

**THE ROSEBUSH:  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMAGES AND  
METAPHORICAL NARRATIVES OF  
GRADE SIX BOYS**

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

In 1978 Violet Oaklander published a landmark book in the field of expressive therapy. It was entitled Windows to our Children. Within the text many strategies are introduced. One is identified as "The Rosebush." Ms. Oaklander explains that an eight year old girl named Gina was brought for counselling. Gina's mom complained that Gina was far too quiet. She seldom played and preferred instead to lie on her bed with a favourite stuffed toy. The therapist proposed a game and Gina agreed. Over the course of this game, Gina was invited to go into space and imagine that she was a rosebush. This suggestion was accompanied by many questions and possibilities which served to open the child to creative associations. After the visualization game, Gina was asked to draw her rosebush. When the drawing was complete, she was asked to explain her picture from the perspective of the rosebush. The therapist recorded this story:

I have red roses, no thorns or leaves, and no roots. The soil helps me. I'm in Disneyland because I like to be happy. I'm protected-not like my life; the keeper takes care of me and waters me once a day. It's a sunny day. I'm pretty. Sometimes I'm lonely. I'm going to see my Daddy tonight. . . . I can grow easier if I don't have roots; if they want to re-plant me it will be easier. I always have buds. (Oaklander, 1978, p. 53)

After the documentation was complete, the therapist asked Gina if this story fit in any way with her life experiences. Gina explained, "I am adopted and now my parents have separated. I am scared and lonely and I don't know what will happen to me" (Oaklander, p, 56, 1978). In time, the entire family was reunited for therapy and Gina's

feelings were, with permission, discussed. It seems that her parents, caught in the turmoil of their own personal difficulties, had been unaware of these feelings. Oaklander reports that they were able to talk seriously about these issues for the first time.

Allan and Crandall (1986) formalize the Oaklander approach, "The Rosebush: A Visualization Strategy" by preparing a scripted visualization and guided enquiry. Ten coping and ten noncoping elementary school children of various ages were seen by the researchers. The metaphorical explanations which arose out of the guided enquiry were taped and later transcribed. The images and stories became the data for the study. In the initial stages, the protocols of coping and noncoping children were descriptively compared. It was assumed that the "subjects would project onto the rosebush various facets of their personalities"(Allan and Crandall,1986,p.39). Their discussion suggested that:

The copers projected themes of positive self images, pleasant association attached to touching, an ability to protect themselves and a tendency to see the environment around them as pleasant and containing friendly caretakers whereas, noncopers used words to describe their drawing which reflected negative self-concepts, painful associations attached to touching, and an extremely aggressive, hostile environment with destructive caretakers."(Allan and Crandall,1986,p.44)

The authors concluded that the pictures and words, when considered together, of coping children are reflective of emotional health whereas the pictures and words of noncoping children are reflective of inner turmoil. Having ascertained that themes existed in the body of work, the researchers then asked trained counsellors to sort the protocols. The

researchers do not describe the nature of the counsellors training. They report that when given both the image and the picture, these three counsellors were able to differentiate between the group members accurately 80% of the time. The authors suggest that children's drawings and the words they use to describe them, can give a school counsellor a view into their inner world of feelings. Consideration of thematic content in the pictures and stories of coping and noncoping children is unexplored, which suggests that questions of this nature are overdue.

Using this proven visualization strategy I asked the following questions for this research project:

1. Could the products from a visualization experience be used to discriminate between "coping" and "noncoping" boys?
2. Is it possible to identify common themes in the pictures and metaphorical narratives of "coping" and "noncoping" boys?
3. Can the pictures and metaphorical narratives of "coping" and "noncoping" boys provide a tool to enhance the therapeutic relationship.

The following pages describe a brief historical review of the literature as it applies to developmental, diagnostic, and therapeutic interest in children's art. The literature review is followed by a chapter in which the specifics of my approach are outlined. The following chapter introduces the data, that is, the pictures and stories of the "coping" and "noncoping" boys in random order so the reader can experience the sorting process for themselves. In the next chapter, the reader is introduced to the groups of boys for the first time. The counsellors results and suggestions for possible conclusions follow. Chapter 7, suggests this author's thematic analysis for consideration. The final question

which asked if a visualization experience could enhance the therapeutic relationship is addressed in Chapter 8. The project is concluded with some speculations about future directions.

## Chapter 2

### HISTORY AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Interest in children's art has a long history in child psychology and counselling. Drawings have been used to examine child development and to diagnose psychological problems. These approaches are product oriented. More recently, a process orientation has emerged. The process orientation suggests that personal growth can be promoted through the therapeutic use of artistic expression. Drawing is a concrete medium through which a child can achieve conscious and unconscious expression (Thomas and Silk, 1990). Research suggests that when drawing is paired with metaphorical explanation, the healing potential is amplified (Rubin, 1978, Oaklander, 1978, Case and Dalley, 1990, Arneheim, 1990). The following review explores these three approaches which are developmental, diagnostic, and therapeutic as they apply to the research questions.

The review is organized under three headings. They are: The Developmental Approach, Diagnostic Interpretations of Children's Drawings, and The Process Orientation.

#### **The Developmental Approach**

Thomas and Silk (1990) report the considerable efforts made to collect children's spontaneous drawings and to describe and catalogue them. The popularity of different drawing topics was recorded and some attempts were made to construct an objective scoring system for describing the drawings. The most important achievement of the early studies was that they provided a basis for the classification of children's drawings into developmental sequences (Thomas and Silk, p.27, 1990). Broadly speaking, as children grow

older, their drawings become more detailed, better proportioned and more realistic. Generally, children's drawings can be classified into five stages starting with the scribbling stage at about eighteen months to two years. Gradually, designs emerge at about two to three years. These cannot quite be called representational until the child is about three to four years old. At this time figure drawing begins to emerge. These drawings become more coherent as the children become older. During the stage of intellectual realism children often make X-ray drawings. It is not until the child is about eight years old that realistic drawings start to appear.

The subjects in this study were all eleven years old at the time of treatment. Therefore, if the developmental literature is correct, the images should show evidence of visual realism.

The developmental question has another perspective which is of contextual interest. Against the background of developmental stages and the assumption that children's drawings were essentially realistic in intent, Florence Goodenough (1969) published a book on the measurement of intelligence through drawings. The main product of this work was the Draw-a-Man Test in which a child's drawing of the human figure is assessed by crediting each feature to achieve a score. The assumption underlying this test was that a child's drawing was directly representative of his/her concept of the topic concerned. Concept development roughly followed the stages which were previously discussed. So while intelligence and development are not the same, they were, in this interpretation of children's drawings, related.

The Goodenough (1926) study was revised and extended by Harris (1963). The Draw-a-Man test is no longer regarded as a valid measure of intelligence (as assessed by other

criteria), although Scott (1981) suggests it can be useful as a screening device for individuals between the ages of three and twelve years. Burns and Kaufman (1970), Kramer (1983), and Ferarra (1991) attest to the validity of including human figure drawings in a diagnostic portfolio. This information is included so that the reader can trace the developmental approach through to the diagnostic orientation which is influential today.

### **Projective Interpretations of Children's Drawing**

From 1940 onwards, another interest in children's drawings began to flourish. This movement was clinical in nature and based on the assumption that children project their emotions and motives into their drawings. Drawings were used to assess personality and psychological adjustment. For example, in the House-Tree-Person projective test, the child's drawing of these three objects is interpreted on the the assumption that each item will function as a symbol for some emotionally important aspect of the child's life and experience (Buck, 1978). According to Thomas and Silk (1990) the house is capable of symbolizing the child's body, the womb or the parental home. The tree, it is claimed, is likely to reflect children's relatively deeper and more unconscious feelings about themselves. The person conveys children's conscious view about themselves and their relations with the rest of the world.

The Draw-a-Person test, developed by Karen Machover in 1949, is also representative of this approach. Machover presumed that a child projects his/her self into his/her drawing of the human figure. She regarded drawings as "expressions of the permanent and enduring aspects of a child's personality" (as cited in Thomas and Silk, p.111, 1990). In this test, the subject is asked to draw a person.



By analysing the various features of the drawing, an interpreter tries to build a personality description of the subject. For example, Hammer (1958) suggests that the size of the drawing of the human figure is most significant and directly relates to the drawers own self-esteem. Di Leo (1970) suggests that the depiction of long arms and large hands is expressive of power and control, while the omission of hands and/or arms is claimed to reflect feelings of powerlessness and ineffectuality. Other factors used in the interpretation of projective drawings are the position of the drawing on the paper, shading and line thickness, sequence of the parts drawn, extent and distribution of detailing, erasures and the depiction of clothing and background (Thomas and Silk, p. 111-113, 1990).

Questions as to the validity of projective drawing tests of this type include the extent to which the interpretation of the drawings give the same result as other assessments of the subjects' personality or emotional state. Levick (1983) cautioned that the clinical usefulness of projective techniques has been based primarily on theoretical usefulness rather than demonstrated validity. The lack of quantitative evidence to support the use of projective analysis is also addressed by Rabin (1981) who says that even in cases where an attempt at systematic comparison with an appropriate control group has been made, it is unusual to find any independent validation of many of the psychodynamic interpretations.

Another problem in validating many of the projective interpretations is that inclusion or exclusion of features of drawings may be more a function of drawing development than of clinical significance. This point is made by Di Leo (1983) who cautions that while the omission of hands and arms on a figure drawn by an older child may reflect a feeling of helplessness, the same cannot be said when the drawing is

created by a younger child. Such an omission is common for children younger than five years of age. It makes no sense to believe that all four year old children suffer from feelings of helplessness. Thus it seems clear that the inclusion or omission of features must be considered in the light of the subject's general level of drawing development.

Di Leo (1983) also suggested that projective analysis of drawings is susceptible to erroneous interpretation. In the House-Tree-Person test for example, the subjects are asked to draw an image of a tree. A barren tree is seen as a projection of loneliness and despair. However, as Di Leo points out, the test fails to appreciate environmental factors. A barren tree drawn in winter may be seen as significantly and symbolically different than a barren tree drawn in summer.

In addition, the features which are likely to occur in better drawings, erasures, greater use of shading, and variety of line are among those proposed by Machover (1949) to be expressive of conflicts. Thomas and Silk suggest:

If conflicts do indeed tend to produce such features, then the occurrence of such features is confounded by the quality of the drawing itself, which in turn reflects the general emotional adjustment of the subject. (Thomas and Silk, p. 115, 1990)

The reliability of projective drawing tests is also problematic. Kellog (1969) found that the drawings of children could change considerably over the course of a day. Therefore if the subject produces drawings that vary a great deal, it is unlikely that any one drawing will be a reliable expression of that subjects personality.

It would seem that my question, "Can the products from a visualization experience be used to discriminate between coping and noncoping boys?", is grounded in the projective tradition. I believe that the subject will project various facets of their personality on to the product. I argue that the chance of erroneous interpretation (Kellog, 1969, Di Leo, 1983) is reduced by the inclusion of textual explanation in this visualization strategy. Omission or inclusion of detail (Di Leo, 1983) will, no doubt, add to the impact of a drawing, but this initial impact should be tempered by the addition of the metaphorical narrative. Levick (1983) cautioned that the clinical usefulness of projective techniques has been based on theoretical usefulness rather than on demonstrated validity. Regardless of the answer, consideration of the question will add to the body of quantitative literature on projective techniques.

#### **The Process Orientation.**

The process orientation toward children's art is the field of expressive therapy. Expressive therapy, or art therapy, is based on the assumption that the expression of emotion in art has therapeutic benefit (Thomas and Silk, 1990). In therapy the child is encouraged to make drawings in the presence of a therapist who serves to both encourage and guide the child. Most writers (Oaklander, 1978, Kramer, 1983, Rubin, 1984, Allan, 1988) agree that the relationship between the therapist and the child is of primary importance.

My survey of the literature revealed that art therapy can take many forms. Dalley (1984) writes:

Most forms of art therapy are closely associated with one or another of the many variety of psychodynamically-oriented psychotherapies. The

rationale, aims and conduct of any particular art therapy are normally determined by the form of psychodynamic theory with which it is associated. (Dalley, p. 34, 1984)

For the purpose of this paper I have identified four aims which are common to expressive therapy. These are catharsis, insight/integration, communication, and mastery.

Catharsis is the idea in Freudian psychoanalytic theory that the confrontation and expression of blocked and suppressed feelings is therapeutic (Dalley, p. 46, 1984). For example, a child who expresses his/her envy of and repressed hostility towards his/her younger brother/sister in an appropriate drawing will thereby gain some relief from the tension generated by those feelings.

Insight and integration are often claimed to be important consequences of engaging in art (Thomas and Silk, 1990, Rubin, 1987, Allan, 1986, & Landgarten, 1981). Naumberg suggested that art therapy is "a way of stating mixed, poorly understood feelings in an attempt to bring them to clarity and order" (Naumberg, p. 511, 1958). For children, who may often lack verbal labels for many of their feelings, expression in images can be particularly useful (Oaklander, 1988, Allan, 1988, Case and Dalley, 1990, Arneheim, 1990, Knibbe, 1990).

Communication, in this sense, refers to communication between the child and the therapist. Pictorial communication, it is claimed, can have special advantages in situations where the child is unable or unwilling to talk about his/her experiences and feelings (Oaklander, 1988, Allan, 1988, Goodwin, 1982, Arneheim, 1990, Grossman, 1991). For example, communication problems can arise when children have suffered some kind of physical or sexual abuse.

These children may be shy about talking about normally taboo subjects, they may lack comprehension or appropriate words to describe their experiences or they may fear retribution from an abuser who may have demanded secrecy. (Goodwin, p. 277, 1982)

Children thus inhibited from talking may find it easier to communicate their experiences in drawings.

Mastery refers to the suggestion that "by recreating difficult situations in drawings, children can gain some experience of mastery over their problems" (Thomas and Silk, p. 124, 1990). In recreating the situation, the child also acquires some control over his/her feelings and reactions. Educators will recognize Piaget's concept of assimilation as one expression of this idea.

One of the key factors determining the effectiveness of expressive therapy seems to be the personal qualities of the therapist and his/her empathy with the patient (Oaklander, 1978, Kramer, 1983, Rubin, 1984, Allan, 1988). Oaklander (1978) suggests that the therapist make tentative translations which the child is asked to verify. In this way the child is countenanced to open doors to self-awareness and self-ownership. Allan explains:

A key ingredient in therapeutic change lies in the nature of the attachment bond that develops between the child and the counsellor. It is this which activates the healing potential of the psyche while the drawing and the metaphors which emerge facilitate the growth. (Allan, p. 152, 1988)

I asked "Can the pictures and metaphorical narratives of noncoping boys provide a tool to enhance the therapeutic relationship?" The literature on expressive therapy, the process approach, is overwhelmingly positive in answer to this question. In fact, I could not find a negative evaluation of the therapeutic usefulness of expressive tools. Pictures and stories might be representative of their lives.

This brief and selective history allows us to identify some of the reasons why we should study children's drawings and stories. There are educational reasons - because the identification of stages of artistic representation is one way to categorize developmental stages. There are clinical reasons - because analysis of drawings and stories may be useful in personality assessment or in the diagnosis of children who are experiencing difficulty. Furthermore, there may be a therapeutic value in the development of a means of emotional expression.

Another approach to the emotional-expressive aspect of children's drawings and stories is the identification of themes. This work was begun by Allan and Crandall (1986) and informed my question "Is it possible to identify common themes in the pictures and metaphorical narratives of coping and noncoping boys?" I could not find any reference to additional work in this area.

Much of the support for expressive therapy is in the form of qualitative case histories and the subjective clinical judgement of experienced practitioners. Critical evaluations tend to call for quantitative support. The following chapter, Research Methodology, is an attempt to standardize the treatment procedure and to encourage others to explore the possible usefulness of this particular tool.

### Chapter 3

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I propose to use "The Rosebush" as a tool to ascertain whether there were discernible differences between the art (visual imagery) and the words which grade six boys use to describe the images (metaphors). I ask "Could the products from a visualization experience be used to discriminate between "coping" and "noncoping" boys?" This question will be answered by asking three trained elementary school counsellors to sort the data. All counsellors hired by this school district must have at least a Masters degree and a number of years related experience. For my purpose, I will be considering these qualifications as training. In the second question I ask "Is it possible to identify common themes in the pictures and metaphorical narratives of "coping" and "noncoping" boys?" This question was driven by my intuitive sense that further work in this area could serve to inform other educators and counsellors working with children in difficulty. A thematic analysis will be undertaken in an effort to answer this question. Finally, I ask "Can the pictures and metaphorical narratives of "coping" and "noncoping" boys provide a tool to enhance the therapeutic relationship?" I believed that this instrument would provide a safe vehicle for children to project some of their thoughts and feelings, thus making it a useful tool in the sequential decisions which are characteristic of therapy.

At the time of this study I was employed as an elementary liaison counsellor. The elementary liaison counsellor program was established to provide support for students (parents and teachers), particularly those experiencing behavioural or emotional problems. The elementary liaison counsellors serve as the key liaison

between the home, community agencies and the school in developing, implementing or supervising comprehensive treatment plans for identified students. My case load included two large elementary schools, each having over 340 students. These two schools served a range of low, middle and high income families. No attempt was made to control for these variables in the selection of either coping or noncoping boys.

For the purpose of maintaining continuity, the definition for a coping and a noncoping student was taken from The Rosebush: A Visualization Strategy study. Minor changes were made to account for the specificity of gender and grade level.

A coping boy will be defined as one who gets along well with his teacher, his peers, and who shows average developmental mastery of skills and material at the grade six level. Noncoping students will be defined as the converse. (Allan and Crandall, p. 39, 1986)

The "noncoping" group was derived from my existing case load. At the time I was seeing seven boys of this age on a weekly basis. The reasons for referral were varied, but all met the noncoping criteria. They were in trouble at school, had few age appropriate friends and did not show evidence of mastery of either the skills or material necessary to succeed at the grade six level. This group represented the biggest bulge in my case load. I reasoned, pragmatically, that I might be able to gain permission for five of them to participate in the study.

The approval process took several steps. First, I submitted a proposal to the Human Subjects Research Committee in the Faculty of Education, The University of Lethbridge.



After gaining permission to proceed, I sent three letters to the senior administrators of the school district in which I am employed. These letters explained the project and my intent (See Superintendents Letter Appendix 1). They were accompanied by a copy of the proposal. Having gained their written consent I formally approached the principals of each of the schools in question. It should be noted that the administration at both of the schools had read the proposal and given tacit approval prior to this stage (See Principals Letter Appendix 2). At this point I was given permission to proceed provided that I scheduled treatment sessions outside of the regular school day. The next step in the approval process involved a formal proposal to each of the five teachers responsible for the subject pool. This proposal was done via a letter which outlined my purpose and intent and asked for their cooperation in the selection of the coping group (See Teachers Letter Appendix 3). This letter included the research definition. I did not, however, ask the teachers what criterion they used in their selection. Each teacher submitted two names which were randomly collated. I began phoning at the top of the list. If I received tacit approval over the phone, this contact was followed up by a letter and a permission to participate form (See Control Group Letter Appendix 4 and Permission to Participate Form Appendix 5). I continued in this fashion until I had received forms for five "coping" students. At this point, I formally approached the parents of the students I intended to use as members of the "noncoping" group first by phone and then by letter which was accompanied by a participation form (See Experimental Group Letter Appendix 6 and Permission to Participate Form Appendix 5).

It was made clear in the proposal and in each of the letters that all information would be handled in a confidential and professional manner. Further, participants were assured of the option to withdraw without prejudice at

any time. As promised, all references to participants have been worded in such a way that anonymity will be protected. Samples of student work are identified with pseudonyms and any other identifying information has been removed.

The five "coping" and five "noncoping" boys were identified by mid-May of 1996. In the final group of "noncoping" boys, four of the boys were known to the researcher prior to the treatment experience. Known, in this case, is defined as having spent four or more hours with the researcher prior to treatment. The fifth noncoping boy had transferred into one of the schools during the approval process. We had two sessions together prior to the visualization experience.

Data collection took place over the four week period ending on June 15, 1996. As this project was not seen as part of my professional responsibility, one hour appointments were arranged prior to school and during the hours after school.

The visualization experience consisted of three phases: relaxation and imagery, drawing, and post drawing inquiry. Each session was conducted by the writer. Students were scheduled for one hour. The average length of treatment was forty minutes. A ten minute audio tape was prepared from a script which was published in the Allan and Crandall (1986) article. The first section of the tape is a guided relaxation exercise. Following this experience the students were asked to visualize themselves as a rosebush noting their flowers, leaves, stems and branches. The audio tape concludes with the suggestion that the students should draw a picture of themselves as a rosebush. For this purpose they were provided with a 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper and several sharpened pencils.

The script is reproduced below so that a reader can get a better sense of the visualization experience.

### **The Rosebush: A Guided Fantasy**

I would like you to close your eyes. Just be aware of your body. . .forget about what's been going on around you . . . just think about what's going on inside of you. Think about your breathing . . . feel the air move in through your nose and mouth, down into your chest - imagine that your breathing is like gentle waves lapping on the shore . . . As each wave rolls in, the more relaxed you feel.

Think about your right arm. Feel it getting heavier and heavier. . . Feel the heaviness go all the way down the arm, down to your fingertips . . . Think about your left arm . . . Feel it getting heavier and heavier . . . Feel the heaviness go all the way down the arm, down to your fingertips . . . Think about your right leg . . . Feel it getting heavier and heavier . . . Feel the heaviness go down, down, into your foot . . . Think about your left leg . . . Feel it getting heavier and heavier . . . Feel the heaviness go down, down, into your foot . . . Feel your body relaxing and feeling heavy. . .

Be aware of your thoughts and images in your mind . . . look at them (pause) . . . now put them into a glass jar and watch them . . . (pause) examine them. As more thoughts and images come into your mind, put them into your jar too . . . Find out what you can learn about them . . . Now take the jar and pour out the thoughts and images; watch as

they spill out and disappear (pause) . . . the jar is empty . . .

Now, I'd like you to imagine that you are a rosebush. Become a rosebush and find out what it is like to be a rosebush . . . What kind of rosebush are you? . . . Are you very small? . . . Are you large? . . . Are you wide? . . . Are you tall? . . . Do you have flowers? . . . If so, what kind? . . . They can be any kind you want . . . Do you have leaves? . . . What kind? . . . What are your stems and branches like? . . . Do you have thorns? . . . What are your roots like (pause) . . . or maybe you don't have any . . . If you do, are they long and straight? . . . Are they twisted? . . . Are they deep? . . . Look around you (pause) . . . are you in a yard? . . . in a park? . . . in the desert? . . . in the city? . . . in the country? . . . in the middle of the ocean? . . . Are you in a pot or growing in the ground . . . or through cement . . . or even inside somewhere? . . . Look around you (pause) . . . what do you see? . . . Other flowers? . . . Are you alone? . . . Are there any trees? . . . Animals? . . . People? . . . Birds? . . . Do you look like a rosebush or something else? . . . Is there anything around you like a fence? . . . Does someone take care of you? . . . What's the weather like for you right now?

What is your life like? . . . How do you feel? . . . What do you experience and what happens to you as the seasons change? . . . Be aware of yourself as a rosebush . . . look carefully. Find out how you feel about your life and what happens to you.



Are you a mean or a friendly  
rosebush?

Question Six: Tell me about your roots.

Question Seven: Tell me about where you live.  
What kind of things do you see  
around you? How do you like  
where you are?

Question Eight: Do you think that you look  
like a rosebush, or do you  
think that you look like  
something else? If so, what?

Question Nine: Who takes care of you? How do  
you feel about that? How do  
they look after you?

Question Ten: What's the weather like for  
you right now? What happens  
to you as the seasons change?

Question Eleven: How does it feel to be a  
rosebush? What is your life  
like as a rosebush?

All responses were taped for subsequent transcription and analysis. The transcribed responses are organized under the appropriate headings and appear in the analysis.

Following each treatment session I wrote brief subjective notes. In the case of the coping boys, these were limited to observations as to their behaviour prior to, during, and after the experience. In some cases I also

included dialogue which seemed indicative of their emotional state during the experience. In the case of the noncoping boys I added subjective biographical information. This information appears in the first section of Chapter 5.

The descriptive analysis was undertaken using the general structure of the guided inquiry. I considered the overall impact of the pieces and then looked at the responses to various questions which seemed to be indicative of themes. This discussion is presented in Chapter 7.

Finally, I asked my colleagues to sort the data. In preparation for this experience, each counsellor received a letter which introduced the project and asked for their cooperation. This letter was accompanied by a copy of the script and a copy of the guided enquiry. The counsellors were asked to familiarize themselves with the tool prior to the sorting process. For the sorting they received a copy of each picture accompanied by the general and guided inquiries which were generated from them. They were asked to study the pictures and the stories and to place them in either a coping or noncoping envelope. At no time were the counsellors apprised of the composition of the groups. The counsellors' results appear in Chapter 6.

After the sorting, the counsellors were asked to describe their criteria. Notes were taken. Although this was not meant to be evaluative in any way, these criteria are included as illustrative of the means by which they reached their conclusions. They suggest a means by which counsellors make sense of expressive products.

**Chapter 4****IMAGES AND METAPHORS**

On the following pages the reader will find the images and metaphorical narratives which were the result of "The Rosebush" experience for ten "coping" and "noncoping" Grade 6 boys. They are presented randomly. I invite you to sort the data and to identify common themes. I encourage the reader to make note of your choices and criteria, so that you might compare these with the methods used by the counsellors in this study.



**James**



General Inquiry

This is a park. In the middle is a bush with daisies growing on it. It is surrounded by trees. Just in the front here is a squirrel and some flowers. Over here is a pathway that has a bench on it. People like to sit on the bench and look at me. These (points to 3 to 5 cm. pencil marks) are kind of long, soft, strands of grass.

Guided Inquiry

I am a really bushy rosebush with daisies growing all over it. I don't have much thorns. My flowers are bright. They are growing quite well and they are all different colours blue, yellow, and white. My leaves are stubby and round. They are not very big and kind of an olive green. My branches are thick and wet. Even though you can't see them there are a lot of them. I don't have any thorns because I

didn't have any thorns in the picture in my head. Maybe my thick layer of leaves would help to protect me from danger. Anyway, I am a friendly rosebush and this is a friendly place. So I don't have to worry. My roots are long and thick and twirly, not tangley, but twirly. I have lots of them.

I like the place I live very much. It is a big park in the middle of the city. There are lots of people around all of the time. It is nice and warm here. It's just a good place to be.

It was really hard for me to draw what I was feeling in my head. I mean this picture looks like a rosebush but the feeling was more like being in a bright sunny place. You know like a feeling of wanting to be alive.

I don't really know who takes care of me because there are a lot of people who work here in the park. They are all really nice and there is always someone here every day. I kind of think it would be nice to have one special person to get to know but that can't happen right now. The weather today is bright and shiny. There are animals all over the place.

When the seasons change I am going to feel a little more down because there won't be as many people walking in the park. There won't be as many animals because some of them will be in hibernation. The flowers will die and it won't look as green and pretty as it does right now.

It feels kind of weird to be a rosebush in my mind because I am used to being a human being. It was okay to think about it for today though. I would give being a rosebush about a 9 out of 10.

Chris



### General Inquiry

I just pictured myself just looking around. Not exactly as a bush but as someone just looking around. Even though I didn't draw them, I saw wildlife and people walking around. Right in front of me there is a river. You see my drawing is of the place I'm looking from, not what, I'm looking at.

### Guided Inquiry

I am fairly big with many small round shaped leaves pointed at the top. I have a few flowers around the edges and many in the middle. And well I guess I'm happy!

The flowers have four petals and a yellow centre. The leaves have a line down the middle and they are a flesh green colour. Not just green but flesh. I didn't see any stems or branches in my picture but I imagine that they are there.

I am honestly not sure whether I have thorns or not. I don't think so. It feels as if I am sheltered so that I don't need them. Anyway I am a friendly rosebush. I don't look for trouble.

I didn't draw my roots because I'm the kind of person, I mean bush, that is looking at what is front of him. I am sure that I have strong, strong roots.

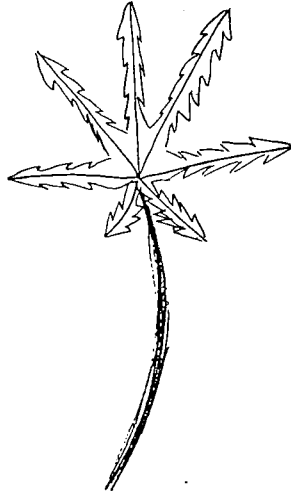
I see kind of a forested area around me. I am thinking that it is more of a park. When you look out you can see people walking in front of you. From a distance you can see wildlife and a river in the background. Really it is just a forest.

I like where I live. I think I look like something more than a bush. I look bigger, more solid, like something that has been around for a long time. I am guessing that some of the wildlife around me or maybe some of the people I can see take care of me.

The weather is hot and sunny right now. When the weather changes it will grow cold and I will lose my leaves. You will be able to see my branches and maybe some thorns then. It feels like I might be worried about the change that is coming. I think I will be cold and maybe lonely.

Being a rosebush feels like I am stationed for life. It is something I just can't fight. I am pretty much okay with it. I'm happy, especially in the summer. My life is going

to get more complicated when the seasons change but I have been through that before so I know I'll come out of it alright.

**Jason**General Inquiry

I saw a plant. It wasn't near a rosebush though.

Guided Inquiry

There was little flow to Jason's narrative. Rather he chose to answer in short, antagonistic volleys. In order to preserve the tone I have elected to present his story in a slightly different fashion. These are Jason's metaphors:

*What kind of a plant are you?* A marijuana rose.

*What do you look like?* Like that! [points to the image] A pot plant with a stem and seven leaves.

*Tell me about your leaves.* It is obvious if you look at it. They're all different sizes.

*Tell me about your stem?* It's right there.

*Do you have thorns?* No.

*Are you a mean or a friendly plant?* Mean. I can kill.

*Where do you live? I don't know.*

*What do you see around you? Other plants same as me.*

*How do you like where you are? No one cares.*

*Who takes care of you? Whoever bought me. They take care of me for a while and then they smoke me.*

*How do you feel about that? I don't care.*

*What is the weather like for you right now? Weather doesn't matter because I live under the lights.*

*How does it feel to be a marijuana plant? Cool.*

### Travis



#### General Inquiry

"This is the rain on the ocean. This is my rose. It has a flower and thorns. My roots are really long they go into the ground, and then right into the ocean. Here is a little fish that might munch on my roots. Here is some seaweed and here is a sunken ship.

#### Guided Inquiry

I am a pink rose. I am kind of average in height and everything. My petals are kind of crispy and hard. My leaves are soft and moist. My stem is really rough and prickly on the outside but it has a creamy milk on the inside. My thorns are kind of shaped like a dinosaur tooth. They are



really pointy and sharp. I have thorns to protect myself from other animals that might want to munch on my stem.

I am a friendly kind of rosebush if people are nice to me. My roots are really long and windy. I live out in the middle of the Atlantic ocean. Today I see mostly fog around me. I like living here because I am a very solitary kind of rosebush and I don't like to be around a lot of people. Nature takes care of me. You know the water and the minerals in the rain. That makes me feel good because I know the supply will never end. Right now it is raining a lot because it is spring. When the seasons change I will grow bigger and have more flowers. Then eventually I will lose my flowers and leaves and kind of die off. Then it will start all over again.

My life is kind of lonely and boring here on my island. I started to grow here all alone because they were shipping a whole bunch of rosebush seeds over the Atlantic, over from Europe, on a freighter. Well the bag I was in was on the deck and a guy came along and accidentally kicked me off. I was just lucky enough to float to this little bit of land and here I am. Sometimes I think about picking up and walking away across the ocean but I couldn't survive without my roots. So I guess I will just have to live with my life right now. Maybe I am feeling kind of down because of all of this rain. I think I will feel a lot better when I have had just one day of sunshine.

**Thomas**General Inquiry

This is what I saw. These are the roses.

Guided Inquiry

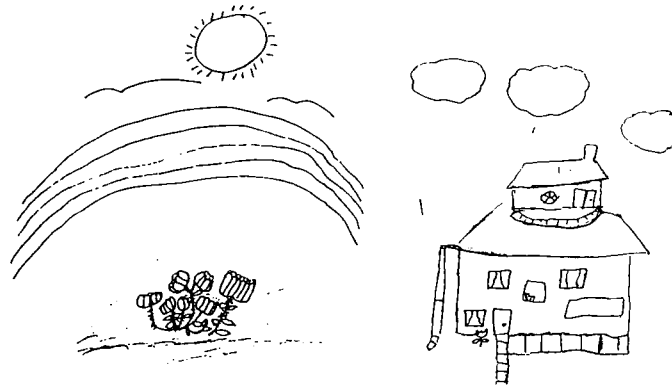
I am a red rose. That's about it. I'm red. There are three other roses around me. They are the same colour. Some are longer. Some are shorter. We all smell good. My leaves are green and they don't have any smell. My stem keeps me standing up.

I have sharp thorns even though I am a friendly rosebush. I am cut away from my roots. Now I will have to live in a vase. I can see a table in the kitchen. Maybe I will sit there. The lady that picked me will take care of me. I feel alright about that.

Right now the weather is hot and dry in the garden. It was dangerous for me out there. It is better inside, but in

time, no matter what she does, I will dry up and die. I am worried about how that will feel.

## Elijah

General Response

This is when I am a rosebush [points to the central image]. I am in a big field after it just finished raining. This is what I saw to my right [points to the image which occupies the right side]. It is still raining over there. I didn't like drawing this.

Guided Inquiry

I don't know what kind of rosebush I am but some of my flowers are big, some are small, some are faint. They are kind of ghost roses. This part of me (points to the largest flower to the right) tried to be red but he couldn't make it. He's a faded pink. The other roses don't like him. My leaves are ragged. My leaves are supposed to be for decoration and to make me a bit happy but they don't. My branches make me

to stand tall. Do you see these little groups of marks here? These are my thorns. I need them for protection because even though I am a friendly rosebush no nice people come to see me. I don't know anything about my roots.

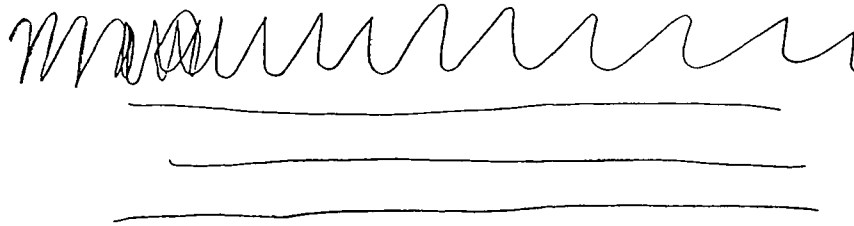
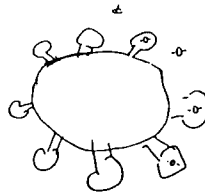
I live in a field where kids like to play sometimes. It is better when they are here. When they're not I like to watch the birds because they are always here. They are my only company really because no one takes care of me and I don't know why. [crying]

I am getting a break right now because it is nice and warm. When the seasons change I will close up and wait for spring again. I don't feel that good being a rosebush. [crying] Being a rosebush makes me sad.

*Elijah did not refer to the image of the house once in his discussion. Yet it had seemed tremendously important in the drawing process. I elected to probe. He explained:*

I don't know who lives over there. I just look at it. A family lives in this big house with a balcony on the top. Sometimes they have parties up there. I wonder if they might be looking at me from up there. They like flowers 'cause they have one in the front yard that they take real good care of. They water it and dig around it and lots of times they all come out and talk about how pretty it is. It is pretty too.

David



### General Inquiry

This is me as a rosebush. My eyes are in the flowers. There are a few clouds in the sky but it is sunny. There is grass in front of the road like I have in my front yard.

### Guided Inquiry

I am a thorny rosebush all covered with roses. They are kind of short and green. They are full of honey which is why the bees are on them. My leaves are soft and short too. They are shaped like a diamond. My branches are poky and thorny. They are not very long either. I am kind of a young

rosebush. My flowers only grow at the tip of the branches so there are none on the inside of the bush.

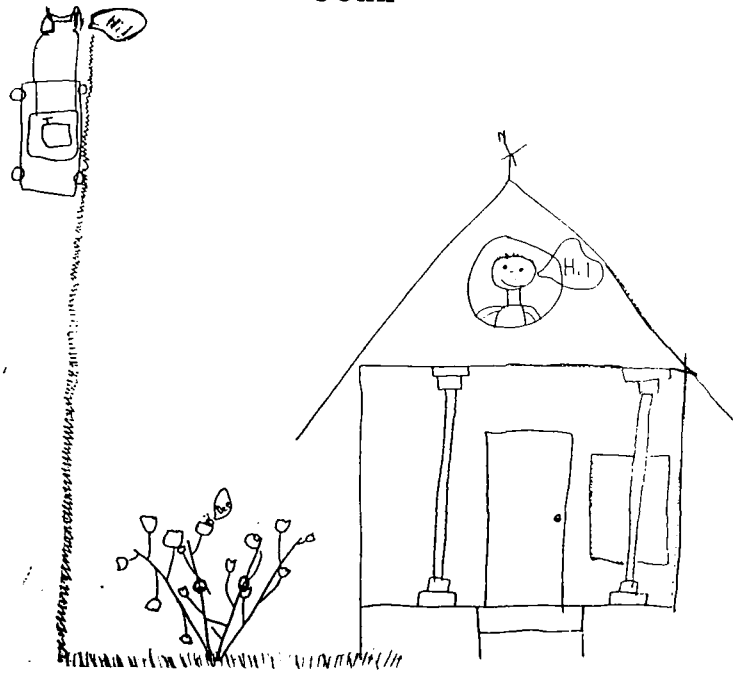
My thorns are for protection. If any humans come around and try to pick me they will get poked. I am a friendly rosebush.

I see lots of grass near a house. There are other houses on either side with grass and trees the usual stuff. Right now I feel pretty good. It has been raining a lot so I had a lot of water and now it is sunny. Once in a while the people over there look after me but most of the time I have to take care of myself. It is hard to take care of myself. It is really hard. I would like people to water me and pick off my dead flowers and pull the weeds around me.

Right now the weather is good. When the seasons change I will start to die and decay. I have never been through that before so I don't know how it will feel.

My life as a rosebush is long, very long because I can't move.

John



General Inquiry

That guy is cutting the lawn. This is a jagged fence. That is their house. This is me [points to the image of the plant in the centre of the picture.]

General Inquiry

I am a rosebush with eyes, right here see. I have all of the usual stuff too, branches, stems and flowers. My flowers are red with yellowish middles. Bees come to suck the sap out of them. [At this point John added the Bee to the image] I smell good. My leaves are dark green but I don't have any right now. They fell off. I don't know why. My branches are green. I don't think I have any roots. I wish that I had thorns because then maybe people wouldn't walk on me.

I live in a yard in front of a house where an old lady and her grandson live. When I look around I can see a fence,



the house, and a guy pushing his lawn mower. I don't mind living here because the old lady and her grandson take okay care of me. They give me water everyday but nothing else.

Right now it is warm but a cold wind is blowing. Fall is coming. Then my flowers will fall off and I will be nothing but bare, bare stems.

Honestly being a rosebush isn't on my top ten list. I would rather be something else.

Kyle



### General Inquiry

This is a rose sitting in a forested, mountainous area. There are birds and stuff like that around. There is a river by it.

### Guided Inquiry

I am a red rose. I have a stem and I have leaves alternating. That's pretty much all. There is only one of me. My leaves are small and my stem is kind of wavy. I feel pretty strong though. That is partly because of the roots you can't see. They are long and strangely and they are deep. I don't need to have thorns because the trees around me protect me. I am a friendly rosebush.

I live in a forested area surrounded by mountains and rivers and hills. If I look around I can see birds and lots of other animals. I like living here a lot.

Even though my drawing doesn't look like a real rosebush, the picture I saw in my head while you were talking looked real. There were lots of different flowers but I decided to only draw one.

No one takes care of me because I can take care of myself which makes me feel good. I am not really happy right now because the weather is windy. I am getting to hate the wind. When the seasons change I will wither and die. When I think about that it makes me feel bad.

How do I feel as a rosebush? Well to be honest with you, I feel odd. It feels strange to be stuck in one place all of the time. If it went on too long it would be boring. I would rather be just who I am.

## Brent

General Inquiry

I felt really weird while you were talking. It was like I had too much coffee. You know dizzy and speedy like. Well this is me [points to an image approximately in the centre of the page] I live beside a beach. The sun is shining brightly and a huge wave is coming in. A guy is watering me and the flowers and the grass. See this here [pointing to the word grass] If I took away the "gr" it would spell ass. [laughter]

Guided Inquiry

I look like a big hairy monster. I feel stiff and I can't move. I wish that I was a flower because if I was one of them [pointing to the images of flowers on the left] I

would get fed every day . My leaves are pointy and rough. They are sharp and they can cut like a razor blade. You see these here [points to a group of pencil lines in one portion of his bush image] They are quills. My branches are stiff and bent like, so I can fire my quills. If anyone tried to sit on me I could kind of fling them away.

*Tell me how you protect yourself?*

Well when the wind blows stuff comes in. The quills hit everything. I am a mean and a friendly rosebush. Sometimes I really feel mean and I don't know why. Most people don't know that I am friendly.

My roots can't get strong here. They are right on the surface. When the wind really blows it feels like I might just pull up and tumble away. Or maybe someday that wave will break the fence and I'll be washed away. I'll survive though. Not like those guys over there [points to the flowers] They are history, man.

Right now I see people everyday. They come to the beach but I like it better when I am alone. It is more peaceful. One adult takes care of me. Right now he is watering me down but this is the first time in a long time. I wish that I was one of those flowers over there. They get water all day every day it seems. I'm pissed off about that. I could just die here and nobody seems to care.

It is summer and it is HOT!. I need water and it isn't going to get any better because it is even hot here in the fall. Still no water. Then in the winter it gets wicked cold man. I don't know. I might die then.

Being a rosebush is "shitty." My life is like a big stinking pile of "crap!"

## Chapter 5

### OBSERVATIONS AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

In this chapter the groups of boys are identified for the first time. Following identification the reader will find the observational and autobiographical information. This information is presented under the headings **The "Coping" Boys** and **The "Noncoping" Boys**. This contextual account may be useful for categorization of the boys and helps to answer some questions as to the maturational level evidenced in the drawings. In the next chapter, the results of the counsellors attempts to sort the data are reported along with their subjective sorting criteria. The thematic analysis follows. The final chapter in this section addresses the specific therapeutic usefulness of this experience for, and with, the noncoping boys.

#### Identification

The study group was made of five coping and five noncoping boys. They were:

<b>Coping</b>	<b>Noncoping</b>
Travis	Elijah
James	John
Kyle	Brent
Chris	Jason
David	Thomas

The coping boys were referred to me by their teachers using the research definition as a criterion. I met them for the first time just prior to our appointment. The noncoping boys were selected from my referrals. As reported in the research methodology four of the boys were known to me. The fifth had

recently transferred into one of the schools. Because I knew the boys, I was able to add biographical information to the observational data.

### **The "Coping" Boys**

I introduced myself to Travis at the classroom door. It was 3:40. We walked amiably toward my office, chatting about inconsequential things. On arrival, Travis informed me that he had never been to a counsellor before. Once inside, Travis appeared to have difficulty finding a comfortable position on his chair. This persisted through the guided fantasy. He commented on this problem at the conclusion of this phase saying, "Man that was hard. This chair is really uncomfortable!" He began drawing after this statement and throughout the drawing phase chose and discarded three different pencils. During the drawing he explained, as he pointed to an array of pencil marks, "This is the weather!" At one point he asked; "Do I have to fill this whole thing [the paper] up?" He appeared to become more comfortable during the spoken portion of the treatment. His voice was confident and his story cogent and detailed.

James arrived at the door of my office at the appointed time, 7:15 A.M.. He was very interested in the features of the room in which the treatment took place and wanted to experiment with the taping equipment even prior to sitting down. However, once he settled into the chair and the guided fantasy had began his physical posture seemed to indicate that he was completely relaxed. Prior to the drawing portion he commented, "I liked that. Your voice kind of put me to sleep. It felt good."

Kyle showed a positive, matter of fact, "lets get on with this" attitude from our introduction at his classroom door until the session concluded. For example, he asked

where we were going, led the way to the location, plunked himself down in one of two chairs and said "Okay, I'm ready!" At the conclusion of the guided imagery he said "Okay!" and begin to draw quickly and confidently saying nothing until his work was complete approximately 2 minutes later. He concluded with "There!" placing his pencil beside the drawing and facing me expectantly. During both the general and the guided inquiry his answers were short and to the point. I got the impression this was his style of interaction.

As we were walking from the front entrance of the school to the counselling office, Chris said, "I have been looking forward to this since my Dad told me you called. I have always wondered what you did with kids in your room." Upon arrival in the room he glanced quickly around, commented on one or two of the pictures which were displayed and settled into one of the available chairs looking up at me expectantly. This good natured curiosity prevailed throughout our session.

David's Mom was waiting with him when I arrived. David explained that he was worried about what might be expected of him during our encounter. I assured him that the experience would be painless and that he could choose to leave at any time. He elected to stay, but his apprehension clearly affected his ability to relax. Several times during the fantasy he opened his eyes as if to check his surroundings. His drawing was quick and careless. Talking seemed to give him some comfort because during the guided inquiry he became relatively animated and cheerful.



### **The "Noncoping" Boys**

Elijah and I had been working together since September. We knew each other well. His issues included abandonment, fear of an abusive step father, and rebellion against the dismal circumstances of his existence. Elijah's family was reluctant to pursue a referral to a provincially funded mental health clinic but had recently sought the opinion of a general practitioner. Elijah had been diagnosed with depression and had started a course of medication. He appeared to accept the relaxation suggestion easily and was observed to be smiling for a part of the visualization exercise. He remained deep in thought for over two minutes when given the instructions and then began to draw with very slow deliberate movements. For example, the rosebush image took a full five minutes to complete. As he worked through the illustrations he appeared to fold in on himself. When he announced it was complete there were tears running down his cheeks.

John and I had a long history. We met in September when he was enrolled in the school. At that time he was returning to the public system after two years of home schooling. His single mom had elected to return to work and felt that the time had come for John to return to the classroom. His history was tumultuous. School records indicated that assessment and support had been recommended but not followed up on. Over the course of his readjustment period we had gotten to know each other well. In our early sessions he had been extremely oppositional but we had reached a point of trust. John had formed a habit of dropping in for a game of checkers on some afternoons in addition to his regular weekly half hour. On the occasion of this treatment he happily agreed to remain after school. The first few minutes were

spent chatting about the experiences he had had that day. When I explained what we would be doing he said, "Why don't we just play checkers today?" It took some time to convince him to participate. As if to express his reluctance John sat throughout the entire meditation with his eyes open.

Brent was a regular client in addition to having the benefit of weekly outreach counselling from a provincially funded agency. Over the course of the year we had dealt with a shop-lifting charge, his involvement with a known pedophile, severe school discipline issues and extended absences when he was required to care for his younger siblings. Upon entering the room, Brent launched into an explanation of his latest crisis. It involved a toy gun being held at the head of a young native boy. Brent explained that it was just a joke, nothing to get all bent out of shape about. Nonetheless, he expected to be suspended the next day. He was quiet, wide-eyed and responsive during the treatment. He felt compelled to nod, give a thumbs up signal and mimic pouring contents from a container. Throughout the drawing he continued to discuss his current life situation and to explain his coping strategies. At times he would offer explanations for his treatment of certain visual images. Both Brent's conversation and responses were peppered with expletives.

Jason had been home schooled until mid-May when his mother elected to move to Lethbridge to seek employment. At that time, he was enrolled in one of our grade six classes. He and I had met on two previous occasions. One of them was on the day of his arrival. Mom and Jason arrived at the door of my office together. He was plunked into a chair and I was directed to help him to "get his \*\*\*\*\* act together " because as she explained "if he keeps \*\*\*\*\* on like this he will have to live with his \*\*\*\*\* old man. Needless to say, we did not accomplish much during that session. John

established himself quickly and by the time of our next meeting, a week later, he had been given a one day suspension and was spending a good part of each day in the office. His mom had given permission for him to participate, but I was not counting on his cooperation. Surprisingly he came along willingly. Perhaps there was an assignment/expectation he was eager to miss. He sat slouched in his chair throughout the visualization. His eyes were open and his features were arranged in an arrogant expression.

Life had thrown Thomas some difficult curves. He had been abandoned two years earlier by his custodial mother. Father stepped in, however, there had been re-occurring problems with alcohol abuse. At the time of our meeting, Thomas was staying with a church appointed guardian. His father was hospitalized with a critical illness and mom could not be located. He had been coming to school regularly but we had all noted increasing despondency. Although we had planned to go out for breakfast following our work, he came to the treatment session with little enthusiasm. He sat quietly while I organized my materials and simply nodded when I enquired if he was ready to begin. He closed his eyes as directed during the visualization and eventually laid his head on the table, resting on his arms. He perked up somewhat at the suggestion to draw and worked diligently at his image for some time. As we talked he continued to sketch and refine his work.

On this day, the behaviour of two of the "coping" boys was suggestive of some sort of difficulty. Travis, for example, could not settle easily into either the visualization or the drawing experience. He also seemed to have difficulty settling on an appropriate pencil when each of the pencils was identical. This may have been due to nervousness or to his comfort level with the drawing medium. He also produced an image and story which was quite different

from that of his coping peers. The isolation which he experienced and described during this visualization experience is quite striking. David admitted to being apprehensive and considered withdrawing from the study. His drawing is also notable in that it is much less developed than those of his peers. His story was characterized by loneliness and frustration. David's expressed loneliness and Travis' expressed isolation, together with the observational data, may be evidence that the definition of a coping and noncoping boy needs refinement. Perhaps a child can be seen as coping in a school milieu when he is, in reality, struggling with an emotional crisis.

Conversely, the reader can not fail to note that the noncoping boys are struggling against some very difficult odds. Yet they carry on. This in itself is evidence of coping. Stephen Wolin (1994) has identified seven resiliencies which emerge when survivors battle adversity. They are: insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humour, and morality. Wolin reports that resiliencies tend to cluster by personality type. A survivor who is outgoing and gregarious will have a different array of resiliencies from one who is serious and introspective. In this sample Brent, who is outgoing and gregarious, shows evidence of humour, initiative, insight and independence in his picture and story. Whereas, Elijah and Thomas, who are introspective personality types, show evidence of insight, creativity and morality. In the Wolin therapeutic orientation, the "damage model" which is implied in the noncoping definition is discarded in favour of a "challenge model." Successful coping strategies, such as those identified for the three boys, are amplified and their capacity for resilience is strengthened. This approach suggests a more humane research definition and a powerful therapeutic orientation which warrants further exploration.

## Chapter 6

### DISCRIMINATING BETWEEN "COPING" AND "NONCOPING" BOYS

The counsellors were introduced to the project through a phone call or personal contact, a letter of explanation, and a copy of the visualization script and the guided inquiry. They were asked to familiarize themselves with the tool in preparation for the sorting process. For sorting, they received a copy of each picture, accompanied by the general and guided inquires which were generated from them. The protocols were in random order and the counsellors were unaware of the group configuration. They were asked to study the pictures and stories and to place them in either a coping or a noncoping envelope.

After sorting, the counsellors were asked to describe their criteria. Notes were taken. These criteria are included in the discussion to suggest a means by which these counsellors made sense of the expressive products they encountered. The counsellors are identified as Counsellor #1, Counsellor #2, and Counsellor #3. In an effort to preserve anonymity all are referred to as 'she' in the text.

#### Counsellor #1

Counsellor #1 was able to place the protocols in the correct envelope seven out of ten times. Three individuals were incorrectly sorted. She placed two "copers", Travis and David, in the noncoping envelope and John, a "noncoper" by definition, in the coping envelope. Her criterion for a "coping" boys picture included variety, the inclusion of positive images such as rainbows and smiles, and a sense of

completeness. In reading the stories she looked for an "up" impression, positive attitudes to change and challenges, a sense of physical and emotional comfort and broad descriptions. Pictures of "noncoping" boys were sorted because they seemed to focus on the negative, they were too intricate, and they suggested the viewer looked inward. She felt the texts of her "noncoping" candidates showed evidence of powerlessness, giving up, feeling taken advantage of, and held no promise of change.

### **Counsellor #2**

Counsellor #2 was able to place the protocols in the correct envelope eight out of ten times. Two individuals were incorrectly sorted. Thomas and Brent, both "noncopers", were identified as coping. She looked only fleetingly at the pictures and concentrated on the text for her sorting. Her criterion for a "noncoping" individual included attitude as displayed by Jason's story, sadness, weakness, limited resources, and the absence of caretakers. Her criterion for "coping" included resiliency which she credited to Brent's work in particular, an overall sense of peace and tranquillity, being rooted and cared for, and hope for the future. She included Thomas and Brent in the "coping" sample: Thomas, because he seemed at peace with his situation, and Brent because she felt that he was a survivor.

### **Counsellor #3**

Counsellor #3 was able to place the protocols in the correct envelope seven out of ten times. Three individuals were sorted incorrectly. She placed one "noncoper", Thomas, in the coping group. She placed two "copers", Travis and David, in the noncoping group. In establishing the "coping" group she looked for congruence between the picture and the story. Her coping themes were calm, innocence, humour,

relationship, independence and realism. The "noncoping" group was established by taking into account the maturity which was evident in the drawings. Her "noncoping" themes were loneliness, despair, antagonism, conditional association, and protective or defense mechanisms.

I asked, "Could the products from a visualization experience be used to discriminate between coping and noncoping boys?" In other words, does this instrument have diagnostic validity? These results suggest that it has limitations, although it shows promise. Discrimination of 70%-80% is fairly positive. Tester reliability is also high. Investigation of issues such as sample size and counsellor training might be relevant.

Counsellor #1 and Counsellor #3 both suggested that the pictures and stories of Travis and David were indicative, to them, of a noncoping individual. Counsellor #3 went so far as to suggest in his concluding remark "This (Travis) is one boy who is going to need watching. He may be 'coping' by this definition, but I am convinced that he is going to encounter difficulties in the future." Both identified the themes of loneliness and despair which seemed to characterize Travis and David's stories. This raises once again the question of the research definition. It seems possible that these boys, who were seen to be coping by their teachers, are encountering some difficulty. However, one sample such as this provides insufficient data to reach any conclusions. Rather, it suggests that future studies may want to look at the ways that expressive tools may provide opportunities for communication and clarification. It is possible that an empathetic teacher could use "The Rosebush" as a class activity.

Counsellor #2 and Counsellor #3 also suggested that Thomas belonged in the "coping" group. Counsellor #2 did

because Thomas seemed at peace with his situation. Counsellor #3 included Thomas because of the congruence which was evident in his picture and story. In addition, she saw evidence of calm, relationship, and realism. I believe that Thomas was indeed coping well with a very difficult situation. However, in the session which followed treatment I asked him if his picture and story in any way reflected his own life. He looked at the picture, pointed at the drops that fall from the stem and said "I cry a lot at night, Mrs. McMullin." We were able to talk about his loneliness and fear for the first time. This vignette suggests once again, that this visualization experience is a powerful therapeutic tool.

All three counsellors said that they relied first on an overall impression and then on their intuitive reaction to the material. However, the identified criteria are remarkably similar to the themes which are identified in the following chapter. This suggests that while the instrument may have limited diagnostic value, it may be useful in identifying themes which could inform other educators and counsellors who work with children encountering difficulty.

Further, each of the counsellors expressed interest in the use of this and other expressive techniques. They were impressed with the amount of information which was collected and felt that they could use this tool in their practice.



## Chapter 7

### IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES

I asked "Was it possible to identify common themes in the pictures and metaphorical narratives of coping and noncoping boys?" The descriptive analysis was undertaken using the general structure of the guided inquiry. That is, I considered the overall impact of the pieces and then looked at the responses to various questions which seemed to be indicative of themes. The results are presented under the headings **"Coping" Themes** and **"Noncoping" Themes**. There was evidence of themes, many of which were also found in the Allan and Crandall (1986) study.

#### **"Coping" Themes**

In the Allan and Crandall (1986) study the researchers found that the "copers projected themes of positive self-images, pleasant associations attached to touching, an ability to protect themselves and a tendency to see the environment around them as pleasant and containing friendly caretakers"(Allan & Crandall, p.43, 1986). In this sample, the "copers" were found to describe positive self images which implied vigour. These boys, speaking as rosebushes, presented a positive aspect which was reciprocated in their environments. These environments were described, for the most part, as pleasant and nurturing. There were differences in the degrees of independence and responsibility to which each boy, speaking in this voice, attested. The association between emotional health and the climatic conditions experienced on the day of the treatment are not clear. It may be significant that all five of the boys chose to describe comfortable conditions. In the narratives each boy

appears to have made a realistic assessment of his situation. However, the boys express frustration with the "rooted" experience of being a rosebush. This may, or may not, be a reflection of the struggle to attain the developmental goals of independence and responsibility. These themes are elaborated along with the supporting evidence in the paragraphs which follow.

The "coping" boys either describe themselves as robust rosebushes, or as bushes with the potential to become so. The images alone, however, do not necessarily convey this impression. Three of the coping boys, David, Chris and James, drew their image as a substantial round clump situated in the centre of the page. The words used to describe the bush suggest that they see themselves as strong and vigorous. They include "bushy", "full", "all covered with roses" and "big and solid like something that has been around for a long time." The boys who chose to draw a single rose qualified their images with statements which either promise mature development or imply that it already exists. For example, Travis, whose lone rose is shown on a small island, explains that "It is spring. When the seasons change I will grow bigger and have lots of flowers." Thus his image would seem to be consistent with the season rather than with a personal perception of fragility. Kyle takes some care to qualify his portrayal of a single rose in this fashion:

Even though my drawing doesn't look like a real rosebush, the picture I saw in my head while you were talking looked real. There were lots of different flowers but I decided to draw only one.

For the sake of this analysis I have equated both the promise of and the actualization of vigour to be indicative of a positive self image.

The second prominent theme is "friendliness." Each of the boys considers himself to be a friendly rosebush. However, there was disagreement in regard to the necessity for thorns. Travis, for example, needs thorns to protect himself from other animals who might want to munch on his stem. In a similar vein, David's thorns are there to poke anyone who might try to pick him. Conversely, Chris has no need of protection. He "doesn't look for trouble" and trusts the feeling of protection that he intuits. James sees no need for caution in this friendly place and Kyle is protected by the trees which surround him.

Only one of the five images depicts roots. In projective literature being "rooted" is seen as being synonymous with a strong attachment bond and viewed as an indicator of health (Burns & Kaufman, p.20, 1970). When questioned, three of the boys describe root systems which are "long, thick and twirly," "really long and windy," and "long deep and straggly." A fourth explains, "I didn't draw them because I am the kind of person, I mean bush, who is looking at what is in front of them. I am sure that I have strong, strong roots." Can the existence of roots be said to infer a positive relationship? Without clarification from the subjects the data is insufficient to make such a connection.

A theme of positive association is evident in four stories. Jason describes his surroundings as a "good place to be that is nice and warm. He tells us that "there are lots of people here." David also implies neighbourliness with his reference to "houses on either side with grass, trees and the usual stuff." Chris describes his home as a "forested area which is park like" and filled with water, wildlife and people. Kyle also lives in "a forested area which is surrounded by mountains, rivers and hills." As he looks around he sees "birds and lots of other animals." Only

Travis shuns association. This is, he explains, because "he is a very solitary kind of rosebush."

The subjects were 11 years old at the time of treatment. This age is widely believed to be the beginning of adolescent development (Sarasan and Sarasan, p. 167, 1990). Two of the key goals for growth at this stage are independence and responsibility. In this data two of the boys were comfortable with leaving responsibility for care up to an ambiguous other. The other three state emphatically that they can "take care of themselves." They are consistent, however, in referring to a dependence on nature's rhythms and all of the subjects describe feeling challenged by the expectation of coping with inevitable changes. This would seem to suggest that a theme of "realistic assessment" might be appropriate.

Life is cyclical. In this sample the boys convey a general attitude of acceptance. James predicts that he will "feel a little more down" because in cold weather "there won't be as many people playing in the park." Travis foresees that as the seasons change he will "eventually die off and lose his flowers and stems." In time "it will start all over again." David introduces a note of sadness saying "as the seasons change I will start to die and decay. I have never been through that before so I don't know how I will feel." Kyle says with characteristic candour "I will wither and die. When I think about that it makes me feel bad." The most optimism is expressed by Chris who first describes physical changes that include the loss of his leaves. He is somewhat apprehensive about the change saying, "It feels like I might be worried . . . I think it will be cold and lonely maybe." He concludes his muse about the future with "My life is going to get more complicated when the seasons change but I have been through that before so I know I'll come out alright."

It is not clear whether climatic conditions depicted or described can be associated with the emotional climate of the subjects. This is impossible to define without the input of the subjects, however, it may be significant that three of the boys depict and describe warm, sunny days. David, one of the three says that he has just been nourished from a generous rain. Travis shows himself in the midst of a rain shower. He tells us that rain brings nourishment in the spring and that it will allow him to grow into summer when one assumes he will enjoy warm, sunny days. The exception is Kyle who complains about the wind which "he is getting to hate." This may have been a reference to the actual weather on the day of treatment. We were in the midst of a brutal spring wind storm, characteristic of this area, on the day of treatment.

An unexpected theme emerged in four of the five stories. These boys all described their frustration with the "stationary" life of a rosebush. David said "my life is long, very long because I cannot move." Travis expressed a longing to "pick up and walk away." Kyle asserts that it feels "strange and boring to be stuck in one place all of the time." Chris addresses this frustration in a philosophical manner. He says "It is something I just can't fight. I am pretty much OK with it." The difficulty seemed at first to be associated with the source of the imagery. However, when I compared their complaints to those I hear daily as the parent of a twelve year old boy, I began to see another association. My son often complains of being stuck at home with his family. When either the responsibilities or lack of freedom in our home frustrate him, he threatens, like Travis, to pick up and get away. Thus far he has not explored this possibility. I believe this is because he knows that he is, at this point, unequipped for the challenge. Perhaps this

theme of "frustration" is evidence of a struggle to achieve maturational milestones.

Analysis of the images and metaphors of five "coping" boys would seem to confirm the hypothesis that they would show evidence of positive themes. Further it gives weight to the findings of the Allan and Crandall (1986) study by corroborating all but one of their themes, "pleasant associations attached to touching" (pg. 43). The discussion portion of the Allan and Crandall (1986) study does not describe the data in sufficient detail to ascertain how this theme was developed. It may be that the subjects were younger than those in the present sample. An age difference would also account for the emergence of the themes of independence and responsibility. Age and the desire to accomplish maturational milestones may also account for the frustration that the boys expressed.

### **"Noncoping" Themes**

In the discussion portion of the Allan and Crandall (1986) study the noncoping boys were said to have projected themes of "negative self-concepts, painful associations attached to touching and an extremely aggressive, hostile environment with destructive caretakers" (pg. 43). The categorisation of themes in this group was difficult. Each boy approached the task in a unique fashion. The pictures which resulted from the guided imagery and the words chosen to describe them suggest that self-concept could be characterized as different, but not necessarily negative. Aspect, the viewpoint from which the boys consider their situations, also defied categorisation as the work suggested aspects ranging from antagonism to disappointment, to confusion and finally to acceptance. However, the images and metaphorical narratives suggest that these boys commonly seek protection from an inhospitable environment. It would seem,

in this sample, that these boys are aware of the fact that they send mixed messages about being approachable. The environments depicted and described appear to be populated by absent or provisional caretakers. This data suggests both negative experiences and an attitude of dependency. In these stories and images the boys experience difficult climatic conditions and face an uncertain future with trepidation. In the following paragraphs this discussion is enlarged upon.

In a school setting these boys stand out from the norm, hence their presence in the "noncoping" group. Perhaps it is appropriate then, that they display this same individuality in their expression of the rosebush imagery. For example, John draws a stick bush which gives the impression of frailty. This impression is confirmed by his story wherein he tells the reader that his leaves have recently fallen off for no reason. Elijah, on the other hand, goes to great lengths to draw a finely detailed full flowered rosebush which is covered by a rainbow. One has the impression of pastoral beauty. This impression is corrected by his metaphor. Elijah tells us that we are seeing "ghost roses" and that one of the images is even more ethereal than the rest. He goes on to describe a lonely and isolated life. Thomas chooses a bouquet of roses to represent his vision. The viewer is struck by their fragile beauty and the appearance of what might be tears falling from their stems. Thomas tells the reader that he is a red rose, one of a bunch, and that is about it. Brent's bush is a cluster of scribbles in the approximate centre of the page. He is confused about the imagery saying he looks like a big hairy monster and describing himself as having quills. However, when he explains the antagonistic nature of the bush, his image seems more appropriate. Jason, in an act of defiance which was totally in keeping with his approach to life in school, draws a marijuana leaf. It would seem inappropriate to describe the group as being representative of a theme of

negative self-concept, rather, the data suggests that these boys must be considered as individuals.

Two of these boys face the world in an antagonistic fashion. Jason tells us that he is dangerous and in fact "he can kill." Brent describes his branches as part of his arsenal. They are "bent stiff to fire quills." Brent's leaves also contribute to this impression. They are described as being as "sharp as razor blades." Thomas, on the other hand, has surrendered himself to fate in the hands of "the lady who cut me." His statement "I have thorns but I am a friendly rosebush" seems to imply some confusion. Confusion is also typical of Elijah who tells us that his leaves were supposed to be for decoration and to make him a bit happy, but they didn't. John tells us that he is determined to make the best of a difficult situation.

The need for protection in a hostile environment, however, is evident in all of the boys work. John tells us that he wishes he had thorns for protection because then "people wouldn't walk on me." Elijah has carefully represented thorns which are necessary, he says, "because no nice people come to see me." Brent devotes an entire section of his bush to thorns which he calls quills. He tells us that "when the wind blows stuff in the quills hit everything." From my perspective, Jason's aggressive attitude is also an expression of a desire for protection. Thomas, on the other hand, tells us that he has traded the hostile environment outside for the temporary sanctuary of the vase. Further, he seems at peace with the bargain.

While the presence of roots was either pictured or described by all of the "coping" boys work, it was either unexplored or unnoticed by three out of five of the "noncoping" boys. The two boys who chose to answer this question suggested the tenuous nature of their existence.



For example, in one of the strongest statements in the sample, Brent cries, "My roots can't get strong here." He explains that his roots are right at the surface and that at times he is in danger of pulling up and blowing away. Thomas has already experienced upheaval as he has been "cut off from his roots."

While the "coping" boys could be seen to be characterized in this sample by a friendliness which was reciprocated, the "noncoping" boys in this sample, who purport to be friendly, are more aptly characterized by confusion. Consideration of this lack of continuity prompts a lengthy response from Brent. He says, "I am a mean and a friendly rosebush. Sometimes I feel really mean and I don't know why. Most people don't know that I am friendly." Thomas tell us that although he is friendly, others may not recognize this fact because of his thorns. This lack of recognition is echoed by Elijah who can't understand why no nice people visit. John chose not to respond to this question. Jason is absolutely clear about his attitude, he is mean and he can kill.

The boys tell us that they associate with the significant others in their environment in a variety of ways. John watches the neighbour and his caretakers with detachment. He is provided with a marginal existence of "water everyday but nothing else." Still, he professes to "not mind living" there. Elijah tells us that he has only birds for company. From the narrative we learn that his days are spent covetously watching the family in the house to his left who give care and attention to their "pretty" flower. Thomas, who has been cut, must depend on the lady who picked him and for the time being, he is content with this fate. Jason only finds association through his ability to give pleasure (to be smoked) or profit. He is tended for these reasons but "no one really cares."

Brent, thirsty, buffeted by the winds and threatened by the waves, prefers to be alone. He tells us that one adult takes parsimonious care of him but coddles the other flowers. Upon considering this turn of events Brent vents his anger saying "They get water all day every day it seems. I'm pissed off about that. I could just die here and nobody seems to care."

"Coping" boys seemed to communicate that they were capable of taking care of themselves within the context of a predictable future. This was not the case for the boys in the "noncoping" sample. They were dependant on uncaring keepers, as was the case for John and Jason, an unknown temporary custodian such as "the lady" who Thomas trusts, or an openly antagonist warder like the individual Brent watches day after day. Elijah, alone on a barren field, has no one. Each of the five boys in the coping sample say at some point "I can take care of myself." This sentiment is never expressed by the "noncoping" boys; although one might argue that the antagonism of both Brent and Jason is designed to give that impression.

Climate is also approached differently in the stories which describe the images for each of the "noncoping" boys. For example John tells us that "it is warm right now but a cold wind is blowing." Thomas was challenged by the hot dry weather in the garden. He tells us that "It was dangerous out there." He knows that being cut means that he will die but he was willing to make that sacrifice for temporary respite. Jason lives a strange, detached existence in which he must depend on lights as a source of sustenance. He knows that his tenure is only temporary; it ends when he is harvested. Elijah is getting a fleeting break from the elements but predicts that he will soon have to "close up and wait for spring." Brent experiences hot weather and constant

thirst. This state of affairs promises to continue through the fall. In the winter he will face "wicked cold." Although the climatic conditions are variously described, I believe they can be characterized as difficult.

Where the stories of the "coping" boys suggest that they face the future with respect, resignation and the assumption that they would successfully navigate the difficulties ahead, the "noncoping" boys stories suggest trepidation and an unhappy vision of the future. John tells us that with the coming of winter his flowers "will fall off and he will be nothing but bare, bare stems. Elijah says that he will simply "close up and wait for spring." He is either unwilling or unable to participate in the experience. It appears that his only coping option is to try to disappear. Readers will note that during the drawing process he physically appeared to fold in on himself and that when he reached this point in his story tears were openly falling. Thomas believes "that no matter what she (his caretaker) does. I will dry and die." He is "worried about how that will feel." His manner seems to imply powerlessness which suggests that he, like the rosebush, might be buffeted about by twists of fate. Jason tells us that basically, his future will go up in smoke. If we accept that this imagery speaks for the individual that creates it, this future seems bleak. Brent also faces an uncertain future. He tells us that he "might die."

How did the "noncoping" boys see their life as a rosebush? Thomas, who has just expressed his concerns about dying, chooses not to answer this question. Elijah tell us, with tears in his eyes, that it doesn't feel that good being a rosebush. "Being a rosebush makes me sad." Jason evades this issue by saying "cool." John says "I would rather be something else." Brent says, "Being a rosebush is shitty. My life is a big stinking pile of crap."

The analysis of the "noncoping" sample confirms the hypothesis that the interpretation of the metaphorical narratives of "noncoping" boys would suggest to an observer the evidence of negative themes. This data fully supports the Allan and Crandall (1986) theme of hostile environments and shows some evidence of negative self concepts among the boys. There was no evidence of negative associations attached to touching. It is possible that the earlier study considered an aggressive attitude and protective thorns to be evidence of previous negative associations with touch. This is not clear in the discussion. Caretakers in this sample were described as parsimonious or indifferent but were not characterized as hostile. This marked another departure from the Allan and Crandall results. Alternative themes of confusion and dependence are suggested. The images and stories describe emotional disquiet and a lack of confidence in the future.

The process of identifying themes added to the body of research in a heretofore unexamined area. Corroboration of the Allan and Crandall themes suggests that more work should be done in this area. This premise is supported by the fact that the counsellors themselves alluded to the existence of themes in their sorting criteria.

## Chapter 8

### THERAPEUTIC USEFULNESS

In the introduction I asked "Can the pictures and metaphorical narratives of noncoping boys provide a tool to enhance the therapeutic relationship?" The research strongly suggests that this is the most appropriate use for strategies such as this one. The guided visualization and inquiry did not provide an opportunity to check perceptions or to ask for further clarification. However, in the next session with each of the noncoping boys I was able to ask whether these pictures and stories fit in any way with their life experiences. The answers were affirmative. Four out of five said that they could see similarities. Further, we were able to have meaningful discussions as a result of the question. This is not always an easy thing to do with a boy of this age.

Thomas pointed to the drops falling from his stems saying, "I cry a lot at night, Mrs. McMullin." We talked about his fear and loneliness. In this conversation he shared that he was now using art when he was alone and afraid. He found that the drawing experience itself was healing. This insight, gained in part through his participation in the experience, continues to be helpful to him today. He is now living in foster care. His father passed away at Christmas 1996. He continues to work with a therapist. When he stopped by recently, he dropped off a picture of a winged horse to replace the roses I had displayed on my wall.

Brent allowed that he harboured some feelings of jealousy toward his peers. He was able to begin to appreciate

that some of his difficulties may have developed out of this envy. We were able to refocus his energy on the resilience he had shown in overcoming tremendous odds by keeping his grades up this year. He was encouraged to build on this foundation in his quest to beat the odds. Despite his academic ability, his behaviour proved problematic in the junior high school. He is now enrolled at an alternative school.

John suggested that one similarity to his life experience was the watchful eyes which he added to the bush. He said that he had been watching carefully over the course of the year and that he had learned some important things about how to fit in. This may be evidence of mastery. He elected to repeat Grade 6 in another school. He continues to receive support for family problems, but has managed to make a reasonable adjustment to the cultural milieu of his new school. He will enter junior high this year and stands a good chance of making the transition successfully.

In our next session, Elijah confessed to suicidal ideation. He said he was going to become a ghost like his rose. He planned to jump from the high level bridge. With this information we were able to convince Elijah's mom to take him to see another, more experienced counsellor. This individual was able to stabilize his slide into depression with a carefully managed medical and therapeutic regime. He continues to require support and is struggling to meet the challenges he is facing.

Jason refused to comment on his rosebush imagery but asked instead to take part in another visualization. At the conclusion of this exercise he was able to concede that he saw some reflection of his present circumstance. More importantly he talked freely for the first time about his life in the present and his hopes for the future. It was the

first tentative overture of trust from a very wary, young man.

These vignettes illustrate some of the cathartic, insightful, integrative, and masterful moments which were generated from "The Rosebush" experience. Communication, between client and therapist was promoted. It seems clear that this expressive tool can, in fact, enhance the therapeutic relationship.

## Chapter 9

### CONCLUSIONS

Although personality interpretations of projective drawings have been generally unreliable and invalid (Thomas & Silk, 1990), they continue to be popular with counsellors. Anastasi (1976) points out that in practice they are used less as a personality test and more as a clinical tool for facilitating discussion with a patient. Anastasi concludes:

Projective tools may serve best in the sequential decisions, by suggesting leads for further exploration or hypothesis about the individual for subsequent verification. (1976, p. 587)

Expressive tools are easy to work with and usually enjoyed by the child (Oaklander, 1978, Allan, 1988, Rubin, 1984, Kramer & Schehr, 1983). These tools provide a ready means for obtaining additional qualitative information.

While this qualitative information is undoubtedly useful in a diagnostic portfolio, it may also be useful in establishing a different research direction. Dalley (1984) suggests that individuals working in this field acknowledge that there is "a popular conception that a disturbed, fragmented drawing is connected with a disturbed personality. The work of Van Gogh is often cited as an example" (Dalley, XXIV, 1984). However, it is difficult to determine whether there is a valid connection or forearmed with the knowledge of disturbance, we look for indicators in the artist's work.

However, in Dalley's view, certain themes do recur in the drawings and stories produced by similar client groups. For example, she reports that depressed adults will express



feelings of hopelessness and emptiness. She cautions that this is not the same as making the assumption that symbols are reflective of particular symptoms or emotional states. Rather, it points to a relatively unexamined idea that some people can be crudely categorized according to what they draw and say. She suggests that although these ideas have been based solely on the observational accounts of individual practitioners, their existence points to an area for inquiry.

While this study was conducted by a novice researcher, the fact that it corroborates the Allan and Crandall (1986) findings in regard to the existence of themes in the pictures and stories of "coping" and "noncoping" elementary school children, suggests that more work be done in this area. Future work might be focused on particular groups such as those showing evidence of conduct disorders or childhood depression. It may also be useful to explore the themes which arise out of expressive work with victims of emotional or sexual abuse. The broad definition for "coping" and "noncoping" individuals made categorisation according to a particular disorder or condition impossible.

This project was primarily designed as a personal exercise. Kramer (1983) suggests:

The messages conveyed in a work in progress call forth intuitive response that is informed by the immediate situation as well as by past experience and academic study. Ultimately, however, we must contemplate products at leisure, analyze them from many viewpoints, and plan ahead. (p. 121)

Through the design, research, implementation, and analysis I have learned a great deal about the use of expressive techniques. I will continue to use these techniques to assist the children I work with in "sharing their wisdom with

me" (Oaklander, p. 67. 1978). Although I believe in the cathartic value of the expressive experience and have seen evidence of insight and mastery gains in sequential use of expressive tools, communication remains my first goal. For this purpose "The Rosebush" is an ideal tool.

The results suggest that children's drawings and the words they use to describe them can give a counsellor a view into their inner world of feelings. In working with this, and other expressive techniques, counsellors need to help children to verbalize their thoughts and feelings about the contents of the pictures. This can be done by having them talk from the perspective of the image used. This image appears to be a safe vehicle for children to project some of their own thoughts and feelings. This may later pave the way to talk more directly about personal issues.

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## Appendix 1

**Superintendents Letter**

In the next month I propose to begin collecting data for a study entitled "The Rosebush." This study is the final commitment for the completion of my Master of Education degree. The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether there are discernible differences between the art (visual imagery) and the words used to describe the pictures (metaphors) of coping and noncoping grade six boys. For the purpose of this study a coping child will be defined as one who gets along well with the teacher and peers and who shows average developmental mastery of learning skills. Noncoping children will be defined as the converse: failure to get along with the teacher and peers and failure to master the work at the child's grade level.

The treatment will consist of three phases: - relaxation and imagery, drawing, and post drawing inquiry. Each session will be conducted by the researcher. Students will be seen for one hour. A ten-minute audio tape on relaxation and guided visualization has been developed based on the imagery of a rosebush. On the tape the first section on relaxation is followed by an auto suggestion that they visualize themselves as a rosebush, noting their flowers, leaves, stems and branches. After the relaxation and imagery activity the children will be presented with a piece of white 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper and a pencil. They will be asked to draw a picture of what they imagined during the guided visualization.

After the drawing, I will ask the children about their experience as a rosebush. Following the general inquiry, I will refer to eleven questions which include: "What do you look like?", "Tell me about your flowers, your leaves, your roots." and "Who takes care of you?". These questions are intended to guide the inquiry. All responses will be taped for subsequent transcription and evaluation.

After treatment the information will be analyzed in an interpretive fashion. I believe that certain themes and patterns will emerge in the work. These themes may serve to guide my future interactions with the noncoping boys. Further, they may serve to inform other counsellors and educators who are endeavouring to assist elementary students who are encountering difficulties. Following analysis I will ask three of my colleagues who work as elementary liaison counsellors to sort the data in an effort to confirm my belief that children's drawings and the words they use to describe them can give a trained school counsellor a view into their inner feelings.

Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. All references to participants will be worded in such a way that anonymity will be protected. Samples of student work included in the final product will be identified with pseudonyms. Further, all names, locations and other identifying information will be changed in the final product.

I have included a copy of the proposal which outlines my intentions in greater detail.

The principals of the two schools in question \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* have been informed of my proposal and provided with a

copy of the same. Should I receive your permission to proceed they are supportive.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to work with the children in your jurisdiction. If you have any questions please feel free to call me or Dr. Cathy Campbell. As well, Dr. Peter Chow, the chairperson of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee can be contacted at 329-2443.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa McMullin  
Elementary Liaison Counsellor  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*  
381- 1244 or 381-2211

Dr. Cathy Campbell  
Research Supervisor  
Faculty of Education  
University of  
Lethbridge

CC: \*\*. \*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*. \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*



**Principals Letter**

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After the drawing, I will ask the children about their experience as a rosebush. Following the general inquiry, I will refer to eleven questions which include: "What do you

look like?", "Tell me about your flowers, your leaves, your roots." and "Who takes care of you?". These questions are intended to guide the inquiry. All responses will be taped for subsequent transcription and evaluation.

After treatment the information will be analyzed in an interpretive fashion. I believe that certain themes and patterns will emerge in the work. These themes may serve to guide my future interactions with the noncoping boys. Further, they may serve to inform other counsellors and educators who are endeavouring to assist elementary students who are encountering difficulties. Following analysis I will ask three of my colleagues who work as elementary liaison counsellors to sort the data in an effort to confirm my belief that children's drawings and the words they use to describe them can give a trained school counsellor a view into their inner feelings.

Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. All references to participants will be worded in such a way that anonymity will be protected. Samples of student work included in the final product will be identified with pseudonyms. Further, all names, locations and other identifying information will be changed in the final product.

I have included a copy of the proposal which outlines my intentions in greater detail. \*\*. \*\*\*\*\*, \*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* have also received similar letters and copies of the proposal. I have received approval, in writing, from all three of these individuals

If you approve of this proposal I will need a letter confirming this.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to work with the children in your school. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me or Dr. Cathy Campbell. As well, Dr. Peter Chow, the chairperson of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee can be contacted at 329-2443.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa McMullin  
 Elementary Liaison Counsellor  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*  
 381- 1244 or 381-2211

Dr. Cathy Campbell  
 Research Supervisor  
 Faculty of Education  
 University of  
 Lethbridge

## Appendix 3

### Teachers Letter

In the next month I propose to begin collecting data for a study entitled "The Rosebush." This study is the final commitment for the completion of my Master of Education degree. The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether there are discernible differences between the art (visual imagery) and the words used to describe the pictures (metaphors) of coping and noncoping grade six boys. For the purpose of this study a coping child will be defined as one who gets along well with the teacher and peers and who shows average developmental mastery of learning skills. Noncoping children will be defined as the converse: failure to get along with the teacher and peers and failure to master the work at the child's grade level.

The treatment will consist of three phases: - relaxation and imagery, drawing, and post drawing inquiry. Each session will be conducted by the researcher. Students will be seen for one hour. A ten-minute audio tape on relaxation and guided visualization has been developed based on the imagery of a rosebush. On the tape the first section on relaxation is followed by an auto suggestion that they visualize themselves as a rosebush, noting their flowers, leaves, stems and branches. After the relaxation and imagery activity the children will be presented with a piece of white 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper and a pencil. They will be asked to draw a picture of what they imagined during the guided visualization.

After the drawing, I will ask the children about their experience as a rosebush. Following the general inquiry, I will refer to eleven questions which include: "What do you

look like?", "Tell me about your flowers, your leaves, your roots." and "Who takes care of you?". These questions are intended to guide the inquiry. All responses will be taped for subsequent transcription and evaluation.

After treatment the information will be analyzed in an interpretive fashion. I believe that certain themes and patterns will emerge in the work. These themes may serve to guide my future interactions with the noncoping boys. Further, they may serve to inform other counsellors and educators who are endeavouring to assist elementary students who are encountering difficulties. Following analysis I will ask three of my colleagues who work as elementary liaison counsellors to sort the data in an effort to confirm my belief that children's drawings and the words they use to describe them can give a trained school counsellor a view into their inner feelings.

Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. All references to participants will be worded in such a way that anonymity will be protected. Samples of student work included in the final product will be identified with pseudonyms. Further, all names, locations and other identifying information will be changed in the final product.

I have received approval, in writing, from senior district administration and from the administration at this school. I would like your support in selecting individuals for the control group. Would you please submit the names of two boys who fit the parameters of a "coping" individual to me at your earliest convenience?

I very much appreciate the opportunity to work with the children in your school. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me or Dr. Cathy Campbell. As well, Dr.

Peter Chow, the chairperson of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee can be contacted at 329-2443.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa McMullin  
Elementary Liaison Counsellor  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*  
381- 1244 or 381-2211

Dr. Cathy Campbell  
Research Supervisor  
Faculty of Education  
University of  
Lethbridge

## Appendix 4

### **Parent Letter: Control Group**

In the next month I will be collecting data for a study entitled "The Rosebush." Completion of this study is the final commitment for my Master of Education degree. The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether there are discernible differences between the art (visual imagery) and the words used to describe the pictures (metaphors) of coping and noncoping grade six boys. For the purpose of this study a coping child will be defined as one who gets along well with the teacher and peers and who shows average developmental mastery of learning skills. Noncoping children will be defined as the converse: failure to get along with the teacher and peers and failure to master the work at the child's grade level. As we discussed on the phone your child has been selected as a member of the control (coping) group.

The treatment will consist of three phases: - relaxation and imagery, drawing, and post drawing inquiry. Each session will be conducted by the researcher. Students will be seen for one hour. A ten-minute audio tape on relaxation and guided visualization has been developed based on the imagery of a rosebush. On the tape the first section on relaxation is followed by an auto suggestion that they visualize themselves as a rosebush, noting their flowers, leaves, stems and branches. After the relaxation and imagery activity the children will be presented with a piece of white 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper and a pencil. They will be asked to draw a picture of what they imagined during the guided visualization.

After the drawing, I will ask the children about their experience as a rosebush. Following the general inquiry, I will refer to eleven questions which include: "What do you look like?", "Tell me about your flowers, your leaves, your roots." and "Who takes care of you?". These questions are intended to guide the inquiry. All responses will be taped for subsequent transcription and evaluation.

It is important that you keep the nature of the treatment confidential until after our session is complete. Prior knowledge of the experience could jeopardize the results.

After treatment the information will be analyzed in an interpretive fashion. I believe that certain themes and patterns will emerge in the work. These themes may serve to guide my future interactions with the noncoping boys. Further, they may serve to inform other counsellors and educators who are endeavouring to assist elementary students who are encountering difficulties. Following analysis I will ask three of my colleagues who work as elementary liaison counsellors to sort the data in an effort to confirm my belief that children's drawings and the words they use to describe them can give a trained school counsellor a view into their inner feelings.

Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. All references to participants will be worded in such a way that anonymity will be protected. Samples of student work included in the final product will be identified with pseudonyms. Further, all names, locations and other identifying information will be changed in the final product.

You have the right to withdraw your child from the study without prejudice at any time. If you choose to do so,



please indicate your willingness to allow your child to participate by signing the attached form and returning it to me at the school.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to work with your children. If you have any questions please feel free to call me or Dr. Cathy Campbell. As well, Dr. Peter Chow, the chairperson of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee can be contacted at 329-2443.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa McMullin  
Elementary Liaison Counsellor  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*  
381- 1244 or 381-2211

Dr. Cathy Campbell  
Research Supervisor  
Faculty of Education  
University of  
Lethbridge  
329-2444

## Appendix 5

**Participant Permission Form**

The Rosebush  
Participant's Permission Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, with my child \_\_\_\_\_  
hereby consent to participation in the research project  
entitled The Rosebush.

I understand that the purpose of the study is to ascertain whether there are discernible differences between the art (visual imagery) and the words used to describe the pictures (metaphors) of coping and noncoping grade six boys. I understand, too, that samples of my child's work may be included in the final product. If this is the case, I understand that all information will be worded in such a way that it does not contain my name, nor the name of my child. Further, I understand that all names, locations, and other identifying information will be changed in the final product.

Finally, I understand that my child (and I) are free to withdraw from being involved in the study at any time.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 6

**Parent Letter: Experimental Group**

In the next month I will be collecting data for a study entitled "The Rosebush." This study is the final commitment for the completion of my Master of Education degree. The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether there are discernible differences between the art (visual imagery) and the words used to describe the pictures (metaphors) of coping and noncoping grade six boys. For the purpose of this study a coping child will be defined as one who gets along well with the teacher and peers and who shows average developmental mastery of learning skills. Noncoping children will be defined as the converse: failure to get along with the teacher and peers and failure to master the work at the child's grade level. As we discussed on the phone your child has been selected as a member of the experimental (noncoping) group.

The treatment will consist of three phases: - relaxation and imagery, drawing, and post drawing inquiry. Each session will be conducted by the researcher. Students will be seen for one hour. A ten-minute audio tape on relaxation and guided visualization has been developed based on the imagery of a rosebush. On the tape the first section on relaxation is followed by an auto suggestion that they visualize themselves as a rosebush, noting their flowers, leaves, stems and branches. After the relaxation and imagery activity the children will be presented with a piece of white 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper and a pencil. They will be asked to draw a picture of what they imagined during the guided visualization.

After the drawing, I will ask the children about their experience as a rosebush. Following the general inquiry, I will refer to eleven questions which include: "What do you look like?", "Tell me about your flowers, your leaves, your roots." and "Who takes care of you?". These questions are intended to guide the inquiry. All responses will be taped for subsequent transcription and evaluation.

It is important that you keep the nature of the treatment confidential until after our session is complete. Prior knowledge of the experience could jeopardize the results.

After treatment the information will be analyzed in an interpretive fashion. I believe that certain themes and patterns will emerge in the work. These themes may serve to guide my future interactions with the noncoping boys. Further, they may serve to inform other counsellors and educators who are endeavouring to assist elementary students who are encountering difficulties. Following analysis I will ask three of my colleagues who work as elementary liaison counsellors to sort the data in an effort to confirm my belief that children's drawings and the words they use to describe them can give a trained school counsellor a view into their inner feelings.

Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. All references to participants will be worded in such a way that anonymity will be protected. Samples of student work included in the final product will be identified with pseudonyms. Further, all names, locations and other identifying information will be changed in the final product.

You have the right to withdraw your child from the study without prejudice at any time. If you choose to do so, please indicate your willingness to allow your child to participate by signing the attached form and returning it to me at the school.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to work with your children. If you have any questions please feel free to call me or Dr. Cathy Campbell. As well, Dr. Peter Chow, the chairperson of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee can be contacted at 329-2443.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa McMullin  
 Elementary Liaison Counsellor  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
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 381- 1244 or 381-2211

Dr. Cathy Campbell  
 Research Supervisor  
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