

GROUP ACTIVITIES FOR INHIBITED AND WITHDRAWN
INTERMEDIATE AGED
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

by

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Abstract

The Group Activities Program for Inhibited and Withdrawn Intermediate Aged School Children was implemented with four grades three - five male students. The program consisted of nine activities that took place over six sessions. The group activities program was constructed based on a Group Activity Therapeutic model, otherwise known as AGT.

The research purpose of implementing the activity group program for inhibited and withdrawn intermediate aged students was to study, describe and, observe the experiences of the participants while taking part in the group activity therapy program. The experiences of the participants were qualitatively explored, documented, and triangulated using a variety of means including video and audiotapes, participant feedback, facilitator observations, and field notes.

The resulting data from the activity group study extrapolated eight fundamental factors of the group activity experience. Those factors consisted of: interest of the activities, leadership opportunities, opportunities to express oneself, small group size, confidentiality, supportive group environment, trustworthiness, and, originality of the activities. The significance of each factor was discussed as to their respective relationship and influence to the activity group participants' experiences during the program. The various factors' authority was also discussed in relation to previous AGT and, inhibited and withdrawn child research. Furthermore, supported by the collected research, proposals for possible adaptations to the activity group program and potential future educational and counselling applications were presented.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Anxiety and its associated behaviours and self-concepts are some of the most common psychological and/or emotional concerns that face school children and adolescents. Those who suffer from varying levels of anxiousness express themselves in a wide range of behaviours. Those behaviours that are perceived as disruptive, problematic, aggressive or violent often receive the majority of educational and psychological resources. Those children who suffer from varying forms and levels of anxiety but who instead exhibit withdrawn or inhibited behaviours are more likely to be left out from receiving secondary resources. In fact, there have been few educational or school counselling interventions designed to support inhibited and/or withdrawn students that have been developed, explored, or implemented. Considering withdrawn and/or inhibited behaviours, boys are at a greater risk than girls because withdrawn behaviour has been found to have a greater negative stigma amongst males than females (Younger & Boyko, 1987); therefore, having a more dynamic negative influence on self-concept. To compensate for the lack of educational and counselling methods studied or implemented that address withdrawn male children, it would be meaningful to implement and explore one such possible applied method - a Group Activity Therapy approach.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to describe and observe the experiences of inhibited and withdrawn children who participate in a school based group activity therapy program. Therefore, the research question that naturally stems from the purpose is: what are the experiences of a group based activity school counselling program when applied with an intermediate level child population of male students who display inhibited and/or withdrawn behaviours?

Chapter II

Rational and Literature Review

Inhibited or withdrawn behaviours in children are inherently linked to anxiety (Irving & Irving, 1999). However, delinquent behaviours have been more commonly associated with anxiety problems, therefore receiving the majority of treatment and intervention research's attention. Yet, ignoring those anxious children who exhibit inhibited or withdrawn behaviours could be considered counter-productive because being ignored may only promote their isolation. Inhibited and/or withdrawn children often become invisible within the classroom (Hymel, Rubin, Rowden, & LeMare, 1990). These children avoid attention, ensuring neglect from classmates and often remain unnoticed by teachers and other adults (Byrnes, 1985). Many of these withdrawn children's behaviours are not seen as problematic because their behaviour is not perceived as troublesome or deviant (Vargo, 1995). However, withdrawn isolated behaviour in the classroom often extends beyond school into a more systemic form of social isolation.

Lacking social contact often leads to low self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness, low creativity, high defences, limited peer interaction, and discouragement (Byrnes and Yamamoto, 1983; & Rubin, LeMare & Lollis, 1990). Vargo (1995) found that there was a higher self-reported level of anxiety and a lower self-reported level of happiness in withdrawn children compared to more sociable children. Essentially, a high frequency of passive solitude is associated

with social anxiety and negative self-perceptions of social competence (Rubin and Mills, 1988; Irving and Irving, 1999).

Inhibited or withdrawn children often suffer from psychological deficits that interfere with their development in learning, socialization in school, and interacting with peers (Silin, 1998). Withdrawal in early childhood is related to a child's negative self-perceptions and social withdrawal is often a behavioural response to negative self-perceptions, social incompetence and/or anxiety (Hymel et al., 1990). Without intervention the cycle of withdrawal, anxiety and negative self-perception is likely to continue. A child's withdrawn behaviour within a social environment, like a classroom, is often reflective of poor psychological adaptation and development (Coplan, Rubin, Fox, Calkins, & Stewart, 1994), therefore, demanding appropriate psychological and educational attention.

Much attention has recently been given to combat the influence of overly aggressive students in elementary school (bullies). However, Younger and Boyko (1987) pointed out that as children get older, especially between grades three and five, withdrawn behaviour becomes a more important indicator of a child being negatively perceived by himself and his peers within their classrooms than aggressive behaviour. "At older ages... when children begin to develop larger, more reciprocal peer groups, withdrawn behaviour may be more visible [and problematic] to children because it becomes more dysfunctional" (Younger and Boyko, 1987). Such withdrawn behaviour is also more of a concern with boys than girls because his peers and society socially perceive a withdrawn boy as more dysfunctional than a withdrawn girl (Younger & Boyko, 1987). The

potential dysfunctional influence of inhibited and withdrawn behaviours in intermediate school aged boys suggests the need to develop tools to address such behavioural, social and self-concept issues.

The Activity Group Therapy Approach

Withdrawn and inhibited children lack peer group experience that is essential for normative development in childhood (Schiffer, 1986). Young and Bradley (1998) suggested that withdrawn children have the knowledge and skills necessary to interact with their peers but lack the perceived safe environment and by extension the motivation to engage with others. Coupled with the lack of a perceived safe environment, it is less likely that inhibited or withdrawn children are ever given an opportunity to experience being in a leadership role. If a safe group environment could be established, placing inhibited children in leadership roles could provide a non-threatening opportunity for them to experience a new positive role when interacting with their peers (Shennum, 1987).

A counselling intervention for inhibited or withdrawn children could focus on how to increase and support an inhibited child's motivation to be more engaged and assertive socially while providing an opportunity for the child to take on leadership responsibilities. Implementing a group based therapeutic intervention for inhibited and withdrawn elementary intermediate school aged children could potentially address the need for peer interaction and leadership opportunities within a safe and controlled environment. One such group therapeutic technique that emphasises creating an environment that encourages

and supports peer relations for children is known as Activity Group Therapy (AGT) (Johnson, Riester, Corbett, Buhler, Huffaker, Levich & Pena, 1998; Slavson, 1986; Schiffer 1984, 1986; & Slavson & Schiffer, 1980).

In the 1930's S.R. Slavson developed a systemic psychological group therapy design to use with children (Slavson & Schiffer, 1980). The approach was called Activity Group Therapy. The goal of the Activity Group Therapy was to provide children with a framework to express themselves within an *active* and *free* environment. The means within which the process occurs was designed to consist of games and crafts and other activities appropriate for the particular age group of concern. The therapist who would facilitate the group would unconditionally accept the participants building a trusting and safe environment in which the children could take risks and express themselves (Schiffer, 1984; Slavson & Schiffer, 1980). The result was hypothesized to create an overall effect of modifying a "... a child's maladaptive behaviours and positively alter [a child's] personality and character (Johnson et al., 1998). By extension the group activity therapy framework also possessed the means to provide leadership opportunities, build self-esteem and increase peer relations by facilitating a safe environment, and promote expression of affect (Shennum, 1987).

Considering the potential therapeutic impact of group activity therapy it was meaningful to consider such a resource for children who suffer from withdrawn or inhibited behaviour (Johnson et al., 1998; Shennum, 1987). It was the goal of this study to describe the experiences of withdrawn intermediate aged school children that participate in a Group Activity Therapy program. The

description of those participants' experiences will be accomplished using observation and soliciting feedback focusing on the merits of the individual activities and the program holistically. The resultant descriptions will aid in highlighting the program and its various activities' strengths and weaknesses and discuss information concerning future adaptations and implementations.

For the purposes of this research, to describe the experiences of a group activity therapy on male intermediate aged school children who exhibit inhibited or withdrawn behaviours, a specific series of program of activities designed and assembled based on Activity Group Therapeutic theory were put into action. The program of choice was titled "Activity Group Therapy for Inhibited and Withdrawn Children".

Activity Therapy for Inhibited and Withdrawn Children

The "Activity Therapy for Inhibited and Withdrawn Children" program was created based on Slavson's and Schiffer's (1980) AGT (Activity Group Therapy) framework and adapted using the suggestions and theory presented in Johnson et al.'s 1998 article "Group Activities for Children and Adolescents: An Activity Group Therapy Approach " and Schaefer, Johnson and Wherry's (1982) book, "Group Therapies for Children and Youth".

Slavson and Schiffer's (1980) framework of AGT consisted of providing a less intrusive therapeutic setting whereby the children were provided opportunities to participate in games and activities with minimal interference from

the therapist. The activity group therapy was designed as a non-interpretive method of therapy, requiring the removal of classic analytical interventions from the therapeutic process (Schiffer, 1984). Schiffer and Slavson viewed participatory activities as necessary components of ego development and character formation. Schiffer (1986) also suggested that the "... integral importance of normal children's activity in acquiring coping behaviour illuminates how a non-interpretive activity therapy can modify personal attributes and [maladaptive] behaviour." Since the 1930's AGT has been developed, adapted, and implemented as a therapeutic method for children using an essential component of their daily lives and development - group activity.

In 1982 Schaefer, Johnson and Wherry summarized the essential ideas involved with the implementation of AGT. Firstly, the role of the therapist was to be permissive so that they are not the entire focal point of the therapeutic process. Instead, it was the interdependent relationships between the therapist, the individuals and the group as a whole that was theorized to serve as integral components of the therapy to help create an ideal social environment to facilitate the therapeutic progress. The second vital component of AGT was the use of reinforcement, such as, verbal praise by peers or therapist, and interactions with peers and/or the therapist. The third mechanism of AGT was insight. The participants should be encouraged to engage in group discussions following the session's activities (feedback sessions). Insight was considered a viable resource of AGT because as children mature between the ages of eight and twelve they have been shown to possess an increasing capacity to reason and actively respond

to such rational (Schaefer et al., 1982). The final outlined therapeutic mechanism of AGT was the presentation of alternate behaviours in a variety of methods, potentially changing maladaptive behaviour. For example, the presence of peers and a group facilitator could often "...exert a corrective influence on its members." It was these four therapeutic mechanisms that Schaefer et al. (1982) constructed from Slavson and Schiffer's (1971 and 1980) respective and collective frameworks to delineate the developed fundamentals of AGT.

Using articles written by Hillman, Penczar and Barr (1975) and Komechak (1971), Schaefer et al. (1982) also progressed the ideals of AGT further, adapting AGT to be incorporated into the spectrum of School Counselling. Schaefer et al. (1982) titled this school counselling variation of AGT - Activity Guidance Groups or AGG. The difference between activity group therapy and activity guidance groups was threefold in nature: the role of the therapist, the setting, and the presence of a pre-determined guiding principle of the group. Firstly, the therapist was allowed to take on a more active role, being able to take charge of the session's direction. Secondly, the group took place in an educational setting instead of a clinical setting. And lastly, the activity guidance groups were more structured whereby the activities were designed to facilitate a guiding principle. For example, in the case of inhibited and / or withdrawn children, the guiding principle may take the shape of leadership opportunities, social interaction, or other increasing engaged behaviour. The establishment of an activity guidance group framework enabled the principles of Activity Group Therapy to be applied

within a more constrained school setting, with student populations, and to address specific educational or counselling related issues.

In 1998 Johnson, Riester, Corbett, Buehler, Huffaker, Levich and Pena used the Schiffer (1984, 1986) and Slavson's (1986) activity group therapy principles to develop a concrete framework describing the processes involved in the creation and functioning of an activity centered therapeutic group. In addition, Johnson et al. (1998) created a general guide outlining four stages to take place over ten sessions of group activity therapy including goals and activities for each session.

Johnson et al. (1998) suggested that when developing an activity therapy group three elements should be kept in mind. Firstly, the setting must be private and free from distractions. Secondly, the length of each session must be appropriately determined because the length will affect the type of activities chosen for each session. Time must be allocated for introduction, instruction, activity, conclusion and evaluation. The setting and other logistical constraints will determine the number of sessions per week or month. Thirdly, the leader must consider the size of the group as the size of the group will inevitably influence the nature of the activities. Considering these three elements would help to establish the group boundaries and potentially increase the "...overall success of the activities and group process."

Once the creation mechanisms of the group were determined the functioning level of the group members then also had to be considered. The developmental age of the members will dictate the level of structure necessary for

the group sessions. The younger the children the more structure will probably be needed for group maintenance (Johnson et al., 1998; Yalom, 1995). Yet, if the group therapeutic process progresses the developmental level of the participants, the amount of structure could be re-evaluated during the group. The re-evaluation could suggest decreasing the amount of structure if the group facilitator felt that the group members were ready for such a dynamic change.

Adapting group theory from Yalom (1995), Johnson et al. (1998) synthesised four stages of group activity therapy: development, conflict, cohesion and termination. The four stages were designed to progress over the course of ten sessions. Each session's goals and respective activities were developed in coherence with the four proposed stages.

<u>Session</u>	<u>Goal</u>
Session #1	<p>Group members will feel comfortable and relaxed</p> <p>Encourage the group members to participate</p> <p>Maintain a supportive environment</p> <p>Group members will form connections with each other</p>
Session #2	<p>Group members learn to become more vulnerable yet feel secure</p> <p>Group members feel like they belong to the group</p> <p>The group members establish rapport amongst each other</p> <p>Facilitator includes all group members in activities</p>
Session #3	<p>Each group member feels secure with each other</p> <p>Activities encourage group interaction and individual expression</p> <p>Group members are committed to the group</p>

Session #4	<p>One person does not dominate the group</p> <p>Members begin to realise the influence they have on their peers in the group.</p>
Session #5	<p>Resolution of conflicts and problems will strive for group cohesion</p> <p>Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with in positive and appropriate manners.</p> <p>Each member is trying to establish his individual identity</p>
Session #6	<p>The group members help to establish the role of the group leader.</p> <p>The promotion of change amongst the members creating cohesion and growth.</p> <p>Constructive Criticism is modeled.</p>
Session #7	<p>The group solves problems as a cohesive entity</p> <p>The leader plays a lesser role in the structure of the group</p> <p>Increased trust and self-disclosure</p>
Session #8	<p>Constructive and open conflict-resolution will take place</p> <p>Termination of the group becomes an issue</p>
Session #9	<p>Communication is direct and cohesive</p> <p>Less anxiety dealing with the activities</p> <p>Discuss group termination and closure</p>
Session #10	<p>Strong and satisfying group closure</p>

For each session the proposed group activity therapy curriculum suggested a number of possible activities. For Johnson et al.'s (1998) purpose, each activity that was chosen to be included in their 1998 article was suggested to meet the goals of the ten sessions when applied with a population of severely disturbed adolescents who were being held in custody in the State of Texas. In this case, working with an inhibited and/or withdrawn intermediate aged male elementary school children population, the AGT process goals remained similar to the Johnson et al. 1998 article. However, the overall objective of the program and nature of each related activity was inevitably different. In addition, due to logistical constraints the Activity Group Therapy for inhibited students program was implemented over six sessions. Therefore, many of the dynamics described by Johnson et al. to take place over ten sessions had to be altered so that the activity program could be employed over a shorter number of overall sessions. Essentially, Johnson et al.'s framework described above provided a tool that influenced and established guidelines for the design and implementation of the Activity Group Therapy program for Inhibited and/or Withdraw Children.

The guiding principle or objective of the group activity therapy was fundamental to the design and application of the activities (Schaefer et al., 1982). In the case of this research, the implementation of a Group Activity Therapy approach was aimed at an inhibited and/or withdrawn male intermediate elementary school student population; a population often in need of intervention because of the negative stigma and dysfunctional potential that has been demonstrated within such a populace.

In 1990 Hymel et al. indicated that social withdrawal was associated with negative self-regard. A question facing the initial construction of activity project became what came first, the poor self-perceptions or the social withdrawal? The answer was unclear and so the aim of the Group Activity Therapy approach was designed and implemented to attempt to address both issues, building self-esteem and providing an opportunity for the participants to become involved within a peer group experience. Moreover, Hymel et al., (1990) suggested that both negative self-perception and social isolation were factors of poor or undeveloped social skills. Therefore another aim of the activity group project, for it to proactively meet the needs of the participants, was to provide some opportunities to educate and practice appropriate social interaction skills.

The observations and experiences of the group members and group facilitator / researcher while participating in the respective activities will be discussed, explored and qualitatively reviewed. Moreover, the participants' experiences of the program holistically will be described. Hopefully these recordings and analysis will provide for future discourse and improving the quality and nature of activities when implemented within an activity based therapeutic approach designed for children who exhibit inhibited or withdrawn behaviours.

Chapter III

Methodology

The implementation of the group activity therapy program and its activities for inhibited and withdrawn intermediate aged male elementary school children was explored and discussed using a qualitative approach stemming from a naturalistic research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Kvale, 1996). Essentially, the qualitative research used a variety of sources to describe the events, perceptions, and ideas expressed, as they were experienced during the implementation of the depicted group activity program. The recorded data was then analysed and used for discussion purposes. The qualitative program exploration attempted to describe and consider each participant's thoughts, feelings and behaviours concerning each activity, session and the activity program holistically.

The implementation of quantitative measurement for explorative and description purposes frequently can be narrow in its vision because it limits the assessment to formal outcome goals. Limiting the exploration to specific outcome goals can often result in overlooking the individual perceptions of the sample and the research administrator (Peled & Edleson, 1992). In this case, the qualitative methodological description of the research enabled exploration of the program beyond the measurement of any stated objectives. The qualitative research design attempted to provide a meaningful understanding about the participants' and

facilitator's reactions, perception, thoughts and feelings about the activities and the overall activity group therapeutic process.

The overall objective of the research was to gain awareness about the group participants' perspectives of each activity and the group process holistically. The individual and group perspectives and narratives were recorded and analysed using solicited feedback from the activity group participants and researcher observations. When individual responses or perceptions varied about an activity, the researcher attempted to explore the discrepancies amongst the individual participants. This further directed exploration took place using individual and group interviews and observations. The qualitative evaluation of the program provided a synthesised description of the participants' experiences so that suggestions concerning improvement and/or merit of each activity and the program itself could be solicited and investigated (Kvale, 1996). The qualitative evaluation of the program took care to observe and solicit participant responses concerning the group setting, each activity, group dynamics, as well as discrepancies and similarities amongst the various group members' thoughts and perceptions of each session's events.

Sample and Time Frame

The population sample of the program included four boys ranging in grade level between three and five. The group number was limited to four because of the inhibited nature of the children. Typically, inhibited or withdrawn children stay away or are intimidated by social interaction (Hymet et al., 1990). The

presence of a large group could have interfered with the ability of each child to learn to feel comfortable within the group environment. Another consideration having used a relatively small sample of four participants stemmed from methodological concerns. A larger sample may have jeopardised the validity of the group's interview responses because of a greater chance of individual dominance and/or resistance to voice individual differences of opinion in front of a large group. (Dockrell, Lewis & Lindsay, 2000).

The Participants

There were four boys who comprised the sample for this research: Jake, Adam, Leon, and Steve. (The names of the participants are pseudonyms used for the purposes of this research in order to maintain participant confidentiality.) Steve was the oldest and was in Grade Five. His teacher and mother saw Steve as a bright boy who was unmotivated to produce classroom assignments. Steve excelled in art projects and alternative independent sports and activities, his favourite being dirt bike racing. Steve was often found playing by himself at recess and lunch. If and when Steve was found somewhat involved with other kids you would not notice him because he rarely spoke or took on any fashion of an assertive role. Steve himself admitted that when he did take a risk and make a comment in a group setting he often felt that he was perceived as "*weird*" or "*un-cool*" so he often just stayed away from social situations.

Adam was the next oldest and was in Grade Four. Adam excelled at school and always gets all his work done. Adam was a fantastic basketball player

and enjoyed martial arts. Adam also sang for radio commercials. Adam complained that he had no friends and that none of his classmates liked him. Adam tried to play basketball with them and felt that he could compete but whenever he started winning his peers began cheating or stopped the game. Adam wished that he could be a leader in his classroom but did not feel like that was a possibility. Adam also wished that he had some other boys to play with during school and after school. Adam rarely joined group classroom activities and always asked the teacher if he could just work by himself. Adam just preferred to be by himself at the present moment in his life.

Jake was in Grade Three along with Leon but they were in different classes. His mother and teacher considered Jake to be a gifted student. However, Jake was never seen sharing his knowledge with others. He liked to go to school, read, get his work done and go home. Jake was rarely seen being engaged in any classroom group activities and looked upset when he could not work independently. Jake said he would like some friends but that he did not know how to get them. He said that most of the kids think he is a “nerd”. Jake did all right at physical activities but did not seem to enjoy them. Jake’s mother tried to get Jake involved in some form of academic after-school or camp groups but he always refused to go once the program began.

Leon, the youngest of the group, struggled with school and wished that he could be a better student. Mostly, though, Leon wished that he could get invited to play in the Grade Three lunch and recess soccer game. Leon said that at the beginning of the year he often got told that he could not play because his

inclusion would make uneven teams. After a while he just gave up and now he just likes playing in sand by himself. Leon made an effort to be socially active, but when his peers denied him the opportunity to be socially active, he digressed into his perceived inhibited and withdrawn behaviours. The other three boys emerged as individuals who previously never made much of an effort to be more engaged. Between Leon's poor academic performance and lack of perceived friends he was often seen sitting quietly in his desk or a remote area of the classroom or playground.

The group consisted of a single gender because, as Schiffer (1984) pointed out, children of an intermediate elementary school age group tend to be interested in hanging out with peers of the same gender. If the activities were designed with the goal of providing a mechanism for a perceived safe environment and increased social interaction it was consistent to promote the interaction with peers of the same gender. The children themselves were chosen based on teacher, principal, parent or school counsellor observations of inhibited or withdrawn behaviours in a particular intermediate aged male student. The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the student participant candidates were asked to give written permission to have their child participate in the Group Activity Therapy research. (The letter asking for written permission is found in the appendix of this thesis.) Moreover, each participant was told about the nature of the activity group and was asked if they would like to join the activity group. The result was that each participant volunteered to take part in the activity group program.

As previously detailed, for confidentiality purposes none of the participant's real names were used in the write-up, instead pseudo-names were used. In addition, access to any of the videotapes or audiotapes collected from the sessions was limited to the research facilitator and the thesis advisor and committee. The program consisted of a variety of activities that took place over the course of six weeks. The group met weekly for forty-five minutes worth of introduction, instruction and activities and then followed-up by fifteen minutes of solicited feedback / group discussion. The group had one facilitator (myself) who also took on the roles of instructor and researcher.

Data Collection

Data was collected qualitatively and, therefore, was corroborated from a variety of sources. One of the vital sources of information came from group leader observations. The group therapeutic program for children by nature needed to be a private enterprise; the presence of non-participant observers could have jeopardised the perceived safety of the program. This argument supported the direct observational data collection to have been from the group facilitator because he was actively involved with the group. Therefore the group facilitator presented a relatively lower risk than an outside observer in potentially jeopardising the perceived confidentiality and safety of the activity group program. The group facilitator / researcher's observations were aided by recorded field notes regarding the students' participation in the activities and their feedback during the final quarter of each session. (Greig & Taylor, 1999) Considering the

benefit of the group facilitator also being the researcher, there was also the potential for bias because the group researcher / facilitator may have had an implicit hope that the program was going to be perceived as successful and command merit.

To triangulate the researcher's observational data and to compensate for researcher bias two further forms of data collection were employed. All the sessions, with permission, were video and audio taped. The video and audiotapes were used to confirm or dispute the recorded field notes and observations dictated by the researcher / group leader (Greig & Taylor, 1999). Moreover, the video and audiotapes helped bring to light other pertinent information that may have been missed by the original recorded observations. Viewing the audio and videotapes not only helped to establish reliability within the research process but also provided important information regarding the process that might have been missed during the actual facilitation of the group activities and the group discussions following each session. Respectively, the videotapes were able to record experiential data and provide testimony from the sessions that took place in an uncontrolled sound setting (outside) that the audiotapes would have not been able to adequately record. The audiotapes, on the other hand, were able to record verbal dialogue especially during the feedback session and interviews that the videotapes were unable to pick-up.

Both the audiotapes and direct observation were further collaborated using a third method of research. The third method of qualitative data collection took place through the use of group interviews. The reason qualitative interviews were

chosen as a component of the triangulation process was because group interviews have been proven to be a proficient method of soliciting information from children (Dockrell, et al., 2000). “ Group interviews allowed for the possibility that the discussions between... [the children]... would spark off new ideas, criticism or developments” (Dockrell, et al., 2000). It has also been demonstrated that small group situations present a more supportive and less threatening environment than a one-to-one interview (Lewis, 1992). Jones and Tannock (2000) addressed the idea that a group interview for research purposes actually increases the reliability of the data if some form of consensus is revealed through the discussion process. Overall, a group interview was a logical and appropriate means of soliciting perspectives on the therapeutic group process and the particular activities involved; as well, as being an integral part of the triangulation process and the overall reliability of the research.

The interviewer / researcher facilitated a group interview process that remained open ended, perceptive to new information and that followed leads to ideas that had possibly not been gathered through observational data collection. The interviewer aided the interviewees (participants) to use their own words, thoughts and values when responding to questions and comments. The participants were also given opportunities to reply to the responses given by their peers in the group. For example, if one interviewee mentioned something of interest, another participant was given an opportunity to say if they agreed or if they had something further to add to the retort. At the end of each group interview session, all the data gathered was reviewed to determine if the

information recorded through direct and indirect observation concurred or was incongruent to the data (perceptions) presented by the participants during the group interviews.

The initial set of questions the group was asked during the group interviews at the end of each session were open-ended, designed to stimulate discussion and collect individual and group perceptions and feelings about the program's activities and process (Costley, 2000). The information presented in the interviews was recorded both on audio and videotape as well as in written notes. The videotapes, audiotapes, and notes helped to ensure that all of the group members' opinions were solicited during each session and that the information being presented was in fact recorded. The group interviews took place during the final quarter of each session. A longer group interview took place after the final session's activities to gather information and feedback concerning the group member's thoughts about the activity group therapy program holistically. The participants' feedback was of great value because the participants observed important information and behaviours that the group facilitator may have missed or been unaware about. The group interviews also had the potential to help better understand the benefits or problems of each activity and the group process itself. Moreover, the group feedback helped to remove some of the researcher / interviewer biases because the perceptions and thoughts of the group members presented at the end of a session helped to guide the research based follow-up discussions in a more non-facilitator directive direction.

It must be noted that there was also potential for perception limitation from the participants themselves during the group follow-up interviews. The young age and inherent inhibited nature of the participants may have limited the maturity and sheer number of personal and group observational responses. Moreover, the possibility existed that participants framed their responses to please the researcher / group leader. These potentials for bias did not necessarily diminish the quality of the research because it was those same biases that helped form a more personal and meaningful set of observational data. However, to add to the validity and reliability of the research, individual interviews were also used at the end on the group activity program to give each participant an opportunity to voice themselves without any potential pressure from the other three group members. Regardless, the potential biases inherent in the research process were considered when analysing and synthesising the collected data in order to present a more accurate narrative of the group activity program. Those same potential biases should also be meaningful for the reader's consideration when reviewing the Collection of the Data, Discussion, and Conclusion chapters of this thesis.

Once the direct and indirect qualitative observations and interviews were recorded, contrasted, and compared, a descriptive summarization of the data was detailed. The collective analysis of the data concerning the activity group therapy program and each respective activity was produced through a variety of means. The solicited feedback from the group members were initially compared to the events and ideas observed by the researcher and depicted on the audiotapes to

address validity and reliability. From those comparisons similarities and differences amongst the three sources were recorded and noted.

The resultant data forming the initial analysis were then compared and contrasted amongst the four group participants. Similarities and differences between the four group members during one session or activity were then compared to the similarities and differences that developed from each of the other activities and sessions. The consistent differences and similarities were then grouped together to illustrate the relationship between the ideas and behaviours of each group member over their entire group activity experience. The grouping of the data was used to address the significance of certain independent and holistic events that took place throughout the course of the group activity program. The depictions of such significances were then used to balance the information collected in this research against the information discussed in the review of the literature.

Consistencies across the recorded observational data of the researcher and the feedback form the participants were also evaluated. This comparison aided with the reliability and validity of data. Moreover, this comparison was also used to depict the differences between the events that took place and ideas that were expressed when recorded through the eyes of the researcher versus the eyes of the participants. These differences were detailed to add to the meaningfulness of the research by helping to articulate how the perceptions of certain experiences differed depending on whom was describing the idea or event.

The objective of the overall synthesis and analysis of the data was to provide detailed descriptions of the program and activities through the eyes of the participants. The major role of the qualitative exploration was to summarize the perceptions and observations attained through the various means. The summation of the collection of the data may provide readers and potential future facilitators with a better understanding of the merit of the following activities when employed with an inhibited and/or withdrawn intermediate aged male student population within a group activity therapy paradigm.

Chapter IV
(The Program)

Group Activities For Withdrawn and
Inhibited Children: Packet Outline

The activities package consists of nine activities designed for four to eight grade three - four students (ages 8-10) to occur over six sessions. For this to take place each session has one activity, but sessions 3, 4, and 5 have two activities respectively. If any of the activities were influenced by an external source credit is given at the end of the outline of each activity.

Group Process:

During any of the activities a leader could be chosen. The leader would be responsible for handing out any supplies needed for each activity. Every group member should get to be the leader at least once during the activity group program.

During any discussion, especially in the follow-ups and interviews during the last quarter of the sessions, a stuffed animal could be used as a speaking device. A group member can only speak when they have the stuffed animal. Rules of group discussion and play should incorporate the following ideas:

- a) No put downs
- b) Include everyone
- c) Listen while others are speaking

- d) The facilitator is in charge
- e) Its important to be at every session
- d) Respect others and their property

It is not expected that every single activity will be pertinent and prove meaningful to every participant. The range of activities and the group dynamic itself facilitates a possibility that each participant will benefit from some aspect of the group activity process.

Activity #1 (Introduction)

Purpose: To introduce the group members

Description: Go around the circle and say your name and something you like very much (eg., a toy, television show or class subject). Then after everyone is introduced have each member whisper their name and favourite thing into the person's ear on their right. That person then introduces their new acquaintance to the circle. The same procedure could then be repeated with the person on the left.

Activity #2 Silhouettes

Purpose: Providing a means for introspection

Description: On a large piece of paper draw an outline of a silhouette. (This should be done by the group facilitator prior to the session). Using colouring apparatus, glue, scissors and magazines each participant is asked to fill in a

silhouette with the qualities they would use to describe themselves. These could be both good and bad qualities. (eg., I love skating or I hate swimming).

Follow-up: After the silhouette is complete the group reforms a circle to discuss the activity. Depending on the social climate of the group, which will most likely be poor, discussion concerning the items included in the silhouette should not be very intense or else you may scare some of the group members. Comments are geared by the facilitator to include positive statements, such as: you are a good drawer, Johnny included both things he likes and dislikes about himself, and I liked the way you all worked so hard to express your ideas in your silhouettes. The silhouettes should be kept for future sessions because as the group progresses to a more safe and inviting environment talking about what was included in the silhouettes could be prove meaningful and worthwhile.

Activity #3 Stronger Together

Purpose: To learn the differences between working by one's self and working in partners and a group.

Description: Each group member is given a set of building toys. The toys can range from blocks to Lego to straws and pins. Each group member is asked to build the highest and strongest tower they can. Once completed two of the students building toys are combined and the same challenge is presented but this time they must complete the assignment in a dyad. After completion the same challenge is done this time in a group of three. The facilitator could himself the

following questions when observing the activity. Is there somebody dominating the group? Why or why not? Has a leader been chosen, How and Who? Was a group member more successful when working on his or her own? Answers or ideas concerning such questions could be addressed to the group when switching between single-work to dyads and triads. In addition, when switching from single to dyads and triads reinforce that everyone should be included in the activity and that just because the group decides to do something different from what a group member may suggest doesn't make the idea worthless. These behaviours could also be reinforced during the actual construction stages of the activity.

Follow-up: A short and simple discussion concerning the differences the group members experienced between working as a single person to working in partners and a small group.

Activity #4 Likeness and Differences

Purpose: To evaluate how we see ourselves

Description: Working individually each group member is asked to complete the following sentences: I'm different from other students in my class because I _____. I'm like the others in my class because I _____. Other students are better than I am at _____. I would like to be better at _____. The things I

can do better than most of the students in my class are _____. Once completed the group members are asked to share two of their answers with the rest of the group.

R.W. Reasoner (1982). Building Self Esteem:
Teacher's Guide to Classroom Materials Elementary Edition.
Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.

Follow-up: What was the most difficult question to answer? Are you proud of your answers?

Activity #5: The Stone Cutter

Purpose: To realise that we are all special in our unique ways.

Description: Read the Stone Cutter story. (See Appendix)

Follow-up: Draw a picture of the story's moral. After the pictures are drawn, as a group discuss what was the moral of the story.

Activity #6 I'm good at _____ !

Purpose: To be confident and proud about what we're good at. To share what we're good at with our group.

Description: Gather a variety of balls, and a Frisbee. Line each of the group members into a single file line. Ask them, one at a time, to run and either throw or kick the ball of their choice as far as they can (everyone goes once). The next time around they are asked to yell out something they're good at the top of their lungs while kicking or throwing the ball. The third time around they just yell something

they like about themselves. This could continue for as long as everyone is interested, each time coming up with something new that they're good at. If time permits, write down all the things they yelled and give it to them to take home.

Follow-up: How did it feel to say the things we're good at so openly and loudly?

Activity #7 Transport Away my Fears

Purpose: To recognise fears and learn that we have some control over our fears.

Description: The facilitator starts by mentioning something that they are personally afraid of, such as snakes. As a group develop a list of both common and less obvious fears (eg. the dark, being called upon in class). After the list is constructed have a short discussion about what it's like to be afraid. Then using art supplies build various forms of transportation: airplane, car, hot air balloon (balloon with a paper basket tied on with string), or whatever one's imagination creates. Have the group members write down a fear and stick it onto the transport vehicle and send the fear away. An example could include, placing a fear on a paper airplane and sending it out the window. Giving a stone a fear and then throwing it into a pond or off a bridge would also work well. After a few fears are thrown away privately some of the fears could be shared with the group before they are thrown away.

Follow-up: Questions which could be beneficial to ask after the activity may include: "how does it feel to throw away your fears, could your fears come back, and what could you do about them if they do return?"

Kristi Lane (1991). Feelings are Real:
Group Activities for Children Leaders Manual.
(pp. 56-58). Accelerated Development Inc.
Adapted by Sheldon Franken - November, 1999

Activity #8 Game Creation

Purpose: To participate in a facilitative and leadership role during one of the group's activities. To learn that it's important to ask for help.

Description: Each group member is asked to create his or her own game. The game could be an original game or an adaptation of an already established game. The games that they are to create can only take a maximum of 10 minutes to play, the game must include everybody, it must be safe and makes use of only accessible equipment. Those four construct requirements of the game are often difficult for the group member to include in their game successfully. That is why the facilitator must go over the games consistently as they are being created to make sure the constructs are being included. This is a difficult process and the group members should be encouraged to seek the facilitator's help when they are unsure if the game meets the requirements. Once the games are established each group member is given an opportunity to explain and facilitate the game.

Follow-up #1: After the games are created but before the games are actually played go over why its so important to seek out the facilitator's help when they are having difficulty. An example of somebody not asking for help could be discussed. For instance telling a story about somebody creating a game that involved standing on a ladder and during the playing of the game the kid on the ladder fell and broke her arm. Such a game obviously wasn't safe. The facilitator could then ask the participants what the game creator could or should have done before playing the game?

Follow-up #2 (after the games are played): What was it like for everybody to be playing your game? How important was it for you to explain you game clearly? What would happen if a group member did not enjoy playing your game?

Activity #9: Speech

Purpose: To feel comfortable talking in front of a group about oneself or one's ideas.

Give each participant a personal information form (found in the appendix) and ask the participants to complete the form. Using the information gained from the answers help each group member develop a 1-2 minute speech. After giving each participant some time to write the speech the participants are given the five cues about how to give a good speech (cues are outlined on the next page). After the cues are presented, the children should practice giving their speeches to one

another. After they have practised, each person comes up to the front and is asked to present their speech. The first time they give their speech you could ask them to purposely make a mistake on one of the cues when presenting and the rest of the group will try to guess the mistake. Asking them to make a mistake takes away some of the initial pressure. After they have each presented their mistake speech they would then be asked to present their speech again, this time trying not to make a mistake (time may not permit a second speech). If time is a concern the group could be asked to write their speeches at home before coming to the group.

Follow-up: The group, sitting in a circle for the final time discusses what it was like to talk about oneself to many people. What did they like, what did they not like? Can they see themselves doing such a thing in the future? Having this as the last activity the group members are then given an award and perhaps awards ceremony for completing their speech and completing the activity group program. Having snacks at this time is a nice treat and makes the completion of the group special. End by telling the group that these awards should be used as a reminder of each person's amazing skills and courage and thank them for having had a wonderful time being their group leader.

Talmud Torah Elementary School

Grade Four Class - November, 1998

Chapter V

(Outcomes)

Implementation of the Group Activities:

Descriptions, Feedback and Observations

The program's activities will be depicted and discussed in a specific manner. Initially there will be a brief description of each session. The description of each session will then be followed up by a presentation of the pertinent information pertaining to the research that was revealed from each session. Each session's information will be divided up into three categories to help depict the information. The three categories developed to help illustrate the gathered information are: **similarities** amongst the participants, **differences** amongst the participants, and **points-of interest** that took place during each session.

Session #1: Introduction & Silhouettes

Session number one started uniquely relative to the other sessions because it was the first session. Rules and norms of the group needed to be established as well as the creation of a safe environment. Three group norms / rules were established using a top down approach. I as the leader essentially told the group what the norms and rules would be and the group members helped by providing insights as to how the group norms and rules would affect and be implemented within the group.

The Rules / Norms:

Confidentiality – The group members could tell others about their group experience but not the experiences of the other participants. This was essential because you cannot ask a child to keep things a secret from their peers or family because it may allude to an unnecessary uncomfortable environment. Yet, it was imperative that the participants trust the group that their reactions and actions would not leave the group.

Freedom – Children often feel stuck in their present situation and do not realise that they are capable of changing the situation. Yet, structure is also an important consideration in a child's life or else they can feel lost. Considering both important aspects, I felt articulating to the group members that they could leave the group anytime they wished to be an integral component to the overall environment. They were there because I wanted them to be there and not because they had to be there - which insinuated a feeling of importance and inclusion. If one of the goals of an inhibited or withdrawn counselling group is to establish and perpetuate feelings of inclusion and importance why not start right with the initial group norms and rules?

No Put Downs – Put Downs were not generally a concern with any of these participants. Inhibited and/or withdrawn children are often not the insinulators of put downs, they are often the ones being put down. Yet, within such a small group setting the presence of any type of put-downs could have had a dramatic negative impact on the group experience for many if not all of the participants. Moreover,

asking the participants to not engage in any put-downs suggests that they too were normal kids capable of hurting others just like the people who had previously hurt them through words or actions.

After the introduction of the rules and norms, each participant was asked to state his name, code name and something he loves. The code name he came up with was not his respective pseudonym used for confidentiality purposes during the presentation of this research. Instead, the code name was something that he could come up with by himself and was a name that the rest of the group could call him during the activity group program. The idea behind having a code name was that the code name could be used as an additional tool to help each participant internalize that the activity group presented him with a fresh start. I was really nervous starting out this first group activity because I had witnessed each group member in their respective classes prior to the group and it was clear that in similar situations they would often pass on any opportunity to reveal something about themselves. However, most of the participants had no hesitation in telling the group their name, code name, or something they loved. Leon was the one exception; he wanted to pass on the code name but was willing to share his love of soccer and his true name. In retrospect, Leon was the last one to arrive to the group and by the time he came in the other three participants had already been discussing their potential code names. Leon may have felt intimidated as to what code name to choose because he was not part of the earlier discussion. This may suggest that even in the first few moments of this group situation, it may have

been valuable for all the participants to get equal exposure to all the group's events so that they were always feeling as though they were being included.

Silhouettes began with the explanation of the activity. The participants were told to draw an outline of a person, a big head and body, on a piece of paper and then fill in the image with various magazine cut-outs and drawing that represented them. They were told to include things they liked or that they identified with or even to include things they disliked, as long as it somehow represented them.

Similarities:

Similarity of interest amongst the four participants was an obvious factor in getting the participants to be socially engaged during the silhouette activity. For example, when Adam found a cut out of chocolates, Leon jumped in to mention that he liked chocolate as well. The two found a common bond and continued to respond to each other's comments. Steve and Jake had yet to find a common interest and remained quiet but actively engaged for the first half of the activity. Then a cut out of a gun presented itself and Jake became a part of the social group as Jake, Leon and Adam had now found a similarity to share amongst the three of them - guns. Steve, however, still remained isolated. Steve did not become a factor in the group's verbal social interaction until Jake brought up some interest in Tai-Kwan-Do. Upon hearing the martial art mentioned, Steve's head popped up and he appeared to now be interested in the conversation and what the other participants were doing. Essentially, similarities of interest were observed to be a

motivating factor for social interaction across the four group members. The social interaction that occurred during the activity was observed to be related to whether one of the participants shared some common interest with another participant.

Three of the participants articulated during the feedback session after the activity that they were surprised how many things they were able to discover during the activity that represented themselves. This comment suggests that prior to the session they did not believe that they were going to find many things with which to fill in their silhouettes. The activity gave them the means to become aware of some things they might not have otherwise realised about themselves. This sense of discovery gave these three participants a positive experience as all three mentioned that it was these surprise discoveries that they liked most about the activity.

Differences:

Steve, unlike the rest of the participants, was very concentrated on the assigned task. He rarely strayed off task even when jokes or stories being told by the other participants. It would be fair to say that Steve demonstrated the characteristics most affiliated as being inhibited or withdrawn. I asked Steve a question during the feedback session I thought to be integral to his inhibited behaviour. The other three participants all really enjoyed the joking, fun play that took place during the activity; they were also very involved in that social play. Therefore, I asked Steve if he still enjoyed the jokes and off task behaviour even though he was not an engaged member of the process. Steve replied that he very

much enjoyed the other three participants' joking mannerisms. In fact Steve said that it made the activity more fun. Steve's relatively more inhibited behaviour during the activity did not necessarily signify that he was not enjoying the social behaviour of the other participants. Moreover, it was interesting to see that the other three participants were capable of social interaction when they decided to become actively and socially engaged in the activity. These observations stressed the importance of taking into account the environment and group dynamics when considering the effect of an activity on an inhibited or withdrawn child's level of social interaction.

Observations and Points of Interest:

Adam began his silhouette activity by isolating himself from the group. He grabbed his paper and magazine clippings and started working at a table by himself away from the rest of the group. While Adam was at the separate table he was engaged in his work. After a few minutes Adam decided to leave his paper and join the rest of the group. While with the rest of the group Adam was very social but was not engaged in the assignment. It appeared that Adam was not successful at doing the assigned task and being social simultaneously. Steve, on the other hand, also demonstrated an inability or lack of desire to be social and actively on-task simultaneously. However, regardless if he was being social or doing the assignment he still positioned himself within the proximity of the group. In either situation, the participant's inhibited behaviour was manifested by the assigned task at hand. This begged the question: had less priority been placed on

the task would Steve have been more social because he no longer felt any pressure to complete the assigned task? Along the same line, had more priority been placed on completing the assigned task would Adam never have left his task at the table in order to be a more social part of the group? In either situation the perceived priority of the task at hand may have had a major influence on a participant's willingness to be more involved in the group on a social level.

Session #2: Stronger Together

This session began with a quick reminder about the group norms and rules established in session #1. Afterwards the session progressed directly into the activity. The participants were given a package of straws and pins and were asked to build / create a structure from the equipment. They could build anything they wanted and were capable of building. They were also told that after about fifteen minutes that they would be grouped into dyads and that would have to somehow find a way to combine their respective creations that they had built up to that point. At the end their dyad creations were asked to be combined into one single group building.

Similarities:

As soon as the equipment was divided out and the participants were asked to work on their own creation, the participants chose to go right to work but in two separate groups. Two of the participants chose to work at the tables on the left and the other two chose to work at the tables on the right. The participants did not

necessarily begin working as a dyad; in fact, they worked on their projects independently immediately next to each other. It was as though they needed to see what somebody else was doing in order to be motivated to work on their independent project. Or perhaps this was their way of telling me whom they wished to work with once it was time to form dyads and combine their creations.

All four participants decided to complete their individual works prior to combining their creation with a partner. There was no communication between the participants as to how the respective individual projects should be combined together until each individual project was totally completed. When it finally came time to work in dyads and combine their projects all four participants threw out many ideas as to how the project should continue to be built. Interestingly, even though none of the participants appeared to take on the leadership responsibility for combining the various creations, when asked about leadership during the dyad stage and the feedback circle stage each group member described themselves as the true leader of their respective dyad. After some discussion on the subject, Leon finally admitted that the role of the group leader continuously switched depending on whom the rest of the group perceived to have presented the best idea. Upon hearing Leon's remarks the other three also agreed that the leadership role changed and that at some point each of them wore the leader's hat. Although each participant actively tried to convince the group and myself that they were "the leader" of their respective dyad, in truth, the leadership role did continuously switch throughout the activity. Even for four kids who are considered inhibited

and withdrawn and who are often observed to be strictly engaged on individual levels, these four group participants all wanted the temporary title of “leader”.

Differences:

When it was time for dyads to form, Leon and Jake formed one group and Steve and Adam formed the second. From my observation it was clear that, although each participant had the opportunity to be a leader of their respective dyad for a period of time, Jake and Steve clearly took on a more dynamic and assertive role in their respective dyad. They were the more verbal, assertive and active members of their dyad.

It appeared as though Leon was willing to accept Jake’s assertive role. Leon listened to Jake, provided his own ideas to see if Jake thought they had merit and appeared to enjoy the combination portion of the activity. Jake and Leon were laughing, engaged with one another and building a very creative project together. This was confirmed by Leon’s comments at the end of the group that he would have felt uncomfortable if I had specifically chosen who the leader of the group should have been. Leon did not view building as one of his strengths and so having potentially been assigned the role of the leader he felt would have been overwhelming.

Contrary to Leon and Jake, Adam was not supportive of Steve’s attempt to take control of the project. As a result Steve and Adam were not engaged with each other during the combination stage of the activity. It appeared as though Adam and Steve worked independently from each other and had no interest in

what the other was doing or had to say. Their typical classroom inhibited and withdrawn behaviour was clearly on display. When I asked which part of the activity the participants most enjoyed, Adam and Steve both said the beginning when they were working on their own, whereas Leon and Jake both preferred the group portions of the activity. Allowing somebody else to take on a leadership role when you may have wanted to be the leader was demonstrated to have a dynamic silencing effect. I'd be curious to find out if Adam constantly wishes that he was the leader during assigned group work and I also wonder if Leon preferred to let others take on the leadership role of the groups for which he is involved?

Observations and Points of Interest:

Steve took control and clearly added to the final outcome of his and Adam's final project. Steve appeared to be insulted when Adam claimed during the final discussion that he felt that he was the leader of his and Steve's group. Despite the fact that Adam recanted his statement slightly and admitted that both he and Steve alternated the leadership role, the initial claim by Adam was not well taken by Steve. Steve's mood changed when at the finale of the group discussion period both Leon and Jake said that they felt that Steve was a great leader for the time when the two dyads were asked to combine their two projects. It was clear to me as the group facilitator that Steve was clearly the in-charge individual when it came down to the time for combining all the straw creations together. Based on Steve's physical reactions - smile on his face - and his verbal comments we discovered that it was extremely rewarding to Steve to hear from his peer group

members that his leadership efforts were recognised. This group dynamic illustrated the important influence peers accreditation can have on individual effort. Without some of the peer recognition, Steve may in the future choose not to take on a leadership role.

As alluded to in the differences category, Leon mentioned that he was glad not to have been chosen as the leader for his dyad. He was not confident in his building skills and creative ideas. Leon felt that Jake was much more competent in taking on the leadership role. Leon's statement begged two questions: Firstly, considering the possibility that Leon's inhibited and withdrawn behaviour had prevented him from taking on leadership roles in the past would it not have been best to continuously provide him with leadership opportunities so that he could become comfortable with the role? Secondly, in contrast, if Leon had been told to take on a leadership role that he was unready to assume, might that not have terrified him from assuming a leadership role and prevent him from desiring to take on any type of leadership role in the future?

None of the other participants demonstrated any fear to become a leader; the other three wanted the opportunity and mentioned that they would have had no problem if I had simply assigned a leader to each dyad. I think, as in the case of Leon, that although many inhibited and withdrawn children could have benefited from pursuing more opportunities to be engaged as a leader, the facilitator needed to be sensitive to the group and individual dynamics because forcing a participant into a leadership role could have potentially been damaging to the overall group experience.

Session #3: Likenesses and Differences & The Stone Cutter

Day three began with each of the four participants answering a series of single response questions. The questions were: (1) I am different than my classmates because _____; (2) I am like others in my class because _____; (3) Other students are better than me at _____; (4) I'd like to be better at _____; and (5) I am better than most of my classmates at _____. After the questions the group discussed their responses and their thoughts about the process of answering the questions themselves. After the discussion the group was told a story called "The Stone Cutter". The "Stone Cutter" told a tale of a man who wished to be other people and other things only to realise in the end that he was most happy and powerful being himself. After the story the group re-formed into discussion mode. The participants expressed their thoughts and feelings concerning the moral of the story, the order of the day's events and their respective issues about wanting to be different than who they are.

Similarities:

All four participants differed as to what question they felt was the most difficult to answer. However, they were all consistent in saying that question number five, I am better than most of my classmates at _____, was the easiest to answer. This question was the one question that indicated that they possessed something at which they excelled in.

The pre-mentioned questionnaire was designed to be asked in conjunction with the "Stone Cutter" story because the "Stone Cutter's" theme of being happy

with who you are is naturally related to the responses provided by the participants. The questionnaire explored ways in which the participants saw themselves in terms of differences and similarities and strengths and weaknesses within their respective classes. "The Stone Cutter" story discussed the negatives of always wanting to be like someone else and how one should really be content with whom they are and try to be the best person that they can be. In fact, all of the participants, when asked, were able to articulate in some fashion that the moral of the story. Yet, none of the participants were able to connect the two activities – "The Stone Cutter" story and the "Likeness and Differences" questionnaire – together. It was not until I mentioned how the two activities were connected that the participants were able to appreciate the theme connecting the two activities. It appeared as though the connections between the activities were overly complex for the participants to grasp.

Although all four participants commented that they enjoyed the story and the questions their behaviour was dramatically different in this third session than it had been during the previous two sessions. For this session the participants' behaviour was less assertive, less dynamic and resembled a greater display of inhibited and withdrawn behaviour. The nature of the activity itself had an effect on the behavioural outcomes, as the activities were far less action and socially oriented and required more concentration and individual activity. Moreover, the participants were more critical of this activity during the follow-up discussion period, suggesting alternative ways to implement the questions and ways to change the story to make the session "*more fun*". This less enjoyment of the

activities during session three appeared to have had an impact on the increased inhibited and withdrawn behaviour of the participants during the session.

Differences:

The subject matter of some of the questions was intense – how are we different than our peers? – and the impact of the questions on each participant differed. During this third session Adam appeared to exhibit more withdrawn symptoms when compared to the other sessions. Adam consistently seemed to be off task, his eyes wandering around the room and he was unwilling to cooperate or answer any of the follow-up questions. At the same time Leon had his most open and emotional group experience. Leon commented to the group about how he is often left out of group games, that he often played by himself, that he cries all the time, and that he is embarrassed that he cries. Leon started to cry during his comments. The intensity of the subject matter presented Leon with an opportunity to express his feelings about his self-perceived differences. Jake and Steve's reactions were far less obvious, as they appeared to remain neutral about the activity, offering some comments but by no means opening themselves up the way Leon did or withdrawing from the group the way Adam did.

Points of Interest:

At the beginning of the "Stone Cutter" story the participants were offered an opportunity to grab a pillow to sit on while the story was being read. Three of the participants rushed up to grab pillows. Steve, however, remained quietly in his

chair while the other three grabbed the pillows. I was curious watching Steve if some factor stopped him from getting up to grab a pillow or did he just not want to sit on a pillow. Part of my curiosity was answered when Jake was considerate enough to grab a pillow for Steve. When Jake handed Steve the pillow Steve put a big smile on his face and sat on the pillow. Steve in fact wanted the pillow, there was some factor missing for Steve that existed for the other three boys to make them feel comfortable enough to abandon their inhibited behaviour and get up and grab a pillow. This incident highlighted how certain factors could exist within a group that could enable some of the participants to increase their level of engaged behaviour but how those same factors may not have impacted all of the group members at the same moment.

Session #4: Transport Away My Fears

Session four revolved around the idea of fears. The first quarter of the session was spent discussing various fears as they related to the participants' life, family, and school. After the discussion period group members were asked to brainstorm and record their various fears on a piece of paper. The papers with the fears were then folded into paper airplanes and thrown into an imaginary ocean (off the school's back porch). The idea of the activity is to provide a forum for the participants to collectively express and discuss their fears and provide a metaphorical means for the participants to control and/or remove their fears.

Similarities:

All of the participants did record many of their fears on their respective pieces of paper beyond the fears that were verbalised during the introductory discussion. During the end feedback session after the completion of the activity I discovered that many of the fears recorded on the papers were different than the ones expressed during our introduction discussion. All four group members commented that their favourite part of the session was *not* the act of throwing paper airplanes with their fears written on them into a metaphorical ocean. Instead, contrary to my thoughts, the most liked portion of the session was the opportunity to write down all of their fears. There was one reason given for their liking of writing down fears that was consistent amongst all of the participants; they all appreciated the privacy (safety) that existed during the writing down of their fears portion of the activity. The participants felt that dealing with their fears should be a personal matter and that they preferred working with their fears privately rather than in an open group setting. In fact, Jake said that one of his least favourite parts of the session was when he thought Leon was looking over at his paper to take a peak at his fears list. This potential perceived lack of confidentiality and safety made Jake feel as though his privacy was invaded. All of the group members also appreciated the time they were given to brainstorm their fears because it gave them a chance to figure out all of the fears that affected them and which of them would be beneficial to record in some private manner.

In contrast to the enjoyment and appreciation of writing the fears down, none of the participants had a positive response to the actual act of throwing of the fears away on a paper airplane outside into a field that was supposed to represent the Pacific Ocean. This is not to say that they did not enjoy making and throwing paper airplanes, it was just none of them actually believed that the metaphorical act of throwing away their fears would have any future realistic effect. The paper airplane activity, according to the group, did nothing more than give them a chance to practice their paper airplane making skills.

Differences:

At the beginning of the session, when the group was asked to express some of their personal fears, it appeared as though each group member had a different reaction to the activity. Leon was initially resistant to expressing his fears but once he started talking about a few of them he began to feel much more comfortable and became willing to engage in the sharing of the fears part of the activity. Jake was very involved in volunteering information to the group about his fears right from the start of the activity. Steve remained very quiet and appeared to withdraw into his pillow, covering his ears during the majority of the activity. However, when Steve was called upon specifically by myself to mention a fear he took his face out of the pillow, put a smile on his face and looked as if he wanted to voice his fears all along. It seemed as though Steve just needed to be directly asked to volunteer the information. Finally, Adam remained quiet and unresponsive during the entire introductory fear discussion. For some of the boys

there were concerns about safety and confidentiality and once some of those variables were perceived to exist some of the boys took the opportunity presented to them to express themselves about their fears.

Points of Interest:

Steve commented that he did not believe throwing his fears via paper airplane into a fictional ocean did anything to help fight his fears. Watching the reaction of the rest of the group when Steve made his comment, it appeared as though they agreed with Steve's comment. However, Steve's disbelief in the power of the metaphorical throwing away of his fears was followed up with two further comments. Steve said that he still very much appreciated the opportunity to list his fears on paper so that the next time he comes across one of his fears he would be more able to recognise it as a fear and, therefore, be less surprised. He also mentioned that instead of throwing the airplanes away into a field that was supposed to represent an ocean, he would have preferred making a boat and sending the fears away down the river because it would appear to have been "*more final*". So, perhaps it was not the metaphor of throwing away fears into the ocean that was problematic; it was the manner in which I chose to enact the metaphor that lacked creativity and therefore accuracy for the situation.

Although the paper airplane portion of the session lacked substance as per its objective of symbolizing the control one has in dealing with one's own fears, I felt that it did prove beneficial on another front. The participants had a tough time making paper airplanes that could fly well, except for Steve. Steve was great at making appear airplanes and helped the rest of the group improve their paper

airplane making skills. At the end of the session, Leon told the group that Steve helping to make everybody's paper airplanes was one of his favourite moments of the session. The paper airplane making gave Steve an opportunity to be appreciated for a skill of his and to be a leader of the group. Moreover, the activity provided Steve with the experience of being complimented by his peers.

Session #5: I'm Good at _____! & Game Creation

Session five started with an activity whereby each participant chose a piece of equipment and used it to help encourage them to yell about something that they feel they are good at. For example, each group member would choose between a frisbee, soccer ball, or rubber ball. Using the chosen equipment they would throw or kick it as far as they could while screaming out at the top of their voice something they feel that they are good at (eg., math, drawing, soccer etc). After each group member got a chance to scream and kick or throw, the participants were split to two dyads. Using the same pieces of equipment, each of the two dyads were asked to create a new game for all four of them to play. After the game was created one member from each dyad - as chosen by myself - was asked to lead and teach the rest of the group the new game. Afterwards the four boys were given a few minutes to actually play one of the new games that they had just developed.

Similarities:

Not all of the participants screamed the things they felt that they were good at very loudly. Adam was by far the loudest especially when compared to Steve's yell, which was extremely quiet. Yet, during the final discussion, all of the participants mentioned that they really enjoyed the activity and had no problem thinking of something to scream out loud. In fact, none of them even admitted to being embarrassed about the screaming portion of the activity. All four of the group members mentioned that they were more embarrassed about the content of the scream – having to be about something that they felt they were good at- rather than the actual action of screaming out loud itself. It was, however, brought up that if the group were any larger it would have felt very uncomfortable screaming or saying something that they were good at out loud because they would have felt that too many people were listening. More group members or observers would have decreased the perceived safety of the group and their willingness to engage in the activity.

All four group members mentioned that they would have preferred to yell out something that they wished they could be better at as opposed something they were good at (such as their responses from session four's airplane activity). In addition, it was brought up by the group members that usually people have confidence in things that they are good at, it is the things that someone wants to improve in that they need help with to increase their confidence.

Opposite to the previous activities, where I let the leaders of the group or dyads form from within the group with minimal outside interference, for session five's activities I specifically assigned the leader for each dyad when teaching and implementing the two games that had been created. My two chosen leaders were Jake and Steve. Although Leon would have liked to have been chosen as the leader, none of the group members were upset that it was me who had chosen who would be the leader of each dyad would be. During session five's final discussion, all four group members mentioned that they preferred it when I chose the leader. An outside person choosing the leader had the appearance of fairness and that made all four of them respect the decision as to who should be the. All of them said they generally liked it when an outsider, a teacher or coach, chose the leader of an activity because then there was less dispute amongst the participants as to who would be the group leader. Moreover, it was explained to me that having an external person choose who would be the leader of a group at least presented these four inhibited boys with a greater opportunity of actually being chosen as the leader, an opportunity which pretty much never existed when the leader was chosen from amongst their peers or classmates.

Differences:

Although everybody in the group liked the "develop your own game" activity, all of them had distinct ideas as to how to make the activity better. Steve wished the games could have been played in a more open space. Adam would have liked more time to flush out his game creation ideas. Jake liked the ideas of

the games but thought they were way to difficult to play. It was a good experience to get an opportunity to be in charge of a game's rules but more structure could have been used to help organize the games so that there could have been more direction as what rules make a game more fun and fair for everybody to play.

Points of Interest:

As I pointed out earlier Leon was upset that he had not been chosen as the leader of his dyad. He was not upset that I chose the leader; he was just upset about the outcome of my decision. When Leon told the group that he was upset that he was not chosen as the leader Jake replied to Leon that he felt bad that Leon was not chosen as their dyad's leader. Jake extended his comment telling Leon that he felt that way because he (Jake) had already had an opportunity to be a leader during a previous session and Leon had not yet had such an opportunity. Leon felt much better after hearing that Jake noticed that he had not gotten a turn at being leader and that Jake was empathetic to Leon's situation. It was meaningful to Leon to have a peer demonstrate concern about his feelings. It was positive experiences for Leon to see somebody in the group truly cared about him. "...*It made me feel much better*" (Leon).

Session #6: Speech

Session six was spent doing activities that encouraged and facilitated opportunities for public speaking in front of the rest of the group. The participants began the group filling out blanks on a form that asked about personal

information and interests (birth date, favourite activity, nickname, etc...). After the forms were filled out, the participants were taught about various skills that make a successful speech, including: voice, eye contact, poise, and knowledge about the information being presented.

After the forms were filled out and some public speaking skills were taught, the participants were asked to practice reading the forms that they had filled out, using the public speaking techniques they had just learned. The goal of the activity was to have each group member present the information from his form to the rest of the group in a speech like fashion. In the end, each participant had an opportunity to perform his speech twice. For the first speech the boys were asked to try and present their speech in the most successful manner they could. For their second speech they were asked to purposely make a mistake in one of the public speaking skills that they had just learned during the session. After the second - purposely mistake ridden - speech the rest of the group was asked to see if they could spot which public speaking skill was performed poorly. Once every participant had performed their two speeches the group concluded with a discussion of the session's events.

Similarities:

All of the participants successfully completed the inventory consisting of fill-in-the-blanks about some of their personal characteristics. In addition, all of the participants were able to stand up in front of the group and publicly present their inventories twice. Three of the four participants mentioned that they had an

easier time public speaking in front of the group than in front of their classmates. The reasons for having an easier time public speaking in the group compared to their respective classes differed amongst the four participants. However, all four participants' explanations revolved around the central ideas of being less nervous because of the trust that existed in the group enabling them to take on the perceived risk of public speaking

Differences:

The four group members were split as to which of the two ways of delivering the speech that they preferred. Two of the boys preferred to do the speech that asked them to try and perform the act of public speaking in the most successful manner possible; whereas, the other two boys preferred to do the speech when asked to purposely make a mistake in a public speaking technique. Jake and Steve liked the successful speech criteria because they felt it taught them how to do public speaking properly and they felt that the mistake speech was beneath their ability. Adam and Leon appreciated the mistake speech more because it made them feel less nervous about public speaking and made the activity funnier and therefore more enjoyable.

Points of Interest

Adam was very upset that he did not get chosen to perform his speech first. As a result, Adam did not sit in one place or listen to the rest of his group-mates perform their speeches. Adam became a distraction both to myself - the

facilitator - and the other participants while the speeches were taking place. Adam was also the participant who had, in my opinion, the least successful first speech. When it was finally time for Adam to present his first speech he walked off the floor prior to finishing his speech and was extremely silly while presenting. At the end of the session Adam told the group that he did sense a great deal of trust in the group and lack of trust was not the reason for his off-task behaviour. In this example of Adam, it would suggest that regardless of the perceived level of trust or safety of a group, there were possible other undistinguished factors that overrode the group dynamics influencing Adam's poor social and on-task behaviour. Regardless of the group environment or its inherent dynamics, the impact of external or unacknowledged factors could result in a negative effect on a participant in question or the group as a whole.

Overview of the Group Holistically

(From the Participants)

Jake:

Jake really enjoyed the group because of three important dynamics: he found the games to be interesting and original and he appreciated that there were the same four group members throughout the entire six sessions. Jake felt that in the group he spoke more openly than in his class. When asked why, he replied, “*[in class] people don't speak so openly, in class people make fun of you if you say something strange.*” In essence Jake felt that the small activity group was safer

and more trusting than his regular class experience because he did not feel that his comments would be made fun of. Jake explained that he was able to trust people in the group because it was small in number– only including four boys. He also felt that being a part of the group was “*special*” because the activities and things they talked about during group remained within the group (confidentiality). In fact, Jake said he felt so special about being part of this unique group that he would have liked to share the fact that he was in this group with his classmates and friends as a means of highlighting the pride he felt being a part of the activity group.

Jake’s favourite participant in the group was Steve because Steve was, in Jake’s own words, “...*a better listener than talker, which is rare*”. Jake mentioned that he would bring the skills he learned about public speaking back into his regular school life. In terms of leadership, Jake did not necessarily feel as though he was a leader during the activity group but he did feel that he was more of a leader during the activity group when compared to his everyday class. Overall, it appeared from Jake’s comments and from observing him throughout the group that Jake benefited from the group because he was able to participate in a perceived safe and trusting group where he could speak more openly. The activity group also provided Jake with a forum to take on a more of a leadership role, take risks, and participate in more interesting and original activities than he could or did in his regular classroom. Jake never mentioned specifically that he wanted the activity program to continue after the last session but he mentioned that he would not mind the possibility.

Leon:

The things Leon liked most about participating in the activity group were the actual activities themselves because they “... *were fun and they did cool stuff*”. Leon’s comments highlighted the importance of the actual enjoyment of the activities in making the group pleasurable and worthwhile. If Leon did not enjoy the actual activities he would not have appreciated the group experience to the same extent regardless of the other group dynamic qualities that existed (trust, safety, confidentiality, etc.). Leon mentioned that in the activities group he had several opportunities to take on a variety of leadership roles that he never experienced during his regular everyday class. In comparing minimal leadership prospects in class to some leadership opportunities during the group, Leon claimed that he preferred to at least have an opportunity to be a leader like he had experienced during the activities group.

Continuing the comparison between class and the activities group, Leon mentioned that he was able to make more comments and “... *thought braver*...” during the group. Leon felt during the activities group that he should speak up and express his ideas because he finally was in a place where he felt the other kids were listening to him. Leon was capable of acting on this inkling to express his thoughts, ideas and feelings because he felt safe in the group and he knew that if he made a mistake the other kids in the group would help him out and that he would not be teased. Overall, Leon would like an opportunity to do the activities group again but would prefer if the activities were longer, that there were more sessions and there were even less participants (two or three).

Steve:

Steve really enjoyed the activities group because of the games that were played during the group. He thought the games were interesting and original. Steve also really liked the other participants in the group due to the fact that he got along with all the participants. Getting along with others at school was a new experience for Steve and something contrary to what he believed took place with his classmates. The reason he gave for this novelty of his getting along with his group peers was that the group members were not in his regular class. Inherently Steve believed that the reputation he had in class prevented him from getting along with his classmates; whereas, in the group, being with new people presented Steve with a fresh start to make friends. The activity group provided Steve with a means of getting along and developing relationships with some of his peers.

Steve also appreciated being the oldest in the group. His extra few months and one school grade of life experience enabled him to take on an active leadership role in the group which is a role Steve claimed that he rarely experienced during his everyday class. The other distinction between class and the group that Steve commented upon was that he felt like he spoke more often during the activity group sessions. Interestingly, Steve's explanation for him speaking more often during group was his clearer understanding about the activities and overall expectations that existed. Steve explained that he often felt confused in class and to ask a teacher or classmate for directions or for a re-explanation in class was embarrassing. In contrast, during the group Steve understood the directions and expectations clearly, and he said that he felt more

comfortable (less embarrassed) asking the facilitator and/or group-mates for help or an explanation. Overall, Steve saw the group as something special and to be proud of. He agreed with his group-mates that the sessions should be longer and that there should be more of them. Mostly, Steve appreciated the opportunity the activity group gave him to help others and not to feel ashamed when asking for help for himself.

Adam:

Adam appreciated being a participant in the activities group because it provided him with a break from the usual non-stop academic tyranny of the classroom. In Adam's own words, "... *[the group gave] me a chance to rest my head and mind*". Essentially, the originality of the activities themselves provided Adam with a break from the perceived typical conducts of his everyday classroom.

Initially, Adam claimed that he did not believe he acted any differently during the group than he did during class. However, as my interview with Adam continued he slowly began mentioning that he did tend to talk more often during the group compared to his regular classroom. The reason Adam presented for this difference was that he felt trusted and respected by his group-mates, and more trusted and respected than by his classmates. As Adam contemplated the distinctions between class and group it became apparent to Adam that he really enjoyed the opportunities he had to be a leader during group, an opportunity that he said he rarely received in class. Adam commented that for him to be more of a

leader in class he would need to feel that more of his classmates liked him. Adam felt that the participants in the group liked him and he liked them and, that positive relationship gave him the confidence to risk taking on a leadership role. Adam was often heard at the end of group saying that he wished that the group sessions were longer and that there were more sessions.

Adam enjoyed being the only person from his everyday class being in the activity group. Adam believed that if there were any of his classmates in the activity group the group would have been boring because everyone would have constantly been complaining and nothing would have ever gotten accomplished. Adam's comment suggested that he had a negative view of his regular class and classmates. Adam's comment may help to explain why the thing Adam appreciated most about the group was the fact that there were new people in the group who he felt were "... *nice, good and supporting.*"

Chapter VI

Collective Analysis of the Data

In reviewing the various observations of the group activities, the overall group process and the feedback comments of the four activity group participants, there were a number of program quality and characteristic themes that became evident. The interest level of each specific activity, leadership opportunities, chances to express oneself, and the small number of group members all developed as integral contributors to the participants' group experience. Those four variables were seen to be in-turn influenced by four mediating attributes: the group members' perception of confidentiality, trust, a supportive environment, and the perceived originality of the activities.

The activity and group characteristics that were expressed and/or observed as integral to the group process were separated into a group of variables and a group of attributes. The variables consisted of those important elements that emerged during every session or feedback session by the participants as significant components of the activity group program. The attributes consisted of those qualities that surfaced as mediating factors that affected each participant's individual relationship with the activity group's discerned variables.

Regardless of which group variables and attributes were considered most important or significant to each participant, all four participants referred to the group holistically as a positive experience. Moreover, the group was generally perceived to be a worthwhile practice when related to their everyday classroom

experience. With withdrawn and/or inhibited children there are many considerations that may play a role in their behaviour. What became obvious even from the start of the group was that these four participants were willing to take on a more engaged and participatory role in the group when compared to their regular classroom behaviour. These observations were confirmed during the individual and group interviews and observations. All of the group members mentioned at some point that they felt that during certain occasions during the group that they took on a more dynamic role than they did in their usual classroom.

There were four integral variables commonly described and observed by each group member when evaluating the activity group experience. The following chart depicts which participants expressed which variables were important considerations in their group experience.

Activity Group Variables for each Participant

(Table 1.1)

	Leon	Jake	Adam	Steve
Interest of Activities	X	X	X	X
Leadership Opportunities		X	X	X
Opportunity to Express Oneself	X	X	X	X
Small Group Size	X	X	X	X

Of the four common variables only Leon did not articulate that an opportunity to be a leader was a significant factor in his activity group experience. The other three variables - the small size of the group, opportunity to express oneself, and interest of the activity -were all expressed by all four participants as vital aspects in making the activity group a worthwhile opportunity.

Each participant had different thoughts and values when evaluating the attributes of the group and its activities that helped make the four pre-mentioned variables such key and positive aspects of the activity group program. Although each participant prioritised the large variety of potential group attributes differently, there were four common attributes that did surface when reviewing the feedback sessions and group observations. The following chart outlines those attributes that were considered by each participant to have played a critical role in enabling the pre-mentioned variables to have a significant role or impact on each of them individually.

Activity Group Attributes for each Participant

(Table 1.2)

	Leon	Jake	Adam	Steve
Confidentiality	X	X		
Supportive Environment	X		X	
Trustworthiness		X		X
Originality of the Activities	X	X	X	X

When comparing the four variables to the four attributes it would appear as though many of the attributes and variables were closely related. For example, the perceived originality of an activity could have possibly been related to a participant's level of interest in that activity. In fact, all four participants articulated that their level of interest in the activities in addition to the perceived originality of each activity were important factors in making the holistic activity group experience meaningful and successful. For this collection of inhibited children one could concentrate on ensuring the original nature of the activities in order to potentially facilitate a greater level of interest in the activity and the group as a whole. In this situation, a combination of activity interest and originality would be a forward step in increasing the chance of a successful, more engaged, and/or more meaningful activity group experience.

With the other three attributes, their values across the four participants were extremely spread out. It was my view that "group size" belonged in the activity group variables category because its degree of meaningful presence was inherently influenced by a participant's view of the existence of a certain mediating attribute. For example, although the small size of the group was classified as an important variable amongst all four participants (see table 1.1), without an established or perceived level of trust the group experience may have been jeopardized for both Leon and Jake and the small group size would have been an insignificant factor. This same idea could be extended to the variable of leadership opportunities, a variable considered meaningful to three of the four participants. Without a feeling of group support Steve and Adam may have not

taken on the risk of engaging in any leadership opportunities. Essentially, each participant's discernment about the various group attributes in conjunction with each variable during each activity and session was extremely influential in their perceptions and resultant behaviours during the activity group program.

In reviewing the interviews and each activity individually and collectively there was a characteristic never highlighted in the observation or feedback but that deserves attention. The perceived potential for success or failure by a participant was never presented as a reason whether to engage in an activity or determine what level of intensity was put into an activity. The participants' impression that they would be a fantastic speech presenter or an incredible artist or soccer player at the conclusion of the assigned activity was not necessarily an important motivator for participation or involvement. Yet, feelings of success have often been an important part of most interventions when implemented with an intermediate aged child population (St. Denis, Orlick, & McCaffery, 1996). Instead, perceptions of a supportive environment, trust, confidentiality, and originality were observed and expressed as more motivating factors for engagement.

This research project was established and designed to provide activities for withdrawn and/or inhibited intermediate aged male elementary school children within a school counselling related program. The four group participants, their teachers and parents classified them as students who displayed inhibited and withdrawn tendencies. The four boys were viewed as students who rarely participated in classroom and school based group activities. When they actually

did participate in the group activities they were seen as providing a minimal degree of involvement or socially engaged behaviour. These boys were witnessed often playing by themselves during recess and lunch and often chose to work alone during class time. These four boys' behaviours fit with Byrnes (1985) impression of inhibited children, being invisible in the classroom and engaging in behaviours that ensured neglect by their classmates. Yet, having pre-knowledge about the behaviours that made these four boys candidates for this research, from the first session I was surprised by both the amount of involvement and degree of engagement that the four participants demonstrated.

In the group feedback interview following the first session I asked about the relatively high level of participation that I observed. The rationale that I was presented in response to my enquiry was associated with the simple change in venue and peers that the activity group supplied. This introduction of an environment and peers that had not previously been perceived as rejecting addressed one of the possible foundations for a group member's inhibited and/or withdrawn isolating behaviours (Hymel et al., 1990). This meaningful consideration of the activity group program, environmental adaptation, was inevitably also associated with some of the integral variables and attributes previously described (i.e., originality of activity, supportive environment, and small group size). The insertion of this new environment was not specifically considered in the research as a perceived *original* activity. However, the perceived unique environmental dynamics within which and with whom the activities took place appeared to have provided for a fundamental change in

atmosphere helping to facilitate more active engagement by the four activity group participants.

The perceived impact resulting from the environmental shift that the group activity program for inhibited and/or withdrawn children provided was not only an essential component of this program but also to other frameworks of Activity Group Therapy (ACT) and Activity Guidance Groups (AGG). It was Schiffer and Slavson (1971, 1984, 1986) and Schaefer (1982) who independently and collectively articulated the meaningfulness of providing a unique forum for children to feel safe, take risks, and build peer relations. It has been explored in this research and by many other discussed group theories and research how developing such an original environment could create a modifying effect on a child's behaviour. The positive influence of those dynamics on the four participants were not only demonstrated behaviourally during the activity program but was also articulated verbally by all four of the participants.

A common notion throughout the various activities and their respective sessions was found in the similarity discussions during the analysis of each session. The participants often commented that they wished that the activities, sessions, and the activity group program itself were longer. It was unclear whether a longer session, longer or more activities, or more sessions would have been preferred because the participants needed extended time to warm up to the activities to enable further involvement or if they, for pure enjoyment value, did not want to go back to class. These comments concerning time frame are worthy consideration as both Johnson et al. (1998) and Yalom (1995) discussed time

frame as one of the three essential pre-considerations when formulating an activity group therapy.

In reviewing the context in which the call for longer and an increased number of sessions took place, it appeared that it was done usually at the end of a session as a hopeful means of me letting the group members get out of more class time and not necessarily because the activities and group process required more time for the session or group program to be a successful experience for the participants. Moreover, as with the case of this activity group therapy, when implementing a counselling group in a school setting the time constraints are often not a very negotiable entity. It was perhaps therefore more applicable to analyze the participants' call for increased time and number of session sin a different yet valuable light.

How did these comments concerning desire for more time and increased session influence the group activity counselling process for these inhibited children? The answer might stem back to the inclusion of *originality of the activities* and *interest level* in the variables and attributes categories of the program analysis. The activities and the group as a whole appeared to have needed to be seen as interesting in order for the participants to want to leave class and attempt to engage in the group activity process. The continuous call for more time for activities and the fact that level of interest and originality of the activities were the only two characteristics viewed by all four participants as integral components of the program perhaps suggested that the participants' enjoyment of the activities themselves was the most fundamental quality of the program. It was

the inclusion of activities and/or play that distinguished AGT from other genres of child centred group therapeutic models (Schiffer, 1984, 1996; Slavson and Schiffer, 1980). Considering the specific activities implemented during the group program per se, it could be argued that it was the level of interest in such activities that proved to be one of the most fundamental holistic components of this group activity therapy for inhibited and/or withdrawn children.

There were many intricacies and practices that took place throughout the activity group program that involved the activities, the participants and the group process itself. The question and goal that concerned this qualitative assessment of a group activity approach for inhibited and/or withdrawn male intermediate aged school children was to describe and comment on the experiences of the activity group's participants. The intricacies and practices that took place during the activity program all played a role in the group participants' experiences of the program. The similarities, differences and points of interest discussions were methods of providing a means to illustrate the four group participants' experiences. Moreover, the alignment of the information presented into qualitatively determined categories of variables and attributes were designed to provide a means to further insight into the group member's experiences. The descriptions of the group participants' experiences supply a clearer understanding emerged regarding the relationship between each activity, the holistic group process and each participant individually and collectively.

Chapter VII

Discussion

Considering the consistencies across all the variables and attributes that encouraged engaged behaviour during the activity group program, it was the level of interest in a specific activity that surfaced to be one of the most critical elements. When a group member was observed as being socially interactive they often explained their individual and social involvement by commenting that they were genuinely interested in the assigned activity. This idea that the participants should be interested in the activities employed during group activity therapy was indirectly alluded to in many of the founding activity group theories and frameworks (Slavson, 1986; Schiffer, 1986; Schaefer et al., 1982; Johnson et al., 1998). However, none of the previous theories and/or frameworks ever directly discussed the notion that the interest of an activity by a participant was as integral a component of AGT equal to or greater than that of the other mentioned key elements, such as, perceived safety, trust, opportunities to express oneself and taking risks. In the case of this Activity Group Therapy Program for inhibited and/or withdrawn children, level of interest in an activity and the perceived originality of an activity were discovered to be some of the most integral components of a group activity-based therapeutic program.

In 1998 when Johnson et al. designed an activity group framework using Schiffer (1986), Slavson (1986), and Yaloms' (1995) general and activity based group principles, he addressed many of the variables and attributes that came to

the forefront from this activity group experience for inhibited and/or withdrawn children. Johnson et al. discussed or alluded to the importance of group size, confidentiality, and trustworthiness when formulating a therapeutic activity group. Johnson et al. also outlined goals for and during the group process that were similar to this research's resultant variables and attributes, such as, supportive environment, leadership opportunities, and the opportunities to express oneself. However, Johnson et al. never any highlighted consideration for the originality or the influence of interest level of the activities that were actually implemented during the group process.

Johnson et al.'s (1998) influential predecessors, Slavson (1986) and Schiffer (1986), also did not directly address the originality or interest levels of the activities themselves as worthy of vital consideration when designing or implementing an activity group therapeutic approach. Perhaps because both Slavson and Schiffer designed many of the activity group theories to allow for non-directive or "free" play, interest level and originality were never considered an issue because each participant was assumed to choose to involve themselves with an activity during the group that they were naturally interested in or curious about. However, Johnson et al. (1998) did not design a group activity framework that allowed for pure free play. Instead they made specific suggestions about which specific activities should be implemented and all of the suggested activities had a goal or collection of goals in mind. Johnson et al.'s directed activities and group process did not provide a mechanism for individuals to have the freedom to decide among a variety of activities. Yet, still neither originality nor the potential

interest levels in the suggested activities were mentioned as important considerations in designing or implementing an activity group framework.

Schaefer et al. (1982), prior to Johnson et al.'s 1998 article, initially challenged activity group therapy to have a pre-determined guiding principle and be facilitator directed when choosing and implementing the group's activities. Schaefer et al. also did not stress any vital consideration for originality or interest level in the applied activities. Perhaps Schaefer assumed that if the participants were engaged in the activities that they naturally would perceive the group activities to be interesting and original; therefore those two elements did not deserve any specific attention.

It may have been a mistake to dismiss the importance of interest and originality of activities by previous activity group theorists. Another option is that it was the nature of the participants of this activity group themselves, being inhibited and withdrawn, that brought interest level and originality to the forefront. This may have been especially the case considering that engagement and participation were both holistic objectives of this particular group activity program. In this case it may have been more necessary for the activities to be interesting and original in order to get the group members participating and engaged than had the group activity therapy been employed with a different population. The provision of an activity group therapeutic program for inhibited and/or withdrawn children should not ignore the vital group dynamics described by previous researchers and theorists, especially considering that many of same dynamics - attributes and variables - evolved as significant aspects of this activity

program for inhibited and/ or withdrawn children. Instead, it may be meaningful to acknowledge the increased influence of interest and originality of the activities when employing a group activity therapeutic program with an inhibited an/or withdrawn intermediate student population.

As Johnson et al. in 1998 noted, “Peer group experience is critical for children’s normative development.” If a child is withdrawn or inhibited, then the opportunities for them to participate in peer group experiences is, by definition, limited. Although level of interest in an activity was a consistent and pertinent variable across all four participants, it was never an individual activity that was highlighted to be pertinent in the holistic group experience. Instead, it was the opportunity to engage with a new, and therefore unbiased, group of peers throughout the group program that was found to be most consistently rewarding and worthwhile to the participants. This opportunity to be with an “unbiased” group of peers was something that Hymel et al. (1990) alluded to as an important consideration when looking at a child’s peer relationships. The activity group program provided the participants with a chance to participate and connect in a group activity with peers, an opportunity that had often previously eluded these activity group members. It was this dynamic of new unbiased social connections and opportunities that helped facilitate many of the variables and attributes discussed in the Collective Analysis of the Data Chapter (e.g. trust, supportiveness, opportunities to express oneself etc.).

Leon, Adam, Jake, and Steve were immediately more engaged in discussion and activities in the first session relative to their regular classroom,

lunch, and recess times. This higher level of engagement fluctuated between the participants over the six sessions, but their active participation never fell to the levels that had been described during their school days. This higher and relatively consistent level of engaged behaviour was observed both by myself and articulated by the four activity group members themselves. Reviewing the comments made by the four participants and my observations, this immediate increase in engaged behaviour could be attributed to the initial safety and trust established in the group. It has been described by many group therapy theorists that the perception of safety and trust are the two most vital components of a successful and meaningful group therapy experience (Yalom, 1995). In this group therapy experience, the sheer fact that the four group members were new to each other presented them with three peers who possessed no previous entrenched biases towards one another; thus increasing the potential for group safety and trustworthiness. Essentially, the participants were given a clean slate in which to take risks and social roles that previously would have been extremely intimidating or discouraging.

In 1996 Young and Bradley found that withdrawn children often had the knowledge and skills necessary to interact with their peers but lack the perceived safe environment and by extension the motivation to do so. This finding was consistent with the feedback and observations that took place during the implementations of the group activity program. Perception of safety in terms of trustworthiness and a supportive environment were often presented as reasons for having the will and desire to engage in an activity. Once the group participants

began engaging in an activity they looked like any other bunch of kids their age, as though they had always possessed the skills to interact with their peers and to become involved socially within any activity. This holistic concept focuses the consideration and evaluation off the activity program's ability to teach individual social skills and re-directs the facilitative attention towards the collective influences and qualities of the activities and the group process overall. Similarly, when Johnson et al. developed a group activity framework in 1998 for disturbed adolescents in custody it did not include activities designed to teach specific skills. Rather, Johnson et al.'s design suggested specific activities that focused on creating appropriate collective group dynamics and encourage participation.

Once the participants began feeling comfortable and enjoying the activities they started working together like a team. They began helping each other out, complimenting each other on their successes, and began taking initiative in the group situations. With the various discussed attributes and variables in place the group was able to establish an environment that continuously encouraged the participants to take risks, open up verbally and take on leadership roles. This environment provided the participants with the forum to use their social skills in a manner that did not discourage decisions to be more engaged, as initially sought by the original architect of activity group therapy - S.R. Slavson back in the 1930s (Schiffer, 1971). Although aspects of the activity group program for inhibited and/or withdrawn boys was successful on various levels based on the qualitative data gathered, it remained unclear how, if at all, the group may benefit these four boys in the future. What was articulated during the

program was that the activity group at least gave these boys three new people that they felt comfortable to be engaged with during recess and lunch times. At the most, the group experience reminded the four boys that they had the skills to be socially engaged and provided them with a forum to practice how to use such skills in a successful and more confident manner.

Limitations of the Research

The resultant research from the employment of the Group Activity Therapy program with the four male inhibited and/or withdrawn grade three through five school students had its obvious limitations in terms of scope and implementation. The thesis did not attempt to consider the perceptions of the activity group process had it been presented with an all female or mixed sample. It has been suggested that as children get older withdrawn behaviour can become a very pertinent indicator of a child being negatively perceived by himself and his peers (Younger & Boyko, 1987). Considering, it could have been worthwhile to implement the Group Activity Program for Inhibited and/or Withdrawn Students with an older grade sample to provide key information about how such activities and/or program could be received by an older population. Moreover, being able to compare the data from the implementation of the activity program with two different grade populations would have provide greater significant information concerning the age appropriateness of the activities and the receptiveness of the programs holistically. A continued discussion of such limitations in terms of scope of sample and the actual thesis question itself could continue indefinitely.

The few ideas just presented that acknowledged such limitation were those that I thought would not only be pertinent in their own right, but also those limitations that if applied could have complemented the presentation of data developed from this research.

Within the research that did take place and that has been discussed, there were some important limitations of the process that warrant discourse. The four boys in the group were all described as being inhibited an/or withdrawn. In addition, none of the boys ever alluded to the idea that they particularly enjoyed their everyday classroom or school experiences. Yet, here I was offering an opportunity to get the four boys out of the norm of their typical school experience. Although, the originality of experience did establish itself as a meaningful quality of the activity program, one could argue my population was inherently biased because I could have provided any activity and the kids would have found the program wonderful just because I provided them with an opportunity to miss class time. Along a similar theme, the four boys were inhibited and/or withdrawn, and yet my research methods were very dependent on participant feedback. Participant feedback for this population, by definition of their inhibition or withdrawal, was necessarily limited in scope and scale. I did manage to secure a vast amount of data from the four boys' verbal feedback sessions. However, perhaps there was a more extensive means of securing accurate information that required less active conduct. Lastly, as the sole facilitator and researcher, the data presented was perhaps biased by my views regarding which parts of the activity group process were pertinent and therefore deserving of attention. Having an

outsider's eye could have been able to discover some other prominent aspects about the group activity program and process that I may have missed. Moreover, an outside evaluator would have provided one further degree of validity and reliability for the data that I collected.

Strengths of the Research

I was the only group researcher and facilitator. Although I previously mentioned this aspect of the research methodology as a possible limitation, in contrast I also believe this feature enabled me to create a strong environment of trust and safety that may have not otherwise existed had another adult been present. In fact, those two program qualities, safety and trust, surfaced as pertinent aspects of the program's identity.

The triangulation process of the research consisted of multiple sources of input including video and audiotapes, participant group and individual feedback, facilitator observation, and field notes. Each of those sources contributed uniquely to the data. Through the triangulation process, I was able to identify some very significant anecdotes that could have easily been overshadowed. For example, if one of the boys commented on something during the feedback session I was able to go back to my notes and the video and see how that event actually took place in the context of the session. Moreover, if I saw something that I thought was noteworthy from my observations I could go back to the group during the feedback sessions and see if they saw that event or situation in the same light. It was from these two manners, a single researcher / facilitator and the triangulation,

that a lot of the data presented was able to develop from a very organic and grassroots source.

The research was able to discern various qualities that made the group activity program successful or ineffective when employed with the four inhibited and/or withdrawn students. Information about the program's qualities in relationship with the specific activities provided tangible tools to help future counsellors or teachers to recognise various activities and programs that could be implemented with their inhibited and/or withdrawn students. Such practical implications were another definite strength of the research.

Suggested Changes to the Activity Program

Leadership opportunities surfaced as a major component of the activity group program. The participants were very conscious of who was chosen to be a leader of an activity and who was not. They were also aware of who emerged as a leader for a particular activity regardless if a specific leader was chosen. In retrospect, as the group activity facilitator I would have made a greater effort to ensure that all those who wanted to be a leader for a specific activity were given a chance and if that was not feasible I would have made sure that they were a leader for the next activity.

I understand that time available in a school setting is often limited. However, I felt very rushed to complete many of designed activities and still provide time for a fifteen-minute feedback session at the end of the hour block. The participants themselves asked, on many occasions, for longer sessions. If I

could do the program over I would have tried to get a full hour for the activities in addition to the fifteen-minute feedback session.

More specific to the actual activities, the 'paper airplanes' activity did not need the act of throwing the planes away into a metaphorical field. A better closure may have been to throw them into a box (or something similar) and then seal the box "forever". At least then "transporting away of their fears" would have appeared more tangible and less abstract.

In the "game creation" activity I think it would have been meaningful to discuss certain qualities that allowed for a new game to be successful in a short time (i.e., everybody plays, simple rules, easy to score or get points). This prior discussion may have provided for more interesting and engaged behaviour during the operation of the participant developed games. A review of the activities presented in conjunction with the data presented in this thesis could be used to help formulate new ideas as how future interventions could best meet the needs of inhibited and/or withdrawn children in a variety of related settings.

During the activity group program's first session the participants were asked to choose a code name that the other group members could call him during the program. The goal was to provide each participant with an addition tool to help them recognise that the activity group program was facilitating them with a fresh start. However, often the participants wanted to change their code name or forgot one of their group member's code name. As a result the code names were history shortly after the beginning of the second session. If a future group facilitator decides to implement code names it would be sensible to not allow the

participants to alter their code names and have their code name written somewhere visible so that the other group members could remember the code names.

Future Directions

When I first began contemplating the potential future direction for this or related research, my thoughts went off in so many different tangents that it became difficult to delineate between them in terms of priority or salience. However, after some consideration and a review of the data presented, I think that there are some key issues that command future investigation. The one that I feel could be the most worthwhile would be to follow-up this research with the same participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the group. A few months after the group activity experience - do the participants engage more in class, are the participants still friends and do they hang out together at all, and has their social confidence improved, would all be meaningful questions worthy of consideration. Such future research could help illustrate any need for further interventions with this population or highlight those aspects of the group activity program that for various reasons remained an influential part of the participants' continued behaviour.

Be mindful that the group age and grade levels of the participants in this activity group program had both positive and negative influences. Steve and Adam, being the oldest in the group were naturally seen as leaders by the other group members, an attribute previously rarely experienced by Steve and Adam.

On the other hand, the presence of older students may have made being a leader more intimidating to Jake and Leon. In contrast, the presence of older students may have made Jake and Leon feel special because it is often considered “cool” to hang out with older kids. Regardless, the range in age and grade levels of potential group participants becomes a significant factor when the implementing an activity based group program with children.

The other area of future direction that I think would be incredibly important would be to explore how and when many of the ideas presented in this research and past research with inhibited students could be employed in the regular classroom. It is often not realistic to have a small counselling group for every inhibited and or withdrawn student. A study that could investigate how to connect with those inhibited and/or withdrawn students with a classroom of twenty to thirty kids could potentially construct some supports that could be applied more consistently and be less intrusive to an inhibited and/or withdrawn child’s classroom learning or social identity.

Conclusion

Although not the direct purpose of this study, it was difficult when analysing the vast amount of data not to subjectively rate the overall successfulness of the program. It occurred to me that a fundamental difference between the group activity program and the average classroom was the holistic objective of the activity program’s activities. I inherently began to subjectively

evaluate the success of the program based on the degree and level of *participation* and *engagement* by each participant. This was in contrast to the classroom setting where it was often typical for an activity to be evaluated based on a student's ability to complete the task at hand, and not the level for which the student participated. I concluded subjectively from the active and social engagement objectives of the activity program that an appropriate accumulative evaluative question should not consider whether a group member could complete an assigned task but rather should have consider what level of engagement a group member demonstrated during the assigned task.

One possible crossover from the activity group to the classroom or other school counselling situation could be, in the case of an inhibited child, to have success evaluated in terms of engagement rather than by a degree of completion ordinarily equated to a score of competence. Once the end objective changes to one of participation rather than competence the focus of the activity theoretically should then also fundamentally change. With the modification of objective from competence to engagement, the other attributes and variables discussed in this study could possibly help to guide and create appropriate activities and program constructs for an inhibited child population.

All four participants alluded to the idea that they saw their withdrawn behaviour as being a part of themselves that they did not like. They all mentioned that they wished that they were more socially active, had more friends and had more opportunities to take on a leadership role. Interestingly, according to Schiffer (1996) and Hymel (1990), it was this same lack of peer experience that

perhaps reinforced their inhibited behaviours. The activity group therapy appeared able to break the consistent lack of peer social interaction and introduced an artificial form of social relations. This artificial setting was able to produce a group experiential environment whereby the four boys could begin to develop and/or discover the desire and confidence to potentially become more socially involved.

Adam and Leon said themselves that in class or during unstructured time they were never chosen to be a leader of a group by their peers. Moreover, if and when they were chosen to be a leader by an adult or teacher they were put into a position whereby they had to lead a group of kids who did not respect them. Essentially, Leon and Adam rarely got to be a leader and when they had an opportunity to be a leader they felt that they were not respected by their peers and were inevitably uncomfortable in the role; in turn, reinforced the idea that they were incompetent leaders.

Understanding this leadership dynamic brings us back to Shennum's (1987) suggestion that if a safe group environment could be established, placing inhibited children in leadership roles could provide a non-threatening opportunity for them to experience a new positive role when interacting with their peers. I felt from feedback gathered from all of the participants and from my observations that the safe group environment that the activity therapy group provided enabled the boys to take on some engaged leadership roles. The perceived bias that nobody wanted them to be a leader that existed in their regular classroom no longer was a viable reason to withdraw from a leadership opportunity. The participants finally

had an opening into feeling what it's like to be a leader and began to implement the social skills they possessed to gain the respect of the other activity group members. Hopefully, those experiences and social skill practice will help the activity group members be more able and comfortable to take on some leadership responsibilities the next time they find themselves in a less "safe" group environment.

In Chapter II I asked a rhetorical question, what comes first, a child's poor self-perception or social withdrawal and/or inhibition? From the data presented in this qualitative research I do not think I have gained any clearer understanding about the answer. What did become apparent to me is that the answer is somewhat irrelevant. In the case of all four boys, they commented about being uncomfortable, embarrassed, and many other perceived negative emotions when faced with peer social situations. Yet, it remained unclear whether the most appropriate method to combat any of the four boys' inhibition or withdrawn behaviours was to help increase their level of confidence while in social situations or to provide them with the social opportunities that, for various reasons, had previously eluded them.

What developed as an appropriate tool in working with these four inhibited students was not necessarily formulating the activities or group environment based on an individual participant's reasons for dysfunctional behaviour (lack of confidence, limited social interaction opportunities, etc.). What did appear to be a foundation for successful outcomes was to maintain a holistic objective of consistently providing the participants with both a safe environment

and interesting and original activities that enabled the them to experience success with participatory and socially engaged behaviours. It was Schaefer et al. (1982) who initially acknowledged the value in providing AGT within a “less free” environment so that the facilitator could implement activities with an overarching principle in mind. It was through this establishment of common principles that the activity group’s activities could be established with the goals of social opportunities and engaged behaviour as a foundation. The inclusion of activities with goals congruent to the potential needs of the group as a whole within the activity group framework provided a meaningful experience for the participants over only six sessions.

The removal of an intermediate aged male child who demonstrated withdrawn and/or inhibited characteristics from his ordinary classroom for a limited period of time for the purpose of engaging in activities that possessed certain independent and collective variables and attributes was a meaningful and productive experience for those students. In the case of the four participants under consideration- Jake, Adam, Leon, and Steve – the opportunity to interact with a small but new group of peers in original activities that they perceived as interesting and enabled them to take on more dynamic roles, resulted in them demonstrating more participatory behaviours and increasing their level of social interaction when compared to the rest of their school day. The participants’ level of engaged behaviour was also influenced by other activity group program features, such as, a supportive group environment, trust, opportunities to express one’s self, taking on leadership roles and confidentiality. The value of each

ingredient - the variables and attributes - differed amongst the four activity group participants, but with an appropriate mixture, a successful, meaningful, and maybe even a more productive experience in terms of engaged behaviour appeared to have been provided.

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Appendix I

The Stone Cutter Story (Activity #5)

Personal Information Survey (Activity #9)

The Stone Cutter

Once upon a time there lived a stone cutter. He loved his job very much. Every day the stone cutter would wake up and go outside looking for stones to cut. Once he found a larger stone he would stay there and spend his days chipping away. The stones he cut would be used for building materials, carvings or whatever the people of the town saw fit.

One day while the stone cutter was cutting stones a parade came through the town. It was a lavish parade full of exotic animals like elephants and monkeys. There were also clowns and jugglers and many guards with swords. On top of one of the elephants sat the prince. The prince was riding the elephant waving to all the town's people including the stone cutter. The stone cutter was jealous of the prince's money and power. That night when the stone cutter went to bed he prayed to the heavens, "please make me the prince, being a prince is much better than being a stone cutter." Sure enough the next morning the stone cutter awoke to find himself the prince.

He was a magnificent prince. He had many many servants with lots of wealth and money. One day he was summoned to his father, the King, to the castle. When arriving at the castle the prince saw that the king had more servants, more money, more power and a larger home, an entire castle, then he did. After visiting with the king the prince went home and prayed to the heavens asking to please be made the

king. After all had he known the king was so wealthy and powerful he would have asked to become the king not the prince. Sure enough the the next morning he awoke to find himself the king.

As the king he strolled around the castle asking his servants to to his every whim and making very important decisions. One summer day while walking in his court yard he began to get very hot. The sun was shining right on his back. He had to take off his cloak and sit down because he was so terribly hot. As the king was sitting and sweating he realised that there was something more powerful than himself, the sun. For the sun provided the nutrients for the tress, grass and flowers to grow. The sun warmed the land and provided light for people to see. The sun was definitely more powerful than the king. So that night the king wished that he could become the sun. Sure enough the next morning he awoke to find himself as the sun.

He was a powerful and warm sun. he made the tress, grass and flowers grow. he heated the land and provided light to the earth. One day while he was shining bright on Vancouver a cloud came by blocking his light and warmth from reaching the planet. "Oh no", he thought to himself, "there is something more powerful than the sun, its the clouds". So once again he prayed to the heavens to please make himself the clouds. Sure enough he became the clouds.

He finally thought to himself, "now I am truly the most powerful thing in the universe, the clouds". Being the clouds, he rained upon Vancouver night after night. He provided water for the humans and the animals to drink. Finally he was the most powerful thing in the universe. However, one day while he was raining on Vancouver

a big gust of wind came blowing him all the way to China. "That's it, I have it", he said. "The most powerful thing in the Universe is the Wind". So that night he prayed to the heavens, "please make me the wind and I will never ask for another thing". Sure enough the next morning he was the wind.

Finally he was the most powerful thing in the universe. He was the wind which was more powerful than the clouds, the sun, the king, the prince and surely the stone cutter. As the wind he created tornadoes and tsunamis. he blew his power all over the world. One day the wind saw a huge stone in his way. The wind huffed and puffed and tried to blow the stone over but it would not move. The wind blew again but the stone would still not move. That was it. The wind was fed up. The wind screamed, "I made another mistake, the most powerful thing in the universe is the stone". So that evening he wished to become the stone. Sure enough the next morning he was the stone.

Finally he was now the most powerful thing in the universe. More powerful than the wind, the clouds, the sun, the king, the prince and most definitely the stone cutter. Well He was a great stone, standing strong all day long. Finally he was content being the stone, the most powerful thing in the universe. However, one day when he was standing strong being a very powerful stone a little stone cutter came by and started
← chipping away at him.

The End!

Personal Information Form

Name _____ Nickname _____

Age _____ Place of Birth _____

Address _____

I have _____ sister(s) and _____ brother(s). _____

I have the following pets: _____

My favourite foods are _____

My hobbies are _____

My favourite television show is _____

The best book I ever read was _____

Three things I like about myself are _____

When I grow up, I want to _____

Other Important factors about me are _____

Appendix II

Certificate of Ethics Approval

Participant Consent Form