CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE, TRAUMA AND
THE SENSE OF SELF:
EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT, AND HEALING
THROUGH GROUP WORK

By

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A Practicum Report
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba
in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Masters of Social Work

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

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ABSTRACT

This practicum involved the creation, implementation and evaluation of a twelve week group designed to help foster connection and re-connection with the self for adult, female, child sexual abuse survivors. Seven women participated in and completed one of two groups run from The Laurel Centre, a counselling agency in Winnipeg which specializes in counselling services for women survivors of child sexual abuse. The purpose of the group was to explore the factors that contribute to personality development, such as society, family and trauma; to work on re-connection with this individual construct; and to integrate various aspects of the self. The group also included a self-esteem component throughout. The group format was considered an excellent context in which to do this work given women's and survivors' developmental needs for connection. Methods of group evaluation included a quantitative measure of self-esteem, and a qualitative art assessment. Group feedback forms were also employed and recorded herein. Overall, the results of the practicum indicated that the environment of connection was a significant positive factor for the women. Gains in self-definition, integration and self-esteem were also noted.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

" Speaking personally, I began my work with the settled notion
that the "self" was a vague, ambitious, scientifically meaningless
term which had gone out of the psychologist's vocabulary with
the departure of the introspectionists. "
                                                    - Carl Rogers, 1959-

Like almost every aspect of personality theory, the concept of "self" is a largely

intangible abstraction which garners little agreement, consequently resulting in numerous

theories and opinions as to its existence, shape and course. From the quote above, Rogers

goes on to speak of the strength and meaning his clients consistently attributed to a sense

of self, profoundly influencing his subsequent valuing of and emphasis on this concept, as

intangible and difficult to define as it is. Like the work before it, this paper does not

provide definitive answers to questions surrounding this concept, however it does attempt

to enter this murky and ill-defined area specifically to explore existing theory and literature

surrounding the impact of child sexual abuse upon sexual abuse survivors' sense of self.

As the literature demonstrates, trauma has the potential to impair and dis-connect people

from important sources of knowledge and experience, both of which are significant

sources of information in the healing process and in daily life.

The literature was then used to help develop a survivors' group addressing

connection and re-connection with the self. The result was a twelve-week group designed

to incorporate the values of feminism, the strengths approach, as well as an ecological

framework that addressed individual, family and societal influences. In doing so, the group

encompassed many values traditionally associated with the profession of social work in general.

The group, offered at two different times run concurrently, was implemented at The Laurel Centre, a not-for-profit counselling agency, located in Winnipeg, which specializes in services for female survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The women met once weekly for twelve weeks, and each meeting spanned two and a half hours.

Background

The decision to explore the concept of, and then incorporate the self into work with survivors of child sexual abuse evolved for several reasons. On a personal level, understanding the notion of self and connecting with it has been an interesting and rewarding journey in my own life. Also important to me from an early age has been my belief in the values of feminism, which subsequently drew me to working with women in my professional life. My desire to work with women connected me with The Laurel Centre, an agency devoted to working in an area that unquestionably touches the lives of so very many women and children.

From both my work at The Laurel Centre and my studies at the University of Manitoba, it has become increasingly clear to me that a significant piece of work in therapy involves connection and re-connection with the self, including one's strengths, beliefs and needs. Like Roger's experience above, clients at The Laurel Centre also speak about connection with the self as an important issue. As such, this practicum was an

attempt to integrate and synthesize the literature addressing trauma and the sense of self

for use in clinical practice.

Group Model

This section will outline the assumptions and principles upon which the group was

developed and incorporated into the group delivery. Specifically, the basic assumptions

contributing to the design of the group are those generally associated with social work

values, including a belief in the dignity and strength of individuals, as well as in client self-

determination (Compton & Galaway, 1994; Robbins, Chatterjee & Canda, 1998; Johnson,

1995). To elaborate, it is believed that humans have a strong ability for resiliency and

growth despite adversity. It is the assumption that a belief in people's strengths and ability

to grow is an essential component of the healing process. Further, it is believed that

individuals have the ingenuity and resources within themselves to define and work towards

their healing. In these two respects, social work values co-exist well with the values of

feminism which also emphasizes empowerment and self-determination in addition to

connecting the personal with the political. For working with a population of trauma

survivors, design of the group grew also from the incorporation of information from the

trauma literature.

Feminist Assumptions

Assumptions of the feminist approach include recognition of the dignity and

strengths of individuals, the need to value women including their right to self-

determination, and recognition of the personal as political. For facilitators who incorporate

such principles, the challenge lies in translating them to the real life situation of the group. This section will be used to help clarify how the above principles were used to help form the foundation of the group, as well as some specific examples of the manner in which they manifested.

Valuing women and women's experiences, perspectives, roles and skills stands as a fundamental value of any social worker and particularly one operating from a feminist perspective. Aside from being a value in and of itself of the facilitators, this assumption was communicated to the group where appropriate. Valuing women included honouring and validating their experiences and their selves.

A second and related assumption is that women have the strength and ability to change their situations and the right to control their own lives. While therapists and group facilitators in general can use skills and knowledge to facilitate healing, an essential feminist belief is that clients have the answers within them. This requires exploring and respecting the choices women make in their lives - including choices that the therapist would not necessarily make in her/his own.

Finally, it is believed that behaviour is linked to the social, political and economic context and the impact of these forces in women's lives were recognised and named where appropriate. In the awareness sections developed for this group, the women were encouraged to connect the ways in which their personal experiences have been influenced by social roles and norms. This process involved the women separating that which belonged to them from influences that came from outside of themselves. Members were not encouraged to adjust to societal prescriptions delineating what is appropriate female

behaviour, but rather were encouraged to assess the costs and benefits of the choices they made based on what they believed to be best for themselves.

Trauma Literature

A prominent author in the field of child sexual abuse, Judith Herman (1992b) discusses the need for group experiences to match the needs of the survivor. Here, Herman (1992b) connects the type of group needed as it corresponds with the woman's healing process, and thus categorises groups as either first, second or third stage. First stage groups are concerned primarily with establishing safety. Focus on the past is the primary work of second stage groups as members deal more specifically with the traumatic event, and third stage groups work at reintegration of the survivor in the world. It is important to note however that such stages are not considered linear nor mutually exclusive, and that overlap necessarily exists at all levels.

This group is considered to be a later stage group, in that it involved women already receiving individual trauma counselling. The term later stage is thus used to recognize that the women were not in the initial stages of healing, and were interested in what Herman (1992b) terms third stage tasks of re-connection with the self or the world. It is noted however that reconnection with the world was true for only some of the participants, who were likely best categorized in third stage healing. The group also incorporated second stage tasks of remembrance in the awareness section, and certainly some of the members could be considered to have been in the second stage. Because the stages are not linear, and based on the assumption that self-connection can be helpful in any stage of healing, admission of women in second and third stage healing was deemed

appropriate. This type of group would likely be contra-indicated for women in the initial stages of their healing, and caution is thus suggested regarding replication of this later stage group with them (Herman, 1992).

Herman's (1992b) concept of safety is significant even for a group addressing later stage healing tasks. The establishment of safety remains an important component for healing and growing to take place, especially during the initial stages of group which are often characterized by participant anxiety. Adding to this is the nature of childhood sexual abuse which is often associated with secrecy and feelings of shame, and the tendency for survivors to experience challenges in developing trust. For these reasons, it was important to establish the group as a safe place to share and heal from the abuse.

The methods in which safety were incorporated into the design of this group break down into structure and content areas. First, the women attended, individually, a pre-group meeting with the facilitator where the group was explained and questions or concerns were addressed. Second, the group was closed. As a closed group, membership was stable and fixed, thus encouraging the development of trust and cohesion (Corey, 1997). It was also hoped that with trust and cohesion, feelings of connection and support would develop between the women.

Safety was also addressed in group content. Because groups can be powerful experiences that sometimes generate intense feelings, discussion included steps and options when feeling overwhelmed both during and outside of group. Further, individual counsellors at the centre remained available to their respective clients throughout the duration of the group, both to process group experience and continue the healing work

experienced in that context. Safety within the group also included the development of a clear contract at the first meeting, which specified the women's identified needs for safety, as well as rules for handling conflict and intense feelings.

Finally, while the group was structured and time-limited, involving a pre-arranged agenda of selected topics and exercises for each of the twelve sessions, some degree of flexibility was required to reflect the interests and needs of group members. Changes that arose during group meetings were discussed with members and agreed upon before modifications were made. As expected, the degree of structure also varied according to the stage of the group. More structure and a greater presence or role for the facilitators were incorporated in the initial stages of group to help enhance safety.

In summary, tailoring the group to meet the needs associated with later stage of healing, specifically re-connecting with the self, while also remaining cognizant of safety needs, were both components of healing based on the trauma literature.

Strengths Approach

While a strengths focussed approach was largely addressed earlier, this section will specify how the values of empowerment and strengths have been incorporated into the design. As the group involved exploration of difficult topics, it was anticipated that intense feelings such as grief and loss would be associated with them. For this reason, each session was designed so that empowering exercises built upon and followed heavy topics. In this manner, the sessions were designed to help connect participants with their own inner resources to help soothe, nurture, re-parent and thrive. The message that each woman had such inner resources and wisdom within herself was emphasized and

communicated throughout the duration of the group by the facilitators, exercises and the very structure of the group.

Practicum Objectives

Group Goals

The goals of the group can be divided into content and process. Process goals will be described in the following section exploring the value of group work for women survivors of child sexual abuse. Content goals included:

1) Heightening awareness of the factors contributing to the sense of self

2) Enhancing sense of self

3) Encouraging integration of the various dimensions of self

4) Increasing self-esteem

Value of Group Work with Women Survivors of Abuse: Process Goals

Various authors support the use of group treatment with a population of trauma or abuse survivors (Bass, 1994; Courtois, 1988; Herman, 1992b; Rittenhouse, 1997), including the value of groups in countering a legacy of isolation, secrecy and shame. Aside from breaking the secrecy and finding commonality, another process goal surrounds the nature of women's development. Specifically, given Miller's (1991) work discussing the importance of women's personality development within the context of relationships (see

Chapter Two), it was expected that the group would provide an ideal atmosphere in which

the women would be able to explore who they were within an interpersonal context.

In summary, process goals of the group included:

1) To provide an opportunity to break the secrecy that often surrounds childhood sexual

abuse

2) To provide an opportunity to reduce isolation and increase commonality through

connecting with others who have also experienced childhood sexual abuse

3) To provide the opportunity for personal growth within a context that recognizes and

respects women's developmental needs for connection

Personal Learning Goals

As one of the primary components of the practicum is to increase the skill level of

the practioner, this section outlines in more detail my personal learning goals from this

experience.

In a most broad and general sense, my learning goals encompassed gaining

experience and skill as a group facilitator. On a personal level, it was my hope that the

experience of running two groups would help to increase my comfort level and confidence

in this role. As my nature is generally quiet and gentle, my tendency has been to hold back

in deference to other staff members, which has to this point presented some challenges in

achieving as active a role in group as I would ideally prefer. This practicum provided an

opportunity to broaden my experience through the assumption of greater leadership

responsibility. Specifically it presented an opportunity for me to take a more active role

than I have in the past for the design, implementation and course of the group, and as such to take more risks. Thus, my first learning goal was to gain group facilitation experience from a perspective of increased responsibility.

On a professional level, I expected to also gain experience in areas generally associated with group facilitation; specifically, experience in assessing and working with group climate and process. Also tied to my professional learning was the opportunity to gain experience working with other professionals and thus further develop co-leadership skills. For this practicum, co-facilitation of the respective groups included working with one staff member for the daytime group and one volunteer in the evening group. The benefits of the co-facilitation model included the opportunity to confer and learn from other professionals, to have someone with whom to debrief the sessions, as well as all the benefits inherent in working as a team. It was important, however, to be aware of potential co-leadership challenges, such as times where leadership style or values diverged from one another. While such challenges can largely be circumvented through discussion and awareness of each others' style and values, where differences or challenges did emerge, they provided learning experience in co-facilitation and professional life in general. An additional factor observed were differences between the experience of co-facilitating with a staff member and with a volunteer; and specifically how such differences affected either my role or experience of the groups, or the experience of the group members.

An additional learning goal stemmed from my own, as well as the agency's, feminist values. Incorporating such values into the group included recognizing and valuing women in all our roles, forms, and experiences. Working from a feminist perspective also

includes therapist trust in the wisdom and strength of the group members, as well as their inherent right to self-determination in the decisions they make in their lives. Finally, working from a feminist perspective also entails connecting the personal with the political. Recognizing and offering such perspectives were an important component of the group, incorporated formally in the outline as well as managed appropriately in the group process. As a learning goal, the group was a context in which to practice implementing such values in my professional life.

In summary, my learning goals included:

1. To gain group facilitation experience in a role of increased responsibility and investment

2. To gain experience in assessing and working with group climate and process

3. To further develop experience working with other professionals

4. To observe any differences between the group co-facilitated by the staff member and the volunteer

5. To incorporate feminist principles into the group.

6. To assess the group, it's fit of content and design with this population.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE SELF AND TRAUMA

Definition of Self

The self is an aspect of personality, incorporated in theory to greater or lesser degrees according to the philosophical perspective of the theorist. Overall, personality theorists make etiological assumptions about personality, generally including beliefs surrounding genetic factors, environmental influences such as culture, society and learned behaviour, the role of choice and unconscious influences, and cognitive processes (Hergenhahn, 1994). It is probably safe to assume that, to some extent, personality can be influenced by any one or combination of the above factors.

According to some theorists, at the core of all of this, and existing in all people, is a central and unique inner force (Horney, 1950; Rogers, 1959). It is this force, emphasized to greater or lesser degrees across personality theories, that is referred to as the self. As a theoretical and variable construct however, definitions vary. Some who have attempted to define the self include Bonime (1989) as cited by Price (1994);

> *" It is a complex affective-sensate-cognitive phenomenon*
> *experienced in the course of functioning. Self is ineffable*
> *and private. It is a subliminal feeling of being a particular*
> *person in an experience, a vague sense of a me involved actively*
> *or passively, alive and somehow in relation to others. "* (p.21)

Bonime (1989) eloquently makes reference to the difficulties inherent in defining a sense of self, referring to it as both a private and ineffable experience of the individual.

Others, such as Cole and Putnam (1992) strive to build upon the above and connect the

subjective experience in conjunction with the social;

> " Sense of self is a psychological construct, an inference derived
> from one's experience that organizes that experience into a sense
> of individuality, unity, and continuity...The sense of self emerges
> out of the transactions between the individual and others ... Self
> and social functioning are inextricably bound together... " (p.176)

Miller (1991) agrees with the connection between the individual and social selves,

as it is her contention that, particularly for women, individual identity development is

developed through active interchange with others from the moment of birth. She

continues,

> " Out of this interplay of experience (with others) one certainly
> develops a sense of one's self, that is internal or mental
> representation of one's self. Moreover, one develops a sense of
> one's self as a person who attends to and responds to what is
> going on in the relationship between two or more people. " (p14)

From the work of those who have attempted to translate some essence of the sense

of self into words, three themes emerge: first, that defining the self is a subjective, personal

and difficult endeavour. Second, that a sense of self is comprised of unique features that

both differentiate us from and connect us with others. According to Horney (1950) the

individual self is comprised of the content and extent of feelings, thoughts, desires,

resources, interests, talents, values and gifts of any given individual (this concept will be

broadly referred to in upcoming sections as self-definition). By inference the above also

touches upon the concept of self-esteem, specifically the evaluation of the parts that

comprise the self. Finally, as Cole and Putnam (1992) and Miller (1991) point out, there

exists a significant connection between the individual sense of self with the social and

interpersonal world, a concept summarized by the term "relationships" for the remainder of the paper.

A fourth theme not yet discussed, is that the sense of self is rarely conceptualized as a static or unchanging entity. In fact, many theorists speak to the ability of individuals to adapt and modify themselves in new directions (Gawain, 2000; Horney, 1950; Rogers, 1959). The change process has been referred to by Horney (1950) as an instinct towards self-realization, a tendency for people to work towards healing and re-connection with the full potential of their real selves. Rogers (1959) refers to this concept as the tendency for people towards self actualization, defined as a "thrust towards life" and a quest for continued positive development.

Gawain (2000), in drawing from traditional teachings, simplifies and organizes the concept of self into four dimensions, including the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical aspects of being. Specifically, the spiritual aspect of self is defined as the most fundamental aspect of human entity that connects people with systems of belief and universality and which can include, but is not limited to, traditional religion. The spiritual dimension of the self is thought to engender belonging, meaning and purpose, which in turn connect people with hope, understanding or strength when dealing with adversity or daily life.

The mental level incorporates the thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, values and memories of an individual. In this way, the cognitive aspect of self is inter-related with the other three dimensions, forming, for example, the values and beliefs one holds about spirituality, emotions and the physical body. Similar to theories that refer to cognitive schemas, this aspect is important in that such beliefs are utilized to interpret, organize and assign

meaning to the world. While this dimension is traditionally associated with the rational, thinking mind, many differing forms of intelligence comprise this category, including social, emotional, musical, instrumental or intellectual intelligence for example.

The emotional level refers to the entire range of human feelings. Gawain (2000) postulates that this aspect of self is frequently discounted in society, owing in part to patriarchal values that exult rationality and devalue that which is traditionally associated with women, such as emotions. Feelings however engender meaningful contact and connection with others, and also significantly serve to provide humans with important sources of information about needs.

The physical dimension of self is the body, the most tangible and visible of the four aspects, as well as "home" to the other three dimensions of self. It includes physical health, nutrition and movement. The physical dimension includes body sensations, such as the need for sustenance, sleep, exercise or care.

Overall, the four dimensions of self are considered to be inter-related and connected, each influencing, and influenced by, the others. In this way, it is considered possible, although not necessary, that change at one level influences and generates change at others. Ultimately, it is considered ideal to find a balance between these four dimensions that recognizes and values each. The organization and emphasis on balance that Gawain (2000) brings to the discussion of self is the clearest way in which to help conceptualize this in therapeutic work with individuals.

Definition of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse as defined in this paper, is any form of sexual contact or

sexualized behaviour between an adult or individual in a position of authority, with a child

or adolescent. Child sexual abuse encompasses a wide range of behaviours, ranging from

exhibitionism to intercourse, and thus includes behaviours that do not involve physical

touching, such as gestures, comments or observation. Patterns of abuse can range from a

single violation to ongoing, repeated and long term abuse, and vary according to course,

duration, frequency, and method of coercion. Perpetrators are defined as anyone in a

position of power or authority over the child, including parents\guardians, siblings,

grandparents, uncles or aunts, neighbours, family friends or teachers, spiritual leaders or

strangers. To be clear, child sexual abuse involves any sexual contact or sexualized

behaviour between a child and any person in a position of authority over that child or

adolescent for the purpose of perpetrator benefit, and it occurs without consent. It is

noted that children are not capable of giving informed consent due to their developmental

level, age and state of dependency (Courtois, 1988; & 1997; Dolan, 1991) In agreement

with Fortune (1997) mutality, choice and equality as well as the absence of fear are

prerequisites for consent to be considered meaningful. These conditions do not exist for

children.

Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

A multitude of studies and literature exists as to the effects of childhood sexual

abuse on survivors, both in the immediate life of the child and the subsequent, lasting

effects on the adult. Trauma literature (Carlson & Furby, 1997; Herman, 1992a & 1992b;

Rodriguez, Ryan, Kemp & Foy, 1997; Van der Kolk, 1996) often speaks to the existence

of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a psychiatric diagnosis designed to describe

symptoms of intrusion, avoidance and hyper-arousal in trauma survivors.

Specifically, the recognized criteria cited in the DSM-IV (1994) for defining PTSD

include any experience that generates traumatic feelings of fear, helplessness and horror.

PTSD is characterised by contradictory and oscillating episodes of re-experiencing of the

event (intrusion), coupled with episodes of avoidance or numbing effects. Re-experiencing

can refer to such experiences as intrusive recollections of the trauma, dreams, feelings that

the trauma is actually recurring, or distress in response to reminders of it that can be either

psychological or physiological. Avoidance can include avoidance of thoughts, feelings or

conversations about the trauma, avoidance of reminders of it, memory loss, reduced

participation in activities, feelings of estrangement, restricted affect, and a diminished

sense of the future. It is these seemingly contradictory reactions between avoidance and

re-experiencing that Herman (1992b) terms the "dialect of trauma", which is observed to

mirror a struggle often experienced by survivors of childhood sexual abuse centring

around the need for truth telling and the need for secrecy.

In light, however, of the multitude of symptoms and effects reported over the

years, there has been growing awareness that PTSD alone can not adequately account for

the host of responses reported. For example, Dolan (1991) cites dissociative responses, memory problems, irrational guilt, sexual dysfunction, disturbed eating behaviour, substance abuse, compulsive sexuality, self-destructive behaviour, socially maladaptive behaviour, difficulty with trust, depression, anxiety, and impaired self esteem as additional symptoms that can be experienced by survivors of childhood sexual abuse, in addition to the traditional symptomology associated with PTSD. Carlson and Furby (1997) talk about feelings of depression and guilt, as well as difficulties with aggression, identity and interpersonal relationships, in addition to re-experiencing and avoidance. Courtois (1988) also discusses a host of reactions in the emotional, interpersonal, social, sexual and esteem aspects of survivors. Van der Kolk (1996) similarly summarizes these effects as touching the emotional, cognitive, somatic, characterological, behavioural and spiritual components of those whose lives have been changed by trauma. As Courtois concludes, childhood sexual abuse has the ability to affect every major sphere of survivors' lives.

The above has prompted experts like Herman (1992a & 1992b) and Van der Kolk (1996) to argue for a new diagnosis that better reflects the legacy of trauma for those who have survived such experiences as childhood sexual abuse. Such a new diagnosis rests on the premise that while PTSD as a diagnostic category is a good reflection of the symptomology associated with a discrete trauma experience (for example a rape or a natural disaster), expansion of this concept is required to better reflect the effects of prolonged and repeated trauma, such as childhood abuse, on individuals. It is the distinguishing factors of captivity and coercive control that differentiate between these two types of experiences. Based on this, Herman (1992a) argues that PTSD should be

expanded beyond experiences of constriction and intrusion to include additional

symptomology, distinct characterological changes and vulnerability to repeated harm after

the trauma. This is a formulation that she terms Complex-Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

(C-PTSD).

Specifically, additional symptomology includes categories recognizing

somatization, dissociation and affective changes. Somatization includes various states of

arousal such as hypervigilence, agitation, anxiety, and an absence of a baseline state of

calm or comfort, in addition to a host of physical complaints. Dissociation, conscious or

unconscious, includes thought stopping, minimization, denial, as well as disturbances in

time, memory and concentration. Affective changes include feelings of bitterness,

depression, rage and feeling forsaken by God and the world.

Characterological changes include pathological changes in relationships and in

identity. Distinctive relationship differences associated with survivors are theorized as

originating from a traumatic bonding with the captor. Perpetrators typically employ a

variety of methods to establish control over victims, which result in feelings of

helplessness and terror, loss of autonomy, as well as a loss of oneself in relation to others.

However, in these situations, victims must depend upon the individual responsible for their

harms and humiliations to meet a variety of their needs, including basic bodily or survival

needs, information and emotional sustenance. It is this context of dependance upon the

individual(s) inflicting the harm which forms the basis of the traumatic bond. Future

relationships are often characterised by oscillations between intense attachment and

withdrawal as well as boundary violations which also have implications for repeated harm.

Changes in identity often include the loss of self and even the sense that one has a sense of self. Particularly complex deformations of identity may emerge where the survivor views herself as malignant, contaminated, guilty or evil. Other deformations interact with and involve dissociation resulting in varying degrees of fragmentation.

A vulnerability to and increased frequency of repeated harm after trauma may manifest as self-inflicted injury, for example in self-mutilation, slashing or pulling out hair. Harm may also be perpetrated by subsequent individuals, such as battering in an intimate relationship.

Herman (1992a) concludes by stressing the importance of awareness of the symptoms associated with trauma in the interest of providing effective intervention. As social judgement of survivors' behaviour tends to be harsh, understanding it helps to put such behaviour in context and avoid victim-blaming. Failing to understand these effects further stigmatizes and harms the individual. In this context, the importance of a model that accurately reflects the experiences of survivors is clear.

In summary, it is evident from even such a truncated review of the effects associated with childhood trauma that it is a complicated and large area, marked by a wide heterogeneity of experiences, individual differences, and symptoms. Some, such as Carlson and Furby (1997), Courtois (1988) and Van der Kolk (1996) have reported attempts to account for the above variability observed in content and severity of effects, in a manner that spans biological, developmental, social and cultural factors, as well as prior and subsequent life events. For example, factors such as the duration and frequency of the abuse, the type of sexual activity, the use or threat of physical violence, age of onset, the

characteristics of the perpetrator including relationship to the victim, the actions and resiliency of the child, as well as responses to disclosure including those at the institutional levels have all been cited as factors that can serve either to mitigate or contribute to the impact of the traumatic experience and resulting symptoms. While such information certainly has value, in a final analysis it needs to remain no more than a guide. It is likely that the entire range of responses to trauma will continue to be somewhat of an enigma in the sense that definitive lists about and factors contributing to severity can not always account for the full range of human responses, given the complexity of the human organism and life experience.

As a final note surrounding the complexity of effects of trauma, Carlson and Furby (1997) have developed a framework which distinguishes between "core", "secondary" and "associated" responses to traumatic abuse. Such a framework helps to describe and organize the multiple and inter-relating effects of abuse by etiological sources of symptomology. Specifically, core responses correspond closely with traditional PTSD symptomology. Secondary and associated responses refer, respectively, to features experienced in response to core symptoms, and to the environment in which the abuse occurs.

As mentioned, core responses are fairly straight representations of PTSD symptomology. Secondary symptoms however occur as a result of the core trauma responses of re-experiencing and avoidance. For example, social disapproval and negative feedback about behaviour related to re-experiencing or avoidance may result in low self-esteem. Difficulties in interpersonal relationships may take the form of disconnection from

family and peers as a secondary response to the core symptoms of avoidance and re-experiencing. Feelings of guilt and shame may follow maladaptive behaviours such as drinking, self harm, or prostitution for example, developed as an attempt to cope with core symptoms.

Associated symptoms are those that occur as a result of the child's environment. For example, in the case of low self-esteem generated as an associated response, experiences such as verbal abuse or neglect would be factors that could lead to the internalization of negative self-worth. As further examples, identity disturbances may be the result of associated factors if opportunities for healthy development such as participation in social activities, sports or academics are limited. Difficulties in interpersonal relationships would be an associated response to a lack of role models demonstrating healthy relationships, as would poor attachment to caretakers. Related to attempts to preserve attachment to the caretaker, associated sources of guilt and shame may involve, for example, the creation of an environment whereby the child takes responsibility and blames herself for the abuse. What Carlson and Furby (1997) demonstrate in the above is that the same symptom can originate and be associated with different, although often interacting, sources.

In summarizing all of the above information surrounding the impact of childhood sexual abuse, it is clear that this is a vast, complex and complicated area that typically involves serious life consequences and challenges for those who survive. The next section of the report will attempt to synthesize some of the above as well as explore additional

contributions from the literature that speak more directly to the effects of child sexual abuse on the sense of self.

Child Sexual Abuse and Sense of Self

Despite differing language, approach, and emphasis of varying authors, four recurring themes became apparent in a review of the literature surrounding the impact of trauma on the sense of self, or that subjective, central and powerful inner force discussed earlier. It is noted that the distinctions between these four observed impacts are somewhat complicated as they inter-relate and influence one another. Specifically, however, childhood sexual abuse has been observed to have lasting and serious effects upon memory, self-definition, self-esteem and relationships. For the purposes of this paper, memory refers to the ability to have access to a coherent, comprehensive and accessible past, or a sense of continuity of and information about one's personal history. Information surrounding one's likes, dislikes, boundaries, feelings or values for example, including knowledge about the unique ways in which one is different from or similar to others in a variety of contexts, is defined in this paper as self-definition. Self-esteem is the way one feels about themselves and her/his value as a human being. Relationships refer to who the person is and how they act in relation to others, and is a construct of importance to personality, perhaps particularly for women, as will be discussed in more detail below.

This section will be used to elaborate upon the four themes discussed above, with the understanding that both their etiology and impact require elaboration of their connection with the unique features associated with childhood trauma, and the

concomitant defenses that can arise within such experiences. This section will thus attempt to draw the connection between these features and their impact on personality, including history, self-definition, self-esteem and relationships. First however, it will be beneficial to explore theory delineating the course of "normal" female development as a context in which to appreciate the impact and challenges to personality development inherent in the experience of child sexual abuse.

Self-In-Relation Theory

Miller (1991), an author associated with the Stone Centre, an organization based out of Wellesley College in Massachusetts that conducts research devoted to the study of women, provides a developmental perspective of personality primarily for conceptualizing female development, although it is perhaps equally applicable to boys in the absence of powerful forces of socialization. Essentially, the premise of the work is that girls develop a sense of self through their experiences with others and through being themselves in relation with others. This is referred to as "being in relationship," and ideally includes a process of mutual attending and responding.

The concept of "being in relationship" is theorized to be present from infancy onwards. The development of an increasingly complex sense of self evolves over time, both with greater awareness of individual capacities and views as well as ability to put these into effect, but also as the individual is exposed to increasingly numerous and complex relationships and interactions with other selves. Balancing these two requires new understandings within relationships, creating and necessitating complex processes of

mutual attending and responding. Miller refers to the growth as "agency within

community," meaning that ideally girls are actively interacting and "doing" within

numerous relationships which thereby expose them to multiple options and choices and

challenges as to how to both relate and be.

Unfortunately, throughout childhood, Miller (1991) contends that girls become

increasingly aware of the importance, power and value accorded men in society and the

concomitant devaluation of women. Girls often struggle with messages that energy should

be directed toward the well being and growth of males. This message is thought to

become exceptionally strong during adolescence, and frequently sense of self as an active

agent within relationships is too often observed to metamorphosize into a sense of self that

defers to and meets the needs of others.

Miller (1991) concludes that being in relationship is an important and valuable

concept for understanding both the manner in which women develop, as well as the ways

by which development can be damaged for both boys and girls by present societal

experiences. Finally, it is felt that an understanding of this process and awareness of the

importance of relationships to women's development and sense of self, is required by

those in the helping community in order to help foster personal growth and re-connection

with oneself.

In light of the importance of meaningful and respectful connection between people

that women's development is thought to require, it is not difficult to imagine the deformity

and assault on the sense of self that the experience of childhood sexual abuse brings. While

the Stone Centre is largely silent on this topic, it is not too difficult to imagine that

challenges include an assault on freedom to develop and exert a sense of self in a mutually

responsive and respectful environment. Indeed, the dearth of empathy and pathology that

permits perpetrators to assault certainly does not foster the security or conditions required

to experience oneself as an active agent in relationship with others. Contrary to respect,

the abuse environment leaves the child to develop in the context of a pathological and

deeply disturbed relationship(s). While the Stone Centre has not specifically elaborated on

the above, it is clear that the conditions and attachments associated with childhood sexual

abuse would certainly not be conducive to fostering the course of development described

earlier.

Childhood Trauma: Attachment and Entrapment

Attachment is a concept often associated with object relations theory - a theory of

personality development which connects individuals with their social environments, and in

particular the environment of early childhood. Basically, attachment refers to the basic

need in all children to have secure and loving interactions with caregivers. It is postulated

that the development of trust both in oneself and in others is premised on such early

interactions (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998).

In an environment of abuse however, attachment can take different and creative

forms as children remain necessarily dependent upon others for survival, protection, love

and virtually every aspect of being. When such dependence and the child are exploited by

abuse, dependency becomes entrapment or captivity. These terms convey the coercive

control of the caregivers over the child, and it is the relationship formed with the

perpetrator(s) that Herman (1992a & 1992b) and Courtois (1988 & 1997) use to explain

the pervasive and profound effects on subsequent personality development. In sum, this

damage is understood in an environment where basic forms of attachment can not develop

normally. Rather than the development of a secure, safe and loving attachment, in the

context of sexual abuse children live in a world where trust, love, safety, and control are

formed with the untrustworthy, unsafe people who harm through exploitation of their

dependency (Herman, 1992b). Again, children, regardless of the context, retain the

profound need to form attachments for survival. It is thus postulated that in order for

children to develop the attachment necessary to survive in such pathological conditions,

they will usually resort to one of two strategies; either the alteration of reality, or the

construction of an alternative system of meaning to justify the abuse.

I. Alteration of Reality: Effects on History/Memory

Clark (1993) summarizes the defenses associated with the first strategy, that of

altering reality, as including denial, repression and dissociation. Denial is the process by

which a child protects herself or himself from the trauma of the sexual abuse by refusing to

acknowledge it. According to Clark (1993), such a strategy disrupts the continuity of

memory, affect, perception and meaning. Repression involves the conscious forgetting of

the abuse and is the least disruptive of the three strategies for altering reality. Dissociation

however is a complicated and very serious process by which memory or experience can

become isolated or split from personality. Dissociation can range from amnesia about the

sexual abuse to Dissociative Identity Disorder in its most extreme form. Regardless of the

form it takes, altering reality is a creative response of a child in a desperate situation who, unable to alter the situation, alters that which she can, her mind. What the child gains through altering reality is survival in a desperate and overwhelming situation. What the child sacrifices is a sense of self-coherence, and continuity of memory and experience.

Despite the absence of such knowledge, individuals may still experience the legacy of symptomology associated with childhood sexual abuse, including any array of symptoms associated with PTSD or Complex-PTSD, as discussed earlier. Not only can such symptoms be mysterious and frightening, and especially so in the absence of a context in which to place them, they may also be experienced as embarrassing or stigmatizing (a secondary symptom), demonstrating interaction between memory and self-esteem.

II. Alternative System of Meaning: Effects on Esteem

As mentioned above, the second strategy employed by traumatized children is the development of an alternate system of meaning in which to understand, or justify the abuse in an effort to maintain attachment to the caregivers. Generally, the most common manifestation of this strategy is a belief system which sets the child up as responsible or deserving of the abuse (Blizard & Bluhm, 1994; Cole & Putnam, 1992; Herman, 1992b; Price, 1994). The benefit in blaming the self for the abuse is that it allows preservation of the child's need for attachment to the caregiver. As Herman (1992b) and Cole and Putnam (1992) point out, egocentrism normally associated with childhood helps to frame an

understanding of the propensity for children to come to such conclusions and strategies

that utilize a degraded image of self.

Expanding upon self-degradation, Price's (1994) work explores the defense of

idealization in preserving attachment to the caregiver. At an individual level, idealization

transforms the powerlessness and vulnerability of the child into feelings of mastery,

control and superiority through believing she has special power and attributes. This

defence generally only serves to mask traumatic feelings of inferiority, dirtiness or shame

discussed above. Idealization of the self may manifest in the belief that the family or the

perpetrator could not live without the child in the role of victim, her perception of her

sexuality, or overall feelings of goodness. While such a defence has obvious initial

adaptive functions for the child, it also places such an individual in a vulnerable position

whereby anxiety, self hatred or shame can be activated by perceived failures or injuries to

aggrandized self perceptions, again impacting feelings of self-esteem.

According to Price (1994), idealization can also refer to the child's perceptions of

the parent/abuser, for whom the child, in her desire to protect the parent-child tie and

perhaps additionally influenced by parental perceptions of their own behaviour as non-

abusive, creates an unshakeable belief in the good parent. Various memory defences may

interact at this level to help protect such perceptions of the parents. As already discussed,

a related mechanism for protecting the belief in the idealized parent is the formation of an

entrenched and powerful sense of self-blame. In this manner, the child protects the

idealized view of the parents, and paradoxically reinforces some semblance of control -

even if for negative life events such as the abuse. It is noted that Price's work draws from

the work of others who have described the phenomenon of splitting (the tendency to view things as all good or all bad) in general terms (Nichols and Schwartz, 1998).

In addition to preserving attachment, self-esteem of the child can be influenced by any variety of core, associated or secondary factors. For example, Herman (1992b) speaks to the difficulties that children who have been abused frequently experience in modulating their (justifiable) anger. Like difficulty associated with modulating PTSD symptomology, without the vocabulary, developmental level, skills or modelling, outbursts or anger, or even feelings of hate may only intensify inner convictions of badness. Cole and Putnam (1992) speak to the child's level of awareness of the abuse as both an illicit and socially unacceptable behaviour, which in itself can intensify feelings of shame and thereby act as a contributing factor negatively impacting self-esteem.

Herman (1992b) elaborates on this point and speaks to the deep level of shame and guilt that children can experience in the event of having been sexually aroused or experiencing sexual pleasure associated with the abuse. The impact on self-esteem can be similar too if the child received special attention, gifts or privileges from the perpetrator(s). Further, if the child has been made complicit in similar sex crimes against others, or has felt she has failed to protect loved ones, such as siblings, self-esteem can similarly suffer (Herman, 1992b).

In summary, self-esteem can be altered by the various manifestations and defenses created to justify the abuse, including self-degradation and idealization. In addition, a host of core, secondary and associated responses can further impact and challenge feelings of self-worth.

III. Effects on Self-Definition

Child sexual abuse thus negatively impacts the child's self-esteem in a direct

manner, as well as by several secondary and associated ways. According to Herman

(1992b), the devastation of this experience on the child's self esteem becomes the core

around which the rest of the identity, or self-definition is formed. Certainly such effects are

severe and prolonged, with the capacity to persist well into adult life.

In addition to affecting memory and esteem, trauma can also influence the self

definition of an individual, such as knowledge surrounding likes, dislikes, feelings or

values, including the ways in which one is different from or similar to others in any

multitude of contexts. In other words, self-definition refers to the characteristics

associated with any given individual. Defenses associated with dissociation, or the

fragmentation of memory and self, obviously interfere with integration of knowledge and

experience and thus identity (Herman, 1992b) as well integration of the various aspects of

the self (Cole and Putnam, 1992; Kilgore, 1988). Dissociation can also serve to remove

individuals from or numb them to emotions and feelings, further alienating survivors from

important self-defining information about themselves (Clark, 1993; Cole and Putnam,

1992; Herman, 1992b; Van der Kolk, 1996).

Some survivors find that with the act of mere survival, both during and later with

the legacy of abuse, little time, energy or concern remains for connection with themselves

(Darlington, 1995). "I never had meaning. I never had goals. I just wanted to survive" is a

quote from an incest survivor that Darlington (1995) reports in a publication outlining the

results of a qualitative study in which women survivors were interviewed about their

childhood and the long term impact of the abuse. The overall findings of the study includes

several recurring themes surrounding the impact of sexual abuse on the sense of self.

Specifically, having no sense of oneself, feelings of detachment or dissociation from the

self, and negative feelings about the self were reported frequently by the participants.

As in general discussion about the sense of self, self-definition tends to be an

abstract and difficult construct to define and study. The words and reports of the women

in Darlington's (1995) study however provide powerful insight and understanding of their

experiences in this area. For example, in the words of one survivor;

> "I don't know who I am at the moment. I don't know who
> Irene really is...And I think the sad thing for me is that I don't
> even have anything that I can make a comparison to. I can't
> look back into the years and say, 'Yes, I used to be like that but
> now I'm not like that.' I feel like I'm permanently lost. I feel
> like I am always walking around totally lost." (p.12)

Darlington's (1995) final question to the women was about recovery, including the

process of moving on from the negative impact of child sexual abuse. Interestingly, the

women participants spoke of recovery as a process involving the re-integration of the

various parts of themselves in order to experience a sense of wholeness. Specifically, the

women were reported to have talked about becoming aware of themselves, including their

needs and wants, as well as a process of establishing and maintaining boundaries as

significant aspects of recovery. This closely reflects the thoughts of Cole and Putnam

(1992) who write that both impact and recovery centre around defining, regulating and

integrating the various aspects of self.

IV. Effects on Relationships

The final theme that the literature draws awareness to is the impact on relationships in the lives of survivors of child sexual abuse. In Miller's (1991) theory of women's development, personality development is postulated to occur within relation to others. It seems reasonable to wonder what happens when personality development occurs within the context of trauma such as childhood sexual abuse.

Herman (1992a & 1992b) and Courtois (1988 & 1997) respond to this question by speaking to the development of a traumatic bond that occurs in such situations where one is forced to rely upon those inflicting harm for everything from basic survival to needs for human contact and love. As discussed, pathological attachment frequently develops in this situation, with children working hard to establish and retain connection despite the abuse. This is considered significant as it is thought that attachment and interaction in the past influence the ways in which individuals relate in the present. Attachment thus helps to clarify subsequent patterns of interaction, relating and attachment often observed in the adult relationships of abuse survivors (Blizard and Bluhm, 1994; Kilgore, 1988). For example, enormous deviations of trust and confidence in relationships are frequently observed (Cole and Putnam, 1992; Herman, 1992b). However humans rarely cease to need respectful human contact and love, and the conflict between such needs coupled with severe impairments in the ability to trust others can result in dramatic and confusing oscillations in the regulation of intimacy (Herman, 1992b).

Significant boundary violations as well as a vulnerability to re-victimization have also been reported as problems in the lives of many survivors (Blizard and Bluhm, 1994;

Herman, 1992a & 1992b; Price, 1994; Van der Kolk, 1996) as abusive interactions learned in childhood are often thought to form the "blueprints" of subsequent relationship patterns (Price, 1994). Danger of re-victimization can occur when the individual fails to recognize cues or signals that danger is imminent (a symptom often associated with a history of dissociation), from an intense need for love, and in disconnection from the information the self can provide (Herman, 1992b). Herman (1992b) also speaks to the role of self-loathing in re-victimization, suggesting that sometimes survivors feel deserving of such treatment, even at times inflicting it upon themselves through self-injury (although this has also been framed as a coping behaviour dependent upon context).

In summary, the literature references the impact of sexual abuse on the individual and social functioning of survivors. The common theme that connects several authors has been the use of attachment theory, specifically the traumatic bond that forms between the child and the abuser(s), as well as the subsequent defenses utilized to maintain it. In a final analysis, the patterns established during childhood to preserve attachment are often conceptualized as leaving the survivor with a legacy of relationship and intimacy challenges. Defenses employed to survive such trauma are also thought to have significant impact upon other aspects of the sense of self, including history, esteem and self-definition.

Group Work with Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

Various authors support the utilization of group treatment with a population of

trauma or abuse survivors (Bass, 1994; Chew, 1998; Corey,1997; Courtois, 1988;

Herman, 1992b; Rittenhouse, 1997; Van der Kolk, 1987). Many of these same authors

also stress the value of group as a complement to individual counselling when working

with this population. Thus, groups in conjunction with individual counselling have been

recognized in the literature as most beneficial to survivors (Chew, 1998; Courtois, 1988;

& Van der Kolk, 1987). It is from a perspective that values both modes of intervention

that the advantages of group work specifically are discussed.

In addressing the advantages in group work, Courtois (1988) recognizes the

power in breaking the secrecy associated with abuse. She also speaks to the power of

groups as a catalyst in the recognition that individual challenges and problems are less

about character defects than relatively common reactions to child abuse. Gilligan and

Kennedy (1989) also discuss how trauma symptomology and legacy tend to lead to

feelings of differentness, wrongness and thus isolation. Group work, however, gives

women the opportunity to break through some of these beliefs while re-connecting with

others and the world via a safe environment. Herman (1992b) dedicates a specific chapter

in her book to the theme of commonality - specifically the value of groups in countering

the isolation, secrecy and shame often associated with abuse. One well recognised group

specialist has referred to the phenomenon identified by these authors as the power of

"universality" (Yalom, 1985), or recognition that one is not alone despite the isolating

effects of trauma. Other advantages of group counselling include utilization of the group

as a safe place in which to explore beliefs, childhood messages, feelings and grief (Corey,

1997; Courtois, 1988; Chew, 1998).

Further to all the above said advantages, the interpersonal context of groups and

the relevance this has in women's development stands as an important additional

advantage. Specifically, given Miller's (1991) work surrounding the importance of

women's personality development within relationships, group counselling provides an

atmosphere in which women can explore who they are in such an interpersonal context.

Courtois (1988) and Chew (1998) also recognize the importance of this in the reparation

of interpersonal injuries sustained in childhood abuse, which also include inter-personal

opportunities to observe and practice new modes of communication, conflict resolution

and problem solving.

As a final thought on the advantages of conducting group work with this

population, Van der Kolk (1987) illustrates the shift inherent in moving from individual

therapy to group counselling. Specifically, the difference in group work is a shift in power

dynamic. While feminist counsellors work to minimize power differentials, some remnants

of power and authority ultimately remain in all counselling. Van der Kolk explains it as

such:

> *" In individual therapy there is an inherent inequality:*
> *it is a relationship between a therapist, the "helper,"*
> *who implicitly has the answers and is not helpless, and*
> *the patient or client, who needs help and may experience*
> *at least some passivity and possibly some sense of*
> *hopelessness. "* (p.119)

Groups, however, move further away from this one on one power difference, both

through providing the opportunity for greater connection with others, and in opportunities

to observe and learn from the personal growth and experiences of, and with, each other.

The presence of many survivors as well as the sharing and learning that transpires between

them certainly marks a differing dynamic between the power of an individual counselling

situation and a group. For facilitators interested in feminism, the idea of some shift in the

distribution of power is viewed as positive and worthwhile experience for participants.

CHAPTER III

PRACTICUM PROCEDURES AND DESCRIPTION

Using the information outlined in the literature review surrounding the profound

impact of child sexual abuse on the sense of self, the group developed here was designed

to address connection or re-connection with aspects of the self that were either lost or

never developed as a result of abuse experiences. This chapter provides information about

group design and procedures. Information about the client population, recruitment, intake

and co-facilitation are also discussed.

Population

Participants of the group were all clientele of The Laurel Centre, a not-for-profit

organization specializing in individual and group therapy for women survivors of

childhood or adolescent sexual abuse. The mandate of The Laurel Centre also recognizes

addictions and other forms of compulsive coping behaviours as a consequence of trauma,

behaviours specifically recognized as growing from attempts to cope with the pain of child

sexual abuse (Laurel Centre Annual Report, 2000). The women who participated in the

groups were not only survivors of abuse, but many had additionally been working with

addiction and/or some form of compulsive coping as a component of therapy.

Demographic information collected at the screening session indicated that the

women who completed the groups ranged in age from 27 to 47 years. The mean age was

40. With the exception of one First Nations woman, all the participants were Caucasian. In

this manner other ethnicities and cultures were under-represented in the groups.

Employment status revealed that six of the seven participants were employed, with an

even split between full and part time status. All of the women had a minimum grade

twelve education; three had also completed technical training, and two had taken some

university courses.

It is noted that household income ranged from less than six thousand dollars per

year to as much as forty thousand with one client. When taken in consideration with the

number of people in each household, it is noted that six of the seven women fell below the

Statistics Canada Low Income Cutoff (1998). Reports made by the women indicating little

disposable household income were consistent with the above. This aspect was perhaps

anticipated as the long wait list for services offered by the agency (approximately two

years), also suggests that some of the agency's clients are likely without financial

resources to obtain private counselling, which would shorten the wait. It is noted however

that because the agency is considered the leading counselling specialist in Winnipeg for

working with this population, women of all income levels are represented as clients of the

agency. The demographic data is presented in chart form (see Table 1 and 2 below) for

each of the groups.

Table One

Demographic Information - Group One

Client	Age Category	Ethnicity	Employ-ment Status	Relship Status	# of Child'n	Household Income (thousands)
1	35-39	Caucasian	pt time	single	0	10 - 15
2	40-45	Caucasian	un-employed	divorced	1	< 6
3	45-50	Caucasian	full time	single	1	10 - 15
4*	35-39	Caucasian	disability	single	4	10 - 15
5*	40-45	Caucasian	pt. time	married	2	10 - 15
6*	30-35	Caucasian	un-employed	separated	0	20 - 25

Table Two

Demographic Information - Group Two

Client	Age Category	Ethnicity	Employ-ment Status	Relship Status	# of Child'n	Income Category (thousands)
1	40-45	Caucasian	pt. time	married	3	25 - 30
2	25-30	Caucasian	pt. time	common-law	0	6 - 10
3	45-40	Caucasian	full time	divorced	0	30 - 40
4	30-35	First Nations	full time	married	2	20 - 25
5*	45-50	Caucasian	pt. time	married	2	20 - 25

* Indicates drop-outs

Recruitment and Screening

Group participants were recruited from the pool of women already receiving

services at The Laurel Centre. In addition to being clients of the agency, women were

referred to the group by their individual counsellors on the basis of client interest and

appropriateness for the group.

Following therapist referral, a screening interview was utilized to further assure

compatibility. The interview provided an opportunity for potential group members and the

facilitator to meet with each other before the start of the group to discuss the goals,

purpose, structure, procedures, and logistics of the group, as well as its fit with the needs

and expectations of potential group members. The meeting also provided an opportunity

to address questions and concerns of interested parties about the group. While it was

anticipated that referring therapists would have identified factors contraindicating group

participation, the screening interview provided an additional opportunity to assess for

factors that could potentially render group unhelpful for the individual candidate or impact

negatively upon the group as a whole. Contraindications included aggression, acute

psychosis and severe substance abuse. Women also needed to be able to acknowledge the

abuse as real for themselves and others, as well as able to hear the pain and experiences of

others (Corey, 1997; Courtois, 1988). No individuals were screened out for these, or any

other reasons. (See Appendix A for a copy of the Screening Questions).

At the screening interviews information was also provided about the group as a

component of a Masters of Social Work degree. Such factors as the audio taping of

sessions, the evaluation procedures, and the written report were explained and the women

signed consent forms acknowledging this information as well as permission to use their experience as part of the practicum. It was noted both in the screening interview as well as on the consent form that the women were free to choose not to participate, or to withdraw their consent at any time and still be welcome in the group. No participant expressed reservations about the above, and all signed the consent forms (Appendix B). The screening interview concluded with the completion of the pre-group drawings which contributed to the assessment and evaluation of the group (detailed description provided in Chapters Four and Five). Screening interviews were generally one hour in length.

In total, eleven women participated in the intakes, and seven women completed the groups. One woman dropped out of the evening group before sessions started. Of the four women who started the evening group, all completed. In the morning group, two women dropped after the first session. One woman dropped individual counselling as well, and attempts to contact her were unsuccessful. The second woman found employment and for his reason did not return. Finally, a third woman dropped the morning group by the sixth week, having attended four sessions. Based on information she shared with the group, this move may have been precipitated by outside stressors and crisis. Attempts to reach her were also unsuccessful.

Co-Facilitators

The groups were co-facilitated by different individuals. The morning group was co-facilitated by another staff member of the agency who, coincidently was the most senior clinician on staff and also in the process of completing her Masters of Social Work

degree. The evening group was co-facilitated by a volunteer of the agency and graduate of

the Applied Counselling Program at Red River College. This volunteer had several years

of involvement with The Laurel Centre, and Dimensions of Self was the third group she

co-facilitated at the agency (the second associated with a practicum). Neither of the co-

facilitators were available for the screening interviews; however both were involved in pre-

group planning, and a period of debriefing following, each session.

Group Outline

The topics of the group can be conceptualized as falling into three main categories:

awareness, definition and integration. The awareness section, influenced by the ecological

model, worked to foster a consciousness of the ways in which sense of self is affected by

society, family and the sexual abuse. Topics associated with the second category were

ones that encouraged thought surrounding definition of self, including the importance of

feelings, getting in touch with the self, and relationships. The last two meetings before

closing focused on integration of the material covered and the various aspects of self,

including one session focussing on self-esteem, or valuing the aspects of self with which

the women connected and re-connected. (See Appendix C and D for group outline and

agenda).

The group utilized various ritualized activities in conjunction with the discrete

session exercises. Specifically, the group format always incorporated a check-in and a

check-out, an opening meditation, and concluding self-esteem technique. Further, the

importance of self care was emphasized with a self-care basket passed around the group at check-out.

The opening meditation was utilized as a manner of aiding the transition from the outside world to the work of the group by providing a space to breathe and connect with the self (for more information about the exercise, see Chapter Four). Check-in was a period in which group members were given uninterrupted space to say how they were feeling, what was happening for them in their lives, or anything else that felt significant to them to share with the group.

A section entitled "Leftovers" always followed check-in and provided the opportunity to addresses anything from the past week or weeks that the participants wanted. It was also the time that flip-chart notes from the previous week were distributed to the group.

A self-esteem technique was also incorporated into every group as an additional way of maintaining the focus on one of the group objectives, increasing self-esteem. The techniques were a series of short exercises or visualizations that were completed by the group members prior to check-out.

Check-out provided the same opportunity as check-in but at the end of each session. It gave the facilitators additional information about members' emotional status before leaving the group. Check-out was significant for safety reasons, and for additional information about the impact of the group in general. Check-out also incorporated the ritual of a self-care basket. As each member completed her check-out, she was encouraged to pick something from the basket, which contained items related to self-care (such as tea,

bathing bubbles and hand lotion for example). Items for the basket were initially provided

by the facilitator, but members assumed responsibility for continuing the basket for the

remainder of the group.

CHAPTER IV

THE GROUP PROCESS

The twelve sessions were designed such that the group was divided into three main sections, couched on either end by a week of introduction and a week to mark the group's ending. The three main sections pertained to awareness, self-definition, and integration. The awareness section, of four weeks duration, focused on examining contributing factors in personality development such as society, family, and the effects of child sexual abuse. It also began with one session generating awareness about the four aspects of self. The focus of the second section was on connecting, re-connecting and defining individual self-definition; this was also four weeks in length. The following two weeks were devoted to assimilating and integrating what had been addressed in group sessions.

This chapter provides a more detailed description of how each week of the group proceeded, specifically detailing information surrounding the exercises, how they were received, and general process issues. Details of discussions and identifying information have been omitted so as to protect the confidentiality of group members.

WEEK ONE: Introduction to Group

Week One involved multiple introductions; including of the group members to each other, of the co-facilitators to each group, and of the group in general. The four specific objectives of this first week were: (1) to introduce group members to each other and to the group process; (2) to begin developing safety and clarify group norms with the

group agreement; (3) to explore expectations and clarify what the group could realistically offer; and finally (4) to connect the concepts of self care and identity.

In both groups, the session began by welcoming the women and introducing the facilitators. The agenda had been printed on a flip chart, which was then reviewed so that group members would know what to expect from the remainder of the session. It is noted here that the agenda was printed and posted before every session, as well as reviewed orally at the beginning of each meeting. It was felt that providing such information could help allay anxiety group members may have been feeling by clarifying expectations for each session. Having the agenda posted was also helpful for keeping sections or exercises to appropriate time limits. When some sections inevitably went over time, it was also helpful to have a written agenda around which the group could then negotiate and consciously decide which direction was most beneficial or meaningful at that time.

After the agenda was reviewed, the concept of check-in was introduced, and the group members proceeded to check-in themselves, stating their name and how they were feeling. The two most often repeated themes of check-in were stated feelings of anxiety and anticipation about the start of the group. The differing dynamics of the morning and evening group deserve mention at this point, particularly as differences between them were already emerging by this time. Specifically, the morning group demonstrated significantly greater levels of comfort despite said anxiety. Two factors likely contributed to this observed difference. First, the morning group, consisting of seven women at Week One, was considerably larger than the evening group where only four women were present. The larger sized group likely added a component of safety and anonymity that was less

possible in the latter. Second, several of the women in the morning group already knew, or knew of, each other which appeared to create a level of comfort and security not present in the evening group where such connections clearly were not present. Thus, the differences that emerged in Week One largely surrounded apparent levels of comfort and joining.

The above differences meant that moving onto the group agreement was a natural and easy transition from check-in for the participants of the morning group; whereas two icebreaking exercises were added before it was possible to continue with this part of the agenda in the evening group. Thus, the group agreement (the compilation of operating rules designed to govern the actions and course of the group) was a lively and prolonged discussion in the morning group, where the women came together and talked about the kinds of things they needed in order to feel safe attending and comfortable participating in the group.

Already, a couple of the participants in the morning group began to take risks, with one participant sharing something that was identified in the screening interview as difficult to say, and another shared something potentially embarrassing. In both instances, the responses were positive, generating more discussion and opportunities for group members to identify with what was being said.

During the development of the group agreement, the members of the morning group continued to demonstrated ownership of their Agreement through a meticulous and democratic process of re-wording of some of the rules, reworking them as a group until phrased in such a manner as to reflect a more positively worded list. For example, no

interrupting was changed to "Be mindful of interrupting. Wait for own turn to speak" and no touching was changed to "Be aware of touch and respect the boundaries of others." In total, 16 rules were devised and revised in the morning group. The evening group was considerably more reserved with this exercise, but did articulate nine rules with the encouragement of both facilitators.

A break followed the Group Agreement and again the differences between the two groups were noticeable. The morning group chatted loudly and easily over their coffee, even leaving the building as a group to continue their discussion outside while some of the group members smoked. Phone numbers were also reported to have been exchanged. While those in the morning group were given two time reminders, the participants of the evening group, by comparison, sat silently in the front room looking into their coffee cups and then congregated back in the group room of their own accord.

Similar dynamics were again observed while group members talked about their expectations for the group. The discussion that ensued from this exercise was so meaningful to the women in the morning group, that the section on self care was shortened and amended as homework so as to allow time for it to continue.

The groups concluded with a Self Esteem Technique, a visualization called the Five Finger Exercise, in which the women were instructed to think about times in their lives when they felt loved, successful, of having done something nice for another, and a memory of loving someone or something (for example a pet) else. Both groups experienced some difficulty with this exercise, with the morning group having a significantly more adverse reaction than the evening group. This was perhaps due in part

to the comfort level of the participants, and existing differences in self esteem (those who expressed the most discomfort with the exercise also tended to have scored lower on the RES). Interestingly however, although the reaction was more subdued than in the morning group, indication to the co-facilitators of such problems were identified sooner by the evening group, with one member sharing her reaction directly following the exercise. In the morning group, discussion of the Self Esteem Technique took place in Week Two following telephone calls between the participants and reports to individual counsellors of the experienced difficulty. Solutions also differed. The evening group, who expressed milder reaction to the Technique, decided to change some of the language so that it was not as strong. For example, feeling loved was changed to a time when they felt cared for or a time when another had done a kind deed for them. The word successful was modified to reflect "a time when you accomplished something or took a step forward in your life." The morning group however opted to not repeat this particular visualization.

The Self Esteem Technique was followed by check-out and the passing of the Self Care Basket. Overall, the objectives of the first session were met. The morning group started strongly and joined quickly, while the evening group followed a slower and more expected course of group development. The existence of a larger group and prior relationships between some of the women likely aided the morning group in assuming their power fairly easily and early. These women demonstrated significant risks during the group agreement and expectations sections, asking for what they needed. That this did not occur following the Self Esteem Technique may have been partly a function of time, which was short in the morning group. By contrast, the most significant risk of the evening

group occurred in response to the Five Finger Exercise, which perhaps was a function of increasing comfort with the passage of more time.

WEEK TWO: Self

The focus of the second week was an introduction of the four aspects of self, a model providing a definitive structure within which to heighten awareness of parts of the self and the balance between them. The objectives of the session were: (1) to introduce the participants to the four aspects of self and explore it within the context of their lives; (2) to introduce and discuss the concept of balance; and (3) to continue to build group safety.

Participants were welcomed to the second session, the topic of the day was introduced and the group opened with the meditation "Becoming a Creative Channel" (Gawain 1998). An opening meditation was utilized every session thereafter, consisting of a short breathing and relaxation exercise, followed by a passage focusing on the establishment of a connection with the self. The opening meditation was thus used as a ritualized signal to mark the start of each session, with the purpose of aiding the focus of attention and energy on the self and the purposes of the group. The transition from the demands and busyness of everyday life were thus recognized and it was hoped that the meditation would help to encourage such a shift. This particular meditation was used most frequently. It was selected because of its emphasis on trusting as well as connecting with the self, and was therefore considered to convey an empowering and positive message.

Check-in for both groups revealed sadness and low levels of energy for various reasons. A second theme running through check-in of both groups was reduced anxiety

than the week before. In the morning group difficultly with the previous week's Self

Esteem Technique was brought up and agreed to be discussed in the time allotted to

"leftovers". It is noted that had a group member not brought this up in check-in, the

facilitators were also planning to raise this issue in Leftovers, based upon feedback from

individual counsellors about some members' reactions to it. The conclusion reached by the

morning group, to leave this particular exercise out (but continue with other self-esteem

techniques) was addressed above in Week One.

Leftovers, mentioned above, was a period of time reserved every week to discuss

anything from the previous week or weeks. For Week Two, the flipchart notes from Week

One were distributed, including the typed version of the group agreement, which was

again reviewed. It was emphasized that discussion surrounding changes or additions to the

agreement would be welcome throughout the remainder of the group.

The Four Dimensions of Self were introduced with the aid of a large flipchart

diagram. Description of the different aspects as well as examples of each were discussed

as a group. The concept of balance was also discussed, however it was acknowledged that

imbalance was a common experience among group members, which simply provided

information about other aspects of life that could benefit from additional attention. The

co-facilitator of the morning group presented the notion of balance as a place we visit, not

live in, as an attempt to really normalize the anticipated imbalance in a population known

to be self-critical.

The women were asked to complete a journalling exercise focussing individual

thought on the four aspects of self and then a collage exercise in which the participants

were asked to use visual images representing existing or desired parts of themselves in each aspect. Both exercises were then debriefed together. Although there was some variation, many of the women expressed difficulty with these exercises. Some participants reported shock at the imbalance represented on their collages. Others reported difficulty stemming from the expectation that they find specifically positive aspects with which to depict themselves. Confusion partly centred around the word "attribute", which appeared in the journalling exercise (for example; how would I describe my physical attributes?"). Some of the women reported that they had found it difficult to respond to a question they interpreted as reflecting self-acceptance or self-esteem.

The exercises therefore provided several opportunities for the groups. First, they provided clarification that identity is not solely the "positive" or socially acceptable strengths we possess, but also a compilation of facts, vulnerabilities, challenges and experiences. Second (and perhaps more so with the evening group) they gave the women permission to be genuine, and to not have to package or present themselves as perfect or invulnerable. Third, they gave the group the opportunity to discuss what it was that made it difficult as women and survivors to recognize or speak their strengths. Fortunately, having been prepared for this response based on the morning group's reaction, more thought as well as room for discussion was made in the evening group than was available in the morning session.

In summary, the women were introduced to the Four Aspects of Self model, which brought up issues providing opportunities to talk seriously about identity and feelings. The issue of balance was also addressed, and interestingly several participants in the evening

group spontaneously named self-care tasks for the week addressing aspects of themselves

that could benefit from more attention. Finally, safety in the group was formally addressed

with the reiteration of the group agreement. It is believed that it was becoming clearer that

the group was a safe place in which to bring up challenges; such as with the self esteem

technique and the aspects of self exercises.

WEEK THREE: Society and Sense of Self

The third session of the group was devoted to exploring the influence of society on

self. Objectives of the session included: (1) to explore the messages and expectations of

women in society; (2) to begin thinking about the impact of such messages on an

individual level; (3) to encourage the distinction between societal injunctions and our own

truth; and (4) to encourage connection with this truth.

Following the ritualized ways of starting the group, check-in was introduced by

emphasizing the idea that it was okay to feel whatever each member was feeling at that

moment, and that whatever they were bringing to group with them was a part of what

made them who they were. It was iterated that all feelings were welcome and that

members did not need to pretend that things were okay if they were not. This was done to

help establish and emphasize a group norm that genuine feelings were okay and could be

recognized by the group. This statement seemed to be appreciated by the women, some of

whom then talked openly about the dilemma they had been experiencing thinking about

what to present to the group that session.

The brainstorms in both groups generated many ideas as well as shared and lived experiences surrounding the messages the women had received about who they were and should be in this world. Laughter and feelings of anger were expressed by both groups. Mason's model of Women's Growth (Mason, 1991) was then discussed and seemed to be well received. This model, which speaks to connection with the self apart from externally generated layers of messages and beliefs, stimulated an interesting discussion in the evening group about factors that make it difficult to honour inner truth, especially messages from family and friends that women who do so are selfish. The pressure the women were facing to un-do changes they experienced as positive were shared amongst the group members.

The group ended with a Self Worth Visualization, and the members checked-out. The morning group reported a significant shift in affect with an earlier exercise, stating they felt it was positive and empowering. The comments of the evening group included commentary surrounding the risks taken in group that night, with some of the quieter members sharing more than they had previously.

In summary, the group explored societal messages about women. Throughout the night, the group members talked about their own experiences with societal injunctions in their lives. The value of such validation can not be underestimated. In the process, the members of the evening group began to demonstrate increased risk taking. It was also noted from client comments that the session was perceived as empowering and positive. This affirmed the overall design of the group, in which difficult topics were addressed, then followed by exercises designed to emphasize empowerment, choice, and agency.

WEEK FOUR: Family and Sense of Self

Week Four of the Aspects of Self group focused awareness on family-of-origin. Specifically, the objectives included: (1) to explore of the influence of family on the development of self; (2) to allow a space for grieving; (3) to encourage the use of present strengths to help nurture and support old wounds; and (4) to encourage self-care.

It was anticipated that this session would be a difficult one for the participants. The focus on family began with a brainstorm which asked the group to collaborate in a discussion about what children need in order to develop a healthy sense of self. Not surprisingly, members of both groups connected with a lot of sadness and loss as they compiled lists of needs and rights that many had not received themselves through neglect and violation.

The second half of the group involved a choice between journalling or art exercises. Both exercises, while recognizing the very real losses in each of the women's lives, encouraged concepts of re-parenting and self-care. For example, the journalling exercise asked the participants to think about what their lives might have been like with perfect nurturing, and once specific examples were generated, asked the women to think about ways that they could then give such that to themselves in the present. The art exercise was similar and involved the creation of a card to help soothe and nurture the self.

Overall, many intense feelings of loss were expressed in this session. It was noted however that throughout both groups, members began to address one another directly and expressed clear support of one another, thus demonstrating one of the many values of group work. Joining, a continuing process in the evening group was also observed during

break, which until this time had continued to appear uncomfortable and quiet. This evening however the women were observed to be conversing easily together for the first time. They also organized amongst themselves a system of transportation home so that none of them would have to walk alone at night. This system remained for the duration of the twelve weeks.

In summary, the objectives of the night were addressed. In addition to connecting with feelings and strengths, it was interesting to note the continued development of group dynamics. Specifically, the groups had progressed to the point where the individual members truly acted supportively of one another. It was also at this point that the power of the joining occurring between the members of the evening group showed signs of catching up to that of the morning group.

WEEK FIVE: Child Sexual Abuse and Sense of Self

The focus of Week Five was to explore the impact of child sexual abuse upon one's sense of self. While there were many different ways to approach this, the identification and function of coping mechanisms, and specifically parts of the self or personality that developed in response to the abuse, were addressed. The objectives of the session were thus: (1) to explore the impact of child sexual abuse on identity formation; (2) to introduce the concept of protective parts and explore it on an individual level; (3) to normalize such parts as coping mechanisms; (4) to introduce the idea of updating these parts; and (5) to encourage self care.

Check-in revealed a large mix of feelings, ranging from reports of positive

developments in the lives of the participants, to feelings of apprehension about the topic

itself, and feelings of hopelessness in general. The topic was not a surprise to the women

as each participant had been provided with an outline of the sessions in the screening

interview. Exploring the expressed apprehension in the evening group, however, revealed

questions surrounding the value of exploring the topic, thus opening the group to

discussion surrounding both the merits and the fears. Each woman contributed to the

discussion, however in hindsight, more attention to and elaboration surrounding safety

would have been beneficial at this time.

The session continued with a brief introduction by the facilitators discussing the

impact of trauma on the self. The concept of protective parts was introduced and then the

women worked together on a brainstorm identifying numerous examples of protective

parts (such as perfectionism, people pleasing, distance, or control, for example). The

brainstorm enabled further discussion, awareness and clarification surrounding this

concept. A guided visualization (Napier, 1990) was then read to the groups, eventually

taking the women through an exploration of the qualities, features and function of one

protective part of their choice. The genesis of this part was next explored, specifically by

asking the women to recall a childhood memory that would help explain its existence.

Appreciation for this part of the self was then suggested, as well as a dialogue explaining

the ways circumstances had changed since childhood for the participant. It was explained

that while protection was still important, updating was now an option to better aid both

functioning and protection.

In debriefing this exercise, out of both groups, only one individual actually participated in the entire visualization. The majority of the women discussed either uncontrollable distraction, or conscious decisions to stay in the safe places of visualization. This development, while unexpected, allowed room for some more discussion about the nature of protective parts, including the role of distraction itself as a protective mechanism. The experiences of the women, both conscious and unconscious were framed as methods of maintaining safety and they were reinforced for doing what was needed for themselves. In retrospect, it was recognized that because only one member followed the visualization, safety was not fully established prior to this exercise and thus a thorough discussion surrounding it clearly would have been beneficial.

In a final analysis, the women were introduced to the concept of protective parts, these parts were discussed and normalized, and the idea of updating was also introduced. That the exercise did not develop as anticipated does not negate this. What was learned from the perspective of facilitation extends beyond acknowledging and exploring expressions of apprehension, and to follow-through with thorough safety planning.

WEEK SIX: Feelings

Week Six marked a shift in focus for the group from one of awareness of past influences on identity development, to self-discovery. The topic for this session was feelings, and the specific objectives were: (1) to help develop awareness of the connection between feelings and identity; (2) to normalize difficulty experiencing feelings; and (3) to provide an opportunity to connect with and feel them in a safe environment.

Check-in revealed that the group members were in a variety of different places this week. It was noted in the process notes that acceptance was demonstrated by the members about how each was doing, specifically that the expression of both positive and difficult experiences and feelings seemed to be okay both to share and to hear.

The topic of the session was introduced with the aid of a large group brainstorm, in which the women talked about and responded to three main questions: What is a feeling; What about feelings cause discomfort; and finally, Why are feelings important. The two groups differed significantly from one another in their approach to this exercise. The morning group addressed this brainstorm with much energy and confidence, while the evening group required a significantly greater teaching component. For example, much time was devoted to addressing what feelings were, and several examples of the kinds of body signals generally associated with specific feelings, such as anger, sadness and confidence were also discussed.

The guided visualization (BC Ministry of Health, 1991) was then utilized to aid awareness and exploration of sensations and feelings that the women were experiencing. Reports from debriefing this exercise revealed that the women had connected with a vast range of feelings, and with one exception, had experienced these in a rich and constructive way. A self-esteem technique was completed and the women checked-out. Overall the session appeared to have been largely positive for most of the women, with those in the morning group reporting feeling energized and the evening group largely commenting about having learned something new.

Overall, the affect of the groups seemed to reflect the shift away from some of the more difficult sessions associated with the awareness section, to interest generated by the self-discovery and connection phase. The mood of the groups seemed lighter, although the work was clearly continuing. The connection between feelings and identity, difficulty feeling feelings as well as other challenges associated with them were addressed in the sessions. Finally the women were also provided the opportunity to feel feelings in a safe way. In this manner, the objectives of the session were recognized.

WEEK SEVEN: Authentic Self

The topic of the session was connection with the self. The objectives were: (1) to increase self-awareness and self-definition; (2) to encourage exploration and connection with many aspects of the self; and finally (3) to incorporate concepts of balance and empowerment with choices to make time and create opportunities to experience the self.

Check-in for this session varied in that the women were additionally asked what they would be if they could be anything. This exercise (Cameron, 1992) used gut responses and fantasy as a guide for information about the self. Whatever surfaces in response can then be incorporated into everyday life in either large or small ways as a way of honouring and satisfying that part of the self. The answers were thus framed as either being attainable themselves, or as representing qualities that were. Interestingly, one woman in each group said they would be Oprah. When explored further, both women identified Oprah as a survivor of child sexual abuse who embodied qualities they admired, such as bravery, being outspoken, compassionate and strong.

The first main exercise of the session was a journalling exercise in which the women were asked to respond to a series of questions about things they liked, enjoyed and wanted for example. The morning group reported this exercise to have been positive. They appeared to work hard on it and seemed to take pleasure in sharing it with the group. The evening group however reported feeling blocked, specifically by the first two questions which mentioned childhood. The difficulty thinking about things associated with childhood was recognized and the women were asked to consider what they needed in order to complete the exercise. The women decided that the use of present tense would help, and so they changed questions such as "my favourite childhood toy was..." to "my favourite toy is..." In this manner the women were able to complete the journalling exercise.

This first exercise served as a warm up for the second, a collage asking the women to create a symbol of their hopes, dreams, likes, dislikes, goals or even images or textures that appealed to them. The women were encouraged to go with whatever came to mind and to be messy if they wanted to be. This comment was later reported by the evening group to be liberating and helpful in doing the exercise. The collages of the different women took various forms and reflected a variety of different things that made them happy, that they liked, dreamed about or were their goals. For one individual in particular, this exercise represented a significant moment of empowerment, acceptance of personal responsibility, and expressed determination to create the future that she wanted for herself.

Overall, the session was reported to have been positive and empowering. The women seemed to take the sessions seriously, and appeared to work hard. Such responsibility for gains from the group was reinforced by the honest identification of

blocks, and their subsequent commitment to problem solving around it. I believe this

represents a level of safety and trust that genuine sharing was truly accepted and

responded to - a group norm that developed early in the group.

Following the self-esteem technique, the women took turns once again checking-

out. An interesting development was a couple of members mentioning ways in which they

had begun to incorporate various aspects of the group that they had found significant and

meaningful into their everyday lives away from the agency. As the facilitator, this was

positive feedback to hear.

WEEK EIGHT: Authentic Self

The topic of week eight was again on connecting with the self. Specific objectives

included: (1) to focus on self-awareness and definition of self; (2) to utilize of the

unconscious to access information about the self; and (3) to introduce the concept of the

future self as a resource for growth and self-actualization.

Check-in with the group again revealed that the women were in a variety of

different places with respect to feelings and experiences from the week. A few women

from each group spoke about noticing things they liked in the past week and then used this

as information to nurture their selves. One participant also talked about the significance of

the previous session, and reported what she had done in the past week to work towards

the vision of her future that she had identified in the past week. Throughout, the group

members demonstrated support and encouragement for one another.

The main exercise of week eight was to introduce and connect with a concept referred to as the future self (Napier, 1990). The future self is a concept designed to serve as a resource that can guide accomplishments by focusing awareness on what is wanted, and what is needed to achieve it. It can also be used as a resource of support in more challenging times. The idea is that comfort and answers come from within the individual to support and guide her. It should be noted that when introduced to the groups, it was emphasized that the most important feature of the future self is that it has learned everything we ever need to know about self-acceptance and love, and offers support and encouragement as opposed to "shoulds" or criticism.

A guided visualization was used to provide the opportunity for members to connect with their future self. The morning group reported the visualization as a positive exercise that had helped them connect with feelings of relaxation, calm and hope. One participant expressed the intention to remember such feelings during more challenging periods. Similar however to the protective parts visualization, the evening group did not find this exercise easy to do. There were reports of distraction, headaches, tension and one conscious decision to remain in the safe place of the visualization. When asked what might have made this exercise so difficult, the women reported frustration with all the work they saw ahead and thus found the idea of a future self discouraging. Perhaps this reflects a basic difference of the place the women in the two groups were. For example, the women in the morning group were coincidentally, all in late stages of counselling, while the evening group represented more of a mix, with two of the participants in earlier stages.

Perhaps it is harder to see ahead that far in earlier stages of healing, or perhaps it is interpreted as negating real feelings of pain and hurt to introduce such concepts of hope.

In summary, while groups were introduced to the concept, how it was received differed. Either way, the concepts were presented to be utilized in the future if desired. It is the belief here that the women knew what was best for themselves, and could select what fit and what did not for themselves.

WEEK NINE: Relationships as Mirrors

Week nine, looking at relationships, progressed for the evening group but was cancelled for the morning group due to poor attendance. The session objectives were: (1) to use relationships to stimulate thinking and provide information about the self; (2) to increase awareness of relationship patterns that may exist; and (3) to increase personal power and balance through awareness and choice of the above.

Check-in revealed some concern and anxiety around the approaching holiday season (Christmas), a difficult time for most of the members of the group. Discussion centred around what could be done that would make the holidays more congruent with the needs of the members as they shared the struggle between shutting down to do what was expected of them and honouring the self. Again, the group validated the experiences and feelings of each other.

The topic of the evening surrounded relationships and our experiences of them which can be used as information about ourselves and for our own growth. The analogy was made that relationships were like mirrors, with the power to reflect back either parts

of ourselves or information about ourselves. The concept of primary and disowned selves (Gawain, 1998) was then introduced and the women worked on two journalling exercises. The participants discovered as they completed this exercise that people who bothered them tended to hold qualities that they did not consider either part of themselves or capable of having. For example, one theme that tended to come up through the session was dislike of people who were carefree, open and spontaneous. As this was examined, the participants were asked to question if there was a small part of themselves that was like this too, and that needed expression in their own lives. A second theme that arose was interpersonal problems with people who were controlling or selfish. Again, it was questioned if there would be any benefit in taking on a little more selfishness or control in their own lives. Because this was considered a negative trait, some care was taken to reframe such words to reflect a much smaller version of selfishness or control, like self care and boundaries.

The women unanimously reported that the session had been of interest to them. A couple of members reported that the concept had been difficult to grasp at first; however, they also valued this as a new perspective. As far as joining was continuing, it is noted in the process recording that it was harder and harder each week to get the women back from break.

WEEK TEN: Self Esteem

The focus of week ten was on self-esteem, and in particular to recognize and work with critical parts of the self, called The Critic. Specific objectives included: (1) to

connect the Critic with childhood abuse; (2) to normalize the existence of the Critic; (3) to encourage self-care of old wounds; and (4) to encourage connection with resource parts of the self. In addition, this session also marked a transition to the final stages of the group.

The women checked-in, again touching on a variety of experiences and feelings. In the Leftovers section, plans for the final session were finalized in the morning group. The evening group had been struggling over the past few weeks to find or express ideas for the final session, and so the group brainstormed possibilities and decided to finalize plans in week eleven.

The Critic exercises began with a group brainstorm recording the messages the women had heard as children, while the facilitators recorded them on the flip-chart super-imposed over the image of a woman. The exercise was to visually demonstrate the difficulty discerning the self when critical messages and beliefs covered the individual on the flip chart. As anticipated, this part of the session was marked by intense feelings of grief and anger as the women saw and shared the messages they had heard as children. This brainstorm was followed by an exercise asking the women to draw a picture of their critic, externalized and contained for safety reasons. The art produced by the morning group depicted powerful images of colourful puke and intestines, jail houses, pits and even a brain to represent how malignant and yet clever the Critic was. The evening group did not fully participate in the art exercise, with only one woman fully completing the exercise. It was noted that the emotions of the evening group were significantly more intense in response to the brainstorm, and that getting in touch with this pain was difficult for them.

A guided visualization next led participants to attend to old wounds that had helped form the genesis of the Critic; this was well received by the women of both groups. The significance in going back and healing old wounds was reported as a powerful experience for the women, one which was said to be soothing as well as empowering. The women reported visualizing various healing and nurturing strategies.

The evening closed with a self-esteem technique and check-out. The morning group reported that the exercises and the session were positive. The evening group acknowledged the difficult feelings that had been experienced that night, and expressed gratitude to other group members for having a place for them to be heard. Finally, feelings of empowerment and control in the healing image of the meditations were also acknowledged by both groups.

WEEK ELEVEN: Integration

Week eleven was designed to aid recognition of the many accomplishments of the eleven weeks, and also to complete the working stage of the group. Specific objectives were: (1) to review the work and growth of the participants; (2) to connect all the parts of the self as existing in and comprising the larger self; and (3) to transition to the group conclusion.

In check-in, members from both groups mentioned the meditations from the previous week, stating again that it was experienced as positive and healing. With respect to the upcoming final session, plans had been finalized in the morning group for some time; however the evening group still needed to decide and organize how they planned to

mark the closing celebration. It was observed by the facilitators that since the subject was first mentioned, group members became very quiet. When asked what feelings surrounded planning for the final group, members expressed valuing the connections they had made and the loss that last group represented for them. Members shared their experiences of isolation and feelings of separateness in every day life and thus the significance of the group connections between them. From this, the group decided upon a way of closing that would be meaningful of and signify the connections which they had come to value. The possibility of continuing with a coffee night once a month was also discussed by the group.

The main exercise of the session was to again ask the group members to think about the question; "Who am I?" and then to depict that in their art. After the drawing was completed, the original drawing from the screening sessions was made available and participants were asked to journal their impressions about the two pictures. Finally, the group took turns sharing what they had drawn and their responses to it. Overall, both groups perceived themselves to have made significant, positive changes in their self-concept over the duration of the group. The tone was overwhelmingly positive, and laughter was common both during the exercise and in sharing it.

The self-esteem technique, "Turn Offs & Turn Ons" (MaKay, Fanning, Honeychurch & Sutker, 1999) was read, and all but one member reported appreciating the messages and visualizations of the meditation. In the technique, self esteem was likened to a basement control room where the participants proceeded to turn off old, rusty pipes supplying negative self images, cutting off the power to an old electrical supply box, an old fashioned telephone switchboard, and public address system. The meditation also

guided the women through a series of events that turned on new pipes, electrical boxes,

plugged in modern telephones, and stereo speakers that represented a positive self-image.

The women then proceeded to check-out of the group, expressing positive comments

about the session and each other.

This group marked the official transition to the ending stage, and feelings about

this were explored and recognized. Certainly the connections formed between the women

were experienced as a significant component of the group. The women also had the

opportunity to review their work and growth in the group as a way of addressing,

consolidating and integrating the sessions, and transitioning to the ending phase.

WEEK TWELVE: Closing Celebration

The objectives of the final session were: (1) to recognize and celebrate the work of

the group members; (2) to allow an opportunity for them to say good-bye to each other

and the group in a manner they found meaningful; and (3) to give the participants an

opportunity to provide feedback about their experience in the group.

Both groups had decided upon eating together for the last session, sharing

breakfast in the morning group and supper in the evening. In both groups, the women

chose to eat first, and feedback forms were left in each member's place to fill out as

desired. Most of the participants filled them out prior to the start of the group. After

eating, the morning group decided upon making affirmation cards both for themselves and

the other members of the group as gifts. It was expressed that this would help them to

remember their strengths and each other during more difficult times. The evening group

decided to make candles as a concrete image and reminder of the connections they had

made in group. While all the members wanted to make the candles, one member brought

the supplies and her expertise as a gift for the others. The remaining group members also

exchanged gifts; including offerings of poems, pictures and cards.

Both groups were punctuated with laughter. When by the end of the final session

the members of the evening group had completed their candles, one was lit from a centre

candle that had been present throughout the twelve weeks of group, and the flame was

then passed from candle to candle around the circle. It was quiet as the members blew out

their flames with silent wishes and good intentions for each other. It took some time for

the members of both groups to leave the building, and in connection with the sadness and

loss, good wishes and gratitude were expressed for both the group and especially the

connections made within it.

Summary of Group Process

Overall, the objectives of each session were met, despite some exercises presenting

challenges to the participants. This section will again touch upon such difficulties, however

within the framework of summarizing larger themes of differences and similarities in group

process between the two groups.

One of the most prominent differences that emerged between the two groups was

the differential progression of the developmental stages of the group. Specifically, the

evening group required more time to join, while in the morning group this was observed to

occur surprisingly quickly. The evening group, perhaps as a function of increased time in

joining did not seem to experience a "storming" phase and moved directly to the working

stage. The factors that likely contributed to these differences have already been addressed,

however it remained a significant enough difference to warrant mention here again.

The second difference between the groups was the composition of participants,

with those in the morning group coincidently being in later stages of counselling at the

agency. The evening group represented more of a mix and generally they were all in earlier

stages of healing. This difference manifested in two observable ways in the process notes.

First, the evening group required more of a teaching component associated with various

concepts and exercises. Second, more attention to safety was needed in the evening group

than in the morning. Such things as mention of the past, or difficult topics tended to

trigger significantly more intense emotion in the evening group.

A difficulty that existed in both groups were challenges with self-esteem and

exercises either directly addressing, or perceived to be addressing this. Such difficulties

were attributed to their experiences as women and as survivors of child sexual abuse. The

women were encouraged to identify such blocks when they appeared so that they could be

discussed, and problem solving around such challenges was encouraged. Often the women

were asked to consult their own inner wisdom in responding to what was needed to

proceed with the exercises.

That the women did such problem solving reflected an important component of the

group, that of empowerment. Another similarity between the two groups was their

willingness to address and deal with difficult topics. The women experienced intense

emotions throughout the group, and demonstrated the ability to be genuine about such

experiences, courage, and the ability to be supportive for one another. Certainly the

connections formed between the members were a significant component of the process

identified by both groups. These connections likely made the genuine sharing of difficult

experiences safer. In a final analysis, the women in both groups demonstrated a variety of

qualities and significant strengths.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION OF GROUP PARTICIPANT CHANGE

Evaluation Methodology

In this praticum, several forms of evaluation were used to assess clinical change.

Based on the literature about the long-term effects of child sexual abuse and on the goals

of this group intervention, self-esteem and self-definition of group members were the two

relevant constructs warranting evaluation. Client perceptions of group helpfulness and

satisfaction were assessed using The Laurel Center Group Feedback Form.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Quantitative data was collected via a standardized measure of self-esteem. The

advantages of incorporating a standardized measure include comparison of client data with

a point of reference (a group norm) as well as the existence of tested and demonstrated

reliability and validity. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a 10 item,

standardized measure of global self-esteem (See Appendix E). As a global, or

unidimensional measure (Bagley, Bolitho & Bertrand, 1997; Gray-Little, Williams &

Hancock, 1997; Hagborg,1993; Hagborg, 1996; & Shelvin, Bunting & Lewis, 1995), it

assesses self-esteem as an overall singular construct, as opposed to assessing self-esteem

in specific content areas, such as school or work. As it relates to the groups conducted,

the relevance of the RSES is its ability to evaluate overall positive and negative attitudes

surrounding self-concept. Thus, while the content or definition of self was accessed

through art, the RSES was employed to help assess the evaluation of such self-concept.

One advantage of the RSES is its status as one of the most widely used measures

of self-esteem (Bagley, Bolitho & Bertrand, 1997; Gray-Little, Williams & Hancock,

1997; Hagborg,1993; Hagborg, 1996; & Shelvin, Bunting & Lewis, 1995). Aspects of the

measure which likely contribute to its popularity include its brevity, ease of scoring and

simplified language. Because of it's popularity, the RSES has also been the subject of

much testing and scrutiny surrounding reliability and validity issues. Specifically, recent

studies report alpha levels surrounding internal consistency which range from .84 to .88

(Bagley et al, 1997; Gray-Little et al 1997; & Hagborg, 1996). Reports of the RSES test-

retest reliability range from r=.82 to r=.88 (Gray-Little et al, 1997; & Wylie, 1973).

Because the measure has been widely utilized, some information is also available that

addresses cross-cultural reliability. Specifically, the measure has been validated in the

United States, Canada, Hong Kong and with French speaking Canadian populations

(Bagley et al, 1997).

With respect to the validity of the RSES, the measure clearly demonstrates face

validity (Rosenberg, 1965; & Gray-Little et al; 1997). For information examining

concurrent validity, Hagborg's (1993 & 1997) research favourably surrounds comparison

of the RSES with other established inventories of self-esteem. Construct validity of the

measure includes research investigating indices suggesting convergent validity, such as

peer group reputation, participation and leadership, interpersonal attitudes, concern with

broader society as well as occupational values and aspirations (Rosenberg, 1965). Support

for discriminant validity has been associated with depression, anxiety, interpersonal insecurity and parental disinterest (Rosenberg, 1965). More recently, Bagley et al (1997) have demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity through associations with various problem behaviour categories, family relationships, school climate, as well as physical and sexual victimization.

As a final note, the RSES is a well established, tested and popular measure of self-esteem which has also satisfied various investigations surrounding reliability and validity. Having said this, it is important to remain cognizant of self-esteem as an internal construct residing within complex human existence and experience. As such, it is recognized that no measure may ever fully capture the self-esteem of humans. For example, the obvious face validity of the measure could conceivably leave it vulnerable to distortion. The potential for such distortion was however minimized by assurances of confidentiality, careful instructions, and information surrounding the use of such information. In a final analysis, the RSES has demonstrated validity and reliability, and the advantages of it include a quick, simple and easy to understand assessment of generalized self-esteem. It was believed that participants would be more likely to participate in the evaluation component of the practicum in the absence of extensive, involved and complicated testing. Further to this, the RSES was completed by the participants on two occasions; first in the screening interview, and again during the last week of group.

<u>Self-Portraits</u>

Attempts were made to locate an appropriate standardized measure with which to

assess self-definition; however, certain limitations existed which restricted the use of such

a measure. First, many existing measures of self-concept or self-definition were developed

strictly for a child, school-attending population. A second difficulty encountered in the

search for measures to evaluate this construct was that they appeared to be better suited

to an assessment of self-esteem than self-definition as defined here. In light of these

limitations, and given the highly individual, subjective, and intangible nature of this

particular construct, it seemed natural to utilize a qualitative approach for this component

of the evaluation.

As such, an open-ended, qualitative measure was designed for the purpose of

assessing self-definition of the participants both before and following the group. The

value of this format is that it was responsive to the subjective and introspective nature of

self-definition. Drawings were utilized to access information surrounding client perception

and understanding of self. Specifically, first at the screening interview and then again at the

eleventh session, members were asked to draw a picture illustrating how they define

themselves. The women were specifically asked to think about the question "Who am I"

and then to draw whatever came to mind. The question was open ended to allow room for

whatever came up for the participants. Pencils, crayons, pencil crayons, markers, paints

and pastels in a wide range of colours were made available for this endeavour.

Many advantages are associated with this mode of information gathering. The use

of art as both an assessment and psychotherapy tool has been used in the past and in

recent years has been gaining popularity with practioners (Oster and Gould, 1987). In addition to accessing unique, subjective and individual information surrounding self-concept, art also allows access to material and information via a mode of communication frequently not as well developed in people as are verbal forms of communication. As an alternate method of data collection, it is thought that art can sometimes access different kinds of information that may not otherwise surface in more standard formats. For example, Oster and Gould (1987) write that;

> " For most people, drawings are a less common avenue of
> expression and are therefore less likely to be controlled,
> allowing more pre- and unconscious material to be revealed.
> In that drawing provides a platform for individuals to expand
> their repertoire beyond their usual narrow sphere senses,
> unexpected things result ... Drawing provides a vehicle for
> gaining insight into underlying conflicts, ego strength, and
> character traits. " (p.10)

Participants were asked to participate in this exercise before and near the end of the twelve weeks. Following time to complete the illustrations, the women were asked to share and talk about their drawings. Clients' understanding and interpretation of their own artwork provided information considered fundamentally important to the evaluation process.

Drawings were kept by the facilitator and reproduced for the evaluation. Originals were returned to clients in the weeks following the completion of the groups. In addition to group members' own interpretations, the illustrations were observed for themes. For example, such qualities as spontaneity, space, medium, colour, organization, effort, line quality, proportions, integration and shading were observed in addition to literal content

and subjective client meaning. Behaviour of the participants as they responded to the exercise was also observed for any potential information, such as insecurity, tempo and affect. The evaluation included vigilance for broad themes emerging from the group as a whole, as well as any potential similarities or changes on an individual level.

The Laurel Centre Group Feedback Form

The Laurel Centre Group Feedback Form is a short questionnaire consisting of 14 questions. It is policy that it be utilized following every group offered by the agency. The benefits of the form are that it evaluates participant satisfaction with the group content, process, membership and facilitation, all of which are important information to both the facilitators and the agency. The form itself is comprised of three different response formats. First, a 10 point Likert scale is used, with responses ranging from 1 "Not At All" to 10 "Very." Questions include such items as, "Were your expectations met?" and "Did you feel safe in the group?" The measure also uses a "Yes" or "No" answer format assessing such factors as length, format, composition and content of the group. Finally, the client satisfaction questionnaire poses five open-ended questions which give respondents an expanded opportunity to specify what was or was not helpful, as well as their perception of change (See Appendix F).

Clinical Evaluation Results

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The RSES was employed as a measure of global self-esteem. The measure was

administered first in the screening interview and then again during the final session of the

twelve week group. Given a sample size of seven the data obtained from this measure was

not analysed statistically, but was viewed directly to examine patterns. For visual

representation of the findings, see Figures 1, 2 and 3. This section reports observed trends,

differences and similarities in the pre and post test scores for individuals within and

between each group respectively.

Pre and post group data for completers:

Viewing the data gathered from the morning group it is interesting to note that the

women obtained identical RSES scores on the pre-test. Further to this it is also noted that

at 31 (out of a possible 40) these scores are relatively high (note that higher RSES scores

are thought to represent higher levels of measured self-esteem). While the scores from the

participants of the morning group are uniform and high, the women in the evening group

demonstrated greater variation in their pre-test RSES scores, ranging eleven points from

the lowest score of 16 to the highest at 27. In addition to greater variation, none of the

participants in the evening group scored as high as those in the morning group. The

overall pre-test means of the two groups are 31 for the morning and 21 for the evening,

representing a difference of ten points between the two groups.

The post-test RSES scores are also interesting for the differences that continued to exist between the groups. The overall mean of the evening group remained exactly the same at 31 (with one woman demonstrating a slight increase, and another a slight decrease while the third maintains the balance). The overall mean of the evening group however demonstrated a significant upwards shift from 21 to 26.75. One participant in the evening group maintained the same level as her pre-test, however the scores of remaining three women jumped six, seven and ten points higher. Thus, while the overall post-test mean of the evening group was still lower than the morning group, it increased significantly while that of the morning group remained steady.

While these between group differences are noteworthy, it is also interesting that the of all the women, the RSES of only one participant went down, and only slightly. A possible explanation for this development is a cumulation of challenging personal circumstances that developed in this individual's life during, but not related to, the group. With the exception of two other women who maintained the same score on the post as on the pre-test, the scores of the remaining participants increased.

Pre-test data for drop-outs

The overall pre-group RSES mean of women who either dropped or did not begin the group is nineteen. While this score is lower than the overall pre-group means of both the morning and evening groups, it differs only two points from that of the evening group. With the exclusion of the score of one participant who dropped before the group started, and thus the inclusion of only scores from those who began but did not complete the

group, this difference becomes larger with the overall mean of the incompleters dropping

to 17. Further, of these three who did not complete the group, the two individuals with the

lowest RSES (also the lowest scores of all the participants) were the quickest to drop the

group. Such a difference is significant only in that it may represent a contributing factor

that helped render the group more challenging for these individuals. Based on the available

information however it is recognized that it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions.
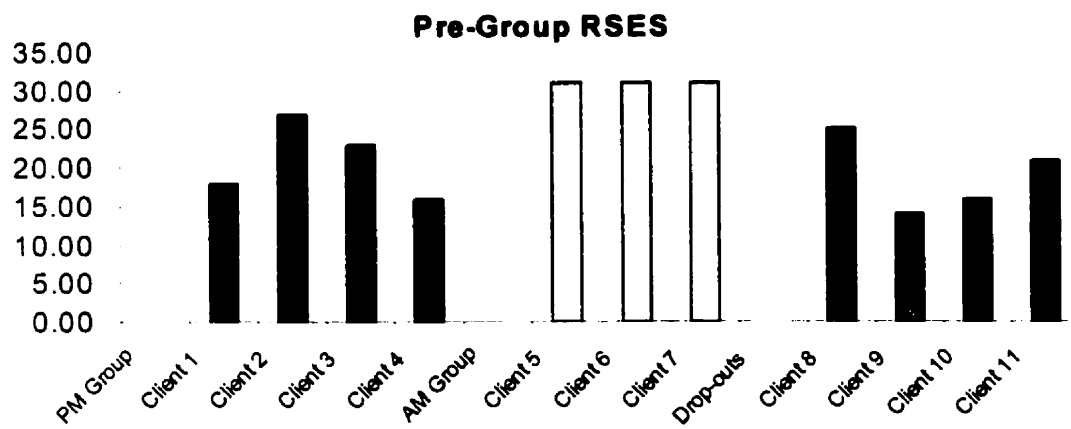
Figure 1

Pre-Group RSES

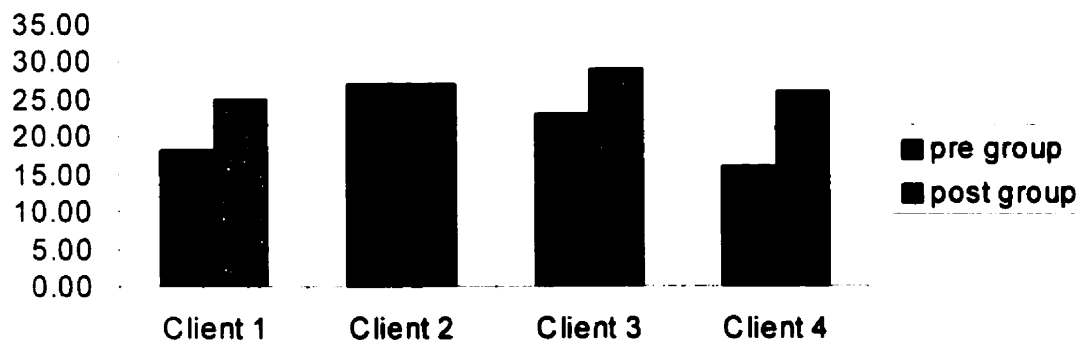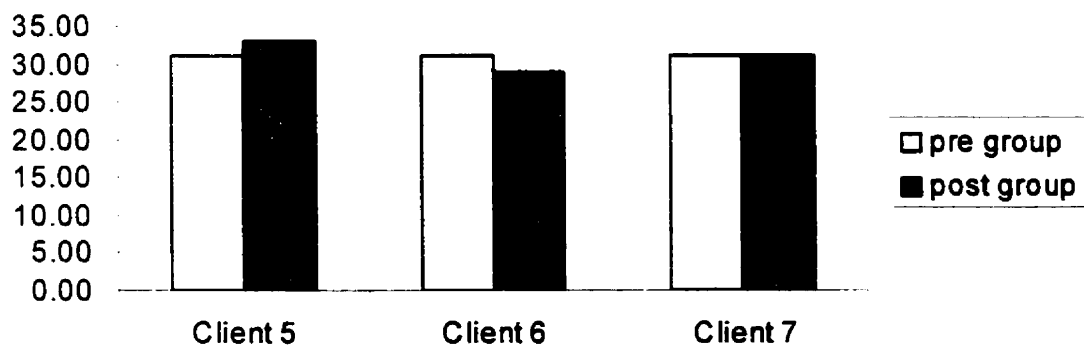Figure 2

Pre & Post RSES for Completers - Evening Group

Figure 3

Pre & Post RSES for Completers - Morning Group

Self-Portraits

Drawings were utilized as a means of gathering data surrounding client self-concept. As discussed earlier, art was proposed as a valuable method for obtaining such highly subjective information. Art is a mode of communication generally not as well developed as verbal or written forms, and allows more room for the emergence of pre- and unconscious material (Oster & Gould, 1987).

It is noted that client interpretation and meaning has been given primary emphasis in the data presented here. Around that, information to further aid interpretation has been included, for example, observations regarding space, content, medium, colour, organization, line quality, proportion or effort. Client interpretation was gathered in three ways: verbally in the screening interview, followed by orally and in written form during the eleventh week of the group.

For the purpose of organizing such a large amount of information, and with respect to the multiple ways it could be presented, this section will first address pre and post test data describing the results of each individual. The data collected from the individuals in the evening group will be described first, followed by a short summary addressing possible within group trends. Description of the data from the morning sessions, as well as for those who did not complete the group, will follow respectively and in the same format. Finally, all the information will then be examined for between group themes, similarities and differences.

The Evening Group

Client One

For Client One (see Figures 4 and 5), the pre-group drawing depicted what she described as a lost little girl in the woods having to exist in an adult world. To see the pre-group drawing that Client One produced certainly confirms the image of a little girl, who in fact is drawn only 1.25 cm tall. Surrounding the image of the little girl lost in a forest are several paths spanning off to unknown places, which the client described as the adult world and decisions that seemed so obscure to her.

Of particular note about Client One are the massive changes and self-initiated directions in which she engaged throughout the duration of the group, including the decision to fight a long standing addiction to marijuana, and to leave her partner. This background provides some context in which to view the change from her pre to post group drawing. Client One's post group drawing took the form of a written response to the question "Who Am I?" Her response documents the transformation of a lost little girl without direction into a strong, independent woman, evidenced both by the content of what she writes as well as the decision to independently choose an alternate mode of communication than was requested. Given that strength in general is required for clients to assume power within the context of therapy, this choice is taken as further evidence of her adult stance, specifically that she chose to honour the mode of intervention that was both most meaningful to her and most helped her to express what she needed to express. The decision to write was interpreted as congruent with both her description of herself as a strong, independent woman, and her actions throughout the group.

Change for this client is evident in the apparent integration of the little girl with the strong, independent woman of Client One. It would seem from what Client One wrote that the little girl of the original picture had been integrated within the adult woman in such a manner that she is both acknowledged and taken care of. For example, in her oral narration to the group about the exercise, Client One said:

> *" Last night I took my daughter and nephew to Tim Horton's for coffee because I wanted to sit and hear teenagers talk... to see what they talked about and what kinds of things were going on in their lives. To see what it was like to be a 16 year old girl. These things I never had ... and I did it to nurture the girl inside of me, and also to let them know how important they are. "*

Also in sharing this exercise with the group, Client One detailed additional ways in which she believed herself to have changed since the start of the group, including: seeing more positives about herself, a new recognition of her own needs and wants, an awareness and faith in her ability to cope with her vulnerabilities, and the difficult process of realizing the need for and thus setting boundaries with her family. It is noted that all of the above were evidenced throughout the twelve weeks of the group.

In summary, Client One made some significant changes and developments during the period she was involved with the Aspects of Self group. Specifically, Client One connected with her needs, wants, and even initiated huge changes to honour that. The integration of a lost, little girl in the woods into a strong, independent, decisive woman seems congruent with what was observed in the pre and post art assessment, as well as from what was observed throughout the group in general.

<u>Client 2</u>

Client Two's pre-group drawing is seen in Figure 6. Depicting a large sun,

rainbow, angel and drawn in bright colours it appears to be a largely positive piece of art.

True to Oster and Gould's (1987) assertion surrounding the importance of client

subjective meaning when using art in assessment, Client Two describes the picture in a

much different light. The tri-coloured, oval shaped image on the bottom right hand side of

the drawing was reported by the client to represent her fractured life. She herself is the

tiny black spiral at the bottom within this structure. Hanging over top is a dark cloud that

obscures the sun. The rainbow however links the sun to the cloud, and was reported to

represent her hope that she would come through the memories, realizations and feelings

that she was experiencing. At the top right hand side of the page is an angel to represent

her spiritual faith.

Like Client One, Client Two's post-group picture reveals remarkable growth from

pre to post group assessment (see Figure 7). Most noticeable is a significant shift from a

non-human spiral half a centimetre large in the corner, to a human being 11.5 cm high and

8 cm wide, taking up space in the centre of the page. Consistent with her human form in

the second picture is what she wrote above it, specifically statements which claimed her

rights as a human being. For example, Client Two wrote such things as wanting to live in

this world, enjoy what is good, be free to be, seen for who she really is, have her choices

listened to and respected, and to feel loved unconditionally.

In sharing with the group what her pictures were about, Client Two spoke about

the shift to having a heart and a soul within her, a smile on her face, taking up more space,

and the personal significance of having integrated colour into the image of herself, stating

that integrating colour was something she had recently begun doing in her real life

wardrobe as well. This shift from reliance upon external colours which had represented

hope (the angel, rainbow and sun) in the first picture, to actually integrating those qualities

of hope and faith as existing within herself in the second seems significant.

With respect to the issue of taking up space, it is relevant here to include a journal

excerpt Client Two wrote after completing her second picture; *"The first thing I notice is*

how much more of the page I take up... The me now wants to be seen and heard, before I

wanted to hide in a corner against a wall." This is consistent with Client Two's

behaviour throughout the twelve weeks of the group, where she was observed to often sit

quietly with her back against the wall, sharing very little. Over time this pattern expanded

with Client Two participating more and more, however at no time was this more evident

than the night she made this drawing. In addition to sharing her work visually with the

group (a rare occurrence for her), talking about the picture and her observations with

respect to it, Client Two also claimed her space in check-in, leftovers and check-out,

literally laughing out loud and saying *"Oh yes, and one more thing..."* several times

before relinquishing the speaking space to someone else.

One thing not clear from the information available is why the client refers to herself

as a little girl in the second picture. One hypothesis involves the process of therapy itself

where clients often connect with past wounds in the process of healing. This often puts

clients more in touch with the children they were during the abuses they survived. Further,

and symbolically speaking, Client Two had only just begun to represent herself in human

form, and as such the experience of childhood naturally preceeds adulthood, and in this manner was developmentally congruent.

In summary, the act of moving to human form, claiming human rights, integrating colour as an internal quality, and the act of taking her space were all significant shifts for this individual.

Client 3

Most noticeable about the pre-group picture of Client Three (see Figure 8) is the image of a woman sitting behind a desk at work, who, partly due to the medium selected to paint the picture, is comprised of lines that appear messy, distorted, overlap and run into each other. Additionally, she has several arms many times the size of her body. In talking about this picture, Client Three described her life as "all work" and "out of balance." Employed at a large corporation that had already, and was continuing to downscale, she talked about multi-tasking, wearing multiple hats, deadlines and responsibility on the job in addition to hours outside of work worrying about job insecurity and responsibilities. In sharing this picture with the group, Client Three talked about how out of control she felt in it, and although feelings of sadness and loneliness existed (symbolized by the face of her inner child in the upper left hand side of the page), she had no time for these feelings herself. By contrast, the right hand side of the page provided information about two things that were a source of happiness for Client Three; her cats and her balcony garden. The blue mask however, situated between these two images was reported to represent her empty life.

Client Three appeared to define herself largely by her work, the impact that had on her, and the feelings it helped suppress. Given this, it is surprising that work is not present in her post-group picture. With respect to the second drawing (see Figure 9), Client Three introduced it by saying "the words that I wrote here are like a map of who I am." With respect to clarity, it is noted that this is seen as a significant shift from the first to the second picture, as a map by definition, requires this. Also notable is the line quality as compared to the first drawing, which is significantly clearer, thus adding congruence to this representation.

The words which were selected by the client to represent herself are joined together by what she referred to as a solid and continuous line. To examine the words themselves, one finds an array of feelings, qualities, roles, likes, experiences and actions. In journalling about her picture, Client Three writes;

> "I am all these things and these are what make me go.
> Good, bad, nice or not these are my words. Some make
> me happy and some not. They are all connected and
> return to the starting point. I can accept that these are
> all connected and interwoven through my life."

Two things that stand out in this quote; the amount of self-acceptance and the harmony not found in the first picture. Even the colours of the second seem to match and complement each other better than those of the first. The act of integrating all these things and owning them within herself seems a significant shift from the fractured first picture where lines exist to segregate the various components of herself (for example, note both the innocent child and feelings of sadness as parts of her inner continuum in the second

picture). Symbolically, the words Client Three chose to define herself are now the entire

picture as opposed to segregated, fractured parts.

Also worthy of note are statements of power and choice that Client Three

appeared to have internalized. For example, she wrote in her journal; *"I can make the list*

grow and I can delete things out. I have the power to change things or to leave the map

as it is." In summary, what stands out in the shift between the two pictures and the

information about them is clarity, self-acceptance, empowerment and harmony.

Client 4

For Client Four (see Figures 10 & 11) the honest acknowledgement of many

difficult and intense feelings stood out in her pre-group drawing. The picture itself depicts

a faceless woman standing within a teardrop and highly visible on the centre of the page.

She reported feeling shame about her perceived visibility and the concomitant judgement

of others towards her (as depicted by the large pointing finger). Client Four likened the

image of her broken heart (located left of her body) to intense feelings of pain and loss; the

large monster-like face at the top of the page as her own anger; and question marks

represented her confusion surrounding how to respond to the question "Who Am I?".

The colours of the picture are dark, and in general it appears to have been a relatively

spontaneous representation of herself given the lack of control present here as compared

with her second drawing. Given the congruence the picture seems to have with respect to

content, colour and spontaneity, it would appear that this is a genuine expression of how

the client was feeling and what she was thinking. In addition, Client Four checked with

me, seemingly apologetically, after drawing the first picture if it was okay for it not to be happy or even clear about who she was.

The second picture marks a sharp contrast to the first with respect to initial associations from its beauty, sharp, clean lines, and its words of inspiration. With respect to the content of the second picture, Client Four reported that she was both the flower and the image of the woman beside it reaching for the stars. She reported that the words "Never forget who you are" and "Never forget who you can be" were placed there for future encouragement in darker times. About the darker times, Client Four writes in her journal entry; *"What came to mind was life is a cycle, there will always be highs and lows."* In this manner, hope is depicted in the second picture given the words of self-encouragement, and what Client Four wrote in her journal about the possibility of liking herself in the future (see below).

Beauty aside however, what is confusing is the contrast of this picture with the content of her journal entry, which does not really address either of her pictures directly and where there appear to be sentences with double messages, such as;

1)   *"For me, I need to remind myself that I am worthy of this gift of life."*

2)   *"It may take me all my life to realize how special I am."*

3)   *"I need to stop searching for an identity I already have."*

4)   *"I must endure (with) patience, pain and loss."*

5)   *"But in the end I am not only more aware of myself, but life and it's surroundings."*

Sentences one and two (above) are almost statements of esteem, yet not quite as she needs to keep reminding herself she is worthy of a life, which may require all of it to realize she is special. The third sentence isolated above gives the impression that the client is perhaps judging herself for not knowing or not trusting who she is inside. The fourth statement however provides a clue as to the struggle embodied in some of her double messages, specifically pain which is clearly absent from her post-group picture. In contrast, the fifth statement seems to be an attempt to make the pain more acceptable. The journal entry in which sentences appear to have double meanings but hint at challenges with self-esteem, self-acceptance, and pain, taken in contrast with a picture depicting beauty, inspiration and no hint of pain appears to represent a struggle with acknowledging and accepting feelings. If this is so, the second to last group session would certainly have been a difficult one in which to acknowledge and share such challenges as several of the women were reporting significant positive feelings and changes.

In summary, the reason for the discrepancy between the picture and the journal entry are unclear, however the existence of this contradiction suggests that this client did not feel comfortable to share whatever else was going on inside. This leads to a conclusion that discussion in the final session needs to include acknowledgment of painful as well as optimistic feelings.

Pre and Post Assessment Themes of the Evening Group

The most obvious theme running through the pre-group drawings is dissatisfaction; Client One with her lack of direction, Client Two with her fractured life, Client Three with

her unbalanced life and Client Four with her feelings of pain, shame and confusion. Expressions of pain represent a second theme, with three of the four clients either incorporating tears directly into their pictures or talking about the pain of a fractured life. This is confirmed by the affect expressed at the pre-group meeting; expressions of pain were made by all four of the women, including Client One who cried as she described herself as so little and lost.

Confusion is another theme running through the pre-group drawings, whether it be about direction for Client One, identity as with Client Four, or within the harried work environment depicted by Client Three. Only Client Two, who depicted herself as a tiny, black spiral at the bottom of the page does not appear to express confusion. While her drawing may not reveal much about who she is beyond feelings of pain and smallness, confusion was not expressed about that.

Client Four raised the issue of feeling removed or different from others. In her pre-group picture, Client Four illustrated the feeling that she is on display and somehow mocked by others, while she is symbolically ensconced and separate within a massive tear drop. Client Four raises a significant feeling often experienced by trauma survivors, that of feeling removed from the world and like an outsider even when with family or peers. This is an experience which, logically, can also fuel intense feelings of loneliness for such survivors. It is thus noteworthy that of the three remaining drawings, the women all depicted themselves in isolation of others. While in isolation such an inference may seem a stretch, these feelings of aloneness, being removed, or like an outsider were clearly articulated by every single member of the group throughout its twelve week duration.

The most obvious feature in the four post group pictures as a whole is that they depict significantly greater clarity than do the pre-group drawings. I have included Client Four in the above as her picture does demonstrate clearer lines and better line quality, but for reasons also discussed above I will not include this picture in inferences about clarity as related to identity. Client Three depicted her inner map, which by definition requires clarity about the information being provided in order to outline it's composition. Client Two depicted herself as quite literally coming into focus in choosing a human form, placing herself in the centre of the page, and asking to be seen. To be seen requires clear form, which she has done. Client One on the other hand was so definitive about what she needed to do in the exercise and about who she was that she chose to write rather than draw her response. It is also noteworthy to mention at this point that every single client in the evening group chose, to greater or lesser extents, to include words on their post-group assessments. The act of writing clear messages, as in three of the four cases here, is more incontrovertible than pictures which are generally subject to a greater amount of interpretation.

Also significantly different in three of the post group drawings is the increase in self-awareness with respect to qualities, roles, feelings, needs, desires, experiences, actions, likes or dislikes. Associated with such statements are what they articulate about self-esteem, a construct that was not even hinted at in the pre-group pictures. Even Client Four speaks to a part of herself that knows she will one day recognize the specialness inside her. Also associated with self-esteem are statements or demands for human needs and rights as expressed by both Client One and Two, including statements about needing

unconditional love, respect, freedom, space, to live, and to have choices heard and respected for example. Such statements reflect women who are taking their power and demanding more from their lives and those they allow into it.

Two final themes stand out about the post-group pictures. First, not only are the women recognizing more about themselves, there appears to be more integration and acceptance of the many parts that comprise the self. For example, Client One still speaks about a child, but it resides within herself and she takes care of her. Client Two integrated the external sources of hope and colour of the pre-group picture into herself in her post-group drawing, and Client Three moves from a fractured and compartmentalized pictured to a map that embraces both the good and the bad about her life, experiences, and self. Client Three also embodies a beautiful example of power and choice. She writes, *"I can make the list grow and I can delete things out. I have the power to change things or to leave the map as it is."* Certainly Client One also took an empowered position and responsibility for her life in the choices she made in group. Client Two choose to be seen rather than hide in a corner, and Client Four also writes about the choice to learn from the past as she has not the power to change it.

In summary, the themes of the post group pictures demonstrated overall a shift from dissatisfaction, pain, confusion and feeling separate or removed to demonstrating greater clarity, esteem, increased self-awareness, and integration of the various parts of the self. Themes signifying choice and statements of rights are also noticed in the post-group drawings.

<u>The Morning Group</u>

<u>Client 5</u>

The first observation about the pre-group picture of Client Five (Figure 12) is that it is pleasant, brightly coloured and happy. Another striking feature is the proportions of the mouth; specifically Client Five drew herself with a very large smile on her face. As Client Five talked about her picture, she explained that she surrounded herself by things that she likes, such as her books, art and nature. She further explained that she drew her brain outside of her head as a means of concretely illustrating to the world that she thinks and is intelligent. Incorporated on her shirt is a heart said to represent love, as well as tears for the sadness which Client Five explained was sometimes with her.

When asked about the mouth depicted on her image, Client Five responded that other people often comment in real life to her about nice smile and pretty eyes, so she had taken extra pain to include these features. While that is no doubt true, it is interesting to include here that people-pleasing and challenges with assertiveness were issues that Client Five brought to group. It was also observed that Client Five took up more space in the group as compared to the other members with significantly greater amounts of speaking time. Interestingly, her propensity for talking was an attribute she did acknowledge in the post-group picture. Thus, the largely proportioned mouth in the pre-group drawing could signify any of these things.

To look at the post-group art created by this client (Figure 13) one does not immediately notice significant differences. As with the first, this picture is also happy, cheerful, and bright to look at. In fact, the colours are strikingly similar in both drawings.

It was in hearing what Client Five said and in observing her affect during this process that differences began to emerge. First, Client Five described herself as standing on top of the world where she had surrounded herself with a greater variety of things that appealed to her (like space, snow, music, nature, books and sunshine) than found in the first picture. She further explained that while books were still important to her having been her only friends in the past, she was actively seeking more human companionship in her life, as represented by the faces around her in the second drawing. Also interesting about this picture is the bolt of lightning at the bottom right side of the page, which Client Five likened to challenges that crop up as a part of life.

Overall, from the picture and what was said about it, there seemed to be a shift to really re-connecting with the outside world for Client Five. Knowing that lightning sometimes strikes, she is pictured standing on top of the world with her arms outstretched as if to embrace whatever she finds out there. Images like the crying eyes (Client Five said that these represented her belief that it was okay for others to see her cry) and the heart (described as signifying her readiness and willingness to accept love) reinforce this conviction. In speaking with Client Five, she likened herself to a teenager, ready and wanting to take risks in order to connect and reconnect with the world around her. With images such as the crying eyes, her acknowledgement of "chat, chat, chat..." and the real acceptance about where she was in life, Client Five also demonstrated a significant amount of self-acceptance and esteem. It is noteworthy that the smile in the second picture seems more proportioned, perhaps another indication of self-acceptance and esteem as opposed to the hard work of pleasing others.

In summary, the first picture Client Five drew demonstrated knowledge about things that pleased her, while for the most part being in a pretty good place. The second picture provides more of such information, including recognition of important things as needs and desires. Perhaps most significant shift however is the movement from relative isolation to the act of reaching out for connection with the outside world. Also noteworthy is the self esteem and self-acceptance that she conveyed both in her picture and in her discussion about it.

Client Six

Similar to Client Five, Client Six depicts an individual who feels good most of the time in her pre-group picture (see Figure 14). Also similar to Client Five, she provides the viewer with some concrete information about who she is, in this case identifying some roles and qualities that she possesses. Client Six however also identified some areas that she felt needed some attention, as represented by the so called "Alien Baby" figure beside her which holds feelings such as fear and pain. The words written next to this little, black figure; "little girl, sex object, unable to protect myself, helpless and vulnerable" indicate that Client Six is likely aware of the connection of this part of herself with the abuses she has survived.

The second picture that Client Six produced (see Figure 15) is markedly different from the first. Although the pre-group picture contains many positives, the harmonious and spiritual feel of the second stands out. Client Six talked about the picture as a representation of her real self - her soul. She spoke of energy comprising her being, with

love existing as her core and around which the whole of her experiences, feelings, qualities and beliefs congregate. Written along the left side of the page is; "Everything I am is Me! (her name)".

Such a message surely conveys significant self-acceptance, a word that she herself repeats three times in her picture and highlights for the viewer to see. Addressing this in the group sharing, Client Six talked about her long struggle with accepting mistakes and coping behaviours of her past, such as drug addiction and promiscuity. She shared the intense shame she has experienced related to these behaviours, as well as her tendency to use them to define who she is. However Client Six also shared this from her journal; "... *at times I can find a place inside me that really is just me and not actions I have done in the past or actions that others have done to me...*" This second picture that Client Six created was a representation of what she saw at such times, and acceptance is obviously an important piece of it.

Related to self-acceptance is self-esteem. If one looks at the number of qualities that Client Six recognizes and lists about herself in this drawing as compared with the first (more than double), it could also be hypothesized that some gains in self-esteem have been realized.

In summary, the second picture stands out for two prominent reasons. First it is a very spiritual representation as compared with the first picture, and second because of the integration this client demonstrates. Gone are two separate people standing next to each other on the same page. Replacing these are her imperfections, learnings and life

experiences existing in the same space with her qualities. As Client Six said; "Everything is me!" Finally, connected with integration also seems to be acceptance and self-esteem.

Client Seven

The pictures that Client Seven created (see Figures 16 &17) are markedly different from one another. By way of background information about this individual, Client Seven had been diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) and had recently been re-victimized. This information is helpful in understanding the first picture, said to have been completed by her children.

To speak about the drawings, the pre-group picture of Client Seven depicts no more then the frightened eyes of a terrified little girl looking out from the darkness. Beside this is childlike writing conveying feelings of fear, worthlessness, shame, pain and sadness. She wrote; " I liv(e) insid(e) my eyes the(y) ar(e) big the(y) are scared they see pain and death and they see sadness. " and "I do not ta(l)k I do not move I am afra(i)d".

The final sentences on the page seem to recognize a part of herself that realized the contradiction between living in an adult body and being in such a child place, and she writes; " I am a girl not able to grow up to old but I am old and I am sad". In speaking about the picture in this screening interview, Client Seven expressed clear dissatisfaction with being a child, and spoke frequently about longing to be and stay an older part of herself.

Related to her desire to grow up are a set of so-called Princess Eyes, pictured near the last paragraph, and which were used to represent the person Client Seven wanted to

be. When asked what would be good about being a princess, Client Seven expressed her dissatisfaction with the experience of being in a child place and also her dreams of the future, identifying that she would be older, have the ability to speak out, knowledge about who she is, a belief that she is good, and possess intelligence.

While the first picture that Client Seven drew was heartbreaking, it was done with a clarity and colour that appears less present in the second. The second picture by contrast appears fractured and distorted. With the interpretation of the client however, it was said to actually represent significant imagery and beauty. Client Seven explained in group that she had drawn her second picture with her eyes closed, and had done so as a way of holding onto what she was seeing about herself in her mind's eye at the time it was produced. The brown, circular representation with the bits of colour in the surrounding area represented her face. Within the face however are bits of colour representing images, memories and fantasies that felt positive to her. For example, the light blue portions were said to represent an image of floating on the ocean, close to the shore, and with the sand beneath her (yellow). In this image she reported feeling safe and relaxed. The dark blue represented the feeling of a summer breeze blowing through her hair, while the light green is a memory of lying on her back in a field in the springtime. In this way, Client Seven incorporated meaningful images, memories and feelings into her self-portrait.

The words that Client Seven chose to fill in the area around her face are also significant in the information they provide about the positive qualities she was able to see in herself. In addition to eleven qualities, there are also feelings (both positive and difficult ones) as well as statements of desire and need. For example, "wanting to be loved" is a

desire that Client Seven expressed in her picture. This last statement was also the only one written in colour so it stands out among the other words. Needing to feel loved is certainly a basic human need, however it is also a common theme for people who are hurt as children by those who were supposed to nurture, love and care for them. In addition, Client Seven had often reported during the twelve weeks of the group her struggle to establish a much wanted, intimate relationship with an individual who appeared more ambivalent about such an arrangement. It could be hypothesized that these words were topical given this romantic situation.

From her journal, Client Seven continues to write about who she is, naming 23 additional things that she likes, qualities that she has, and roles that she plays in her life, prefacing this long definition with the words; "I am me". Three things stand out with respect to the words that Client Seven wrote on both her picture and in her journal. First, the many and varied parts of herself that she connected with. This observation is consistent with her first sentence in her journal about the second picture; *"I am more than a child"*. Second is the self-acceptance expressed in conjunction with who she is. Not only does she write *"I am okay"* twice on her picture, she also writes in her journal about it being okay to have feelings like fear and fatigue. Client Seven additionally wrote another significant passage denoting acceptance, this one pertaining to what it is like to be her;

> *"I am different. I always have been but inside somewhere*
> *all through my life there has been a sliver of myself that has*
> *been proud of my difference, happy about it, not embarrassed!*
> *I am different not weird! Things maybe weird (unusual), but*
> *people are different."*

In conjunction with self-acceptance, self-esteem can be inferred, not only from her expression of being "okay different", and from the many positive qualities that she portrayed in the second picture, but also from her journal where she made several significant statements of human rights, especially the right "not to be used, hurt, or expected of."

In considering the two pictures produced by Client Seven, the movement between the first and second from that of being only a little girl to a picture and journal entry that captures many parts of herself is significant. Her words and imagery are beautiful, and while the amount of colour that she uses to represent this is yet relatively small on her picture, there is room for continued growth. The self-acceptance about the many parts of herself and being different as well as her demand for human rights are also commendable.

Pre and Post Assessment Themes of the Morning Group

One of the first things that stands out about the pre-group pictures of the morning group is that two of the three participants start off by acknowledging being in a fairly positive place psychologically. This stands out more so for its sharp contrast with the pre-group pictures of the evening group. Being in a positive place most of the time however does not preclude the inclusion of pain, in varying degrees, from being represented in all of the three pre-group pictures. Also in contrast with the pictures of the evening group, two of the three women in the morning group included information about roles and qualities (Client Six) or about likes (Client Five). As with the evening group however, it is striking how much more abundant this kind of information is in all the post-group pictures.

A fracturing, or split between different parts of the self is also depicted in two of

the three pre-group drawings. Specifically, Client Six illustrates a distinction between the

part of herself that feels good, and the part of herself that holds pain, fear, shame and her

little girl. Client Seven quite literally demonstrated a split between her child and adult

parts, and symbolized this in her drawing as the difference between her wide and scared

child eyes with the Princess eyes she hopes to be. It is thus interesting to note that in the

post-group drawings, both of these women demonstrated increased integration of the so

called good and bad aspects of themselves. This may not be a large coming together of the

child and adult parts for Client Seven, but such a shift was not expected from a twelve

week group, and does not detract from the fact that in her post-group drawing, positive

qualities exist on the same page as her fear (which was a significant portion of her child in

the pre-group picture).

Self acceptance is a fourth theme worthy of mention here. In their post-group

assessments, all three of the clients demonstrated various forms of self-acceptance. For

Client Five, self acceptance included owning her right to cry and putting that out for the

world to know rather than holding it (at least symbolically) inside on her shirt, among

other things that were discussed above. Self-acceptance was also depicted by Client Six,

who captured an image of an identity that she was working towards where she could

accept her past mistakes and integrate them all into herself as a whole. Finally, in the act of

accepting her differentness, Client Seven also demonstrated self-acceptance. With such

self acceptance there were also statements of esteem, made by all the clients in their post-

group art assessments. Perhaps the most poignant of these being the demands for human rights as expressed by Client Seven.

Similarities and Differences between the Art Assessments of the Evening and Morning Groups

One difference between the groups has already been mentioned, specifically that more than half of the members of the morning group entered the twelve weeks having described their lives or identities with positives, and depicted this in their pre-group assessments. However, all the women in both groups, albeit in varying degrees, include some aspect of pain as a component of the pre-group pictures. With the exception of one woman (Client Five) all the women also expressed some form of dissatisfaction with their current identities or lives.

The most significant information however perhaps comes from an inspection of the post group drawings, where not one large overall group difference appears to emerge. On the other hand, several significant and important similarities exist in the post-group assessments. First, with only one exception (Client Four) each woman included more information about herself in the post-group drawings, including such things as likes, dislikes, qualities, roles, actions and experiences for example. Second, all but two women (Clients Four and Five) demonstrated increasing amounts of integration of the various parts of themselves. For example, child with adult parts (Clients One and Seven), positive entities associated with the self existing alongside more challenging or difficult parts

(Clients Three and Six), and finally, also the integration of external sources of hope and faith and colour to the internal form (Client Two).

Self acceptance, like integration, also appears to have been a significant post-group assessment theme in the art, and six of the seven clients either portray or express this. Themes of esteem can also be inferred from positive qualities many of the women chose to describe themselves with in the second picture, as well as from the three women (two from the evening and one from the morning group) who made statements declaring or demanding their rights as human beings.

Two last observations deserve mention. First, one individual from each the morning and the evening group expressed their intention to open themselves up to the outside world, with Client Two asking to be seen by others and Client Five literally breaking her isolation and placing herself in the world to be seen. Second, it is also noted that making such internal representations of self can truly be a spiritual endeavour, a fact that one women from each of the groups also noted in their post-group representations of themselves (Client Two and Six).

In summary, many overall similarities exist between the two groups, while few differences emerged. What is particularly salient to this report however, is the recognition that themes surrounding the positive growth in self-definition, esteem and integration emerged time and time again in the post-group assessments.

<u>Pre-Assessments of Participants who did Not Complete the Group</u>

Client Eight

Client Eight drew a visually stunning, if barren looking picture (see Figure 18) in black pen that depicted a pair of hands over top of a circular image containing miniature people and a nature scene. Having traced her real hands onto the paper to help her form the image, Client Eight described the hands, hers, as "old woman's." Although little information is known about Client Eight, given the context of the comment, which was derogatory, it was perhaps an expression of either self-dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction with the situation she depicted in her drawing, or maybe both.

Specifically, Client Eight identified that the hands signified her role of looking after other people, people who were in continuous need of her help and caretaking. Related to this, Client Eight spoke with anger about having nothing for herself, as nurturing was not returned by those who received hers, and further that this made her very sad - a feeling she signified in the drawing of tears cried onto the right side of the page.

Certainly pain and having nothing left for oneself are congruent with various components of the picture. The barren or empty look of the drawing has already been mentioned, but also the act of depicting nothing more of oneself than hands, and hands which are used expressly for the service of others is indeed congruent with what the client expressed about her pain and belief she had nothing for herself. At this point, the group was reframed as one way of taking time and space specifically to nurture herself, however Client Eight called prior to Week One to say that she would not be able to find the time to participant in the group.

One final observation will be made about this drawing. It is interesting to note

again, as was observed in some of the earlier pictures, that Client Eight also appears

somehow on the outside, separate or disconnected from the people and things she is

taking care of. Thus, along with pain, and self esteem as familiar themes that appear in

many of the other pictures, so too do indications of disconnection seem present.

Client Nine

Client Nine (see Figure 19) talked in the screening interview about not knowing

who she was. Her picture however was said to capture a vague but inner sense of

movement and becoming (as represented by the tall, upright figure in the centre of the

page). This tall, central and faceless figure, while described as wanting to become unstuck,

was also described as being unsure how to accomplish this (as represented by the smaller,

sedentary figure heaped on the ground to the right.) Client Nine also spoke about the

windows being barred by slats, a reference evocative of something similar to a prison.

Client Nine described drawing the stationary flower next to the tall figure as a way

of again illustrating again her "inner contradiction," specifically the stillness of the flower

next to the movement of the figure. Indeed the flower is interesting for several symbolic

reasons in addition to its stationary status. First, the client drew an image of a beautiful

and living entity bent over and wilting. Second, when looking at the flower, one also

notices the strong and vibrant colours of a blossom drafted with heavy handed colours, but

which is also insufficiently supported by a thin and weak crayon stem. Many

interpretations could be proposed for this part of the picture and without the input of the

client it is especially difficult to guess which comes closest to the truth. Certainly however one can guess at the feelings that are possibly, even if unintentionally, conveyed through this. It is also interesting to note that much the same as the flower, the two images of the women are drawn in ways that characterise the blossom and stem respectively. Like the blossom, the standing figure makes a grand impression, almost ballerina like in its potential but somewhat messy beauty. The second figure said to represent stuckness, seems to convey more than this in it's heaped form which gives the additional impression of possible exhaustion, dejection or grief. Whatever the images of the flower and the figures represent, a definitive split between various parts of the self has been clearly depicted.

Other aspects of the picture are also interesting. First, the artist chose to utilize five different mediums with which to complete the picture; specifically marker, pastel, crayon, paint and pencil crayon (it is noted that this individual was actually an artist, and as such her familiarity with working with various mediums may have been a factor in this development). Second, the line quality in the image is such that it overlaps and runs together giving the picture a messy look. Third, the proportions of the hands on the standing figure and the absence of arms altogether in the second is also noticeable, as is the absence of faces on both human images. Taken together, the facelessness, the messiness, and the variety of mediums squashed together all seem to converge and give the picture an extremely hazy, foggy or confusing feel. Taken in conjunction with the statement the client made with reference to not really knowing who she was, this confusion takes on additional congruence with what has been portrayed.

Client Ten

The first thing one notices about the picture created by Client Ten (see Figure 20)

is a small, colourless, almost androgynous looking image of a tiny person. She is

surrounded by a large amount of blank space save for the words; "I do not know who I

am yet. Everything is black." These words on the picture of Client Ten summarize the

two most prominent themes seen when looking at the picture. First, the size of the figure,

the terrific amount of white space surrounding her colourless form, and even the gender-

less quality it takes all lend credence to her assertion that she is not sure how to respond

to the question concerning her identity. Second, the smallness of the figure, combined with

its crying, tear-drop shaped eyes, down turned mouth and black coloured outline all speak

to the pain that Client Ten communicates clearly. Her words, "everything is black" were

further clarified in the session as referring specifically to her abuse history and associated

pain she carries as a result.

Client Ten spoke of never having stayed still long enough to look at her pain,

describing herself as having run from every opportunity in her life to face it. With recent

developments in her life however, she expressed renewed determination for therapy. She

was however very hard on herself in the meeting, blaming herself for past mistakes, for

having run for so long and wasting so much time, and even for her appearance.

Three themes thus came from the pre-group art assessment with Client Ten. First,

her difficulty knowing who she was, her pain, and low self-esteem.

<u>Client Eleven</u> ·

Client Eleven drew a box representing her body from between her neck and stomach (see Figure 21). Within this area she decided to draw what feelings existed within her and where they were located within this space. In this way it is beautiful that Client Eleven took something as integral to identity (feelings) to represent who she was. Within this context, it is noted that the colours and space allotted each respective feeling, as well as the location where she chose to place each one, was carefully thought out and executed in a manner meaningful to her. For example, the feeling of love is represented by the colour pink, which Client Eleven explained was created larger and given more space than all the others because it represented her love for her children. In total, Client Eleven drew seven feelings, some of which could also be counted as qualities, and one clearly positive attribute, her sense of humour.

Client Eleven expressed a significant amount of anxiety about what she had drawn, stating repeatedly that she hadn't really known how to answer the question. Further, as she talked about her picture, she repeatedly made comments putting both herself and the drawing down. Perhaps such expressed and demonstrated anxiety and critical self-talk were factors that prevented her from recognizing the brilliance of what she had used to identify herself.

In summary, Client Eleven chose to depict herself in an appropriate and meaningful manner as demonstrated both in content, as well as in the care she took to portray it as accurately, logically, and meaningfully as she could. The overall space taken up on the page, the non-human form, lack of spontaneity, in addition to the content of what she said

while describing her art, are perhaps connected with feelings of anxiety and low self-esteem.

Similarities and Differences between the Art Assessments of Completers and Non-Completers

Two similarities run throughout all the pictures of the women who either did not begin or dropped the group. First, expressions of pain, and second the assertion of being confused or unknowing about who they were. Neither of these two themes differ significantly from the pre-group drawings procured by the women who completed the two groups. While the morning group overall expressed more positives in their pre-group assessments, this is a difference which separates them from both the participants of the evening group as well as these individuals, and thus does not represent a difference between completers and non-completers. Based on the pre-group pictures, there is no indication of any significant differences between those women who completed the group with those who did not.
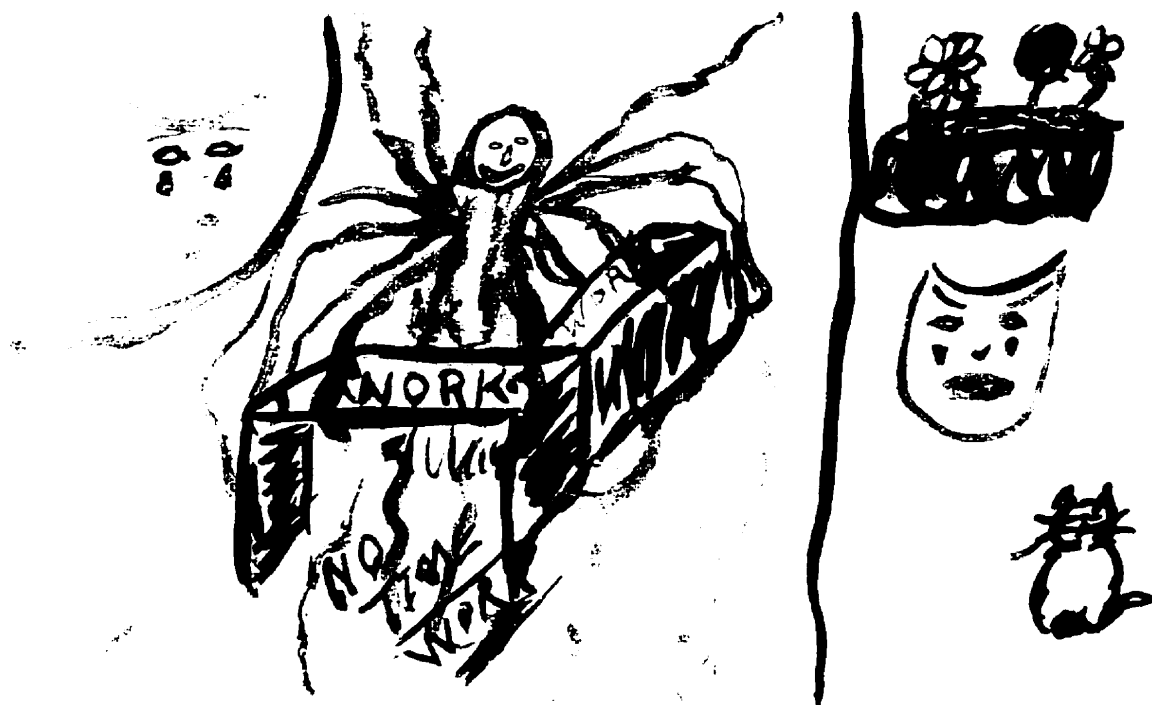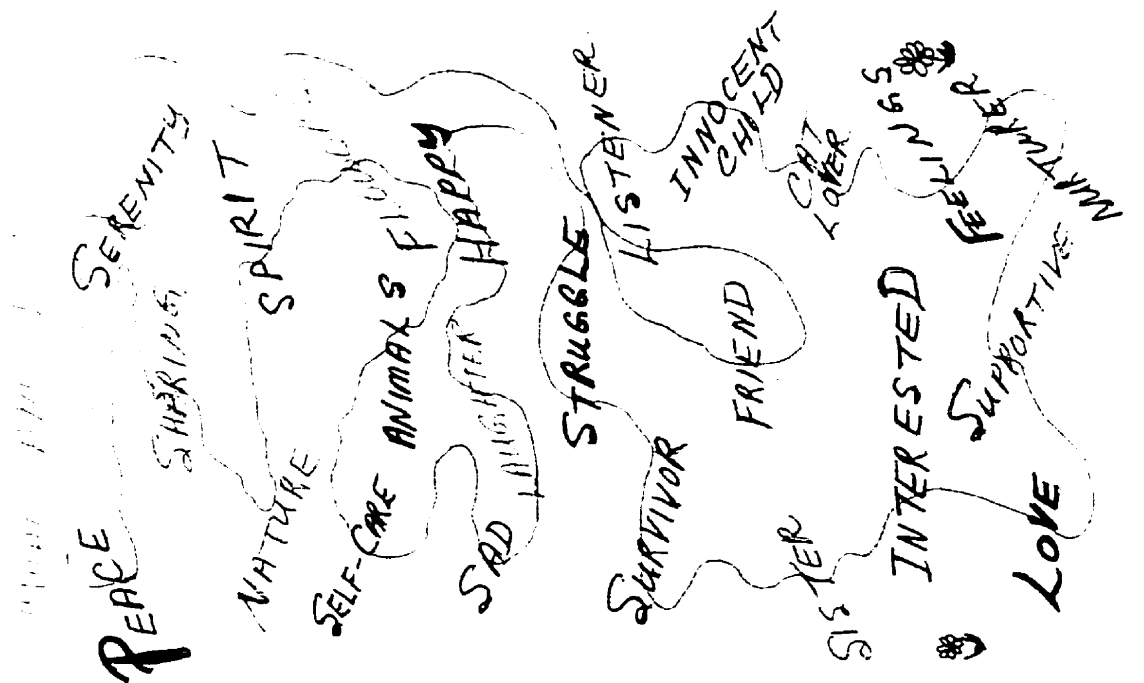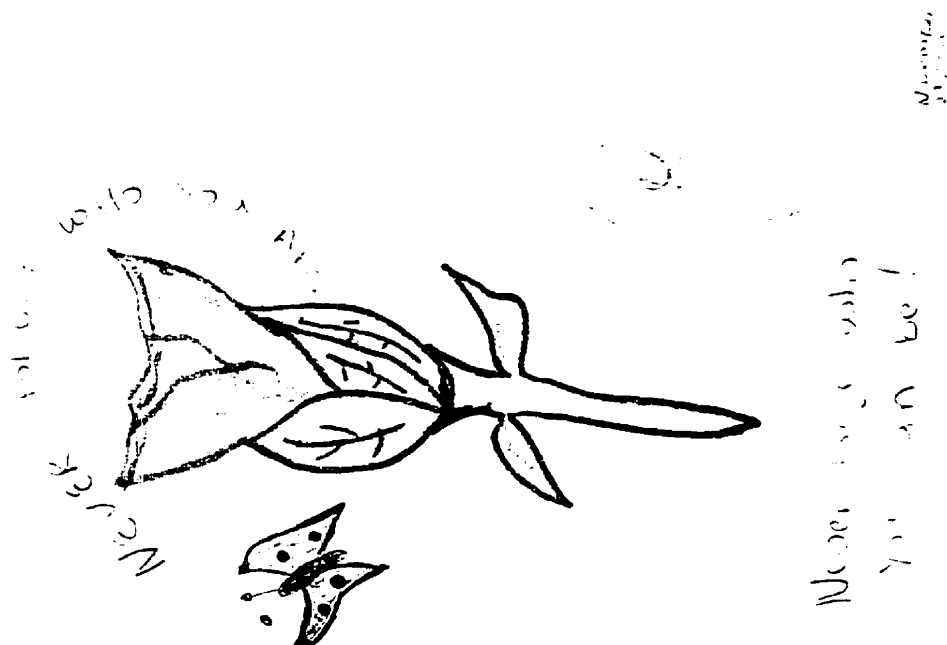
Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

Who Am I?

*I
A Woman
A Mother   A valuable member of society
A Friend
A Grandmother

Happy.

intelligent
open to learn
willing
caring
kind.

sex object
scared
little girl - lost
a victim
lack of self worth
vulnerable   insecure
- helpless
- not able to protect
myself

Figure 15

Who Am I?

Sadness forgiving   Victories
Acceptance sharing Pain Acceptance
Losses Inquisitive Humility Joy Accomplishments
Caring LOVE Spiritual Serenity
Imperfect Love Love Trust
Life LOVE Energy
Compassion Valued Fear
Gods Growth
Child Learning Beauty
Acceptance Explorative
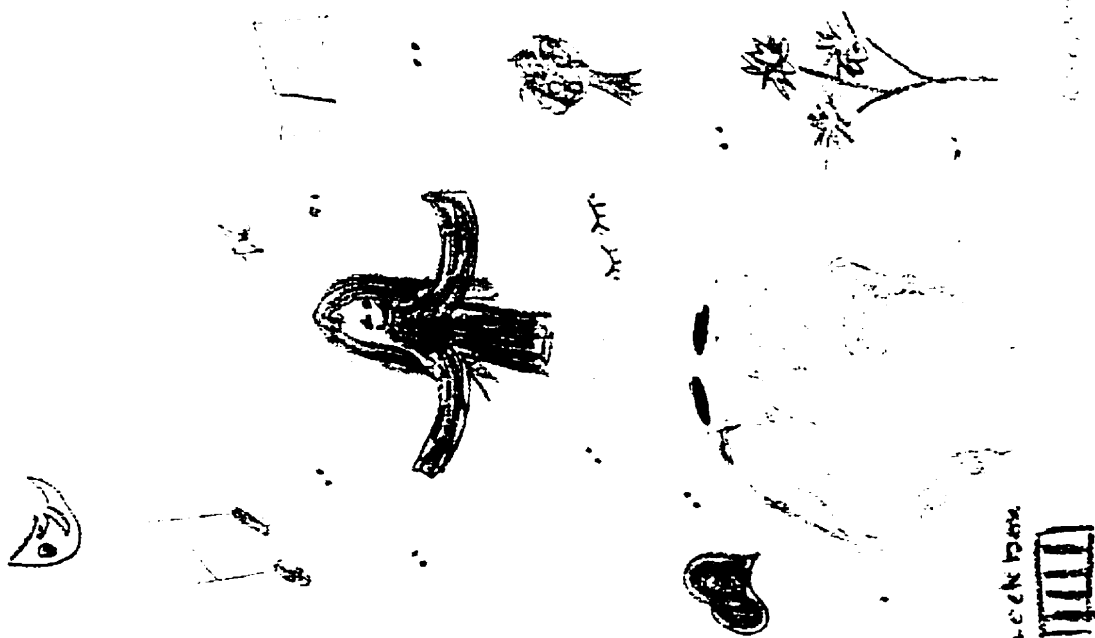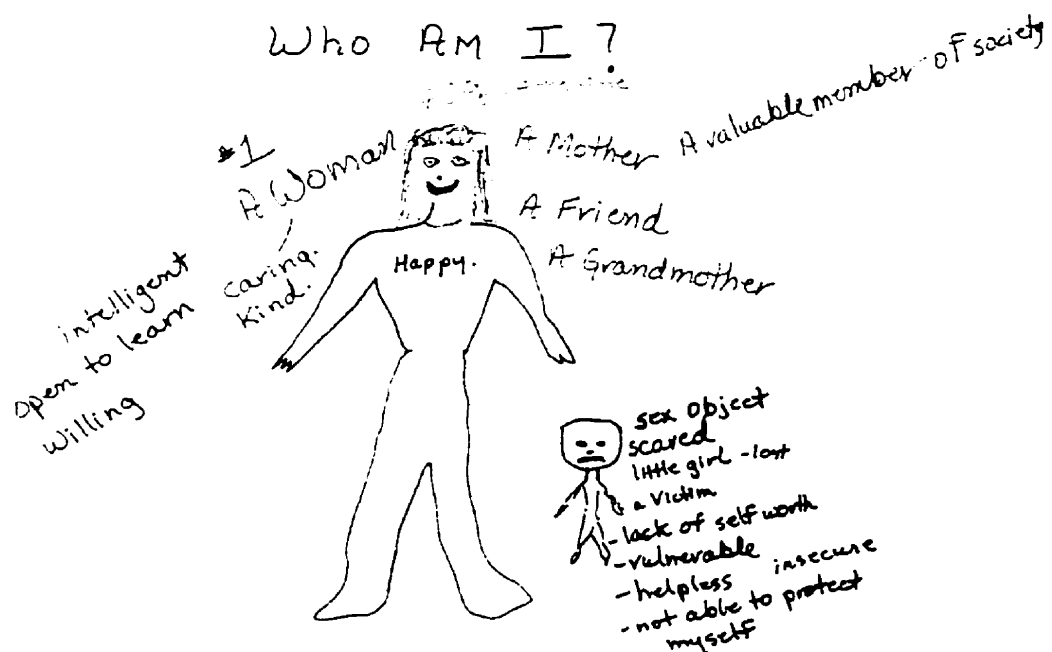
A Soul

Figure 16

I am a child
wo can not
cee I do not
Tak . do not
move i am
afrad if you
do not see me
I am not there
I liv in blacKnes
afrad I am a baby
who is lost sha
has eyes who
look but she is
alon I am a
frend I am a

girl, I am a bad
girl I am sad
I am her
I liv insid my eyes
the ar big the
are scared they
see pain
and deth
and they
se sadness

I am a girl
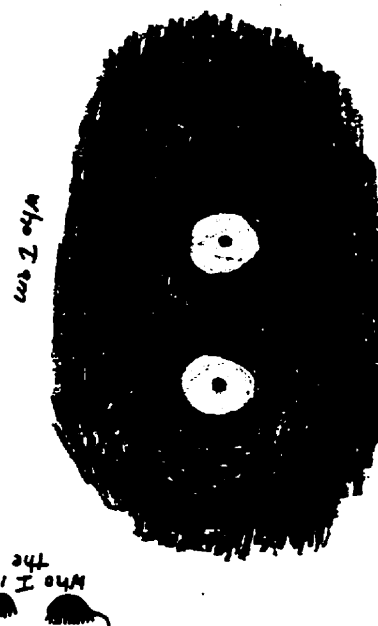not able
to grow
up to old
but I am old
I am sad

Figure 17

Figure 19
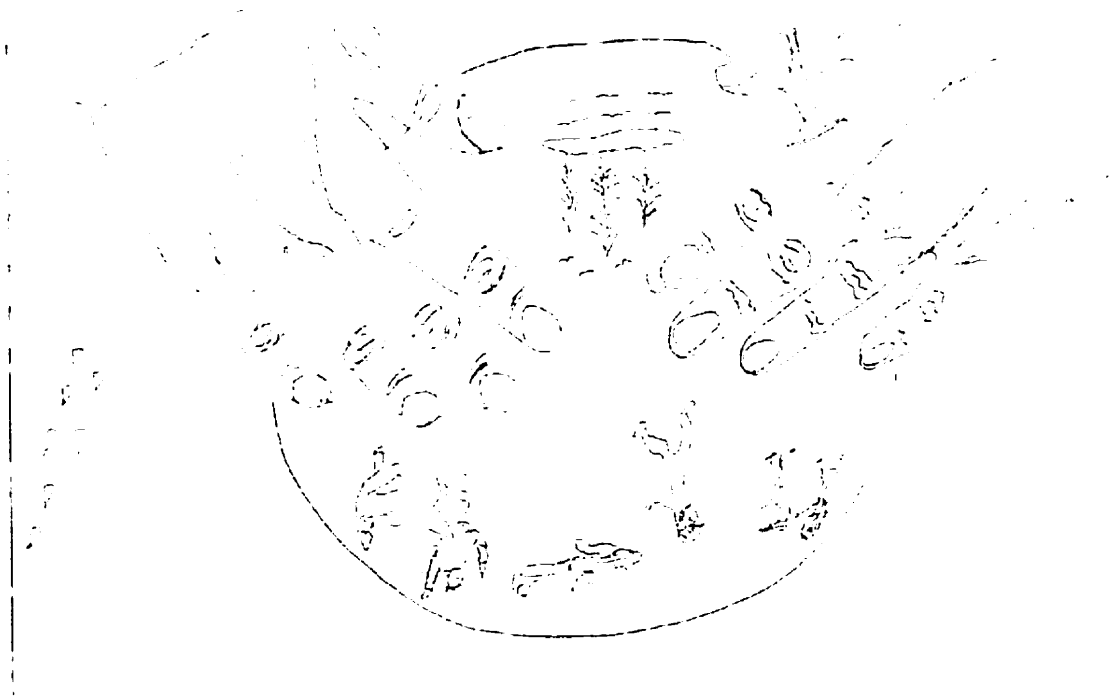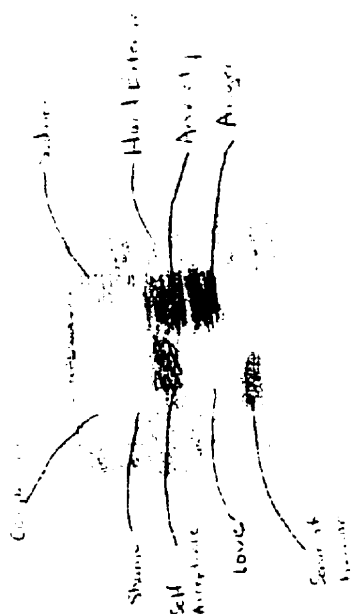
Figure 18

Figure 20

Figure 21

The Laurel Centre Group Feedback Forms

A written response from clients to help assess participant satisfaction with the group content, process, membership, facilitation and experience was utilized. This form included two finite response formats (such as "yes" or " no" format and a Likert type format), followed by five open ended questions. All of the participants who finished the group (seven women) completed this form. The responses to the finite questions will be summarized below, while answers to the open ended questions will be recorded here as they appeared on the forms.

In response to the first question, which asked the women to rate on a 10-point scale how useful the group was to them (with 1 "not at all" and 10 "very"), four women responded with an eight, while three marked ten. The second question asked the women if their expectations of the group were met. One woman marked a seven, while the remaining six were evenly split between eight and ten in response. When asked to rate how safe the women had felt in group, all seven unanimously reported ten. When asked about a sense of group unity, three clients responded with an eight while four responded by indicating ten.

The following three questions utilized a "yes" or "no" format. The three questions asked: if the length of the sessions were satisfactory; if the number of sessions were adequate; and if the handout material was helpful. All seven respondents reported affirmatively to all of the above questions. Finally, with response to the open ended questions:

Did the group experience help you to attain a better understanding of yourself, your needs or your values? Explain.

"Yes. I learnt to ask myself what do I need right now, to question questions, to look deeper, a certain amount of acceptance, definitions, and that I can redefine things and that I'm okay and it's okay"

"The group helped me to understand myself for who I am, how I function, and how I can work towards positive changes"

"Yes. My self-esteem is better. I've identified areas of my past I still need to work on"

"Yes. The brainstorming and collages are eye-opening and the sharing of others offers insight into myself"

"At the point of self discovery in individual sessions with my counsellor I grew to understand myself in relationship to the world better - I'm not so different, weird, etc... The need I had for group support (even just by attending) was fulfilled completely. My values were accepted and respected which was great."

"Yes. The group experience stimulated thoughts and awareness of my needs and understanding of my feelings. I am accepting and allowing myself to feel what I feel and not to try to hide my feelings. I do have good awareness of my values."

"Yes because now I don't call me weird just different, and also I believe that someone should like me cause I'm nice, and I'm a person, not perfect, just a regular person, but I'd still like to be famous."

What aspect of the experience was most valuable to you?

"The whole experience was of huge value to me. I have grown and travelled a great distance. I am more relaxed with myself"

"Realizing how much my attitudes and beliefs were others ideas of me, and how others molded me"

"Sharing experiences with others, knowing I'm not alone, learning how to deal with my issues spiritually, physically"

"Sharing my feelings and listening to others share theirs"

"Coming together and helping and learning from the facilitators and each other"

"The group experience of sharing, safety, and trust was most valuable to me. I value the experience of appreciating everyone's unique personalities. The homework was excellent, fun, helpful"

"Being heard and understood and valued for me, and me speaking, being accepted for who I am, and still somewhat valuing myself"

I liked....

"Learning that there are other people that I can be myself with. I'm accepted and its just okay"

"I liked feeling safe, I liked feeling that I will be respected for my ideas, feelings and goals. Plus becoming connected with others"

"The support the group offers"

"Brainstorming, collages and writing exercises"

"All the art"

"Doing the homework exercises and the meditations. I feel much more relaxed doing meditations here. I liked the group art exercises"

"The two girl leaders - Jennifer and Deborah. And being accepted even if I forgot names. Learning about me, and I liked putting things in boxes that weren't needed at the group"

I did not like....

"The reason I'm here"

"Having to end, I have a hard time with endings"

"Nothing"

"Check-in is sometimes hard, getting focused when one first comes in"

"(rarely) going off topic"

"Getting out of the house to come some of the days"

"To come in the morning, but I loved the group, mornings are hard for me. Also I didn't like that I got to come by cab and my friend couldn't cause welfare is sort of unfair. I love my friend. I do not like a sore body or broken ribs"

Have things changed for you since the start of group? If so, how?

"Yes. I'm not usually as hard with myself. There are a lot of people trying to figure life out and we are all at different places. By sharing experiences and feelings I might be of help to them"

"I'm beginning to take better care of myself, plus I'm beginning to see that I am a worthy human being"

"Yes, I am more positive about myself. I have made some positive changes in my life. My self esteem is better than when I started"

"I'm just trying to accept that life will never be perfect and move on through the pain and in spite of it and hope for happier times down the road"

"I feel better about myself emotionally. I feel I can speak up a little more for myself"

"Things have changed in my life such as quitting job, having to seriously consider my health and the quality of life I want to live. Struggling with emotions, fatigue, etc, but I am beginning to be able to feel things will work out okay. I am having more positive thoughts"

"Yes cause I like me more but I would like to have comfortable pants for winter cause sometimes I am cold, but I learned a lot in group. Specifically that perfectness is perfect in my eyes and perfect becomes perfect just by speaking the message intended. Not perfect in the eyes but the emotions it evokes"

What, if anything, would you suggest we add, subtract or change in future groups?

"As tough as it was I think it was all necessary and served its purpose"

"The only thing I can think about is the meditations. Myself I can meditate, but if I do too much it causes headaches"

"Nothing"

"Nothing comes to mind"

"Do homework checkups - (I know we're adults but some may need particular attention in this area.) Add a little more relationship interaction with newly discovering self.

"Can't really think of anything"

"Nothing, maybe cinnamon buns at every group"

What feedback do you have for the facilitators?

"Please continue, your work is necessary and valuable"

"Thank-you for everything, you both helped me to open my eyes and my mind. May God bless you and watch over you both"

"They were gentle and caring and offered great feedback and ideas. Supportive."

"Both very gentle and kind and cognisant of the group members feelings, well being and safety at all times and in each group"

"Thank you both very much. It was a wonderful group and I am always amazed at how we can pull together, be safe, and learn about ourselves"

"I enjoyed the material and information very much, the other group members and the facilitators. The group was well organized. I appreciate the work Jennifer and Deborah put into the group and also the environment of safety provided at The Laurel Centre"

"We love you. I felt accepted as I am"

What stands out in the above is the expressed value in having come together in an environment where the women felt safe, understood and accepted. The power of the connections and feelings associated with them certainly comes through as the strongest

theme in reading the group feedback forms, where specific reference to this is found in eleven different excerpts. It is also noteworthy that all the participants mention this factor at least once on the forms.

A second most repeated theme on the feedback forms is expressions of increased feelings of competency or self-esteem. Here, nine separate statements representing such assertions are found, the examination of which also reveals that they were made by all but one of the seven participants. Third, statements indicating changes or growth in the area of self-definition were also made, although not with the same frequency as the above two themes. Finally, it is also noted that several of the statements on the feedback forms reflected an empowered perspective, where the women recognized and acknowledged the power available to them to survive, change and grow.

While no consistent areas of difficulty or dissatisfaction were found, three statements (two of which were offered by the same individual) which identified some factors were offered: going off topic, difficulty with meditations, and a request for homework check-ups. First, despite the fact that only one client mentioned challenges in maintaining the focus, it is acknowledged that this did occur from time to time throughout the group. It is also interesting to note that such challenges tended to surround the particular individual who made this comment, a fact that does not however detract from the validity of this feedback. It is acknowledged that this is an area of growth for myself as a facilitator, and it was a specific challenge identified from time to time in my own process notes and journal about group sessions.

In response to the meditations, some women reported finding them valuable, and another one reported difficulty associated with them. It is true that meditations comprised a large portion of the exercises in the group. As such, it might be helpful to inform potential group members about such reliance upon them in the screening interview for future groups. Finally, homework checks were routinely made in the Leftovers section of each session. That some women did not do the homework was consistently found every week, however it was not a requirement of group. The women were rather encouraged to connect with their own inner wisdom in deciding which exercises would be either meaningful or relevant for themselves. It is certainly recognized that such an approach could be frustrating for those who want to hear the reactions of others; however, logistically and philosophically, this was the best way to approach homework.

In summary, the feedback from the participants was largely positive. Overall, emphasis reflected the support and connections the women received from one another in the experience. Statements reporting gains in self-esteem and self-definition were also observed. As these were two of the primary objectives of the group, this is considered to be positive. It is noted that the third primary focus of the group, awareness of factors that have contributed to identity development, was also mentioned once on the feedback forms. Finally, comments reflecting empowerment were also present, which provides support for one of the structural components of the group.

Summary of Group Findings

The RSES demonstrated consistently high self-esteem scores for the morning

group, and a fairly significant increase of scores for the evening group. The drawings

demonstrated increases in clarity and self-awareness of the factors that comprise the self,

increased levels of integration, as well as self-acceptance and self-esteem. Finally, the

Client Feedback forms expressed most clearly the significance of the connections formed

in group, followed by statements indicating self-perceived increases in self-esteem. Gains

in self-definition and empowering messages were also made.

CHAPTER VI

EVALUATION METHODS OF LEARNING GOALS

Evaluation not only encompassed the group but, on a more personal level, was also used to assess the learning goals referenced in chapter one. Broadly, growth in these areas was assessed by a combination of process and log recordings, supervision, and evaluations. This section first outlines the various methods which were used to help assess the learning goals. Each goal is then listed and the specific means by which it was addressed follows. Finally, the findings are shared.

Methods

1) Co-facilitator Feedback Form

To aid in the evaluation of both the group and my own personal learning goals, a co-facilitator feedback form was developed (Appendix G). On this form, five open ended questions were posed to assess the co-facilitators' experiences, observations and assessment of the group. As open ended questions, it was anticipated that responses could encompass such factors as the working relationship, the group design or process, or an assessment of the overall value of the group. The form also inquired about the strengths and limitations of the group and the facilitation. The Co-Facilitator Feedback Form was distributed following the final group session and facilitators were asked to complete and return it at earliest convenience.

2) Student/Clinician Process and Log Recordings

With the use of audio taped recordings of each session, I made process notes to aid in the assessment of my learning goals. The tapes and process recording helped in monitoring content and process related issues. A log was also maintained for the purpose of recording my personal observations and feelings with the goal of helping me respond to my personal learning goals.

3) Supervision

Supervision was provided by my advisor, Dr Brenda Bacon, at the University of Manitoba. Internal supervision, as needed, was also available with Heather Block, Executive Director of The Laurel Centre. In total, five meetings were arranged with Dr Bacon, each spanning one to two hours in length. Updates about the process of the groups, what was happening in sessions and how I was feeling and responding were addressed in these meetings. The clinical team at The Laurel Centre was also available, as needed, for supervision.

Learning Goals

1. To gain group facilitation experience in a role of increased responsibility and

investment

> This goal was evaluated largely by my own impressions and with the aid of a
>
> weekly log. Feedback from the co-facilitators was also obtained at the conclusion
>
> of the groups to help assess this goal.

2. To gain experience in assessing and working with group climate and process.

3. To allow further opportunity to develop experience working with other professionals.

4. To observe any differences between the group co-facilitated by the staff member and

the   volunteer.

> The above three goals were monitored through detailed process recordings and the
>
> log, as well as through supervision with my advisor at the University. Goals
>
> number three and four were also evaluated with the aid of co-facilitator
>
> impressions.

5. Incorporate feminist principles into the group.

> Group content and process, as it relates to feminist values and goals can be
>
> assessed through examination of the group as documented in this report, and as
>
> recorded in the process recordings.

6. To assess the group, its fit of content and design with this population.

Goal number six was evaluated in several ways. Assessment of participant

experience and growth is a large component of this goal, and has already been

discussed in the previous chapter. Facilitator impressions, in conjunction with

supervision from both the agency and the university was also utilized.

In summary, a combination of process recordings, weekly logs and evaluations

from both clients and co-facilitators were employed in conjunction with individual

supervision from both The Laurel Centre and the University. It is believed that the above

was helpful in the evaluation of said learning goals.

Findings

This section will first report the information obtained from the co-facilitator

evaluation forms. As it is unfeasible (and unethical) to transcribe the process notes here

beyond that detailed in Chapter Four, following the data gathered from the co-facilitators

of the groups, each learning goal will then be individually addressed in Chapter Seven.

Co-facilitator Feedback Forms

One method of obtaining additional information to aid the evaluation of the group

as well my specific learning objectives was to obtain the feedback from the two co-

facilitators of the groups. The information generated from these forms is listed below as it

appeared on the actual reports. Following this, general themes that were observed will be

summarized, and potential limitations associated with this form of data collection will be discussed.

What has the experience of co-facilitating the "Dimensions of Self" group been like for you?

"This has been a positive experience for me. Jennifer and I connect, therefore we were able to work effectively together. She has developed the group and did all the preparation of the groups. I was just there for the groups which was a treat for me."

"The entire experience, from start to finish, has been very rewarding for me. I consider it a very positive experience in that I was always learning new things: group dynamics, dealing with emotional clients, focus, etc... as well as being able to use my own personal skills. After doing this group my confidence in myself and the entire process has been elevated. I grew also."

What was good about the experience?

"That the groups were well organized and researched - re: content, homework, assignments and handouts. Jennifer was comfortable and confident in how she dealt with issues that came up in group. Jennifer's skill level is excellent, therefore I could relax as the co-facilitator and trust her skills."

"The outline of the program allowed for an increase in the intensity of emotion, thought, affect, etc... The women in group became more aware of how and why they developed their identity and how they could incorporate what was learned to develop their true selves. It was extremely rewarding to see the women becoming so much more positive about themselves. The entire experience was good for me. From working with Jennifer to watching the women grow, I learned something from every group."

What observations do you have about working with the facilitator? What do you see as her strengths?

"* extremely well prepared, organized and responsible * very present in group and as facilitator * respectful and empathetic *demonstrated leadership by adhering to time limits and time management and addressing group dynamics."

"Jennifer was able to discuss in an open and honest manner with me all the aspects of the group. She made me an equal partner in the process of facilitating. Her presentation style is very easy and non-threatening. She was always aware of the dynamics of the group and kept the focus intact. She was very willing to accept suggestions and feedback, as well as giving it. She was able to deal effectively with all the women and emotions that arose in an empathetic, real and genuine manner while exhibiting professionalism throughout. Great leader."

Do you have any concerns or were there any challenges about either the group or the facilitation?

"absolutely not!"

"This particular group of women were at times rather quiet. We wanted them to shoulder more of the responsibility for getting the most out of group. Without getting into a power struggle we shifted the focus back on them in a gentle way. We encouraged the women to give feedback to each other instead of talking to the facilitator. The women became increasingly more productive, open and a bonding was taking place."

Overall Impressions:

"* Jennifer developed a powerful and beneficial group that the participants gained much from. They were able to integrate information in an honouring, introspective way. * Excellent group information was a powerful tool in the transformation for the group participants."

"The Dimensions of Self program was very well thought out. It was a smooth transition from week to week and everything fit. It incorporated as much as possible but not so much that there wasn't an opportunity to digest, reflect, and take in what was being presented. A very helpful group. One that I feel is beneficial and very much an important aspect in the healing process. This group was needed."

In summary of the co-facilitator feedback forms, it is noted that the same general ideas were expressed by both women. First, they described the overall experience as positive. Other similarities that are noted is that both women reported the working

relationship between us as positive. The overall design of the group, including content and structure was also reported to have been a strength, and both co-facilitators reported their perceptions of the group as beneficial for the clients. While my perceptions of the group are largely consistent with that of the co-facilitators, the positive working and personal relationships that developed between us, in addition to the lack of anonymity, the possibility exists that the feedback was disproportionately positively weighted.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GROUP GOALS

Goals for the group included content and process goals. The four content group

goals were: 1) Heightening awareness of factors contributing to the sense of self;

2) Enhancing sense of self; 3) Encouraging integration of the various dimensions of self;

and

4) Increasing self-esteem. Process goals were: 5) To provide an opportunity to break the

secrecy that often surrounds child sexual abuse; 6) To provide the opportunity to reduce

isolation and increase commonality through connecting with others who have similarly

experienced child sexual abuse; and 7) To provide the opportunity for personal growth

within a context that recognizes and respects the women's developmental needs for

connection. Each of these goals will be addressed in the section below.

**1) Heightening awareness of factors contributing to the sense of self; and
2) Enhancing sense of self**

These goals are interconnected, and as such are addressed together. Specific

factors contributing to the sense of self were addressed in the awareness section of the

group, where the impact of factors such as society, family and child sexual abuse were

addressed directly. Week Ten, which involved specific focus on the Critic, was an

additional opportunity to explore the impact of child sexual abuse on the sense of self. It is

noted that recognition and discussion of these factors was not limited to these sessions, but were addressed throughout the entire group.

The second section of the group focused on exploring the many factors about the self that can be connected and reconnected with. These sections included awareness of feelings, as well as connecting with needs, wants, likes and dislikes for example. Finally, the world and the relationships formed in it were also used as a mirror with which to view and gain information about the self.

The most poignant evidence that group members connected with many varied and new parts of themselves was captured in the comparison of pre and post group drawings. All the members demonstrated increases in the number of values, descriptors, words and images with which they chose to portray themselves. Verbal feedback in the session involving the post-group drawing also confirmed that the women perceived themselves as knowing more about themselves than they had at the start of the group. Some feedback to this effect was also found on the Client Feedback Forms.

3) Encouraging integration of the various dimensions of self

Evidence of the integration of the various aspects of self was also demonstrated in the post group drawings. This integration however took different forms. Some of the women were observed to internalize factors that had been depicted as external in the pre group drawings, and factors previously depicted in a fractured or separate manner were subsequently accepted as existing alongside one another and all comprising the self. The

theme of integration was observed in the drawings of the both the morning and the

evening groups.

4) Increasing self-esteem

Increases in self-esteem were also observed in the pre and post group drawings.

Clients both listed more qualities about themselves, as well as made statements and

demands for human rights. The RSES also demonstrated high or increased scores on this

measure of self-esteem. The drawings, perhaps in allowing more room for subjective

experience, or maybe even interpretation, do however seem to be more sensitive to

changes in self-esteem in the morning group than were evident on the RSES, and as such,

more change was observed from these than from the quantitative measure. Finally,

increases in self-esteem were the second most frequently repeated comment on the Client

Feedback Forms. Clearly the women in both groups identified this a change in themselves.

5) To provide an opportunity to break the secrecy that often surrounds child sexual abuse;
6) To provide the opportunity to reduce isolation and increase commonality through connecting with others who have similarly experienced child sexual abuse; and
7) To provide the opportunity for personal growth within a context that recognizes and respects the women's developmental needs for connection.

The above process goals can be addressed together. From the act of joining and

attending this group, as well as speaking and hearing each others' stories, the women had

the opportunity to break the secrecy that often surrounds child sexual abuse. The

importance of the connections that the women made with one another were voiced clearly

in the groups, as well as on the Client Feedback Forms, where it was the single most

repeated and significant theme expressed by the women. Such experiences of acceptance,

commonality and validation can not be under-estimated. As such, the context of the group

was certainly responsive to women's and survivors developmental needs for connection.

LEARNING GOALS

1. To gain group facilitation experience in a role of increased responsibility and

investment

This first learning goal was a significant, new experience for me, and I feel that it

was accomplished. The very act of independently designing the group, coupled with the

research required to do so, contributed to my confidence and knowledge about the group

in general. This in itself likely helped to facilitate my taking a more active role as a group

leader than I have risked in the past. I did find that differences developed in the amount of

risk and active role that I took in the two groups, which will be discussed further in

response to learning goal four.

While my role as facilitator expanded the amount of risk and responsibility I was

assuming for the group, I also came to understand more about my personal style, and how

this was related to my learning goal. Specifically, I found that even with increased

responsibility my style remained gentle and perhaps less active or verbal than others I have

worked with, my style was effective and successful for me. This was further reinforced by

client feedback, which noted and appreciated this.

Comments from the two co-facilitators of the groups were also examined for feedback surrounding this goal. It is noticed that both women expressed confidence in my facilitation skills. Other comments reflect recognition of the responsibility I assumed for the design, planning and implementation of the groups. In this manner, although my style may never be as verbal, and my manner not as extroverted as I have in the past wished, I did take responsibility for the groups in a manner that was genuine and true to who I am. Affirmation that my approach was acceptable was reflected by both co-facilitator and client feedback.

2. To gain experience in assessing and working with group climate and process.

The experience that I gained in assessing and working with group climate and process included the developmental progression of the two groups, as well experience working with intense emotions, conflict and blocks.

Chapter Four, which details the group process, provides more detail about the developmental progression of the two groups. In summary however, it was noted that differences existed in the speed in which the two groups joined with one another, with the morning group coming together very quickly and the evening group following a slower course of development. The "storming" stage was perhaps more pronounced in the morning group, where the Self Esteem Technique was raised as a very serious concern. In retrospect, and in consultation with my advisor, it is felt that the situation could have also been handled by exploring with the group what about the technique was difficult, and what was needed to make the exercise work. I think that I was intimidated by the group's

concern, and very much wanted to be seen as responsive and accommodating. As such, I was quick to agree to the expulsion of this particular exercise with the morning group, and missed an opportunity to explore self-esteem on a deeper level.

Both groups progressed to the working stage. With respect to the evening group, and perhaps related to the length of time required to join, there seemed to be a shift directly from the joining to the working phase, whereas the morning group had the addition of storming. Both groups appeared to settle into working at about the same time. Finally, with respect to parting, although the evening group took longer to join, their connections were also voiced and grieved more at the end of the group than were those of the morning members.

Invariably, differences of opinion and minor conflict did emerge in the groups, and this was handed easily through direct acknowledgement of it and facilitation of negotiation between the involved parties. Process was also named in the evening group whereby the members had a tendency to remain quiet, and reaching into the silences was frequently required. This sometimes involved problem solving around various blocks. Whatever the issue, responsibility was gently placed back on the women for the work of the sessions, and they were encouraged to find solutions that worked for them.

One process difficulty that I have commented upon in my process notes and in my log was occasional difficulty maintaining the focus in not letting individuals go off topic or monopolize discussion time. One participant referred to this on the client feedback form and it is acknowledged that this was a valid comment. It is expected that with continued experience, this skill will also continue to develop.

3. To allow further opportunity to develop experience working with other professionals.

What I have learned from past experience in facilitating groups is to pick co-facilitators carefully. Facilitators with whom a good and open working relationship could be established were selected, and this required consideration of personality characteristics and competence. The group, including its intent and values were discussed with both co-facilitators ahead of time, as were expectations and needs. While no significant problems emerged during the groups, minor issues and thoughts were openly discussed as needed. Overall, it is felt that a good working relationship was formed with both women, an observation that was also reflected on the co-facilitator feedback forms.

4. To observe any differences between the group co-facilitated by the staff member and the volunteer.

Two general differences between the two groups can be identified, one relating to my role, and the other to outcome. While the differences about to be discussed emerged in the two groups, I will begin by stating that they do not reflect upon the co-facilitators themselves.

First, my role in the two groups was different, as I took on more of a leadership role in the evening group than in the morning one. This tendency did not reflect the space accorded me in the morning group nor the skill of the facilitator in the evening group, but rather my own tendency to defer to individuals I perceive to have more experience than myself. While working with the most senior member on staff gave me confidence in the experience of the group members, I was also feeling this difference in experience.

In the evening group, as the staff member representing the agency, and working with a volunteer who although very competent and skilled herself, expressed similar competency questions surrounding her experience and position as a volunteer, I was placed in a different role. The role was that of staff member and in some respects mentor, although support and encouragement went both ways in our working relationship. My role in the evening group was the one I have generally cast my other co-facilitators into, the ones who "know more" and tend to respond first and most frequently to the group.

I found that this experience was enjoyable for me. It helped me to understand that I am capable of responding appropriately to issues raised in group. At the same time, it was important to me to remain cognisant of the needs of the co-facilitator and to ensure that I was neither taking away from her space, nor making her feel abandoned or unsafe in her risks. This issue of space and needs was discussed openly between us, and she reported that the balance we achieved was comfortable for her. Working with this co-facilitator also helped me in that I could see strengths and skills that she did not always so easily identify, and from this experience I learned that I could trust similar feedback from past co-facilitators about myself.

The second difference in the groups co-facilitated by the staff member and the volunteer was outcome. While all the women were observed, through the drawings, the RSES and from client feedback, to have made positive gains, the women in the evening group clearly demonstrated the most movement. It is possible that this difference was related to my different role in the two groups, however it is more likely that it reflected stage of healing. The women in the morning group were, coincidently in later stages of

healing than the evening group, and perhaps this gave them less room for the dramatic

differences that were observed in the evening group.

5. Incorporate feminist principles into the group.

The group provided an opportunity to practice feminist principles. I did not find

this part of the practicum difficult. I believe that the group is designed in manner

congruent with these principles, specifically in helping the women to connect with the

knowledge and resources that are within themselves. Valuing the women and their

experiences and validating them was also not difficult. The social, political and economic

context and the impact of these forces in our lives were also recognised and named when

appropriate in sessions. In Week Three of the awareness section, the women were

encouraged to connect the ways in which their personal experiences had been influenced

by social roles and norms. This process involved the women separating what belonged to

them from what influences came from outside of themselves. That some of the women on

the Client Feedback Forms write empowering statements supports the design and

philosophy with which the group was developed and delivered.

6. To assess the group, its fit of content and design with this population.

For the most part, this learning objective was addressed in the previous section. In

conclusion, I think that those findings, my own impressions, and those of the co-

facilitators, agree that this group was of value to the women who participated, and

needed in general by this population. The words of a client however, speak the loudest.

This excerpt was taken from the audio tape of the eleventh session;

> *"It wasn't hard (this time) to answer "Who Am I" but*
> *I didn't have a picture I wanted to draw. I definitely know*
> *more about myself than when I first came here. I have*
> *direction because I know more about me and more about*
> *what I want from life, whereas I couldn't answer that question*
> *before. Now I know what I want and the things I need to do*
> *to get them."*

7. Serendipitous Learning.

Unanticipated learning also included reinforcement of art and qualitative forms of

evaluation as a valuable tool for intervention and evaluation. The rich and vivid

information that was gained outweighed that which was collected via the standardized

measure. Certainly the standardized measure added verification of what was observed in

the self-portraits, however what occurred in the group was most vividly and wholly

captured and reflected by the qualitative measure. The value in utilizing subjective modes

of evaluation has thus been underscored for me in this process. I additionally had the

opportunity to learn more about art as an assessment, evaluation and intervention tool,

and gain skills in completing such assessment.

Recommendations

Three recommendations pertain to future replication of this group. First, based on the assumption that self-connection can be helpful in any stage of healing, admission of women in second and third stage healing would likely be most appropriate. This type of group would likely be contra-indicated for women in the initial stages of their healing, and caution is thus suggested regarding replication of this later stage group. Second, given the intelligence of group members to discern what facilitators and clinicians want to hear, as well as whatever internal pressures exist to present positive gains at the end of group, it is recommended that acknowledgement of painful as well as optimistic feelings are made in the second to last session as they are throughout the entire group. Third, given some difficulty experienced with the visualizations, I would also recommend ensuring that clients are made aware of this component of the group in the screening interview.

On an agency level, for clinicians working with survivors of child sexual abuse, I would further encourage knowledge of the impact of trauma on the sense of self, as well as skill in helping clients connect and reconnect with their selves as an important component of the therapeutic process.

My main recommendation however, surrounds the great need that I have witnessed of services for survivors of child sexual abuse. I encourage societal recognition of the very real prevalence of child sexual abuse, as well as tremendous impact of it on every aspect of the self. Certainly the need for services is great, as evidenced by a two year wait list at The Laurel Centre. With the aid of such awareness, I would encourage

governments to increase funding for services that address the needs of these women, men and children.

Concluding Remarks

Based on a review of the literature, the experience of trauma, specifically childhood sexual abuse upon the sense of self, was conceptualized as impacting survivors through access to individual history, impact upon self-definition, self-esteem and relationships. This impact is considered to affect self development before the trauma, the emerging sense of self at the time of the abuse, and the sense of self following it.

However, people have the strength and power within themselves to both develop and re-connect with aspects of themselves. As discussed at the start of this paper, some personality theorists who directly address the concept of self refer to such movement as a natural tendency towards self-actualization (Rogers, 1959) and self-realization (Horney, 1950). Such concepts are further embraced by general social work values.

Thus, for survivors who are ready to turn their attention to re-connection with themselves and the world, this group provided a space to focus on this issue. Specifically, the women were provided a space to increase conscious awareness of the forces that have impacted individual identity, as well as a place to explore, connect and re-connect with new aspects of the self. Self-integration and self-esteem were also components of the group. This was done in an environment which recognized and respected women's and survivors needs for connection. In these ways, it is was the hope that this group would be one small and helpful part of the survivor's journey.

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Appendix A
Aspects Of Self: Group Screening Questions

What are you hoping to get from this group experience?

Do you have previous group experience?

    What was this like?

    Based on past group experience, what do you need from this to be a good experience?

How will it be for you to talk about and hear other people's stories?

Group can surface a lot of feelings. What do you do when feeling stressed?

What is your current drug/alcohol/substance abuse process like?

What kinds of things may get in the way of coming to group? Do you see yourself as able to make the commitment to group at this time?

How will it feel to be in a diverse group of women (class, age, race, sexual orientation)?

Do you have any questions?

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

I _____ Give my consent to have the written and verbal information I provide during the group to be used for the purpose of a Masters of Social Work Practicum report. I understand that I will complete two short evaluation questionnaires, and two pieces of art.

I provide this consent voluntarily, and understand that I may withdraw my consent without penalty.

I understand that, as a participant in this group, my rights will not be jeopardized, that my privacy will be maintained, and that the information obtained for the Masters of Social Work Practicum will be used in a manner that maintains confidentiality and personal rights.

Name _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Masters Student _____

Appendix C

GROUP OUTLINE

Introduction

Week One - Introduction to Group

Awareness

Week Two - The Four Aspects of Self

Week Three - Society and the Sense of Self

Week Four - Family and the Sense of Self

Week Five - Child Sexual Abuse and the Sense of Self

Self-Definition

Week Six - Feelings

Week Seven - Authentic Self

Week Eight - Authentic Self

Week Nine - Relationships as Mirrors

Integration

Week Ten - Self Esteem

Week Eleven - Integration

Closing

Week Twelve - Closing Celebration

Appendix D

Week One
Introduction to Group

Objectives

1. Introduce group members to each other and to the group process
2. To begin developing safety and clarifying group norms with the group agreement
3. Explore expectations and clarify what the group can realistically offer
4. Connect concepts of self care and identity

Outline

1) Welcome to the group
   - Welcome group members and introduce facilitators
   - Overview the session
   - Describe check-in

2) Check-In & Introductions
   - Name
   - How are you feeling?

3) Group agreement: Large group brainstorm

4) Expectations
   - List hopes and expectations - pairs work
   - Large group sharing

5) Self care & Self
   - Brainstorm: Learning to appreciate and nourish yourself is an important component in developing & nurturing the self. List as many things as you can think of that you can do to take care of and appreciate yourself.

6) Self-esteem technique - The Five Finger Exercise

7) Check-out & self care basket
   - How are you feeling?
   - What are you going to do to take care of self?

☞ Homework: Make a list of some personally meaningful ways that you can nourish and take care of yourself.
   Handouts: Self & Who Am I?

Week Two
Four Dimensions of Self

Objectives

1. To introduce participants to the four aspects of self and explore.
2. To introduce and discuss the concept of balance in the four aspects of self.
3. To continue building group safety

Outline

1) Opening Meditation - "Becoming a Creative Channel"

2) Check-In
    - How are you feeling right now?
    - What are you bringing to group today?

3) Leftovers
    - Hand out and review group agreement. Incorporate any additions
    - Anything from last week?

4) The Four Dimensions of Self
    - Introduce the four aspects of self wheel
    - Individual exercise "Who am I"
    - Collage exercise
    - Large group debriefing

5) Self-Esteem Technique - Five Finger Exercise

6) Check-out & Self-care basket

☞ Homework - Think about your emotional, physical, spiritual and mental boundaries. List them in the four aspects of self wheel.

Week Three
Society and the Sense of Self

<u>Objectives</u>

1. To explore societal messages and expectations of women.
2. To start to think about the impact of such messages at an individual level.
3. To encourage participants to distinguish between societal injunctions and their own truth.
4. To encourage the women to connect with their own truths.

<u>Outline</u>

1) Opening Meditation - "Becoming a Creative Channel"

2) Check-In
   - How are you feeling right now?

3) Leftovers
   - Anything from last week? Anything else for the group contract?
   - How was the homework?

4) Group Brainstorm
   - What messages exist in society about who women are? How does society define women?
   - Discussion question - How does this fit with the four dimensions of self? Is the wheel balanced?

5) Introduce Mason's Model of Woman's Growth

6) Exercise - Tap the Wise Woman Inside
   - Journal: If you lived more in accord with your preferences rather than on what you"should" do, or whom you "should" be: What about your experience as a woman would be different? What things would you be doing with your life? How would you pass your time? With whom?

7) Self-Esteem Technique - Self Worth Visualization

8) Check-out & Self-care basket - How are you feeling right now?

☞ Homework: What do you do to feel...
   Handouts: Mason's Model of Woman's Growth

Week Four
Family and the Sense of Self

Objectives

1. To explore the influence of family on the development of the self.
2. To allow a space for grieving.
3. To encourage the use of present strengths to help nurture and support old wounds to the self.
4. To encourage self care.

Outline

1) Opening Meditation - "Becoming a Creative Channel"

2) Check-In

3) Leftovers - Anything from last week? How was the homework?

4) Group Brainstorm - Using the four dimensions of self; "What do children need in order to develop a healthy sense of self?"

5) Individual Exercise
   - New Childhood Exercise
   - Group Sharing
   Or:
   Card of Solace to the Self
   - Include a message inside describing how you can use the strengths of your present-day aspects of self to support those aspects that did not receive the nurturing you needed growing up.
   - Group Sharing

7) Self-esteem technique - Radiant Sun & Reflective Moon Meditation

8) Check-out
   - How are you feeling?
   - What are you going to do to take care of yourself this week?

☞   Homework: Recovering a Sense of Self: Task #1

Week Five
Child Sexual Abuse and the Self

Objectives

1. To explore the impact of child sexual abuse on identity formation.
2. To introduce the concept of protective parts and explore it on an individual level.
3. To normalize coping and reframe such survival skills as protective parts.
4. To introduce the idea of retaining but updating protective parts.
5. To encourage self-care.

Outline

1) Opening - Focusing Exercise

2) Check-In

3) Leftovers - Anything from last week? How was the homework?

4) Mini discussion - Impact of trauma on the self

5) Protective Parts
   - Meditation
   - Individual writing/reflection about the meditation
   - Group sharing

7) Self-esteem technique - Five Finger Exercise

8) Check-out & self care basket

✏ Homework: Recovering a Sense of Self: Task #2

Week Six
Feelings

<u>Objectives</u>

1. To develop an awareness of the connection between feelings and identity
2. To normalize difficulty feeling feelings
3. To provide an opportunity to connect with, and feel feelings in a safe environment
4. To provide members with a way to work with feelings

<u>Outline</u>

1) Opening Meditation - "Becoming a Creative Channel"

2) Check-In

3) Leftovers - Anything from last week? How was the homework?

4) Group Brainstorm
   - What is a feeling?
   - Why are they important?
   - Why do they cause grief?

5) Recognizing and feeling feelings - meditation

6) Self-Esteem Technique - Visualizing your Confident Self

7) Check-out & Self-care basket - How are you feeling right now?

✐   Homework: Emotional energy scan & journalling
                   : Inform group members about the collage next week and let them
                      know they are free to incorporate items from home if they want to
                   bring them in.

   Handouts: Some Ideas about Feelings

Week Seven
Authentic Self

Objectives

1. To increase self-awareness and self-definition
2. To encourage exploration and connection with the many aspects of self.
3. To incorporate the concept of balance and the importance of making time/creating opportunities to experience the self.

Outline

1) Opening Meditation - "Intuition"

2) Check-In - If you could do or be anything (pilot, belly dancer, scuba diver...) What would you be?

3) Leftovers
   - Anything from last week?
   - How was the homework?

4) Recovering a Sense of Self and Power
   - Where is your time spent?
   - Group debriefing

5) Heart's Desire Collage - Create a concrete symbol of your hopes and dreams. Use any items you brought from home for this exercise, and any combination of drawings, words or magazine pictures to create a collage of your heart's desires.

6) Self-esteem technique - Five finger exercise

7) Check-out and Self care basket

⮫   Homework: Report on this weeks goals from "Where is your time spent" exercise
             : remind group members that final session is approaching and ask them
             to think about how they want to mark the last session.

      Handout: Imaginary Lives
             : Free association exercise

Week Eight
Authentic Self

Objectives

1. To focus on self awareness and definition of self
2. To introduce the use of the unconscious to access clues and areas of movement towards the authentic self
3. To introduce the use of the future self as a resource for growth and self-actualization.

Outline

1) Opening - Focusing Exercise

2) Check-In

3) Leftovers
   - Anything from last week?
   - How was the homework?
   - Ideas for last session?

4) Future self
   - meditation
   - art exercise - symbol of future self
   - group sharing

5) Self-esteem technique

6) Check-out and Self care basket

✎   Homework: Creating a New Influence for your Life

Week Nine
Relationships as Mirrors

Objectives

1. To stimulate thinking and provide information about the self
2. To increase awareness of patterns in relationships
3. To increase personal power and balance through awareness and choice

Outline

1) Opening Meditation - "Becoming a Creative Channel"

2) Check-In

3) Leftovers
   - Anything from last week?
   - How was the homework?
   - Plans for last session

4) Mirrors - Introduce concept
5) Primary & Disowned Selves Exercise

6) Journalling Exercise
   - Patterns exercise, or
   - Focus specifically on one interpersonal incident/relationship and briefly describe the problem. Then ask yourself what about this situation or person is a mirror for you. Write your reflections.

7) Self-esteem technique

8) Check-out and Self care basket

☞ Homework: Animal Story
          Characteristics Handout

Handouts: Our Relationships as Mirrors

Week Ten
Self-Esteem

Objectives

1. To connect childhood abuse with the Critic
2. To normalize the presence of a Critic
3. To encourage self-care of old wounds
4. To encourage connection with resource parts of the self.
5. To begin transitioning into the ending stage of the group.

Outline

1) Opening Meditation - "Becoming a Creative Channel"

2) Check-In

3) Leftovers
   - Anything from last week?
   - How was the homework?
   - Plans for last session

4) The Critic Exercises
   - brainstorm
   - art exercise
   - guided visualization
   - group debriefing

5) Self-esteem Technique: Resource Parts Meditation

6) Check-out and Self care basket

☞ Homework: My critical and assertive selves journalling exercise

Handouts: My Declaration of Self-Esteem

Week Eleven
Integration

Objectives

1. To review the work and growth of the participants.
2. To connect the parts of the self as existing in and comprising the larger self.
3. To continue the transition towards group conclusion, and finalize plans for the last session.

Outline

1) Opening Meditation - "Integration Meditation"

2) Check-In

3) Leftovers
   - Anything from last week?
   - How was the homework?
   - Finalize plans for last session

4) Art Exercise
   - draw a picture of the self
   - have first self drawing available for comparison & journal impressions
   - group discussion

5) Self-esteem technique - "Turn offs & Turn Ons"

6) Check-out and Self care basket

☞ Homework: Using words or images, identify on the four aspects of self wheel the parts of yourself whose growth you will continue to nurture in coming months, and the ways you will do so.

Week Twelve
Closing Celebration

<u>Objectives</u>

1. To recognize and celebrate the work of the group members
2. To allow an opportunity for group members to say good-bye to each other and the group in a formal way.
3. To give group members the opportunity to express the above in a manner they find meaningful.
4. To give participants an opportunity to provide feedback about their experience of the group.

<u>Outline</u>

1) Check-In

2) Eating Together

3) Art Exercise
   - constructing affirmation cards for each other and one self (Morning Group)

   - candle making (Evening Group)

4) Check-out and Self care basket

Appendix E

RSES

Please record the appropriate answer, per item, depending on whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with it.

1= Strongly Agree
2= Agree
3= Disagree
4= Strongly Disagree

_____ 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself

_____ 2. At times I think that I am no good at all

_____ 3. I feel I have a number of good qualities

_____ 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people

_____ 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of

_____ 6. I certainly feel useless at times

_____ 7. I feel I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others

_____ 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself

_____ 9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure

_____ 10. I take a positive attitude towards myself

Appendix F
The Laurel Centre Group Feedback Form

1. Did you attend group?   □ Yes   □ No

If yes, please complete the following:

Section A: Circle the number that is most true of you, with 1 meaning "not at all" and 10 meaning "very"

	Not at all Somewhat Very
2. Overall, how useful was the group to you?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Were your expectations met?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Did you feel safe in group?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Did you feel a sense of group unity (members working towards a common goal)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Section B:

6. The length of sessions were satisfactory?   ☐ Yes   □ No

7. The number of sessions were adequate?   ☐ Yes   □ No

8. Were the handout materials helpful/useful?   □ Yes   □ No

Section C:

9. Did the group experience help you to attain a better understanding of yourself, your needs or your values? Explain

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. What aspect of the experience was most valuable to you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. I liked...

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. I did not like...

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. Have things changed for you since the start of group? If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. What, if anything, would you suggest we add, subtract, or change in future groups?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. What feedback do you have for the facilitators?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix G

Co-Facilitator's Evaluation Form

What has the experience of co-facilitating the "Dimensions of Self" group been like for you?

What was good about the experience?

What observations do you have about working with the facilitator? What do you see as her strengths?

Do you have any concerns or were there any challenges about either the group or the facilitation?

Overall impressions: