, both theorists argue that "role-fluidity" is the bedrock of positive personal development and social integration. Further, both imply that addressing personal growth in terms of group dynamics can allow for a more holistic perception of, and experience of, being a person within a family, as a part of a group, and as a member of society.

I also explored group art therapy and focused on the effects of an activity-based approach, as well as the impact of an art object on individual and group process. In these

sections we see that encouraging a healthy relationship with oneself and with others is a vital part of group therapy, and further that group interaction, as well as the creative process, can improve the individual's ability to mediate between inner and outer experience.

I argued, with the help of Case and Dalley (1992) and Diane Waller (1993), that the art activity invites the individual to explore both interpersonal and intrapersonal needs and issues, as well as exploring the tension between the two. The presence of the object allows clients to free-associate, can enrich the sharing process and group feelings of cohesion, and offers an alternate self other relationship as the art work is both an extension of the self and an objective entity with qualities and characteristics of its own..

I further explored group therapy with children, key to my main question and group case study. I stressed the role of the therapist as children usually feel dependent on the adult group therapist. I suggested, with the help of Edith Kramer (1959) and Ann Cattanach (1998), that it is a primary goal of the group therapist working with children to understand that childhood, like "self", and other constructs explored in this paper, is not to be understood in absolute terms. Thus the therapist must encourage socialization and identification with the therapist, but must at the same time encourage autonomy and individuation, and must create a contained and safe environment for the child to create, maintain, and explore his or her own sense of the world.

I also briefly discussed the role of art therapy in the school system where the child's inner world first clashes with the realm of the institute; and where the transition from the family unit to society in general occurs. With the help of Case and Dalley (1990) I suggested that encouraging creative endeavors in the school milieu could enrich social

and educational experiences by nurturing individuality and a sense of community.

For the second part of the research paper, I offered an overview of my group art therapy experiences co-leading a group of seven latency age children. I also explored, but in greater detail, the experiences and therapeutic processes of three children in the group. My aim was to describe the mechanisms and dynamics of group art therapy with children, and to then retrospectively compare the experiences of the children and myself to the theoretical discussion presented in the literary review.

Taking a psychodynamic approach, I attempted to trace the development, conflicts, and progress of three boys all experiencing low self-esteem, difficulty individuating from their parents, and an inability to form lasting relationships. My case study presentation suggested that while all three boys improved during the course of the group, their experiences of the group life and art process were varied. While the theory available on group therapy was very useful to my research and retrospect of the group, was also evident that group experiences and personal experiences cannot be measured according to a set standard, but remain fluid and changing.

Glancing one last time at the work of Gergen (1991), whose ideas I now realize are key to my own interests and perspective of social construction and the importance of group therapy, we see Western conceptions of identity described in terms of a developmental process. The field of psychology can also be seen in these terms as we slowly move from empirical, objectified views of the individual in society, to more fully acknowledging the relativity of human experience and the interlocked roles of the individual and his or her society.

For these reasons, among others, group therapy is becoming increasingly pertinent

to the future of psychotherapy- in theory and in practice. While I can only scrape the surface of issues involving individual and social development and the role of group therapies, it seems evident that continued efforts in the general field of group therapies will continue to flourish only if we continue to question and to explore human experience and our understanding of interpersonal and intrapersonal phenomena.

Future research questions that I am left with include:

1) How do non-directive and directive groups with children differ in practice?

While I felt it necessary to take a directive role with the group presented in the case study, I find myself pondering what themes might have developed in the group if I had not suggested projects.

2) Do emotionally corrective experiences carry over into the individual's personal life, and are changes effected by group process sustained over time? It would be very interesting to perform a longitudinal study that would follow children's development after the group had terminated to gauge whether any long-term gains could be traced.

3) Do boys and girls differ in their approach to group process and interaction? It would be interesting to perform a comparative analysis of a group of boys and a group of girls, as socialization and genetics may affect how each gender learns, interacts, and expresses itself.

4) How do verbal and art therapy groups differ in practice? A comparative analysis of a verbal therapy group and art therapy group over time could gauge differences that might shed light on the benefits of creating art in a group setting.

5) How can one measure the effects of group process on members? While in my case study I rely heavily on my interpretations of how children related to one another and

to their artwork as tools for measuring process, I did not do so in a systematic manner. A more quantitative approach to group therapy research would add weight to the hypothesis that group therapy offers a space for children to learn from one another and to experiment with different ways of interacting with their environments and peers.

I have found in my practical experience that every group I have led or been a part of seemed to have commonalities as well as unique qualities. In this way a group is like a living organism- it has needs, hopes, dreams and defenses all it's own. Like a person the group exists in the here and now and manifests as a being via it's relationship with and responses to it's environment; and like a person it is a unique organism existing within a larger microcosm.

Thus while my findings offer interesting and thought-provoking data concerning group process, the role of art in group therapy, and it's usefulness in implementing group therapies with children, my case study represents the experiences of *one* therapist and *one* group. Yet while quantitative research may offer data that can be reproduced and generalized on, it seems equally useful to the practitioner to understand experience as well as categorizing it. I believe that leading therapy groups is an art in itself, unlike any other experience, and I look forward to further group explorations both as a member and group therapist.

Figure 1- by Carl (Session 12)

- Markers, pipe cleaners, scotch-tape and paper bag

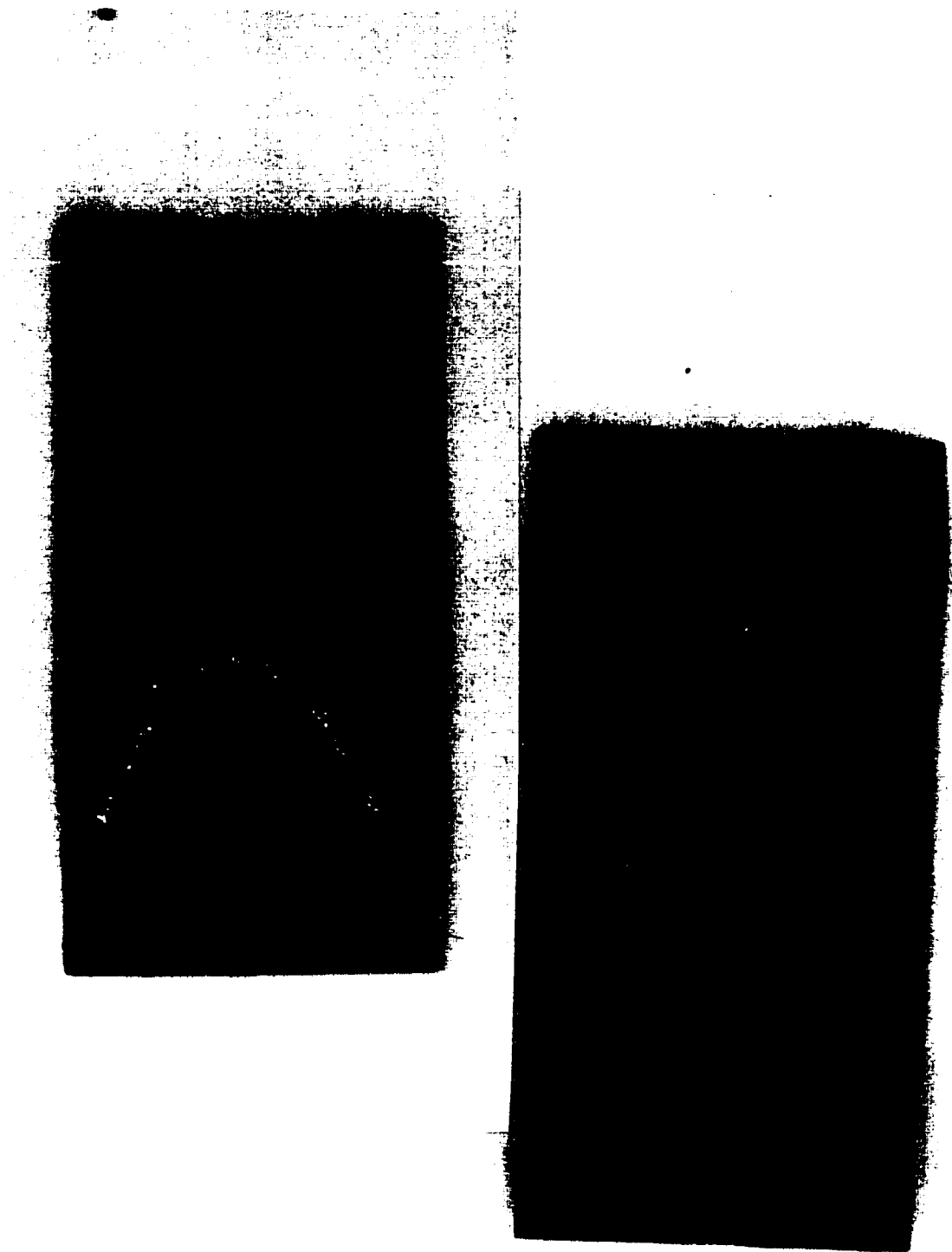


Figure 2- by Carl (session 12)

- Markers, pipe cleaners, scotch-tape and paper bag

Figure 3- by Jay (session 12)
- Markers, pipe cleaners, scotch-tape and paper bag

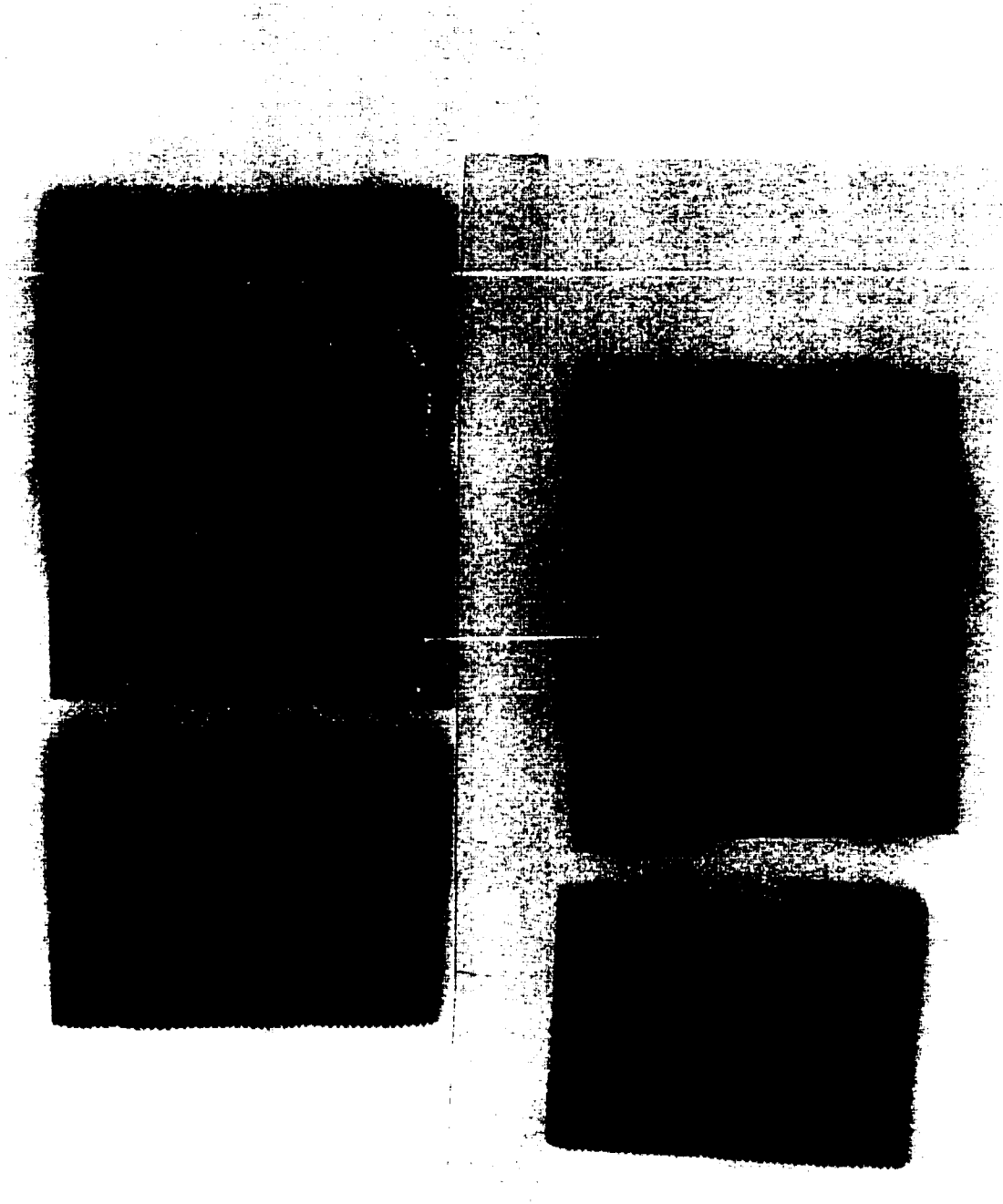


Figure 4- by Jay (session 12)
- Scissors and scotch-tape

Figure5- by Don (session 12)
- Pipe cleaners and scotch-tape

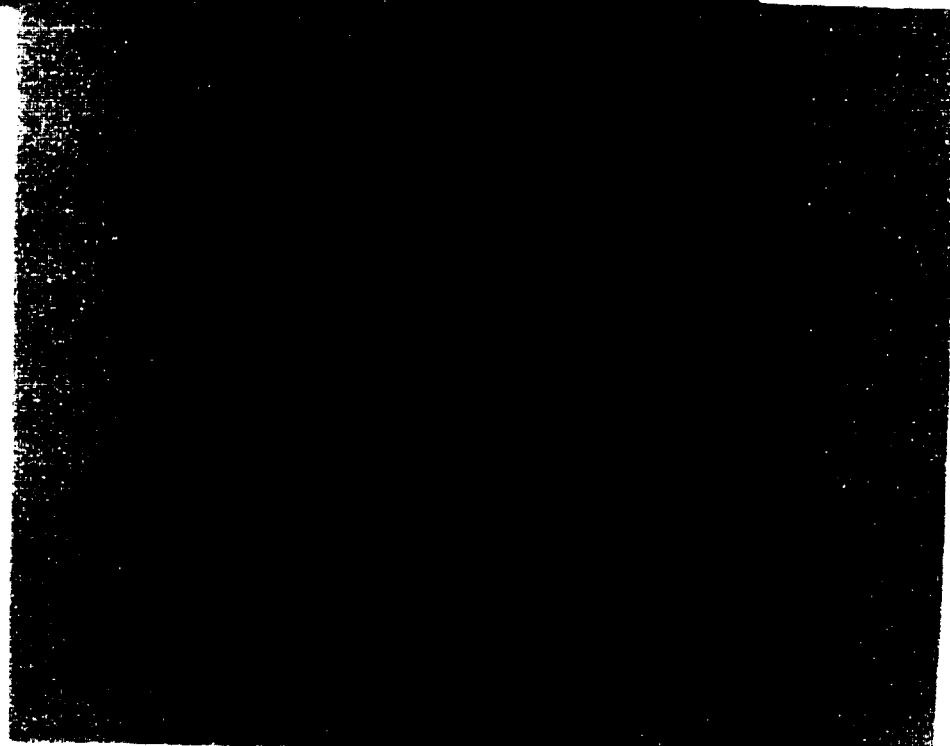
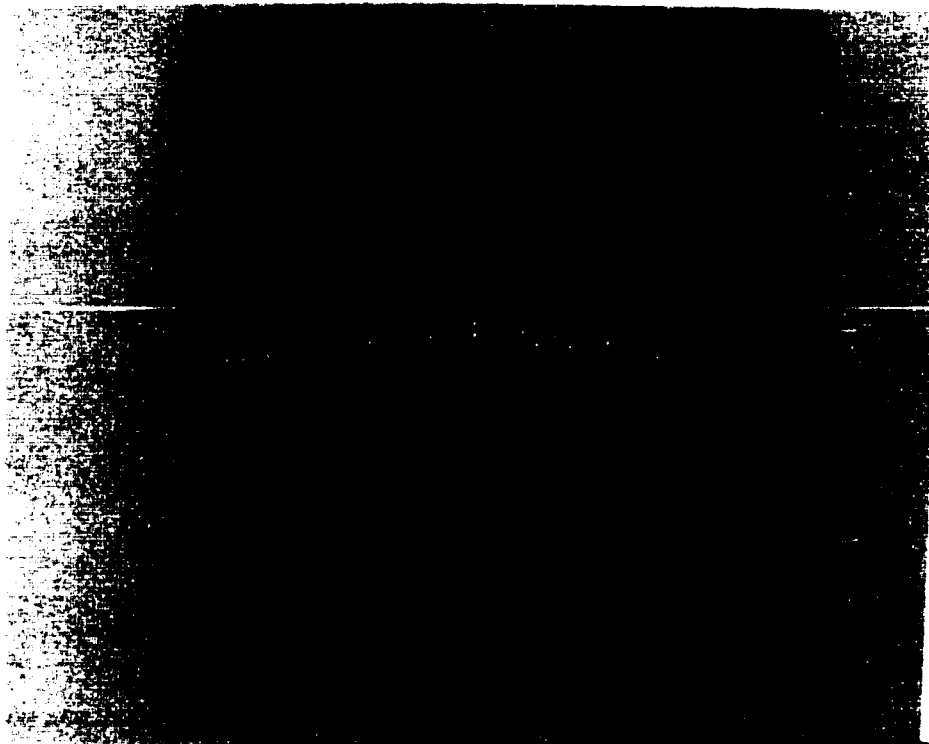


Figure 6- by Don (session 12)
- Scissors

Figure 7- by Carl (Sessions 13, 14, 15)
- Markers, magazines cutouts and glue



Figure 8- by Jay (sessions 13, 14, 15)

- Water color paint, markers, magazine cutouts, fabric and glue

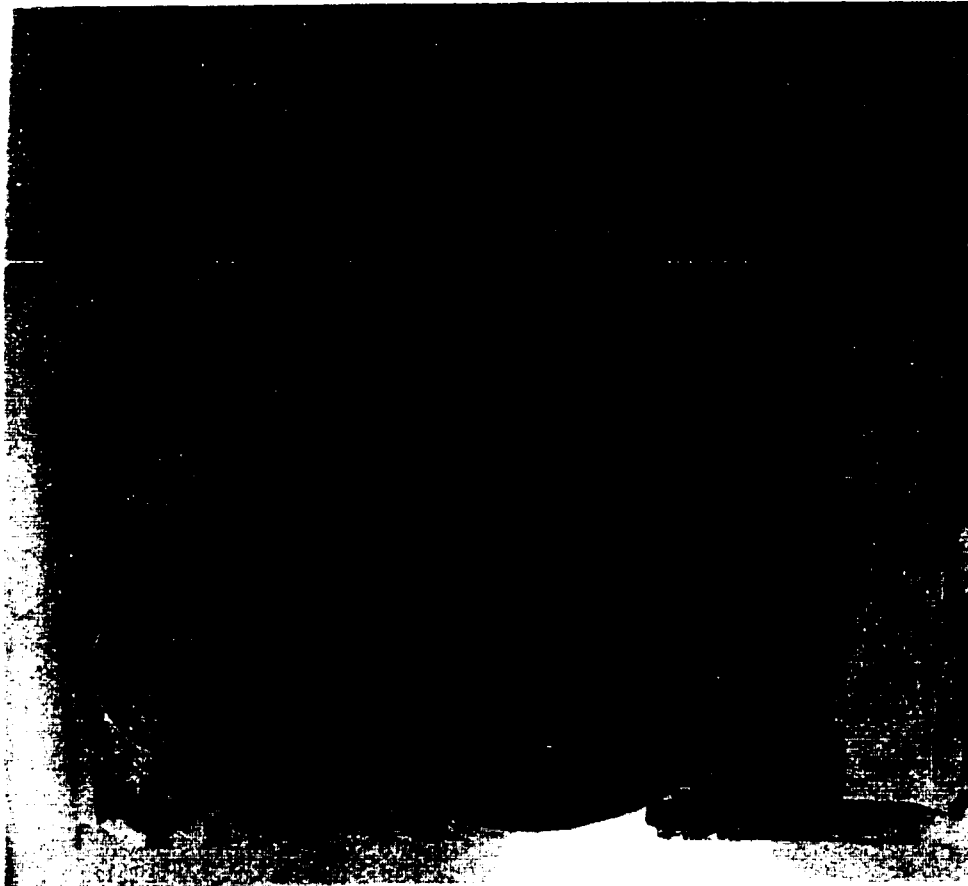
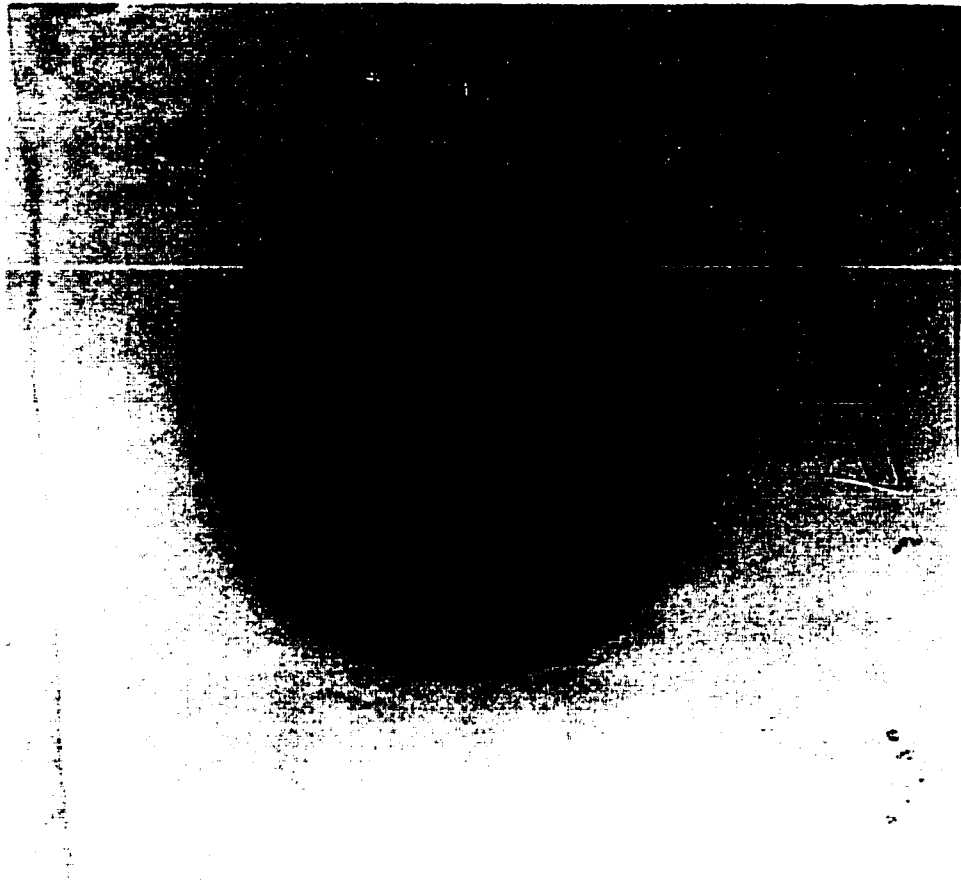


Figure 9- Don (sessions 13 and 15)

- Water color paints, markers, magazine cutouts and glue



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Consent Information

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Background information

One of the ways art therapy students learn how to be art therapists is to write a thesis that includes case material and art work by clients they have worked with during their practicum. The purpose of doing this is to help them, as well as other students and art therapists who read the thesis, to improve their knowledge and skills in giving art therapy services to a variety of people with different needs.

Permission

As a student in the Master's in Art Therapy Programme at Concordia University, I am asking you for permission to photograph your child's art work and to include them in my thesis. I am also asking for permission to describe general events of an art therapy group of which your child is a member. My aim is to observe how art therapy affects group process by looking at social interactions and art work.

Confidentiality

It is understood that the confidentiality of your child and family will be respected in every way possible. Your child's name and any other identifying information will not be mentioned in the thesis.

Whether or not you give your consent will have no effect on your child's involvement in the art therapy group or any other aspect of treatment. Also, you may withdraw your consent at any time before the thesis is completed with no consequences and without giving any explanation. If necessary you may call me at 514-948-3206 between 10am and 6pm. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Consent Form

**Art Therapy Thesis
Frederique Roy, student
Master's in Art Therapy Programme
Concordia University**

I, _____, undersigned, give permission to Frederique Roy to photograph the art work of my child, _____ (name of child), for inclusion in her Master's thesis in the Art Therapy Programme at Concordia University.

I also give Frederique Roy permission to use general descriptions of events in a group of which my child is a member, as part of her thesis.

I understand that both my child and the setting where the art therapy group sessions took place will be kept strictly anonymous and that no identifying information will be given in the thesis. I also understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time before the thesis is completed, without explanation, by contacting Frederique Roy at 514-948-3206. I also know that this decision will have no effect whatsoever on my child's art therapy or any other aspect of treatment.

I have read and understand the letter attached to the consent form and am satisfied with the information supplied. I give my consent as described above.

Signature: _____

Date: _____