

THE EXPERIENCE OF IMMIGRATION: THE CASE OF IRANIAN WOMEN

by

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Abstract

This study investigated the question: What is the experience of immigration for Iranian women? This was accomplished by using an existential-phenomenological approach. The study included four adult single female co-researchers who had migrated to Canada from Iran and, by their own reckoning, were feeling settled in this country. The co-researchers were asked to describe their experience of immigration, from the beginning to the time they felt adjusted. The descriptions were audio-taped and transcribed. The analysis of these descriptions was conducted according to the method described by Colaizzi (1978). From the four descriptions thirty-two themes were derived. These themes were clarified and woven into a narrative description of the experience of immigration. Highlighted in the narrative description were five significant phases involved in the process which depicted an approximate symmetry of experiences. These significant experiences included sense of loss and attachment to the homeland, awareness of differences and conflicts, sense of self-invalidation and disorientation, reviewing oneself and the situation and sense of personal growth, stability and deriving meaning from the experience.

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the successful blending of cultures.

Certain things--the odour of jasmine on my terrace or the two paragraph news item in the paper--can revive the memory of my country. . . . The sights and sounds and smells, the faces of lost friends, the shorthand expressions by which we immediately understand each other without having to launch into detailed explanations: all of these things, I sometimes fear, are fading, becoming more and more difficult to summon up. I'm on a liferaft in a placid sea. I have survived the shipwreck, . . . but I look around at times and ask myself, "what am I doing here?" (Alegría, 1984, pp. 11-12)

CHAPTER I: Introduction

Significance of the Study and Statement of the Problem

Acculturation has been interpreted as the overall change process which takes place as an immigrant continuously engages in first-hand contact with a new socio-cultural system (Kim, 1979). Also, Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) argued that:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups. (p. 149).

Regardless of how positively one may view change (of any kind), the process is associated with varying degrees of pain and difficulty. This is particularly true in the case of immigrants where change is from one culture, one upbringing, one system of values, one "way of being" to another. Most, if not all, studies done in the area of immigration and acculturation refer to the process of adjustment to a new culture as difficult and somewhat problematic. In fact, Kim (1979) referred to immigration and separation from the country in which one has been raised as one of the most significant and painful types of separation.

An overall study of cross-cultural research reveals consistent recurring themes in what may be referred to as "patterns of adjustment and adaptation." Some of the more general and prevalent problems that seem to occur in the process of acculturation are discussed, such as: confusion and disorientation, issues of identity, and role and value conflicts (Adler, 1975; Berry, 1980; Chance, 1965; Kim, 1979; Padilla, 1980; Sue, 1981). The above seem to occur upon one's realization and discovery of the discrepancy between one's own values, beliefs, attitudes, behavioural patterns, etc., and those of the host culture. This realization, Kim (1979) argued, calls for a kind of "resocialization." Moreover, associated with the above problem areas are some of the more specific emotional patterns, such as: alienation and

isolation, feelings of helplessness and inability to control one's life and environment, feelings of rejection, bewilderment, tension, hostility, anger, mistrust, defensiveness, feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem (Adler, 1975; Chance, 1965; Kim, 1979; Sue, 1981).

Most of the cross-cultural research has been conducted in the fields of anthropology and sociology, studying adjustment patterns of immigrant groups, rather than those of individual immigrants. Only in recent years has the attention of cross-cultural psychology been focused on the individual's changes in the process of acculturation, most of which have mainly studied changes in overt, observable behaviours in immigrants (Kim, 1979; Padilla, 1980). Very few have carefully examined the "process" itself. According to Padilla (1980):

. . . missing from most studies of acculturation is an analysis of the impact of acculturation on the psychological functioning of the individual Rarely is there mention of the psychological processes involved in the individual who is in a state of transition between two cultural orientations We know very little about how the individual adapts to and/or copes with pressures to acculturate . . . (p. 47)

Moreover, most of the research conducted in this area has been carried out in the United States and, to date, little attention has been focused on the psychological aspects of immigrant adjustment in Canada. Even less attention has been paid to adjustment patterns of immigrant women. The increasing number of first generation immigrant women in Canada, the rarity of research on immigrant women's adjustment patterns, the increasing number of women who are referred to counselling services in Canada, the inadequacy of traditional North American counselling methods for dealing with this group of clients, and an observed slower pace of adaptation in immigrant women compared to their male counterparts (Chang, 1980; Lee, 1984) make apparent the need for research in this area.

Being an Iranian immigrant woman, however, my personal interest is concerned with women from Iran. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the meaning of the experience of immigration for Iranian women in Canada and to arrive at a description of the experience as actually lived by these women. This

study will hopefully reveal themes that could assist counsellors and therapists to understand more fully the "as lived" experience of Iranian women, and perhaps that of other immigrant women in Canada who have lived similar semi-sheltered existences, arrived in Canada not completely by choice (i.e., as refugees) and are first generation immigrants.

An Initial Portrait

In an attempt to clarify the reason behind my interest in this study and in order to make visible to the reader my experiences, assumptions, presuppositions and possible biases, I will give a brief account of my own experience as an immigrant woman in Canada. The existential-phenomenological approach recognizes that man is "bodily engaged, participating, being-in-the-world-with-others" (Colaizzi, 1973, p. 132). Hence, it does assume the involvement of the person of the researcher in his or her research, which is not so objective as to be technologically controlling.

In February 1980, my husband and I migrated to Canada upon the realization that we had a slim chance of emotional, ideological and physical survival (let alone growth) in our homeland, Iran, which was (and still is) undergoing dramatic political and economic upheavals. Another factor that strongly pulled me to this country was the fact that my family of origin had already migrated to Canada, mainly for the same reasons.

Having lived a secure, protected and semi-sheltered existence in Iran--as is most likely the case of most Iranian women--I continued to enjoy the shelter and protection provided for me by my spouse and family for the first year of my life in Canada. Separation from my much-loved Iran was painful and grieving over the loss was lengthy. It was only after I decided to let go of the security of my home and opened myself up to the "outside world," (i.e., school, work, career, community involvement) that I realized the real magnitude and depth of the

discrepancy between the two cultural orientations in which I was involved.

I found myself confronted with endless internal struggles in trying to establish a "marriage" between two different sets of values and life patterns. I caught myself acting and reacting "foolishly" in situations I did not know how to handle. My self-image was shattered. I became aware of a "split" within my "self." I was faced with the painful realization that the strong, confident woman I had known and lived with for long years did disappear almost every time I came in contact with the large mainstream society and in her place stood an insecure, fragile woman who did not have appropriate responses to situations with which she was confronted. It was as if I had regressed to my teenage years of confusion. A lengthy and painful process of questioning had begun. I found myself crushed under questions pertaining to my identity, my self-worth, my values, my beliefs, my actions, my feelings, my choices (including that of leaving Iran), in short, my being and my existence.

I sought professional help, only to realize the futility of my tiresome struggles in trying to explain "myself" and make myself understood by my therapists (with all due respect for their genuine caring and attentiveness). I also found myself trying, so faithfully, to make myself understood and accepted by others in the society at large. I tried very hard to establish my significance and credibility. I struggled with my Canadian friends and colleagues, my employers (or potential employers) and with the various institutions with which I was in touch. I also realized that in an attempt to bridge the cultural gap, I got myself into conflictual situations with people from my own cultural orientation. In short, I found myself constantly yearning for understanding, for significance, for intimacy, for a sense of belonging, for security, for roots, for a "home," and for a purpose--a meaning--behind my uprooting from my still-loved Iran and my new existence in Canada.

As the years went by, as I gradually came to grips with an almost complete break away from Iran, as my contact with the mainstream society

increased, as the number and magnitude of my accomplishments grew, and as I earned more recognition at home, work, school and in the community, I steadily found myself again and felt more grounded in my new home. I, now, see in me a "self" which has remained, at the core, very Persian and feels, to this day, deeply and strongly rooted in Iran, but which has earned a new identity and has reached a sense of "wholeness" which is unique, novel and exciting. I owe this sense of wholeness to my having lived this part of my existence in Canada.

The profundity of the changes which I have undergone--although still frightening at times--excites me greatly. I now have a much stronger sense of my values--some of which have, in turn, undergone profound changes. I now have a wider scope of realities and a more encompassing worldview. I now feel a greater openness to the different mysteries, possibilities and questions that life has in store for me, yet to be met, discovered and answered. Moreover, I have learned to "be" and to accept graciously what comes, for I have truly arrived (through personal experiences I know I would not have had, had I stayed in Iran) at the conviction that in every event, every incident, lies a meaning to be discovered. In Frankl's (1978) words: ". . . life retains its meaning under any conditions" (p. 41) and

. . . what counts and matters is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to transform a tragedy [or any event, for that matter] into a personal triumph, to turn one's predicament into a human achievement. (p. 39)

As part of *my* human achievement, I wish to see this study contributing to an increased understanding of the phenomenon of immigration. And this, I believe, can most effectively be done through a careful, first-hand search into the depths of my co-researchers' experience as lived by them in their new home.

The main reason behind my choice of methodology comes from: 1) finding that there exists no description in the literature of what exactly the experience of immigration is and what it means for those who undergo it; 2) believing that human phenomena must be investigated in a vibrant and humanistic manner, one

which takes into account the totality of the individual and his or her experience; 3) believing that any human phenomenon must be contacted as lived by the individual (Valle & King, 1978); and finally, 4) holding the conviction that the description of any experience--the only true access to the world of the describer--must come from the describer himself or herself (Giorgi, 1975).

"It is the meaning of the situation as it exists for the subject that descriptions yield" (Giorgi, 1975, p. 74). Hence, with a detailed description of the experience of immigration for women, and consequently a more accurate and precise understanding of the phenomenon, researchers and clinicians will be better able to facilitate the adjustment process of their clients and to help them create success stories.

CHAPTER II: Review of the Literature

Acculturation

Acculturation has been interpreted as the overall change process which takes place as an immigrant continuously engages in first-hand contact with a new socio-cultural system (Kim, 1979). Until recently, research in acculturation occupied fields within anthropology and sociology, studying phenomena resulting from first-hand continuous contact of groups with different cultural orientations (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). In 1954, the Social Science Research Council gave a rather comprehensive definition of acculturation as:

. . . culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be a consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modifications induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the process of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences and the operation of role determinants and personality traits. (p. 974)

The majority of anthropological and sociological studies exploring acculturation have generally done so by defining the "ideal" value system of the "dominant" culture and then measuring the degree of internalization of such a value system as a replacement for that of the original culture (Nagata, 1969). More recent studies in the area of cross-cultural psychology have shifted from focusing on groups to individuals (Kim, 1979; Padilla, 1980), and from emphasizing the dominant cultural values to that of ethnicity and understanding ethnic groups (e.g., Chance, 1965; Sue, 1977; Olmedo, 1979). Also, an increased interest can be observed in methodological issues and the measurement of acculturation (e.g., Der-Karabetian, 1980; Dyal & Dyal, 1981; Goldlust & Richmond, 1974; Olmedo, 1980; Padilla, 1980). Some of the more recent models of acculturation include the following.

In their multivariate model of the adaptation process of immigrants to Canada, Goldlust and Richmond (1974) suggested that three factors affect the process of adaptation: pre-immigration characteristics and conditions, length of residence in the host country, and situational determinants in the host culture (e.g., government policies, industrialization, pluralism, etc.). Acculturation is then measured by the economic (e.g., occupational mobility), cultural (e.g., interchange of cultural symbols), social (e.g., integration into the host society via primary relationships), and political (e.g., voting) aspects of the immigrant's life. Acculturation is also measured by the more subjective (personal) elements of 1) identification (a modification of one's sense of identity and transference of loyalty from one's former country to the new); 2) internalization (a change of attitudes and values); and 3) satisfaction (relative comparisons with one's situation in the pre-migration phase).

According to Berry (1980), acculturation takes place at both the group level and the individual level. Acculturation, Berry argued, is a three-stage process: contact, conflict and adaptation. The conflict, following contact with the larger society, involves varying degrees of resistance, since people, in general, do not lightly give up valued features of their original culture. Adaptation is a process through which the individual tries to reduce the conflict. Acculturative change at the individual level takes place mainly in the areas of language usage, cognitive style, personality, identity, attitudes and acculturative stress (mild psychological disorders).

Padilla (1980) suggested another multi-dimensional model which involves, as its essential elements, the two concepts of cultural awareness (the individual's knowledge of specific cultural material such as language, values, food, etc.) and ethnic loyalty (the individual's preference for one cultural orientation over the other such as self and ethnic-identification). In a study involving a large group of Mexican-Americans, Padilla (1980) used criteria such as: ethnic language familiarity, knowledge of Mexican history and cultural symbols, and legal first names to measure the level of cultural awareness; and criteria such as: language choice,

preferred first names and first names of children, and preference for and consumption of Mexican or American food to measure the level of ethnic loyalty. Taking into account some individual factors such as educational level, he then introduced a typology model in which the person with very low levels of ethnic cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty is considered as highly acculturated and vice versa.

As can be seen, certain elements remain significantly important across all the above models. Change is a must in the process of adaptation. Moreover, it seems that among areas most significantly affected by change are: the values system, behaviours, attitudes, cognitive style, language usage and communication, and most importantly, self and ethnic identity.

Why do these changes take place? To what degree and how do they happen? Are there more detailed stages involved? What happens to the individual emotionally? What facilitates the process? What hinders it? How does the individual himself or herself perceive the outcome? What meaning (if any) does he or she extract from it? Is involuntary migration an important factor? And finally, is there more that happens to the individual involved in the process? If yes, what? These questions, for the most part, remain unanswered.

Most studies of acculturation/immigration include scattered comments about the deep emotional, psychological and developmental experiences inherent in the process. Areas such as confusion and disorientation, issues of identity and role and value conflicts and the emotional reactions associated with these problem areas are only briefly touched upon by most researchers in the field (e.g., Berry, 1980; Chance, 1965; Goldlust & Richmond, 1974; Kim, 1979; Padilla, 1980). Moreover, those who have studied the emotional adjustment of immigrants have done so by measuring pathological/medical symptoms of the individual's maladjustment (e.g., Murphy, 1974; Weinberg, 1961).

While models of acculturation tend to view adjustment externally (e.g., through external conditions), personal accounts provide an inside view of

acculturation that add new aspects to consider. Upon contact with the new culture, the immigrant (male or female) becomes confronted by a whole new orientation to life which challenges the individual to experiment and experience a new and foreign form of existence. The totality of the person becomes attacked and challenged (e.g., his or her values, self-esteem, identity) as a result of this contact. Out of this conflict and out of this challenge, if one is to adjust, comes a person who has outlived the fires of two melting pots and is in relative harmony with both (Stonequist, 1937). Having passed the challenge, the person learns to live an existence potentially stronger than the one lived before migration. The following three studies provide support for this view, and for the initial portrait, as presented in the previous chapter.

The Marginal Man

"It is in the mind of the marginal man that conflicting cultures meet and fuse" (Park, 1928, p. 881). What is a marginal man? Stonequist (1937) defined the marginal man as "the individual who through migration, education, marriage or some other influences leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another, finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither. He is a 'marginal man'" (p. 2). Stonequist assumed that through interaction with others, the individual gradually recognizes a place in her or his social world and tries to live up to those standards, evolved from his or her experience in this social world (doubly rooted in the established codes and patterns of her or his group and his or her own self-respect). The unity and harmony maintained and present in the social system are reflected in the unity and harmony of the individual's personality, including her or his sentiments, self-concept, aspirations and life style. "His conception of self will have a core of certainty paralleling the continuity of his group membership" (p. 2).

An active contrast and conflict of two or more cultures, to at least one of which the individual feels belonging, disrupts the unity and harmony of the individual's social world and activates in him or her inner conflict and acute personal tension, which, in turn, seem to force her or him to choose between two national/ethnic loyalties. In Stonequist's (1937) own words: "The external conflict of the groups finds an echo in the mind of the individual concerned" (p. 4). This inner conflict leads to a "dual personality," a split in the person's "soul" and the individual finds herself or himself estranged from both groups and belonging to neither. The marginal person is thus created.

In order for the marginality of the situation to be present, direct and immediate physical contact with the mainstream society is a necessary factor. Only when the individual does not totally settle in the immigrant community does he or she enter the marginality phase. Stonequist (1937) further argued that a mere mixing of cultures does not create the marginal man. The person must experience the conflict of the cultures involved. It is the person's experience of the conflict of group attitudes flowing from cultural differences that helps create the marginal man.

Stonequist (1937) stated that the experience of immigration is most significantly associated with a strong sense of loss--within many aspects of the immigrant's life. He classifies the immigrant as "dépaycé" (stripped of country), "déclassé" (stripped of status, particularly for those who experience downward social mobility) and at the heart of the problem, "déraciné" (uprooted, stripped of roots). In this transition, Stonequist claimed, the marginal man, the déraciné, "has lost something of his former self and has not yet acquired a new and stable self. For the individual's self is an integral part of his/her social role and when this social role is fundamentally changed the individual's self is forced through a similar transformation" (p. 6).

Fear of the unknown is present at the decision to leave and feelings of homesickness associated with the sense of loss are prevalent upon arrival and in the beginning--particularly for individuals with a proud and self-conscious history.

His mind is filled with vivid memories of the old life which, moreover, become idealized with distance and time. The difficulties and rebuffs of the new conditions tend to throw him back in imagination toward the land he has left. He rebels against the thought of giving up tastes and characteristics which he has formed in youth. (p. 88)

Moreover, the marginal person becomes overwhelmed and shocked at the new social world as his or hers becomes disorganized. He or she feels confused, loses direction, loses her or his sense of judgement (of the situation or of self) and becomes very self- and race-conscious. The person sees himself or herself through the eyes of two social groups and develops a double consciousness, a dual personality. He or she suffers from a divided loyalty and ambivalent attitudes. Some of the overt manifestations of what happens to the individual at the affective level are: hypersensitivity, withdrawal and/or blaming one group or the other for one's own failure to adjust, concluding that the differences are too great to bridge. Also, the marginal person often vacillates in his or her feelings and attitudes toward the host society, depending on the situation.

The life cycle of the immigrant, according to Stonequist, consists of three stages: pre-marginality--when the person is not yet fully aware of the conflict "out there"; crisis or marginality--when the person consciously experiences the conflict, and permanent adjustment or lack of adjustment. To clarify these stages Stonequist (1937) used the analogy of "the protected environment of childhood, the widening of social contacts and ensuing conflicts of adolescence, and the necessary accommodations of maturity" (p. 122).

Having been caught in the crisis stage and in situations where one's usual ways of being break down and one's conception of self calls for change, a process of transformation begins, only after a prolonged and painful process. The individual must, then, "find herself or himself again" and reconstruct a new conception of her or his self as well as a new place in the society. Some immigrants speak of this social, mental and emotional transformation as a rebirth.

According to Stonequist (1937), the marginal person evolves from marginality (or tries to do so) in three different ways:

1. By assuming a "nationalistic" role through which he or she seeks and gains self-respect by fully assimilating into his or her own cultural/ethnic group and by--for the most part--striking against the dominant society. Extreme political leaders are among this group.
2. By trying to assimilate completely into the dominant culture. Since relinquishing, rejecting and, in extreme cases, denying one's own cultural heritage/background are prerequisites for assimilation (or passing), Stonequist predicted that this course of action might lead to future personal and social disorganization.
3. By assuming an intermediary role. This role leads to an "accommodation and rapprochement" between the clashing cultures.

Using Park's (1928) concept of "the wanderer," Stonequist (1937) argued that the person assuming the intermediary role frees himself or herself from local prejudices and values, becomes detached from both worlds and unites in her or his person the qualities of nearness and remoteness which give him or her the objectivity of a true "multicultural person, the true internationalist." The internationalist first understands and becomes in harmony with his or her own nationality and its values. Since self-understanding promotes the understanding of others, the person, then, becomes able to understand the values in other national cultures. He or she can look at a situation or problem from more than one viewpoint, can shift from one language to another, can feel successful inner adjustment and can penetrate into the foreign culture contributing to its richness. This situation permits the social acceptance of the individual upon a self-respecting basis.

Perhaps the finest citizens of foreign origin are those who have been able to preserve the best of their ancestral heritage while reaching out for the best of what America can offer. They have been able to create a balance between continuity and change, and so have maintained reasonably stable characters. (p. 206)

Stonequist (1937) argued that situational factors work hand in hand with the evolving personality to hinder or facilitate the process. Racism and prejudice are strong hindering factors. Disillusionment with the host society, downward social mobility, great gaps between one's own cultural orientation and that of the host culture, lack of emotional support from one's own community, lack of skills and language, and the experience of rejection from the host society are among the most significant hindering elements. On the other hand, acceptance in host and own society via friendships and work, sense of pride in one's own skills/trade and job, language acquisition, exposure to different beliefs and ideas (e.g., intermarriage), perception or experience of equality of public rights and freedom of culture are among factors that facilitate the process of adjustment which, according to Stonequist, is basically a question of psychological integration. Also very helpful in the process is the sense of identification with a meaningful movement or task which could be strong enough to render the racial and national difficulties secondary in significance. In conclusion, what seems most important in the process is that the individual *face* her or his inner conflict in an unfriendly and confused world. Essential to this process is that the individual must not deceive herself or himself and must not deny his or her cultural existence, "to be oneself" in the face of external pressures.

An Existential and Developmental Model of the Transitional Experience of Immigration

In this model, Adler (1975) put the experience of culture shock in a different perspective and argued that: "A successful cross-cultural experience should result in the movement of personality and identity to a new consciousness of values, attitudes and understandings" (p. 15). He further argued that this new consciousness and awareness can be instrumental to personal growth.

Adler defined culture shock as "primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning and to the understanding of new and diverse experiences" (p. 13). He further argued that culture shock "in one sense . . . is a form of alienation. In another sense, however, it suggests the attempt to comprehend, survive in, and grow through immersion in a second culture" (p. 14). Adler thus suggested that the negative consequences of culture shock can be associated with and followed by an important aspect of cultural learning, self development and personal growth. Inherent in the conflict he saw a potential for authentic growth (dialectic).

Adler (1975) based his positive approach on the following assumptions:

1. The individual has the tendency to refer to groups for identity, loyalty and outlook. At the same time he or she has the tendency towards integration and wholism. These two tendencies work together when the individual tries to understand both the universe/world and himself or herself. Thus, "in situations of psychological, social, or cultural tension, each person is forced into redefinition of some level of her or his existence" (p. 14).
2. The individual experiences the world through values, beliefs and assumptions influenced by his or her culture.
3. Contact with other cultures and movement from one's own culture to another bring into one's awareness and conflict cultural predispositions of which one had, thus far, not been fully aware.
4. The psychological movement into new realms of experience tends to produce disintegration in the person's personality, which is the basis for movement of personality to a higher level, a movement toward integration.

Adler (1975), then, suggested a five-stage model of the transitional experience which "is a movement from a state of low self- and cultural awareness to a state of high self- and cultural awareness" (p. 15).

1. Contact

At this stage the individual, still integrated with and "insulated" by his or her own culture and ethnocentrism, is excited and intrigued by the new experience. Similarities, rather than differences, between the two cultures come to the foreground of perception and become validations of the individual's own status, role and identity, which, in turn, reinforce continuity of his or her own cultural behaviours.

2. Disintegration

This is a stage of confusion and disorientation. Cultural differences come to the foreground of the person's perception. The person loses sense of judgement and understanding of various confronting situations and thus becomes frustrated at her or his inability to respond appropriately. The person feels different, isolated, inadequate, bewildered, depressed, withdrawn and lost in his or her identity.

3. Reintegration

At this stage, the individual stereotypes, generalizes, judges and rejects the host culture and its members. He or she blames the host culture for his or her personal difficulties and may, in defence, seek security from the familiarity of her or his own cultural group. Returning home may become an alternative. Anger, rage, and frustration are felt most strongly at this stage. Adler viewed these reactions as natural, healthy and constructive for the forming of a basis for "new intuitive, emotional and cognitive experience" (p. 17).

4. Autonomy

The individual now develops understanding of the host culture and skills to cope with the new situation. Differences and similarities become accepted and are viewed in a different light. The individual becomes flexible and communication flows more easily. The person feels well-versed in both cultures. He or she also senses his or her ability to survive without what Adler called "cultural cues" from her or his own culture. He or she also

senses his or her ability to experience new situations. The person feels more secure, self-assured and relaxed as an "insider-outsider" of both cultures.

5. Independence

At this stage the individual has developed "attitudes, emotionality and behaviours that are independent but not undependent of cultural influences" (p. 18). The person becomes capable of accepting, appreciating and drawing nourishment from the differences and similarities and views herself or himself as well as others as individual human beings influenced by upbringing. Choice and responsibility are exercised in situations which are now given meanings, and the person becomes open to explore the diversity of other human beings. He or she gains strength to undergo further transitions in life, to explore new dimensions and to be challenged again with regard to her or his values, attitudes and assumptions. Now, "the self- and cultural discoveries have opened up the possibility of other depth experiences" (p. 18).

Adler (1975) concluded that the transitional experience begins with the encounter with a new culture and evolves into an encounter with one's self.

As a gestalt, the transitional experience is a set of intensive and evocative situations in which the individual perceives and experiences other people in a distinctly different manner, and as a consequence, experiences new facets and dimensions of existence. (p. 18)

Minority Identity Development Model

Atkinson, Morten and Sue (1979) developed a Minority Identity Development (MID) model based on a two-decade-long observation of their minority clients in the U.S.--whom they viewed as "oppressed." The researchers held the assumption that attitudes and behaviours are flexible and a function of the individual's stage of development. Minority attitudes and behaviours, therefore, are viewed as products of an identity development continuum. This continuum, according to the researchers,

consists of five stages:

1. Conformity

At this stage, the person values the dominant culture's values over his or her own. He or she depreciates self and own group's characteristics and views them as sources of shame.

2. Dissonance

This stage is typified by cultural confusion and conflict. This happens when the person encounters ideas, information and experiences inconsistent with those previously held and known about the mainstream society and is led to challenge them. At this stage the individual's feelings towards self, own group and the dominant society alternate (from positive to negative and vice versa).

3. Resistance and Immersion

At this stage, the individual completely endorses his or her own group-held views and rejects the dominant culture. He or she takes pride in her or his own culture which helps enhance his or her self-worth. At the same time, the individual experiences a sense of distrust and dislike for *all* members of the host culture.

4. Introspection

The individual now feels discontented and uncomfortable with her or his own group views and does not feel the previously strong desire to adhere to them all. He or she now desires individual autonomy and experiences some inner conflict between this desire and that of allegiance to one's group. Moreover, dependent on his or her experience with individual members of the host society, he or she develops an attitude of selective trust (or distrust) toward them.

5. Synergetic Articulation and Awareness

The individual establishes her or his identity, first as an individual and then as a minority and/or dominant group member. This leads to a strong sense

of self-worth; self-confidence, self fulfillment and autonomy. Feeling proud of his or her cultural background and empathic toward his or her group, the individual recognizes her or his freedom to accept or reject some of his or her group values. The individual feels open and trusting toward some positive elements and/or sympathetic members of the dominant group. He or she learns to see and respect each member of any group as individual human beings regardless of differences and similarities.

The models and studies presented seem to reflect the initial portrait to an extent. Nevertheless, none of them, significant though they are, take into account sex differences and no distinction has been made between male and female immigrants in studying the developmental process of their adaptation. "What of the marginal woman?," asked Lee (1984, p. 26). This question is of particular importance when dealing with a culture which distinguishes, at times rigidly, between men and women. Lee suggested that the subordinate position of women in such a culture calls for a more gradual and difficult acculturation, which may, in turn, have a deeper impact.

The Refugee Experience

A refugee is a person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself to the protection of that country. (U.N., 1971)

The political and ideological situation of Iran is not an unknown story. Not *all* of the Iranians currently residing in Canada have crossed this country's borders under the classification of "refugee" (though a great number of them actually have, especially since 1984). Nevertheless, most, if not all, have left/fled Iran to escape living conditions under the rule of a fascist, fundamentalist religious régime or to escape the dangerous consequences of the Gulf War. Some have been politically or

religiously persecuted. The fundamental rights of many have been violated (including that of speech, work and dress code). Most, if not all, have left their homeland against their own will, and many *cannot* return. Therefore, we can assume that the Iranian population in Canada, which has been rapidly growing in the last decade, shares with the refugee community of this country many (not all) experiences and sentiments, some of which differ in nature and/or degree from those of immigrants who left their homelands voluntarily and in search of a better life: Consider the following report of refugee experiences.

According to D'Souza (1987), exile "is a form of radical repression, which forcibly removes the actor from his natural environment, his country" (p. 203). Unlike immigrants who, argued Westwood and Lawrance (1987), perceive their voluntary migration to a new country as "the end of one way of being and the beginning of another " (p. 5), the exile sees arrival in the new land as neither an end nor a beginning. The exile looks back at what he or she has left (Wright, 1987). The hope of ultimately returning home remains with the exile and hinders the process of his or her adjustment.

The strong sense of loss experienced due to forced separation from the homeland and the felt guilt for abandoning one's country and people are among the most significant and powerful aspects of an exile's experience. A result of the many losses the refugee experiences is the disintegration of meaning--a loss of structure of meaning for the individual. To reconstruct and/or restore this structure, Westwood and Lawrance (1987) argued that the sense of the self of the individual, which has been so "radically uprooted" needs to be attended to.

Without such attention to this dimension of self-validation, the host society is neglecting to fulfill the moral imperative it has taken upon itself in its humanitarian policies" (p. 12).

A Cultural Overview

Iran, formerly called Persia, is a predominantly Moslem country in the Middle-East whose people (Moslem and non-Moslem) hold values and ideas which are profoundly influenced by Islamic traditions. Although Iranians share with many other Asian countries many traditional beliefs, life styles and values, they have their own distinctive characteristics and qualities. The terms Iranian and Persian will be used interchangeably in this study, since both refer to inhabitants of the very ancient country of Iran or Persia which is believed to have been the first home of the Aryan (Indo-European) race. In fact, the word Iran means "home of the Aryan."

Their glamorous and colourful history gives Iranians much pride in their cultural heritage. Graham (1978) characterized Persians as people with a strong sense of nationality and patriotism. Iranians love their country and for them, losing one's Persian identity is considered shameful. Iranians take pride in their uniqueness, attributed to the richness of their history and civilization (i.e., the Persian Empire). This strong sense of pride makes them boastful people who believe strongly in holding one's dignity and they have much difficulty in admitting the smallest mistake for fear of losing face and self-respect (Arasteh, 1964; Graham, 1978; Jalali, 1982; Nyrop, 1978; Zonis, 1976).

Iranians have been characterized generally as mistrusting and suspicious people who don't readily trust "outsiders" (Graham, 1978). Trust and submission are openly expressed only toward God and toward one's family and close friends. The family is the most significant element of Iranian society and culture and people rely on family connections for influence, power, position, protection, security, and support (Jalali, 1982; Nyrop, 1978). Family members are expected to, and do, sacrifice for one another. Family ties are very strong and it is one's duty to keep, at all times, the unity and dignity of one's family. Men and women are both obliged to work for the prosperity and happiness of their families (Haeri,

1980; Nyrop, 1978). Women, of course, are held much more responsible for maintaining the family's "good" name and reputation (Nyrop, 1978). Individualism does not exist (to the extent it does in North America) and family loyalties and obligations take priority in an Iranian's life. The family, being the unit of the society, is to be kept unified at all times (Jalali, 1982; Nyrop, 1978).

Marriage of both sexes in Persian families from all religious backgrounds must take place with parental consent (Nyrop, 1978). Polygamy is an Islamic law and despite the previous régime's various efforts to abolish it, it is still exercised in some areas (e.g., rural) and within some families (traditional middle and lower classes) (Haeri, 1980; Nyrop, 1978; Safa-Isfahani, 1980). Arranged marriages, too, still take place among the population mentioned above (Haeri, 1980; Jalali, 1982; Nyrop, 1978; Safa-Isfahani, 1980). Sexual mores, especially for single women, are very strong and chastity is highly revered. Pre-marital sexual activities are scarce, much more for women than for men (Safa-Isfahani, 1980).

The Iranian society is patriarchal. Within the context of the family, father is the head of the household and other members feel a strong sense of duty toward him (Jalali, 1982; Nyrop, 1978). In an Islamic framework of ideology, the role of the woman is that of subordination and submission and her duties consist mainly of domestic ones (Beck, 1974; Bonine & Keddie, 1981; Haeri, 1980; Jalali, 1982; Mahdi, 1981; Millet, 1982; Safa-Isfahani, 1980). Results from an exploratory survey from five universities throughout Iran on the attitudes of the subjects toward equality of the sexes and sex-role stereotyping (Farnoodymehar, 1975) indicated that sex-role stereotyping exists even among university students. The findings also reveal that a majority of men who participated in the study characterized women as: unambitious, passive, undependable, dependent, intuitive, emotionally unstable, but competent! Also, middle class mothers in Iran were observed to foster more independence in their sons than in their daughters (Madanipour, 1978). Education, although compulsory for both sexes at the elementary level, is pursued more by men than by women, at all levels. In short, the Iranian society is characterized

as extremely male-dominated with a strong sense of sex-role values.

Iranians are very class conscious and have a strong sense of class structure (Jalali, 1982; Nyrop, 1978). Nyrop stated: Iranians "refer to the groups, commonly called the upper, middle and lower classes in the West, as first, second and third levels of society" (p. 164). The distinction between classes have steadily become more apparent since industrialization and modernization of the country began during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941) and since the 1960s an accelerating growth of professional class families has taken place (Bill, 1973; Nyrop, 1978). As a result of modernization, the middle class, also, has been divided into two distinct upper and lower, or modern and traditional, middle class groups (Bonine & Keddi, 1981; Jalali, 1982; Nyrop, 1978). The two groups differ greatly in many respects. The modernized middle class comprises those Iranians with Westernized education, professional background, more liberal values, modern life styles and clothes, whereas the traditional middle class includes bazaar merchants, mullahs (Moslem clergy) and wealthy guild members who have lower levels of education and adhere much more to religious (mainly Islamic) practices (e.g., women's dress code, which calls for a complete cover up of the head and body) (Bill, 1973; Nyrop, 1978). Bonine and Keddie (1981) stated that the two groups differ greatly with regard to life styles and cultural values. The above authors characterize the modernized/westernized middle class as one calling for women's education and greater equality between sexes and the traditional class as one trying to justify at least a degree of inequality.

This shifts our attention back to women, particularly to those whose experiences are being explored in this study. It is important to note that the majority of Iranians residing in North America (especially in Canada) are among the modern middle class and educated Iranians who hold more liberal values. This group of immigrants includes members of Iran's various religious minorities such as: Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians and Baha'is. Members of the latter, who are currently being harshly persecuted are, according to Nyrop (1978), the most obvious

examples of educated middle class individuals. "In evaluating the position of women in Iran, difficulty arose in the diversity found between urban and rural areas, élite and lower class, educated and illiterate individuals . . . and among various religious denominations," said Beck (1974).

Since 1932 when the Oriental Feminine Congress was held in Tehran until the outbreak of the Islamic revolution, steady changes had taken place in the position of women in Iran (Haeri, 1980; Nyrop, 1978). In 1936 when the University of Tehran was first erected, women were admitted and some were sent to Europe by the government to receive higher education (Haeri, 1980). In the same year the Unveiling Act was legislated to liberalize the dress code for women. In the 1960s women were granted voting rights. Also laws providing women with the right to divorce (one denied to them through Islam) were legislated (Haeri, 1980).

These social changes, along with greater exposure to, and contact with, the western world and the expansion of higher education, increased the level of consciousness and awareness of the general population, especially that of the middle class women. This, in turn, led to *some* equality and higher levels of aspiration for women in Iran. Since the 1960s and until the outbreak of the Revolution, many women had entered the work force. By 1972, 1.4 million women were working in different branches of industry, medicine, education, agriculture, etc. In the same year 8% of the general population of physicians in Iran was female (Nyrop, 1978). According to Jalali (1982), by the year 1979, about 40% of all university students in Iran were women. Moreover, polygamy and arranged marriages among this group of modern middle class families, to which all my co-researchers belong, were virtually non-existent (Nyrop, 1978). Dating for young women has become permissible and acceptable, however, with definite limitations.

Nevertheless, male domination, sex-role stereotyping, dependent behaviour on the part of women, non-individualism and various other Persian values and characteristics still remain, to some degree, untouched by class, level of education,

and/or religious denomination. Though emancipated in some areas, such as: career and educational pursuits, choice of marriage partners, and dress code, the modern Iranian woman still enjoys less autonomy, independence and freedom when compared with her male counterpart (Farhoodymeher, 1975; Haeri, 1980; Jalali, 1982; Madanipour, 1978; Mahdi, 1981).

Rationale for the Use of an Existential-phenomenological Approach

In order to explore the experience of immigration for Iranian women, a qualitative approach seemed most suitable for capturing the richness and potency of the women's own descriptions of their experiences. Among qualitative approaches, the existential-phenomenological approach is distinguished by its rigour in systematically elucidating the meaning of a given experience from the viewpoint of the person who experiences. In particular, it focuses upon individual experience as lived in concrete situations.

Existential-phenomenology is the result of a blending of the two disciplines of existentialism and phenomenology. While existentialism "seeks to understand the human condition as it manifests itself in our concrete, lived situation," phenomenology (founded by Edmond Husserl, 1859-1938) "is a method which allows us to contact phenomena as we actually live them" (Valle & King, 1978, pp. 6-7). Existential-phenomenology thus becomes existential-phenomenological psychology, when applied to human psychological phenomena. This psychological discipline "seeks to explicate the *essence*, *structure*, or *form* of human experience and human behavior as revealed through essentially *descriptive* techniques including disciplined reflection" (Valle & King, 1978, p. 7).

Existential-phenomenology is based on the essential concept that "people are not viewed as *objects* in nature. Rather, the existential-phenomenological psychologist speaks of the total, indissoluble unity or interrelationship of the individual and his or her world" (Valle & King, 1978, p. 7). Thus, the individual and his or her

world "co-constitute" one another and are seen as having no existence apart from each other. In fact, "in existential-phenomenological thought existence *always* implies that being is actually 'being-in-the-world'" (Valle & King, 1978, p. 8).

This world, which has no existence apart from the individual who lives it and "is the world as given in *direct* and *immediate experience*" is the *Lebenswelt* or the *life-world*" (Valle & King, 1978, pp. 9-10). "The *Lebenswelt* is the starting point . . . for the existential-phenomenological psychologist. The life-world is the foundation upon which existential phenomenology is built" (Valle & King, 1978, p. 10). Rejecting the dualistic conception of the relationship of the individual and the world, existential-phenomenological also rejects the notion of causality and views the life-world as having a prereflective nature which gives birth to reflective awareness. Hence, the practices of hypothesis formation, testing, controlling, and predicting are also rejected in this model and disciplined reflection is the descriptive technique used to explicate the essence of any given immediate experience in a *Lebenswelt*.

"Objectivity," in an existential-phenomenological research context, "requires me to recognize and affirm both my own experience and the experience of others" said Colaizzi (Valle & King, 1978, p. 52). The researcher in this context is to have "a special presence" to the phenomenon and his or her full engagement in the research situation is essential (Giorgi, 1970). Being well aware of the fact that my own experience as an immigrant woman was a significant dimension of my presence to the phenomenon, I have, in the previous chapter, described an initial portrait in an attempt to make explicit my own assumptions and pre-dispositions. Moreover, in this context, according to Colaizzi, "objectivity is fidelity to phenomena . . . it is a respectful listening to what the phenomenon speaks of itself" (Valle & King, 1978, p. 52). Hence, by engaging myself in a respectful listening to my co-researchers' descriptions of their experiences I will have maintained, as much as possible, the objectivity of the data collected in this study.

A close look at the existential-phenomenological model reveals a differential set of philosophical assumptions (as compared to the positivistic approach to psychological research) with regard to its conception of the individual, the questions it asks and the methods it utilizes. Such assumptions call for a different kind of relationship between the researcher and the subjects. In this model the relationship is a dialogal one involving cooperation in a non-manipulative and controlling context. In this context the humanness of the individual under study and his or her full participation in the research is of primary concern and for this reason the participants in the study are called "co-researchers" and not subjects. Colaizzi (Valle & King, 1978) saw the dialogue as taking place in a situation of trust among equals. In this context the co-researchers are allowed to describe and illuminate existential dimensions of their lives and experiences. The research design, which is open-ended, allows the co-researchers to make the final closure with the meaning they bring into the situation (Giorgi, 1970).

CHAPTER III: Methodology

Summary of Design

I interviewed four Iranian immigrant women. In each interview my co-researchers and I dialogued as equals in a relationship of trust. My role in the interviews was to create and maintain an environment of trust in which to elicit each woman's story as fully and clearly as possible. I actively listened to her story, and asked questions to make clarifications along the way. I recorded and transcribed each story. I analyzed the transcripts (or protocols) for themes. I then wrote a description of the experience of immigration based on these themes. I returned to my co-researchers to verify the themes and the description. Through full participation in this step-by-step verification of the data, my co-researchers helped me obtain a description that reflected their experience as clearly and accurately as possible. All of their suggested changes and additions have been incorporated into the final description.

Selection of Co-Researchers

According to Colaizzi (1978, p. 58) "experience with the investigated topic and articulateness suffice as criteria." The first criterion, therefore, was that the women had had the experience of immigration and had felt adjusted to their new home. In order to ensure that the participants in this study had completed the process of adjustment to a new culture, only women were interviewed who had arrived in Canada no fewer than three years prior to the time of the first interview, who were single women (based on the observation and assumption that married Iranian immigrant women need more time to adjust), and who reported that they felt adjusted both at the time of the initial contact and at the beginning of each of the main interviews. As for the criterion of articulateness, all of the

four co-researchers spoke fluent conversational English and had the ability to express themselves clearly and relate their stories articulately. For the purpose of eliminating any chances of miscommunication, each co-researcher was given the option of switching to Persian at any point throughout the interview. On a few occasions three of the women used Persian words to clarify their statements. These words were immediately translated into English and accepted by those women as the appropriate substitutes to be used in the protocols.

I found my co-researchers by personally contacting friends and acquaintances about the topic of research. Originally eight women were contacted either by telephone or personal meetings. Among the eight, all of whom expressed their interest in participating in the study, five were selected on the basis of the criteria discussed above. One was later omitted from the study. After having interviewed her, I decided that she did not meet the first criterion. Among the four women selected, two I knew quite well, one was an acquaintance and one was introduced to me through a mutual friend. Interestingly enough, the latter two have now become my friends as a result of the nature of the study and the trust established between us throughout its course.

Demographic Information

The only demographic information required of the co-researchers was: a) length of residence in Canada (no less than three years), b) marital status (single), and c) age (no younger than 18). Based on the co-researchers' families' status, education level and level of affluence in Iran, all of the four women must be classified in the modernized upper middle/middle class category (see section on class stratification in Iran in Chapter II).

Table I: Co-researcher Demographic Information (at time of main interview)

	Co-researcher Initials	Age	Length of Residence in Canada	Occupation
1	CR ₁	23	5	Student
2	CR ₂	26	3	Student
3	CR ₃	21	3	Student
4	CR ₄	30	8	Fashion Shop Manager

Existential-phenomenological ApproachMain Interview

The co-researchers were first contacted by telephone or in person and the study was fully explained to them. After having agreed to participate in the research, each co-researcher received a letter of introduction (Appendix B). Appointments for interviews were then made. Consent forms were signed by each co-researcher (Appendix B).

I had three interviews with each co-researcher. The first set of interviews was spread over a period of one-and-a-half years. Each interview lasted between two and a half and three and a half hours, during which the co-researcher described the story of her experience as an immigrant woman in Canada. The interviews were all audio-taped and transcribed (as protocols).

The interviews were conducted in complete confidentiality in my home or in previously booked office spaces in the Department of Counselling Psychology at U.B.C. Confidentiality was further maintained by using initials of co-researchers'

names and other names mentioned in the interview. The tapes were erased after they had been transcribed and listened to a sufficient number of times. The co-researchers were also put at ease by being assured that they were, in fact, the experts on the phenomenon of interest and that they were free to relate to me only that which they felt comfortable disclosing. Since the kind of trust which is conducive to full participation of the co-researchers in the process already existed or was created and maintained between us, the interviews flowed very smoothly. During the interviews I found that my co-researchers were very relaxed and spoke of their experience with much openness and genuineness.

The interviews were basically unstructured. I began by asking (one more time) if they felt adjusted/settled in Canada. Upon receiving an affirmative answer (and some clarifying explanations about their adjustment) I continued by describing the purpose of the study. I then answered any questions that the women may have had regarding the research procedure and methodology. I continued by asking each co-researcher:

What is the story of your life in Canada? Give the whole story, from the very beginning until the time you felt relatively settled and at home. What was it like when you left Iran? What has it been like since you've come to Canada? What has your experience been all this time? What is it like now?

I also asked each co-researcher to relate to me any specific events or details which would help me understand the meaning of her experience.

I then became an active listener. I tried to be fully present in the interview and, when necessary, probed and reflected on her statements. If the interview questions were not answered within the co-researcher's description, I asked the following questions in a form appropriate to the individual:

1. What kind of experience helped you feel settled? What facilitated the process?
2. What kind of experiences slowed down the process of adjustment?
3. Did you ever feel lost/confused? When? How?
4. Did you ever hit a point where you felt a vast emptiness inside? When

did that happen?

5. Did you yearn for Iran? Do you still?
6. Did you feel guilty for leaving Iran? Do you still?
7. Compare yourself now with when you were in Iran. Have you changed?
How have you changed?
8. What is the meaning of this experience for you?

It should be noted that rather than asking the above questions in a potentially leading manner, the women were asked directly whether the questions fit their experiences. In other words, the co-researchers were allowed the freedom to reject or confirm any of the questions.

Analysis of Protocols

The analysis of the protocols was conducted according to the procedure described by Colaizzi (1978, pp. 59-62). The audio-taped interviews were transcribed as protocols. Each taped interview was then listened to at least twice before it was erased. Each protocol was read and re-read until I acquired a feeling for it and began to understand the essence of the experience as related to me by each woman.

From each protocol, key statements that pertained directly to the experience of immigration and settlement in Canada were extracted and underlined. While repetition of the same or similar statements in several protocols were eliminated, the used statements were written in individually colour-coded index cards (one colour for each protocol). Since the co-researchers had been asked to tell a story with a beginning, a middle and an end, the cards containing significant statements were arranged in three groups labeled "beginning," "middle," and "end."

Using the process of "creative insight" as described by Colaizzi (1978, p. 59), meanings were formulated from each significant statement in the protocols. This was done by making explicit what was implied in each statement through

moving beyond the statement to illuminate its meaning while remaining, at all times, true to the original statement (Colaizzi, 1978). In some cases the original statement was clear and explicit, allowing me to use the co-researcher's own words to formulate meaning units. For example, co-researcher 4 said: ". . . I questioned myself is there anything I can do? . . . in a sense I felt incapable I didn't have any self-confidence at all, or self-worth." In this statement co-researcher 4 is describing the meaning unit that was labelled "Loss of Self-worth." However, co-researcher 2's statement: ". . . and at one point I felt that it's okay, having sex is joy, especially if you are attracted to each other, so what is wrong here?" is an example of a statement whose "contextual and horizontal meanings are given *with* the protocols but are not *in* it" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 59). In this case the researcher, according to Colaizzi (1978, p. 59) "must go beyond what is given in the original data and at the same time, stay with it." This statement, thusly analyzed, was then labeled with the meaning "Confusion over one's known values." This meaning unit was further refined and labeled as the theme "Disorientation to Living."

When all the key statements were analyzed in the above manner, those statements by different co-researchers which seemed to have similar meanings were grouped together. Once this was done, themes which were common across all protocols were formulated. The formulation of the themes was a lengthy and engaging process and took many hours of constantly living and being with the data to ensure that the co-researchers' experiences had been accurately and fully represented in the themes.

After formulating the themes I returned to the original protocols to ensure that I had captured all that had been related in the themes and that I had not included anything in the themes that was not implied in the original protocol. In describing a theme I tried to include individual variations. After the themes had been organized in an approximately sequential manner, they were integrated into a narrative description of the experience of immigration for Iranian women. This

description attempts to reflect as fully and accurately as possible the essence of the experience, as told by the co-researchers.

Validation Interview

I then returned to my co-researchers twice with the themes (and their descriptions) and the exhaustive description for validation of the results. The second set of interviews were audio-taped, but not transcribed. Each of the four interviews lasted between one and two hours.

All the co-researchers were given the chance to review and reflect upon the themes and the description prior to the interviews. In the interview each theme was discussed individually and while the interview was being taped. I took notes of any comments and suggestions made by each co-researcher. After reviewing my notes and listening to the tapes, I then incorporated all the changes suggested by the co-researchers into the final results of the study. After incorporating the changes, I returned to my co-researchers one more time by telephone to validate the final results.

As the last note in this chapter, I find it necessary to mention that I felt extremely encouraged by watching and listening to the excitement expressed by my co-researchers as we dialogued and went through the themes and the description together. All of the women felt that their experiences had been fully and accurately portrayed in the material presented to them and validated almost all that was contained therein. As was mentioned above, some minor clarifying changes were later incorporated in the final results.

CHAPTER IV: Results

Formulation of Themes

Thirty-two themes were formulated from the co-researchers' stories. These themes, which are significant aspects of the experience of immigration, were common to all the co-researchers in the study but varied for each co-researcher in degree and scope. Each theme focuses on a part of the whole experience in a way that includes any individual variations.

Originally, ninety meaning units were extracted from the original protocols. Upon further reflection, meaning units that reflected the same broader meaning were melded together into the same theme. For example, prior to losing their self-esteem (which is a theme more explicitly conveyed in the protocols), the women had had a number of varied experiences which had been individually labelled as: feeling misunderstood, feeling rejected, feeling a failure, etc. Then, once again, by moving beyond these already-labeled meaning units, they were grouped together as the theme: "Invalidation of Self." Through this lengthy and engaging process, thirty-one themes were formulated. After dialoguing, for the second time, with my co-researchers and upon consulting my notes and tapes of the validation interviews, I realized that the theme: "Sense of Purpose/Meaning in the Experience" can be divided into two separate but consequent themes of: "Seeing Experience as Part of a Greater Plan" and "Sense of Uniqueness of Experience." This brought the final number of themes to thirty-two.

Another example of how the validation interviews sharpened the final results is that in the original description of the theme: "Opening to New Possibilities/Establishing New Dreams," I had portrayed all the women as "ready and excited to meet the challenges of the future." All but one of the co-researchers (CR₃) validated this description and actually underlined the word "excited" saying that they are now looking forward to meeting new challenges.

CR₃, however, stated that she feels ready, armed and open to meet her future challenges, but does not look forward to them. This was, therefore, incorporated in the description of the individual theme as well as in the narrative description of the experience. All the final results were validated in the third set of short interviews.

Since the original statements are both the source of the themes and a means to touch the richness of the co-researchers' experiences, I have followed the listing of theme names with a second listing which includes the descriptions and some of the statements made by each co-researcher from which the themes were derived. These statements are drawn from different sections of the protocols. I have tried, as much as possible, to include only one statement from each co-researcher under each theme. However, since each statement brings to life a different aspect of the same theme, I felt reluctant to eliminate some statements and have included (in some instances) more than one statement for each co-researcher. A few of the statements listed under certain themes were made during the validation interviews to further clarify and expand on the original description.

The reader may notice that certain significant statements contain in them a theme(s) other than the one that particular statement was chosen to represent. It should be noted that, due to the nature of the experience and the flow of each description, this overlap is natural.

The sequence of the themes as listed and integrated into the narrative description gives the experience of immigration a linear appearance. While the narrative description and the general sequence of the themes reflect the narrative nature of the experience which has a beginning, a middle and an end; the order of individual themes can vary for each protocol.

Themes

1. Sense of leaving behind all that seemed precious.
2. Sense of enforced separation or dislodgement.
3. Apprehension of Unknown.
4. Yearning to settle down and to find stability.
5. Sense of Insecurity/Instability.
6. Chronic Sense of Missing Home.
7. Anger and Resentment at Being Forced from Homeland.
8. Resentment and Anger at Losses in the Homeland.
9. Sense of Loyalty to the Homeland.
10. Search for Belonging.
11. Sense of Estrangement.
12. Felt Superficiality of Connections.
13. Feeling Different and Out of Place.
14. Yearning for a Deeper Connection.
15. Sense of Chronic Conflict with Parents.
16. Invalidation of Self/Identity.
17. Loss of Self Esteem/Worth.
18. Disorientation to Living.
19. Sense of Struggle.
20. Reviewing One's Self.
21. Realistically Appraising the Homeland as it is.
22. Recognizing Personal Potency/Power.
23. Validation of Self.
24. Sense of Acceptance.
25. Exercising One's Personal Power (Acting on One's Personal Power).
26. Sense of Freedom.
27. Sense of Having Grown as a Person Through the Experience.

28. Opening to New Possibilities/Establishing New Dreams.
29. Seeing Experience as Part of a Greater Plan (Sense of Destiny).
30. Sense of Uniqueness/Richness of Experience.
31. Sense of Stability.
32. Re-affirming One's Roots.

Themes and Significant Statements

1. Sense of leaving behind all that seemed precious.

She painfully realizes that she would have (has had) to break away from things that meant a lot to her. She anticipates the loss of everything that seemed precious which includes(ed) people who loved her and cared for her, security, happiness, good memories/times, dreams, places she loved, a home, a part of her, a country, etc.

CR₁: . . . When you are leaving something, there is something that you are losing. There was something, you had something and you are losing it. And you know that it is hard to get it back.

CR₂: I had a boyfriend whom I wanted to marry . . . and the first time that I really realized that I'm not in Iran, that I'm in Turkey, one night I looked at his picture and decided to tear it and throw it away. And at that point I understood that: "Here I am! I cannot go back! I knew what I was doing. I'm here. I'm trying to go to another country, and then another and another until I establish myself somewhere. I'm not going to see him again. It is over!" . . . that was the first time after so many hard moments that I cried. When I threw his picture in the garbage, you know, those little pieces of picture didn't look like him any more. But it was something I knew with my heart and I cried so hard, so badly And that was the first time I just found deep inside that the most precious thing that I had was gone and at that point, you know, I wasn't thinking of my country as much as I was thinking of him. Yes, they were in a sense related. Leaving him was leaving the country and leaving Iran was leaving him and so on. That was the first time. In a way, throwing his picture away was a symbol of breaking away from my country. That was the

first time.

CR₃: . . . Iran was my home, but when I left Iran, I just knew that I would never, it would take me a long time to go back. I wasn't that optimistic as a lot of Iranians are. I just knew it would probably take another ten years that I would be able to go back to live there, actually.

CR₄: . . . I had a feeling that I would probably not be able to go back and it was a bit hard. It's a hard feeling to think about, that you will not, you're leaving the country that you've been born in and you're, you have memories there, everything--families, friends. You have to really break up with that, with all your memories and everything, and it was kind of hard.

It [leaving] was like leaving a part of you ... the feeling was like you are one person but you had to divide yourself between two, and one of you had to stay in Iran, and the other had to come out. And I don't know, it was hard.

2. Sense of enforced separation/dislodgement.

She feels forced/compelled to leave Iran. This force may be perceived as external, i.e., parents want her to leave or her life is endangered, or may come from within herself, telling her to leave since she no longer has a place in her homeland.

CR₁: First they [parents] asked me if I wanted to go. So I said "no, I don't!" But then it got serious and I thought more about it and then I really didn't want to go. And I thought: "No! I really don't want to leave here!"

CR₂: So I was living there for two years after the revolution. You had to wear a veil and so on . . . and then from the south [where the Gulf war broke

out] we moved to Karaj [a city near Tehran] and that was the hardest part in the last seven, eight years! We'd lost everything, it was very hard financially, we didn't have a house to live in, we had relatives, but, you know, when you're going through hard times, everybody was tense, everybody was under pressure. And then I was in university in the south. And you know, as a Baha'i they simply said I couldn't go back to school and it was really hard for me to believe that! Because everything was going so well in my life up to that point. Everything was just perfect! Just the way I wanted it. So although I was in my own country, I couldn't feel adjusted. And for one year after the war we lived there and then things got harder and harder for Baha'is specifically and for women and in general.

CR₃: My biggest question was: "How would I survive in this society?" As a person with my kind of ideology I'd say: "how can you live here?" You can't live here. You've either got to accept some of these kinds of ideologies, or you won't be able to survive here. And . . . my biggest fear was that I knew that I couldn't survive if I had stayed there.

All of a sudden, Iran felt like a strange place to me!

CR₄: . . . it was hard, but I wanted to do it . . . I wanted to experience other things. . . . I didn't want to become like my mother . . . which was like, she was 16 years old, or 17 years old and she was, and they were in a family which the father was the head, and then she got married and her husband was the head, and this wasn't me. I couldn't, I just wanted, in between, to have some other experience that I would like to see, would like to do, would like to find out, would like to study . . . like I wanted to see some other life, some other experience, some other things to learn, things to

do, things to see. . . . It [separation] was hard, but I was looking forward to it.

3. Apprehension of Unknown.

What lies ahead is a big questionmark in the dark. The unknown of a different way of life puzzles her and scares her. The fear may be present before, at and even after separation from Iran.

CR₁: It was my first time on my own like that. I didn't know what the outside world was like . . . so it was kind of scary.

CR₂: Something happened, I didn't want it, because I didn't know what it was, I didn't know what was going on, but I'm glad that it happened now.

CR₃: . . . whenever I think about immigration . . . I always think of this family which is tired and sort of fatigued and things like that, and they have all these suitcases and big boxes and they're carrying them to the airport . . . that's the image that comes to my mind, and just, like I said, a chest-burn, just because whenever I'm upset I get that, so I always relate to the experience, it's like entering a cave, but you don't know what's in there. . . . And I always remember the fear . . .

CR₄: . . . to be exact, it was, I could see a ladder. . . . I could see that I am on the step, see myself that I come up maybe five steps, and to go higher, like I couldn't move. I was there, I couldn't go back. I turned back and I saw myself on the first step and I didn't want to go back, and yet I couldn't go higher, because I was stuck, I didn't know, I was confused. I didn't know, I really was stuck there. . . . I was frightened [because] I didn't know what's up there.

4. Yearning to settle down and to find stability.

Tired of uprooting, she wants to settle down, to find a home where she can feel stable and secure.

CR₁: And for you when you are young and you go to another country and you are not settled, moving from one place to another, it's a hassle! . . . I couldn't stand it any more . . . [and] I wished, I dreamed that it would have been nice if I could have my parents here. We'd have a house. I'd be in my own house to be able to do what I wanted to. To be more settled. . . . You know, I wanted to settle down! I was tired of moving from place to place.

Cr₂: . . . immigration-wise we could have stayed in Spain, but education-wise and the kinds of things that were happening were exactly like before the revolution in Iran, politically. . . . And I thought, "I don't want this!" It is much safer in Canada and much more stable and once was enough! I didn't want to have to go through the whole experience of uprooting again!

. . . our trip seemed so endless that I remember [when I arrived in Canada] . . . I had no feelings at all! I just didn't want to get into any other airplanes. I wanted to be on the ground and walk!

CR₃: I want to make a stable home somewhere and I want it to be Vancouver, so I can come and go whenever I want.

CR₄: . . . I really don't think I would want to go back [to Iran]. . . . It's as if . . . going through all the problems that you had again and I don't think I can do it any more. Once was enough!

5. Sense of Insecurity/Instability.

Upon coming to Canada she realizes that she is on her own. The shelter and the protection of family, the security of being in one's country and among one's people, the stability of one's way of life and the certainty of one's future disappear. She finds herself vulnerable and in need of help and shelter from others.

CR₁: I always enjoyed my life in Iran . . . you see, I never thought about the future, what's going to happen next, what will the future be. I thought, "this is life, enjoying yourself!" So that really bothered me!

I said: "I have to depend on somebody, there has to be always someone to take care of me!"

CR₂: [Before the revolution] it was a good and fun experience. . . . It's not like Canada. Kids don't usually work. Parents could and did support them. Even after I went to university, I wanted to find a job and the reaction of my parents in Iran was totally different from what I got from them here. . . . They said: "But why do you want to work?! We will give you the money!" They wanted to give us a very comfortable life, they wanted me to have fun and study well. . . . [and] I had a great time!

Here, you not only have to take care of yourself, you have to also take care of others, like your parents.

CR₃: You just want someone to take your hand and show you the steps.

It's not like Iran, especially when as Iranians we are used to other people giving us that sense of security.

CR₄: Oh, I felt safer [in Iran], I felt more safe. . . . It maybe sounds funny, but when I was in Iran, when I was in my own country, when you go to sleep and sleep, you have a perfect sleep, because you are safe. I don't know how to explain it, but I didn't have to think about my future . . . I had my father to look after me, I had my family there, my roots were there. I was in a place that everybody accepted me as I am, and I accepted them, not totally with me, but anyway, I accepted them as much as I could. . . . I felt at home, I was safe, I was completely safe, nobody could hurt me, nobody could touch me, nobody could do things wrong to me, I was like a, I could say like a queen. I had protection, I had everybody looking after me, thinking about me, protecting me, feeling for me, caring for me, but here, I didn't have that feeling.

It's as if when I was in my country I was in a shell . . . and this shell was made of gold. . . . And I was protected in that, and I wanted to come out of it. . . . And when I came here . . . it's exactly like a bird, when you want to come out of your shell, you try it, you break it, you come and your head is a little bit higher, but it's as if, a wind, or . . . something happens and you have to go underneath again.

4. Chronic Sense of Missing Home.

She remembers those precious things, places, people, feelings and moments she left behind and misses them. This theme is characterized by having vivid and often pleasant visions, dreams, fantasies and thoughts of Iran. Although much stronger in the beginning the feeling of homesickness resumes until this day and is often triggered by certain reminders such as a poem, a smell, a view, and so on.

CR₁: Really, even after about eight months, I had letters, I thought: "I wish I could be there right now! I wish I could be with them, as happy as I

used to be. I wish I could go to the same places with them!" Even when I made my own friends here, I told them of how I wished to go back and how I wanted to go back!

And I had lots of fantasies about going back. I had been fantasizing about what I would do, where I would go and about seeing my friends.

CR₂: [I dreamed] a lot about Iran when I first came. . . , I'll tell you one thing, it's not a dream, but that's what happened in Spain. . . . One day I closed my eyes, I wasn't asleep, but I was in Iran, and I knew that I wasn't, I knew that I was in Spain, but I wasn't able to take myself out of that situation. So here I was, I was in my city, I was taking the bus to go to university. I don't know how long it took, but anyway. I remember every detail in the road, in the city, every detail in my dormitory room, every detail of my friends, everything. And I was suffering, Afsaneh, I wasn't sleeping, I wanted to open my eyes, but at the same time it was so tangible, I mean, I was actually in Iran and I didn't want to open my eyes. I used to think "What's wrong with it? You ride in Iran? [I was suffering because] it wasn't true. I knew I wasn't in Iran, I knew that it wasn't even a dream . . . and I wasn't dreaming and I wasn't daydreaming . . . I wasn't even doing that. I guess I just wanted to be in Iran so badly and it was so amazing. I was able to remember every detail, every house on the block, all the names, all the places, all the streets and how long it takes to where I used to stay and all these things.

Oh, sure [I miss Iran], but on occasion . . . when I find a good book, a good poem, you know, everything comes back, of course, I loved it!

CR₃: . . . you know Vancouver is like the north of Iran. Sometimes when I

drive through Stanley Park and the smell, it's, once it happened to me the first time, I was driving through Stanley Park and there was this part that reminds me of Pahlavi Street, and all of a sudden I just felt the smell and it was amazing, because I felt that, remember that there were birds in the afternoon? And just, I could smell the street, I could hear it and for like two or three seconds I could see it, just sort of like a flash, like that! It was fantastic. . . . I really wanted to go back. That night I said: "God, I wish I was there!"

CR₄: I missed the happiness . . . I missed the safeness, I missed the smell even, I missed everything, whatever you can think of, I missed. I missed the feeling, I missed the sun, I missed the feeling of being in the sun and sometimes, it's unreal, but sometimes I missed the people, whatever bad, I don't know how to say it, I missed that badness of the people. I missed that--do you know what I mean? Like, it was amazing, you don't like something, but yet again, I missed it.

7. Anger and Resentment at Being Forced from Homeland.

She feels "locked out" of her loved and much missed country. She feels the unfairness of this forced situation and is chronically angered and resentful about it. Although stronger in the beginning, her resentment resumes to date.

CR₁: And I felt like just wanting to be alone, at that time when I thought "I cannot go back," I felt like being alone somewhere and screaming. You know what I mean? Like as if you were in jail and you want to get out of there, but you can't. They won't let you. They say: "Next year!" And you want to tear up everything and get away from it! But there's nothing you can do. You cannot come out of there. So you want to scream! You want to say: "Please let me go! Let me free!" And that's

how I felt.

. . . it's by force! My being here is because of the situation in Iran which forces me to be here. . . . Right now I'm not suffering. Now I feel more settled, so it is easier. But in the beginning, I resented it badly. I was mad! Oh yeah! I was mad! I used to say to myself: "I wish I'd never come! I wish I didn't have to go through all this!" But now I don't feel angry any more. Actually I can say that I'm happy that I had to go through this experience. Now I don't resent it that much.

CR₂: I guess it goes back to why you can't go back. Because I always wanted to come to Canada to study. But you could always go back on holidays. You could ask your mom to send you a Persian tape, you could ask for this and that book. You know, the situation is different. You're locked out of your country not by your own choice.

CR₃: . . . I guess it does bother me that I might never be able to go back there and live there. . . . [it's] frustrating . . . I guess it's like, I don't want to use the word "prison," I guess it's just so you know you're in a room, and if you open the door there's just space down there, you just can't step out and stay there, but you want to go out there because, okay, here's . . . there's something out there in the sky, and you want to go get it and you just know you can't go because there's space in between, there's no way you can get out of that door and go get it.

CR₄: . . . I can say I've made Canada my country. But sometimes I think about it; "wouldn't it be nice to go back, to have a home, where you were brought up, where you were born, where your memories are, where your childhood is." It would have been a nice thing to go back and visit once

in a while, it's unfair. I still think that way . . . [and] I don't think I can do anything! It's unfair, but it's something that is there, we can't change it, it's the reality . . . ?[and] you feel frustrated.

8. Resentment and Anger at Losses in the Homeland.

She feels angry about the changes Iran has undergone and about all the "good" things that they have lost as a nation, maybe never to be replaced.

CR₁: You see I was there during the revolution. When I see what a loss it was to go through all what happened throughout the revolution, it makes me mad! To fight for nothing! To lose lives and people for nothing! It's awful!

I still feel angry. Even more angry. . . . The things that we used to have and we don't have any more. If I go back, they won't be there. I just have a view of them . . . and they won't be replaced and that's sad and painful.

CR₂: . . . what hurts is that, the hard part is that they are destroying everything that I love in that country, and I could give you one example. When we were leaving Iran we went to Tabriz [a city in the north] and one mullah was trying hard to destroy one of the historical monuments in that city. And he did, he tried three times, he put bombs and dynamite everywhere to destroy that beautiful, whatever, I mean, we cannot have that any more, he was trying to destroy it just to have a piece of land to say prayers on Friday mornings, which he could find that piece of land anywhere. And nobody was able to, everybody was upset, but nobody was able to stop this guy, and to me, from the moment I heard it, to now, I cannot understand, you know, this is our culture, this is our history, some

guy who doesn't feel like being a Persian, someone who obviously has no values . . . has the power to do such a thing and nobody says "don't." Nobody even. Nobody! Everybody's crying, you know, but nobody says "why?," nobody says "hey, he can get *that* piece of land." You know, and that hurts! . . . I talked with my teachers and they are all fascinated by the Persian arts and crafts and . . . they never turn to me and say, "Oh, I know you have this," they always turn to me and say, "isn't that a pity they're destroying everything." . . . I was there, I was there . . . and you can see how it can hurt when you hear that a bunch of crazy people, without having any reason, are doing so. And it is a loss, for sure.

CR₃: . . . whenever I hear about the war . . . I know that it's something that would really hurt me and the war in Iran is one of the things that I always just let it go along. And it really does hurt me. . . . It does really upset me, because, as I said, I was in Iran three years after the revolution and I've seen a lot and it just, when I was there it really bothered me. Because I really got, I got into trouble a couple of times with the revolutionary committees and I know how frustrating it could get, that these people are so unrealistic, I mean, they're so stupid, irrational people!

CR₄: You feel angry because you feel as if you own something very, very precious and somebody's stealing it and ruining it. In that sense, you feel angry. You're saying, "Why? This was mine, and somebody is stealing it." And you wish, okay, if somebody's stealing it, take care of it. But when you see that they're misusing it, it makes you angry. It makes you frustrated, it makes you want to do something about it and you know you can't do anything. You can't do anything at all.

9. Sense of Loyalty to the Homeland.

She feels strong ties with Iran and experiences a strong sense of duty towards it. Knowing that there was (is) nothing she could have done (do) to change the situation, except for maybe being there and suffering with others, she feels powerless.

CR₁: For three years I would get so excited when talking about Iran. Whoever didn't like it back there, I wanted to fight with them. I would say: "No! That's your country! You *have* to love it! You *have* to go back!" I was full of energy for Iran! . . . I didn't like his [Khomeini's] government, but I still felt that that's Iran! That's my country!

I never felt guilty for leaving Iran, but I thought that, had I stayed, I maybe would have gotten used to the situation, like the others who did stay.

CR₂: I will marry, I can even marry to a Persian, I would teach my kids Persian, I would talk to them, I would tell them stories, I would show the pictures, of course, but how can we replace that [the destroyed historical monument?? Suppose that some day we go back to Iran--this guy has destroyed that thing! What would be your feeling to go and say, "yes, this guy came and he tried three times and they were not able to say 'no'"? At least your kids would ask you, I'm sure, that "what did you guys do? Did you try to stop him?" . . . And, of course, when I was in that city I tried to imagine myself going there and stopping him.

. . . you can see how it can hurt when you hear that a bunch of crazy people, without having any reason, are doing so [destroying our culture]. And it is a loss, for sure. The kind of thing that you used to read in

history textbooks, like Chengiz Khan destroyed everything, and you'd say, "oh, too bad! How could they let him do that!" And now in your time, someone else is doing the same thing, so you cannot blame those people any more--what are *you* doing? Nothing, you just escaped Iran, and even those who are there do not do anything.

Cr₃: Of course, I might not like Iran right now to go and live there. But I'm still very patriotic and it really bothers me if someone wants to insult my country or my countrymen or anything like that. . . , I love Iran.

The frustration just comes in because I just know there's no way that I can change it [the situation in Iran], there's just that sense that, either way that I go I know that I cannot make any changes. That's what bothers me most of all. I would say that if it was a 100, 200 years ago, we could have, I could have gone there and done all that my energy would allow me to and right now, no matter how much I spend my energy there, nothing would come out of it . . . and that makes me so frustrated.

CR₄: I felt guilty in a sense that I felt my country needs me and I left it . . . like I would say that to myself, for example, if one day the country goes back to what it was, would you ever go back? I couldn't say yes. I felt ashamed. . . . Whether they're going to accept me or not, my own country is going to accept me or not, I feel it, and that's why, probably, I can't think of going back, because I don't think they should accept me . . . because I don't belong there. I came out of the country in the position that the country probably needed me. I left it, now how can I go back?

10. Search for Belonging.

Missing home, feeling lonely and insecure, she looks for people with whom to belong. She feels that she has but little choice than to be with other Iranians, with whom she feels more at ease.

CR₁: I didn't want to be alone! When I was in Iran, all my life, I was always around people. I was always with somebody. I always had friends. It was hard for me to be alone!

CR₃: . . . I guess it was sometime in April and I started dating this other Persian guy. And at that time it was sort of like, I think, I'm not really happy about this, that when I went out with this . . . guy it was more out of desperateness than just liking him and going out with him.

CR₄: . . . now I come to think about it, why did I do it [mingle with Persians in the beginning]? I don't know why, because as I say, come to think about it, I was afraid that I'm not accepted by Canadians and yet I wasn't like Persians. . . .

You think they would understand you because they are in the same situation so you try to be there, with them, and be understood better, to be accepted better.

11. Sense of Estrangement.

She realizes fundamental differences between herself (or her friends back home) and most Iranians in this country. Feeling shocked, angered, judged, hurt, used, and cynical, she becomes disillusioned about her own people and feels estranged from them.

CR₁: When I was back home the people around me were mostly family and good

friends. It was a rather closed setting. You are familiar with what goes on around you. You know the people are nice, they are sensitive like you. They don't take advantage of you. Then I went to college and met these people out of the blue. I thought them to be the same as the people I knew. Like my friends, my family, my relatives [in Iran]. I thought I could trust them just as much. I thought I could tell them everything, that they won't take advantage of you . . . that they like you the way you like them. Like a child, I trusted everybody. And I'm talking about Iranians. . . . I thought of people I met there as nice and trustworthy and I just went right on and shared with them my feelings . . . and told them whatever I felt. And then I realized that they were taking advantage of me, or hurting me with what they said. . . . I thought this was the same society and I should treat these people the way I used to treat my friends back home. I didn't know people [Iranians] could be, . . . they are so different! I couldn't believe that people could be so different!

Cr₂: For Persians, I can divide them into two major groups. Some who are very rich . . . I cannot get along with them because I would be a different person, anyway, even if I had the same amount of money, they haven't had the experiences that I had in the last few years. They don't understand me, you know, the kind of movies they want to watch, the kind of activities they want to have, the kind of conversations that they have, they're so, I won't say that I'm more mature, but they're just, they have a long way to go. . . . And you see, the other group, Persians, I mean, those who are not as rich, or probably are the same as I am, they are very different. Most of them, I'd say . . . they don't seem to be from this generation, they're from two generations . . .

Here, I got to see Persians more objectively, in a new light. It gave me a

new vision of what they can be like and actually, maybe that's one of the positive things that happened.

CR₃: [In Vancouver] I learned a lot of lessons in friendship . . . like not to trust so many people, . . . and over here I learned . . . that whatever people say, . . . there's so many scrupulous ideas behind it that you can't even start thinking about it, there's so much. So I learned that. And I learned that a lot of people who claim to be your friends and they might do a lot of things for you, but on the other hand they might manipulate you and take advantage of you . . . [I am talking about Iranians] because most of my friends were Iranians.

CR₄: Actually, come to think about it, now I feel I am, I have to struggle more with Persians than with Canadians . . . what do they do? Their ideas, their way of thinking, their way of acting sometimes, . . . talking about people, gossiping, saying that the person did that which I think was bad or . . . yeah, gossiping.

I can't say I don't like the people [Persians], I still can't say it. I don't agree with the people, let's put it this way . . . there is so much difference, there are so many things that, the way of their thinking, it's in a way that it boils me, like it really makes me boil, angry, like, you know, frustrated.

12. Felt Superficiality of Connections.

She experiences solitude and unfulfilment when in the presence of others.

CR₁: . . . my social life was mostly with Iranians. I'd be going out with them and, and up until last year I wasn't really, really enjoying myself the way

I wanted to. I went out, I had some laughs. But deep inside, it wasn't really what I wanted. . . . They were okay. There was nothing wrong with them really. But they were just not like me. They were different from me. They enjoyed things that I didn't enjoy.

CR₂: People [Persians] who are with you must be able to understand what you are doing, otherwise it is a distraction, so you know, so you have to do certain things . . . that other people are not familiar with and can't understand . . . so, you know, this has created two different worlds.

CR₃: And I was happy, like when I went out and things like that, I was happy, I went out . . . with this guy I was dating and this girl . . . the Persian one . . . , well we used to talk a lot, like laugh and, you know, things like that, but I never felt that I achieved anything from going out with these people . . . either exchanging knowledge, . . . with these people nothing like that ever happened and I never felt achieving something . . . [with them, it was] just laugh. . . . I can't say it was a kind of laughter that was really deep down inside, it was just, I guess, like a hysterical laughter from being so tense and so frustrated--that kind of laughter, that kind of happiness.

CR₄: Did I feel lonely? Yeah, within me, yes. I wasn't lonely in the sense that nobody was around me. There were people around me, but I was lonely because there were not many people like me around, in that sense I felt lonely. . . . There weren't enough people who could understand me [and that includes Persians].

13. Feeling Different and Out of Place.

Contact with Canadians unravels, before her eyes, the magnitude of differences between herself and "them." She feels shocked, very different, judgemental and

completely out of place--as if she will never belong.

CR₁: I felt out of place! In that school, not outside school. In the school I felt I was out of place. Even after I started to know some of them, still I felt, "I don't belong with them because they are different." They were completely different than me. They were thinking differently. Their ideas were different. Their behaviour was different. We were completely different.

CR₂: I remember once we had this meeting and one of the Canadian Baha'is laid down right there in the middle of the living room while everybody else was sitting in chairs and he just felt tired and laid down. Ah, I couldn't keep my eyes off him! I was so shocked. My God! What on earth is he doing?! He is such a gentleman, he's so knowledgeable, he's so respected, a Baha'i, you know. I couldn't find any answers to that. That was three years ago. . . . It was harder for my sister and brother. They would come back from school and say: "They [kids at school] did this, they did that! I found this in the corridor!" You know, and I would say, "my God!" They were really strange. I couldn't accept them.

CR₃: My! I had nothing in common with them [Canadians] at all! I couldn't find anything to talk with them. I took an English course, because I really like literature. . . . There was only ten people in the class and . . . we talked about whatever comes to your mind about the books you've read. And things that these people come up with--and these were books that I had already read in high school! And I couldn't believe they were so stupid!

CR₄: The things that shocked me . . . were the differences, the ideas. . . .

People were different, everything was different, the relationships between people were different, everything was different.

. . . it was as if you can't get close to them, it was as if there is always a wall there, you can't really pass this wall, you can try and get to it, but once you go there, that's it, it blocks you. It's like you're trying to touch somebody and that person is in a plastic bag, you can never touch, really touch that person. It was like that with Canadians . . . because I felt they're not warm enough. I felt they were within themselves, they can't give you a little bit more, like . . . they have their own families, they have their own grouping, they have their own people and that's it. It was like, as if, "do not come any closer, you're there and you stay there." As I said, it might be my own problem . . . really, that's how I felt.

14. **Yearning for a Deeper Connection.**

Not having yet found a place to belong, she yearns to reach out, to connect, to be understood and accepted, to express herself fully, to communicate, to be more real and to belong. In an attempt to fulfill her desire for this deeper and more genuine connection with others she finds herself faithfully explaining herself and her background to them. At times, this desire is accompanied by the fear of rejection which keeps her from taking risks with Canadians.

CR₁: I feel angry about what we have lost. Angry about what we were and what we are now! So when I talk to them [students at the college], I try to explain what we were, how beautiful it was there, . . . I try to explain to them that we are not what they see on TV. I try to explain to them that we, the Iranians who live in Canada, are not such a fanatic, traditional and stupid bunch of people, that we were different back then!

CR₂: But that smile on his face that he found me shocked was bothering me. . . . I felt that he was looking at me like a nun from a church on top of the mountains that has never been touched by a man and doesn't know how to react and is nervous but wanted, you know, like, "I wanted you badly but I was nervous, I was afraid" . . . [I didn't want that to happen]--for him to think that of me, as a crazy, stupid girl who said no to such a wonderful guy . . . I didn't want that to happen. I have his address and God knows, I will find him someday in Toronto, only because I don't want him to have that kind of image of me, if he does by any chance.

CR₃: He really tries to understand our culture and actually he is dating a Persian girl and he had some trouble at the beginning and I went to him and I said, "okay, these are these things, okay? You either have to accept them, or don't even make an attempt to go out with her. These are just some things that come with her culture, just the same way that she has to accept some of your kind of attitudes." And he's very understanding. When I tell him, for example, "no, I can't leave the house to go and live alone because of this and that," he understands. He might not agree with it, but he understands.

CR₄: . . . you come to a country to live and you don't know whether you're accepted by the country, by the people, how to get to them. Okay, you're here, you're totally different from them, and you're willing, within yourself, you're willing to try it, to show them that, "you can accept me. I can be one of you." But I didn't know whether I can be accepted.

You're trying to find a reason for everything you do to make others understand you and your background and your beliefs and so on and so

forth.

15. Sense of Chronic Conflict with Parents.

She constantly feels the frustration of being watched, judged, told to and sheltered by her parents. She feels torn between her desire for autonomy and her love and respect for her parents. She feels different from them and is often unable to communicate with them. As time passes, she finds the strength to take a stand against them with regard to major decisions. Nevertheless, her sense of duty remains strong since she does not want to "hurt" her parents.

CR₁: They [my parents] are around me all the time! I'm overly protected. Sometimes I feel that I cannot think for myself. They always get into your life. It's not that they always want to, but they're used to it. So sometimes I want to get away from all that.

Right now, there are some decisions I have to make, but first I'd have to consider my parents. . . . Right now I'm going through a stage where I have to think about certain things in my life, which I want for myself, but I also have to think of what my parents think first. If it *really* hurts them I won't do it! So I still have strong values about considering what my parents want. But it is hard and sometimes it hurts.

CR₂: So I have to decide something. Things have to change, they will have to change if I want to be something in this work [arts]. Now it doesn't mean that I will have to change my values . . . , but the way I'm living, it has to change, obviously, and I am sure I am not going to have my support in my family, especially my parents, because they're not living in it. They don't understand me . . . it is that family thing I guess I was a little bit concerned about . . .

CR₃: . . . there were a lot of things that we couldn't agree on and they couldn't understand me and I couldn't understand them . . . and yes [in Canada] it's gotten worse. Right now we just can't communicate. When my parents are here I just try to limit the conversation to specific subjects because there are some subjects that they're too touchy and I don't want them to bring them up and be bothered.

CR₄: . . . I think what slowed it [the process of adjustment] down was the family ties, the feeling of wanting to do something and not being able to do it because of your family background, which is your family, the tightness of your family.

I don't totally have the courage to do some things that they [my parents] might not agree . . . not totally, no . . . because I don't want to hurt them. I could do it. I could do it. But I know if I do it, they will get hurt.

16. **Invalidation of Self/Identity.**

She feels that her whole being has been invalidated, as if she is told that her way of doing things, her ideas, her life experiences, her feelings, her past gains, achievements and skills and her culture do not count. She feels this way because she experiences (has experienced) rejection in its various forms: being misunderstood by others, failing a course, being fired from a job, being denied a position or admittance to an institution, and the like.

CR₁: Well, right now, I don't think . . . [that Canadians don't understand me]. At that time, when I was younger, when I talked with them, because as I said, my ideas were different, then, I felt they don't understand me. And they didn't.

CR₂: I was so sure of what I was doing there [in Iran]! . . . Because I was so independent, always, and then in Canada I had to, you know, sometimes people had to translate for me, I had to ask for a ride, I had to ask for an address . . . but [back home] I was so independent . . . always . . . and then [in Canada] . . . I wasn't able to communicate, I wasn't able to manage . . . to find a job and to keep it . . .

. . . so I came here and sent my final grades and all that stuff to U.B.C. and went to a counsellor out here and she said: "I can't accept you because you don't have Math 12." Well I had finished Math 12 when I was in eleventh grade, and practically all my sciences, because I gave an exam and just finished everything [in an English-speaking school in Iran]. And she said, "no, I can't accept you on that, so you have to go to college" and so that was another sort of a blow.

CR₄: When I first came here, I tried a lot of things. Nobody would accept me. You had to have [Canadian] experience . . .

. . . I felt as if I am fighting, but I cannot get anywhere, . . . because as much as I fought I was getting tired. . . . I couldn't push myself to go higher . . . probably because I felt maybe I am screaming, I am fighting, but nobody can hear me, nobody can see what I am going through . . .

17. Loss of Self Esteem/Worth.

She feels disappointed in self. The magnitude of her loss of self-worth can be as great as her feeling "like a failure" (CR₃) or "like a nothing" (CR₁ & CR₄).

CR₁: It's like being nothing, to be empty inside. In the beginning I did feel that.

I would think: "I'm nothing. I'm good for nothing." I guess that relates to my self-confidence. . . . In the beginning I felt I was good for nothing. I wasn't doing much for myself then. Not working, not going to school, not meeting people, people I liked and made friends with. I felt empty, like: "Who am I? What am I good for?"

CR₃: Somehow that year, I wasn't able to do it, I just didn't want to face myself, sort of thing. I was so disappointed and so disgusted, I just didn't want to have anything to do with myself. And as I said, when I looked at myself I just saw this failure, this person who cannot achieve a certain standard.

CR₄: I didn't have any self-confidence at all . . . or self-worth. Future-wise, I questioned myself: "What am I going to do? What are the things I want to do? Is there anything I can do? . . . in a sense I felt incapable . . .

I didn't know myself, I didn't know. . . . It was hard . . . it was terrible--as if you don't have anything, you're not a human being.

18. **Disorientation to Living.**

A deep sense of confusion prevails and covers areas such as values and identity. She feels unsure and uncertain about herself and a period of frustration begins.

CR₁: Two years ago. That's when I started to have a more definite sense of myself . . . [before] I was lost in my identity. I didn't know what I wanted. I didn't know what I wanted to be. I didn't know what makes me happy or who makes me happy, what kind of people make me happy. All those questions . . .

CR₂: I was checking all the people that I knew, that I knew and I respected so much from this culture. I was checking them one by one. What was wrong about them? . . . And at one point I felt that it's okay, having sex is joy, especially if you are attracted to each other, so what is wrong here?

CR₃: I wasn't sure. Actually I wasn't sure about anything, it was sort of like, maybe you don't know anything.

There was always this sense of, I mean, which one is right? A sense of confusion--am I doing the right thing?

CR₄: And it was hard because you don't know yourself . . . you don't know what you are, what characters you have . . . you feel the emptiness because you don't know what you are, you don't know what to do, it's as if you're stuck somewhere, it's like not being able to move, not being able to do anything.

19. **Sense of Struggle.**

She is caught in a struggle which often feels in vain. Upon becoming frustrated and powerless in her struggles she develops a *tendency* to give up hope and at times feels completely defeated. Defeat manifests itself in: depression/withdrawal, drained of energy to fight, give away power/control, etc.

CR₁: I'd say: "I'll have to tag along with them [sister and her family]." I didn't want to, but I would say: "that's okay, I have no other choice. . . ." I wished, I dreamed I'd be in my own house to be able to do what I wanted to, to be more settled, you know, that choice I did not have. Or the choice of going back to Iran, where I had a place, I had friends and everything. . . . I was caught. . . . I had to tag along with them. And

it really bothered me.

CR₂: So the whole thing was *really* disappointing and hard. And I failed the course . . . and after that I didn't want to speak a word of English to anyone!! I remember I hated it! . . . I didn't want to speak any more English. I used to love speaking English when I was in Iran.

CR₃: . . . but over here it was just like a dead end, like, it felt like, I'm going to die, so what? Should I? There was just no hope.

It was like when you're walking down a hill, you don't really have to walk because you would just get dragged down anyways. And it was like a pit, just fall and you'd just go down and down.

CR₄: . . . I have struggled and I have fought and I didn't know where I'm going to, I didn't know whether it's a fighting or not, sometimes. Because sometimes . . . I was so frightened and frustrated and sometimes I would sit there and say, "I accept anything" and I didn't know whether I can fight any more or not.

I felt as if I am fighting but I cannot get anywhere, I can't go higher because as much as I fight I get tired, like, you know. . . . I couldn't push myself to go higher [on the ladder].

20. Reviewing One's Self.

She stops to examine herself, others and the situation more realistically. She feels a need to act and begins looking for solutions and finding answers.

CR₁: . . . if you face problems and you're more on your own, you will get a

chance to know whether you can handle the difficulties or not. You get to realize your strengths and abilities. It was like examining to find out whether I could take care of myself or not. Whether I can handle my own problems or not, or would being on my own, being independent, make me happy or not? Is it what I want? I would've never been able to tell until and unless I experienced that. And being here, I think, has provided me more chances to experience that.

CR₂: In other words, you give this culture a chance. Maybe some of it is correct. And give yourself a chance to change, changes that make sense to me.

CR₃: One of the factors was facing the reality of what had happened. I faced myself with: "Yeah, you've failed your first year of university, you're still getting Fs in your sciences, you can't do this, you can't do that," and finally with these I was able to, sort of like a self-analysis, I was able to face them and do something about them.

CR₄: In a sense it made me realize the differences between me and them and how much I have to work, how much I have to experience, how much I have to be open-minded, how much I have to see, how much I have to get my views larger, to be, to accept those views . . . it made me realize how much I have to change myself, how much I have to see and to experience, to do to be more adjusted.

You get to a point that you have to do something about it. You can't be pulled any more. You have to do something about it and that's it! You set to a point where you say to yourself "no matter what, I have to find a solution for it." . . . And then you review yourself and you review your

situation. Who am I! What am I going to do? And you kind of sit back and figure yourself out, you come back to yourself and to me that's the point where you begin to understand yourself, you begin to grow.

21. Realistically Appraising the Homeland as it is.

She (gradually) comes to terms with the realities of the situation in Iran. She painfully realizes that her country has become an entity unknown to her. This insight, however, helps her let go of the desire to go back and to feel more at home here.

CR₁: It [the situation in Iran] actually helped. If the situation hadn't gotten so bad, the process might have been slower. I might have thought about Iran more and about going back. But when the situation got worse, it helped me to not think about it as much, it sort of helped me to accept the situation and the reality, the fact that I am here. . . . It sort of broke down my hope of going back to live there for ever.

Being here for five years and not knowing what's going on there, you really can't tell! It's like talking about the unknown. It's an unknown place.

CR₂: Some of these people say "would you go back?" and I say "no." And I guess that's when I think of Iran as what it is right now, I'm not stupid, it is hell! Who wants to go back?!

CR₃: This was Iran after the revolution. It was so strange because you were used to the specific kind of people and then all of a sudden . . . it's totally different. I felt left out--it wasn't my country any more, these were strange people that I didn't know.

Most of it was new. It's like going to another country [after going for a visit]. It's something else. It's completely new. Even the relationships are new, 'cause I've been away for five or six years. So I've definitely changed a lot. . . . It was different, very different . . . even right now, whenever I remember something about Iran, it's usually from the past, prior to my trip, most of the time, when I remember, it's from before . . .

CR₄: [I really realized that I won't go back] a year ago. About a year and a half . . . that's when I felt more settled. . . . It's a good feeling. It's a feeling that you, okay, it's like for six, seven years, you were carrying a disease within yourself. Something that's eating you up, or finally you're getting rid of it, and it's a good feeling, I feel guilty sometimes . . . but it's a good feeling. And I have, like it doesn't bother me any more to talk about it even if it be to Persian people. Like before I felt ashamed to say that, to feel that way, because . . . everybody is thinking one day they will go back. But I don't think this will be my case, you know, because finally I come to a settlement that I've got rid of the disease. . . . And that's it. When I think about my country it's as if I am thinking about thirty years ago, forty years ago, it's so, so far away, it's so far away that it's like, thirty, forty years ago, it's behind me, it's unreal, it's like gone, it's finished, it will never come again. . . . I don't think I know Iran any more. Because what I remember is not what it is now.

22. Recognizing Personal Potency/Power.

Looking back at the experience she realizes the magnitude of her power throughout the process. She takes responsibility for events over which she has had some control and takes pride in her strength to meet the many challenges of the process.

CR₁: . . . maybe if *I* were more friendly. You see, then, I always thought that

they were not friendly with me. I never thought it could be me. I never went to them, and yet I blame them for being unfriendly. I always blamed them [Canadian high school friends], not myself. But maybe it would have been different if I was different.

CR₂: I'm not being reasonable to expect more of myself, more than what I could do. For example, the doctor that I told you about, well look what's happened in his life, so he's a doctor at the age of 26, I'm not, so what? I cannot blame myself for what's happened, you know, I'd no control. . . . I did the best that anyone could do in these situations. . . . I never gave up. And I didn't, it wasn't easy, we knew that it is hard to leave Iran, you know, but I did it. It wasn't easy to learn Spanish, after a few months, after five months, I was able to do everything myself . . . [and] I haven't given up yet . . .

CR₃: Three years ago I would just be dragged anywhere, I couldn't care less. The only thing that I'm happy about is that I was still strong enough not to get involved in drugs or things like that, which I, the school part I don't give a damn about as long as I don't get involved in drugs or alcohol or any kind of that stuff, or God knows, you know, when you are in that state you can do a lot of things, so I'm really happy about that. . . . I'm proud of myself.

CR₄: I've proven myself and I've proven that they don't have any other choice but to accept me, you know what I mean? Like, it's not any more whether they're going to accept me or not, they will, they have to, they'd better. . . . I have struggled and I have fought and I didn't know where I'm going to, I didn't know whether it's a fighting or not, sometimes. Because sometimes when I think about all the way I came sometimes I was

so frightened and frustrated and sometimes I would sit there and say "I accept anything" and I didn't know whether I can fight any more or not, but you've come all the way and you've proven to yourself and proven to everybody that you can do it . . . !

23. Validation of Self.

She recognizes that her being/self is being validated by others in various ways and degrees. her self, which encompasses her ways of doing things, her ideas, her life experiences, her feelings, her achievements and skills and her culture and history, are validated through meeting and befriending people who understand or try to understand her, coming across Canadians who know (or are interested in knowing) about Iran, discovering people with whom she shares similar experiences, values, ideas, . . . , recognizing her accomplishments and realizing that others with similar experiences (of uprooting) have successfully completed the process.

CR₁: She was really something! She really was a good friend to me. She [a Canadian friend] was different. That's what I felt. I could easily talk to her. She could understand me. She helped me. You know, she didn't have the same cultural background as me, but she *could understand* me.

I've met some [Canadians] who know exactly everything about our country and I feel happy about that because you are known to them and that feels good!

CR₂: . . . now I look at my papers and I'm so thrilled, I can sit there and laugh at them for hours, when I read them! Anyway, I could feel the progress of my English. Like I used to go places, youth conferences and meetings and not understand a word of what they were talking about. And after six months I would go hear the same person talk and understand a

little more and after six months I understood more! . . . It was great!!

. . . I have a teacher, he is funny, he always goes to the girls and says: "would you marry me?," and he makes funny comments and one day he came to me and said, "did you have a nice weekend?" I said "no, not really," and he said "why not? Didn't your man take you on a wild night?" and so on. I said "what man?" and he said "you don't have a boyfriend?" I said "no." "Come on, such a pretty girl!" I said "well, I don't" and he said "so what do you do?" I said "I work." He said "you go to school five days a week and then you work!" I said "well, I have to." And he said "would you have a boyfriend if you didn't have to?" I said "I've had opportunities, but I didn't have one yet." And then I thought, "my God, now he'll think that there's something wrong with me" . . . it just didn't happen, I haven't met someone who I like. So next time he started asking questions, you know, just as a friend, "How come?" and "It must be hard" . . . and he started talking . . . and as he was talking we got to this point, he wants to marry too but he just doesn't meet the right person . . . so I came home and I thought "he is so popular at the school, everybody loves him! But he has nothing to do on his weekends? Nobody calls him, he cannot find anyone to marry to, and so it is not a problem, at least, it's not only *my* problem."

CR₃: Their age range was from, they were like 24 and above. . . . So I guess that helped, because these were people who had gone through the same experience that I had gone through, so they were familiar with it, and regardless of their age, forget about their age, they were mature people, and they weren't silly persons . . . and because they so reminded me of myself when I was back in Iran, of my wildness . . . and when I met these people, it just reminded me of myself five years ago, of what I was when I

was back in Iran.

. . . and I did work and I really started from the basic, like the lowest rank, and I went to the highest which was really good. They [my parents] were really surprised . . . it really gave me a sense of independence, which was really important, independence has always been an important issue in my life, so that was good. It boosted my self-image, because as I said, I moved five steps during the six month period, which was good. My ability to work, and be, this was a work I had never done, I had no knowledge about, I was able to learn it in a day and do it with perfection . . .

CR₄: Also my manager, used to be my manager, now she's my supervisor, she was a strong, how do I say that, when I see her, I see myself in twenty, thirty years and probably that helped . . . in a sense that she's doing fine and she's enjoying every bit of everything, every day she's enjoying it! And that probably helped me to see, to realize, "yes," you know, "you can be by yourself and still enjoy yourself and still be an achiever." . . . I probably needed to see, to get close to someone who is a little bit like me in a sense that, she's by herself, she has no kids, no husband, and she is still, she feels very successful, probably I needed to see somebody in that position.

And I think a lot of it, it's due to my job. . . . The achievement and the accomplishment, and it's funny, but when we go to a meeting, it's such a good feeling, everybody is Canadian except me, that is, I don't know how to say, that is an excellent feeling. . . . It feels really good. It feels as if you, it feels that you can tell them to accept you, it's not any more a question whether they're going to accept you, you're different, and it's a good feeling, you think as if you've gone, you've had more difficulties, you were stronger, you had to do a little bit more . . . to be where they are,

it's a good feeling . . . you've come a long way, and you've proven to yourself and proven to everybody that you can do it and it's a good feeling.

24. **Sense of Acceptance.**

She realizes that it is fine to be different and that it is also fine and necessary to make changes. She begins to accept others in spite of their differences--some of which she had found appalling in the beginning. She accepts her own individuality as well as that of others, regardless of differences in background.

CR₁: Until then, I didn't know that it [her being Canadian] doesn't matter. I used to think that maybe it did matter. But by being with her and talking with her I realized it doesn't have to matter. Because I don't always feel comfortable with Persians. There are some you wouldn't want to get close to at all, so I think right now it really doesn't matter.

CR₂: . . . before when I saw drunk people, for instance, I was scared to death of them. But now . . . of course, I don't like it because, my first reason is that when they're drunk they're not themselves any more and I don't understand why they do it and I don't like it . . . I cannot understand why they do it then, but I also found out that they enjoy it, I can accept it, so it doesn't destroy their whole image any more. They're drunk tonight, tomorrow they're the same people, so that's another thing that I came to accept. I now can make friends with people who do get drunk and that's very important to me, because before I wasn't able to. . . . I also found out that there are some people who don't drink. So I don't go by the "typical" Canadian image in my mind any more. I know that people are different from one another, which is good. Which was, I guess, a kind of discrimination before which I wasn't aware of. So there's less prejudice.

CR₃: And I went through a process of adaptation--it was difficult, but I'm still trying to get out of it, and I'm succeeding, succeeded so far . . . and I hope to make it even better . . . and if there are already the values that I've had, I sort of adjusted them so I could survive here, but still not lose my identity as an Iranian.

CR₄: . . . you have to change, not totally, you still can have your values and your, I mean, everybody is different from any other person, so you still can be different. And I know I am still different, but everybody is, everybody else is different from any other person.

25. **Exercising One's Personal Power (Acting on One's Personal Power).**

Having discovered her personal potency, she feels encouraged to exercise it. She does so by speaking her mind, taking a stand (particularly with parents), going after her dreams and facing her difficulties.

CR₁: The other thing that is a sign of maturity for me is the way I deal with my problems now. I don't panic at the thought of a problem any more. I handle them more calmly. For instance something happened to me last year and I thought "This is it! It is the end of the world for me!" Not any more! It's a kind of strength that I feel. I feel stronger now.

CR₂: . . . I always believed that if you can imagine something it means that you can do it, it can happen, and now my imagination can go farther. . . . So I can do anything.

CR₃: . . . I really wanted to go and study psychology. . . . I decided I'm going to study psychology, finally, I just said, I just got the courage to say [to my parents], "now I'm going to study it, now if you want to pay for it,

you can, if you don't, too bad, I think, I'll get a job."

CR₄: . . . when I first started this job. . . . I was a frightened kid. I wasn't the kind of person who would talk to two people at the same time in the same room, because I was so frightened. Now, I can do it, I can go to a meeting and speak my mind and say what I think.

26. Sense of Freedom.

She recognizes the freedoms and choices that Canada has offered her, particularly as a woman, and she admits to being a freer person now.

CR₁: . . . the meaning [of the experience] has been that I have found the freedom to choose, to do what I choose. I am more free!

If I was back home I couldn't feel that freedom. That's one of the things why I might not be able to live there, because of the sense of freedom. I might not have personal freedom and that might bother me. . . . I felt that freedom here. . . . this sense of freedom was really good for me and I felt it here.

CR₂: In Iran I had to struggle more as a woman. . . . I guess I'm expecting of myself more here, because I have more opportunities, more, so I'm obviously expecting of myself more.

CR₃: . . . over here, I think I'm just a bit more comfortable than I was back home. And I have more freedom.

Another thing that I realized when I went back, well before I came out of Iran, I was young and knew a little about the male dominated society we

had and then I came here and over here, there is *some* prejudice against women . . . but still it's not as bad as it was in Iran. But when I went back, I realized that it's worse than I ever thought it would be! So I guess one of the other problems that keeps me from going back is that. And I guess the problem has always been there, it was just under cover and they've just removed the cover. And it's such a shame! So I guess it's true that Canada has offered me that freedom, or at least a hope for it.

CR₄: One of the reasons I am happy and I can never regret it, I don't want to go back is really because I had a lot of choices, I had a lot of choices. And I believe choices is what makes you, what builds you. . . . Like, if you have a life without any choices, I don't think you can grow as much, . . . if you don't have any choice, you don't think, you're told in a way and you're going in that direction . . . and I'm happy and I'm lucky that I had the choice and I could find my way . . . I don't think I, if I was living in Iran, I don't think I would have had [as many choices].

. . . I think there is a lot of things that I would have never know if I didn't do it [come to Canada]. There's a lot more that I have to do, or to learn and thank God I am in a country that they will give me a chance to do it.

27. Sense of Having Grown Through the Experience.

She feels she has matured through this unique experience. She has grown to know herself and feels more whole/more grounded as a woman now. She has grown to rediscover herself and her identity.

CR₁: It was a maturing process! It was very good. Now, I'm not sorry that I

came. . . . I like Canada, because it's like my second country, this is my second life. I started to know myself here! I started to grow up here!

If I had stayed in Iran, I would've matured very late, much later. I wouldn't have had those growing experiences. I wouldn't have known life the way it really is so early in my life. . . . I'm really glad to have gone through all of this and to have gained the kinds of experiences that I did. Because it really changed me very fast, it helped me grow fast.

CR₂: I have changed. . . . I'm older in my age, then I'm older experience-wise, I'm expecting more of myself.

I think I've grown so much that, that I think nothing existed before. And because there is no end to growing and maturing, now I don't tend to depend so much on what I am *now*.

CR₃: When I went back and saw my friends, I really felt so proud of myself, 'cause I have grown so much having been here, and they were so surprised.

CR₄: [the meaning and outcome of this experience for me was] to know myself. To grow. . . . to be me, and I guess I had to pay a little bit in a sense that I had to leave half of myself in my country. But, I finally found myself. . . . [who is a woman] who is independent, who is looking for a life, for a fulfillment in life

. . . I know myself now, I know who I am, I know I've come a long way, but finally I've found myself, I know what is wrong and also what is good and what my values are, what I want to do and what I don't want to do. . . . Let's put it this way, I lost myself, then now I found myself.

28. Opening to New Possibilities/Establishing New Dreams.

She feels open to new ideas, new discoveries and new changes. She now sees life differently and feels ready to meet the challenges of the future.

CR₁: . . . I compare myself with my sister back home, the one who is still in Iran. She got married when she was 20, it's seven years now. I don't think the experience I had which helped me she went through. . . . Well, she's older than me, but I think much better than her. My values in life are much better, my expectations are much higher, my aspirations in life are much higher. If I were back home, I think I would've been married by now. And like her, I would've hoped for a big nice house and lots of money and a comfortable life, like the one I had when I was in Iran. . . . That's all she wants for herself, nothing else. And I know I would've been the same. Depending on other people and having a comfortable life. But my values are different now. Now I know life doesn't come easy, it shouldn't come easy. You have to work hard to make it worth living!

CR₂: . . . my world is bigger now, and I can think big, there is more diversity than I can imagine now. It is open now, my life can be anything. Before it was so limited, because of the environment and because of my experiences before. But now, I can improve myself because of what I see, all the good and all the bad that I see. Now I can see the choices that I have. . . . my world is, has no limits, has no end now.

. . . I have to decide something. Things have to change. They will have to change if I want to be something in this work [art]. . . . it's a change for the better, to me, because it's a new vision of life, you know, what is going around me, everything, every detail, every single thing around me will have a different meaning to me, you know, this is a whole new thing. So

it's not a change to be worried about. . . . I'm just expecting something to happen.

CR₃: I knew that I had to change some things, *now* it's as if it's written down for me. How do I explain this? Like sometimes you know you have to do something but it's always kept in the back of your mind and you never face it, now I'll face it. So, I guess it's taking it one step further of facing the changes in your life. I can't say that I'm anxious about it, 'cause there are going to be some bad things happening, but also some good things as well and, I think it would be very exciting though. It'll probably be something very new and I'm open to newness.

CR₄: I am more open. Open to new ideas, open to finding, open to probably not thinking, as I said before, not thinking about something right and something wrong. Probably before I was thinking whether, like if you want to do it, is it right to do it or not? Now I, at least, the least I can do is see it, experience it, and then find out whether it's wrong or right. Whether you like it or not, whether it's you or not. . .

[Now] you're looking for the challenges of the future. You don't want to wait. You go there to look for challenges. It's as if you can't wait any more!

29. Seeing Experience as Part of a Greater Plan (Sense of Destiny).

She has reached the conviction that having to go through this experience and being in Canada was "meant to be" for her--as if behind the experience lies a meaningful purpose.

CR₁: It could've been God's will. He really liked me to have a better life,

maybe He saw a better life for me here, maybe it was my destiny to come here.

CR₂: . . . and you hear about them executing ten women or ten men [Baha'is in Iran] and so on and you say, "my God, what on earth, why am I here?!" and you feel kind of guilty, and at the same time sometimes I think, you know, if God doesn't want you to do something, you cannot do it, no matter how hard you try. So there is a point to be here for me, and maybe I don't know yet, I'll find out sometime, or maybe the point is that here I can have a voice, and talk for those who have no voice there.

CR₃: For a time I thought, "is it really fair for me to go through all of this? They say there is a God out there. So where is he?!" After a while I realized maybe He wants me to go through all of this for a specific reason. That's why I've let go of any set plans and I've decided that if there is going to be a way, it will come and I don't really have to go after it. All I can do is prepare myself for any of the paths.

CR₄: I feel as if I was chosen to be here, as if it was meant for me to be here. Maybe me, as me, I had to be here and not the other girl next door--in Iran. I was meant to be here for a reason. . . . The reason to me is that I don't think, if I had stayed in Iran, I wouldn't have been the woman I am now and maybe the reason is for me to know myself, to be what I am and maybe to find the truth, whatever the truth is. . . . Maybe there is a reason and it lays ahead and I'll find it later.

30. **Sense of Uniqueness/Richness of Experience.**

She feels that she has experienced something that no-one else has had a chance to experience. This experience has added to the richness of her life. She also feels

proud that vis-a-vis the uniqueness of this experience, as well as the richness of her cultural background, she has contributed much to this country and to the world.

CR₂: My faith [helped], my faith in what was going on in general, in why were things happening and looking at the Baha'is being persecuted in Iran and then feeling guilty for a while, but then, I thought, well if somebody like me should leave Iran and come to a country like Canada and be able to tell people what is going on in Iran, for example. So this again is destiny, but I'm being useful again, I can do something here. And then I should do it as a duty, as a responsibility, so yeah, there is a meaning.

. . . I think it is a success for humanity as a whole that . . . immigrants bring something with themselves to this country, they add something to what is already there and as human beings, they learn something, you know, they learn things that they didn't know that existed before. So this whole process is a positive constructive thing that happens.

CR₃: Sometimes I think, well, if I had passed that year and so forth I would have finished university this year, but then I think back and I say, "well, I experienced something that hardly anyone has had the chance of experiencing . . ."

. . . when I came here, migrated here, I brought my biggest asset and that was my culture, my ideology from another country. And my biggest gift is that to Canada, and nothing more than that. No matter what I achieve here, that's the biggest one, so it's from my experience that obviously others can learn.

CR₄: . . . when I looked at myself and I saw that girl which I left in Iran, and when I looked at the other part of me which was in Canada, I felt I had the opportunity to see and to measure, to see Canada and what I can get from Canada and what I have which I can keep and what I don't like I can lose and get it from Canada . . . I thought, maybe a lot of people don't have it. That they don't have other things to compare, which I had and that made me feel good.

31. Sense of Stability.

She has established so much here that she feels partly rooted in this country. Moreover, her dreams and her future have moved to Canada and she looks forward to establishing even more. This is the home she feels she has now.

CR₁: You see, I keep saying "being here" and the reason is because I feel that I grew up here. The period between childhood and adulthood, I've spent here, in Canada. I've gone through the transition here. I went through the experiences here in Canada. So it will be easier for me to go through the rest here as well. I don't know, maybe if I had gone through this stage in Iran, it might have been easier to stay there. But . . . I kind of grew up here and that's different.

I don't see a future in Iran. I am planning for a better future in Canada.

CR₂: I guess somehow Canada is home, because you start something over again here and you establish something here.

CR₃: I can say that I'm more comfortable here, I feel more at home here. . . . And I guess I feel at home here because nothing is new to me, everything is familiar to me now, as if I've lived here all my life. So I guess that's

why I can say that I feel at home here. . . . Even right now if the regime changes [in Iran] we would still feel like strangers there.

CR₄: I finally got a chance to say it out loud! And yes, I call this country home and I'm happy to be here!

32. Re-affirming One's Roots.

Feeling very positive about the overall experience of immigration, she is still very much in love with the homeland and feels that she will, forever, remain Persian.

CR₁: Sometimes I say, "I belong here." But then sometimes I still feel that I belong there, because of my strong feelings for Iran. I love Iran! I can't accept to belong anywhere else

CR₂: . . . if I read a poem or something, and on occasions there'll be a song or something, and then it brings me to this world, to Canada and in my relationships to all these people, and I try to imagine myself married to a Canadian, you know, the best could be a Canadian who is willing to learn Persian. I don't know, a Canadian . . . who can accept me as a Baha'i, then everything would be just fine, we'd love each other crazy, but you know, there are going to be points when he is not Persian, and I want to be Persian like crazy, now what would happen?

CR₃: My roots? I guess in Iran, . . . that's where I grew up, my relatives, my friends, so I guess even now that I'm a Canadian, if someone asked me I would say Iran first, it's where I grew up . . . most of my life and most of what I am right now, I owe it to that, that kind of lifestyle.

I guess I'm more proud now of being an Iranian than ever before.

CR₄: I will always and forever feel Persian. But this is my home now. I am a Persian who lives in Canada and Canada is my home.

Narrative Description

Upon leaving her homeland, she realizes that she must break away and leave behind all that she loved and seemed precious to her--people, happiness, a home, memories, a part of her, and much more. Leaving all of that is difficult and painful, but she feels forced to leave. She feels pushed to leave because of the situation, which has left her no place in her homeland and no choice but to leave. But what is "out there" is unknown. What lies ahead of her, her future in a foreign land with people so different from her, is a question mark in the dark. Questions like "would I have to stay out of my country for the rest of my life?" (CR₃) puzzle and scare her. The vagueness of her future scares her, but she must leave.

Having broken away from her home and all that she left behind, she feels homeless and yearns to settle down "somewhere"--somewhere she can find stability. She arrives in Canada and realizes that the shelter she experienced back home is no longer there. At home, she had protection, security of being in her own country and with her own people. She had the stability of a way of life and certainty about her future. As if the "rug has been pulled from under her feet," she now feels insecure and disarmed of stability.

Missing home's sense of stability and security, she remembers all those precious things, places, people, feelings, moments, etc., that she left behind and yearns to have them back. She dreams, fantasizes, and has visions of home.

Amidst her longing for the much-loved homeland, she remembers why she is here and resents the force behind her being here. She feels chronically "locked out" of her own country, the country which was hers and belonged to her. The situation "back home" also angers her. She remembers the culture, the history, the literature, the people and everything that constitutes a nation and is now being destroyed by a handful of "mad" people, towards whom she feels much anger.

Angry at those who are destroying her home, she wonders if she could do anything to help (like staying and suffering with the rest of the nation). Knowing that there is little or nothing she can do, she feels powerless.

Being here and yearning for a home, she looks for a place to belong. She, naturally, is surrounded by people from her homeland/group and she naturally feels more comfortable with them. Befriending some members of her own group, she realizes that she is different from most of them in many ways. This insight is painful and leads to a sense of estrangement from her own group, and from the connections she has made thus far. She feels lonely and unfulfilled among the crowd of her friends.

In the meantime, her contact with Canadians tells her that she is very different from them and that she has little or no place in the society at large. Having failed to find herself a place where she would belong, she feels desperate to establish deeper connections with others (of any group). Trying to establish this connection, she finds herself explaining all of her actions, values, culture and background. She cries for understanding and acceptance.

Amidst and accompanying her seemingly endless struggle, she feels torn between her desire for autonomy and her love and respect for her parents, from whom she feels very different. This chronic sense of conflict with parents resumes to date and she constantly feels watched, judged, told to, and sheltered by, her parents whom she sees as trying to keep her strongly attached to their own ways of being.

In this tiring endeavour she experiences rejection at a very personal level and feels that her self is not being validated. The message she receives is this: "Your past, your way of thinking, your upbringing, your skills, your knowledge, your feelings, your values, your culture, and who you are (were) doesn't count here." What gives her this message is that she feels misunderstood by others, or that she is not hired for a job (or is fired from a job), or that she fails a course, or . . . Therefore, she feels very disappointed in herself to the extent that she

feels incompetent and incapable and in some instances "like a nothing."

Thinking and feeling "What am I worth, anyway?" and receiving messages that answer negatively, she begins to question her values, her upbringing and her identity, as well as the moral values of the society. Uncertainty and confusion prevail and she feels lost in her choices. She struggles to find an answer(s), but she becomes frustrated. She feels powerless, stuck and pushed out of control. Giving up sounds very appealing to her.

Having "hit the bottom" she feels compelled to act. Her first endeavour is to look back and put the experience into perspective. She now, more realistically, reviews herself and others in relation to the experience.

Still resentful about the situation back home and angered at losses her nation has experienced, she realistically reviews the situation of her homeland. She painfully comes to terms with a final loss. She realizes that her homeland, regardless of the felt emotional connection with it, is no longer what it used to be. She realizes that Iran has not remained what she had known for all those years. This painful insight helps her feel more grounded here. It helps her view Canada as her second home--as the home she has now.

In the course of reviewing her experiences, she realizes the magnitude of her potency throughout the process. She realizes that as defeated and helpless as she may have felt at times, she has never truly given up. Feeling proud of herself, she also feels empowered. Looking at the past and the present, she recognizes moments, events, experiences, in which the self became validated. How? She meets others (from any group) who are interested in her and in her background. She discovers others who show her more understanding and acceptance. She finds people who feel, think, and act similarly to her. She discovers people from whom she receives the message that she is on the right track of a successful adjustment. She works, learns, accomplishes and achieves. Her sense of being becomes validated and she accepts herself as she is. She tells herself that it is fine to be different and that it is fine for others to be different. She also realizes the need

to change in certain areas and accepts the change.

She feels ready to further exercise her power, at a more conscious level now. She begins to speak her mind and takes a stand with her parents. She faces her own problems, establishes her values and desires and feels strong enough to fulfill them. Her self-esteem rises.

She realizes that the experience has made of her a freer being. She now sees the choices she has had and still has. She feels freer to be and to act. She feels especially much freer as a woman. As well, she feels that she has grown and become more whole as a person. She concludes that the painful experiences of having to make choices, of having to struggle for acceptance, of having to take care of herself, of having to review her values, of having to meet the many challenges of the process, have shaped her and have made her grow. She realizes that the process has given birth to a more grounded sense of self. She has now established a more certain knowledge of herself and her identity, and this, she believes, is among the most valuable outcomes of the experience.

Having re-discovered and re-constructed her identity, she feels open to newness. She feels open to new dreams, new possibilities, new challenges and a new future here in Canada. She feels armed to meet her life's challenges and in some cases she feels anxious to meet them. She now looks forward to fulfilling her dreams and establishing new ones.

She realizes that in Canada she has established some, but never all, of the precious things she left behind in Iran. She feels partly rooted in this country and her dreams have, for now, moved to Canada. This has *now* become the home she has. And behind this painful, but rich, experience, which she will never regret, she sees a greater purpose. It is as if she was chosen to come, as if she was pushed out of her homeland and brought here to fulfill a mission and to accomplish something for herself and/or for humanity. Fully accepting the experience and regarding it as very worthwhile and meaningful, she contentedly admits that her central core, her central roots will forever remain in Iran, like the

roots of an old tree. She will forever love her country, miss it and remember it. She is thankful for this experience, but will forever remain Persian.

A Special Case

One interesting finding which renders support to the results of this study is the fact that one of the co-researchers (CR₃) had actually been able to go back to Iran for a short visit and upon her arrival there she had felt estranged from most aspects of her country--partly due to changes in Iran and partly due to changes she had undergone here in Canada. This incident had happened a few months prior to the validation interview. Interestingly enough, during the second interview she validated all the themes and the narrative description quite strongly and added that she, *now*, feels more at home in Canada (some of her statements pertaining to this experience have been quoted in the section on themes in this chapter).

A point worthy of mention is that she expressed that after returning to Canada, she had, once again, gone through almost the entire cycle of themes, but for a very short period (a few weeks). This exciting incident, I believe, can be considered as one lending more support to the results of this study.

CHAPTER V: Discussion

Through an analysis of the interviews with the co-researchers, thirty-two themes were formulated that describe the experience of immigration for Iranian women. Based on these themes, which were common to all co-researchers, a narrative description was produced which is a story about the essential structure and pattern of the phenomenon. The themes and the narrative description were validated by all co-researchers, in spite of the diversity of the women and the uniqueness of each of their experiences.

Limitations of the Study

The study described the structure of an experience common to the four women who were interviewed. It does not assume that the themes and the description encompass the entire population of immigrant women in this country. Neither does it assume that the story completely fits the experience of the entire population of single Iranian women who have migrated to Canada. The results of this study, I believe, can be of use in counselling Iranian women and possibly women from similar backgrounds. The extent of the application of the results, however, remains to be examined. It is possible that by interviewing a larger number of immigrant women, Iranian and other, additional themes would emerge and add to the richness of these findings.

The narrative description provides a foundation for future research in this area. The story, as told in the description, is not a long list of objective facts. Rather it should be viewed as an intricately intertwined tapestry which provides counsellors and researchers with more understanding of the experiences of immigration. I undertook this task with the hope that the findings of this study open up dialogue in new and unexplored areas of the phenomenon among those who are interested in the field of cross-cultural psychology. Future studies may

confirm, challenge, or add to these findings.

Theoretical Implications

The narrative description has, as any human story, a beginning, a middle and an end. The end completes the beginning and adds meaning to the middle of the story. The story of immigration acquires a wholeness with the ending and becomes an integrated and meaningful description of the phenomenon. However, the ending should not be viewed as the final stage of the process. The end in this narrative description is a beginning of a new process beyond, yet inclusive of, what has thus far been experienced. The construction of this story is "optimally the beginning of a continuing dialectic" (Cochran & Claspell, 1987, p. 39).

Rather than formulating a stage model in which the beginning of each stage is marked by a sharp and almost definitive ending of the one preceding it, the findings of this study can be presented as a five-act play whose acts are interwoven into a gestalt. Each act is significantly, but never exclusively, marked by certain features. The main character of this play is, of course, the immigrant woman.

Act 1 (themes 1-10) marks a strong sense of *attachment* to the homeland and whatever represents it. It is characterized by feelings of loss, fear, anger, resentment, blaming, insecurity and powerlessness. Memories of the homeland are strong. The woman tends to cling to her past and is afraid to let go. Her past is the context, the background, in which she knows how to operate and live. Her future is unknown.

The play continues as the woman sets off on a journey into this unknown future. Act 2 (themes 11-15) is marked by the woman's *awareness of differences and conflicts*. In this act the woman feels shocked, disillusioned, estranged, out of place, in need of acceptance and in need of a context in which to live and markers by which to feel, think and act. She throws herself on the mercy of

other people's (including her own parents) acceptance of her, only to become more conflicted.

Act 3 (themes 16-19) presents the very powerful middle of the story and is characterized by an almost complete *descent*. In this Act the woman experiences her whole being becoming *invalidated*. She feels stripped of self-worth, identity, direction and orientation, and of control and power. Sense of defeat is among the strongest of the emotions in this Act.

The play, however, does not end here. Not unlike the dialectic beginning of a synthesis, all that the woman has thus far experienced, inclusive of the rock-bottom experience, seems to bear potential for growth towards an integrated whole. Act 4 (themes 20-22) marks a *turning point* and begins with a touch of realism. In this Act the woman is compelled into a more realistic review of herself, others and the situation in the homeland. Reflection upon the positive aspects of her experience, as well as a more concrete detachment from home lead to a process of self-validation. The need to change in some areas becomes apparent and willingness to do so is created. Regaining some of her power, she continues her journey in an opposite direction.

The final Act (themes 23-32) is marked by a strong sense of *personal growth*. It is a reconstruction of all that had been destroyed during the process, and much more. Her sense of growth through the experience not only encompasses validation of self, reconstruction of identity, acceptance (of self and others), empowerment, sense of freedom, groundedness, openness and stability, it transcends all of the above, viewing the experience as a unique and meaningful spiritual journey with no end.

Significant in this five-act play is an approximate symmetry of the overall experience. A few examples will illustrate this point. Apprehension of Unknown (#3) is replaced by Openness to New Possibilities (#28). In place of Invalidation of Self (#16) stands the theme Validation of Self (#23). Search for Belonging (#10) and Feeling Out of Place (#13) are replaced by Sense of Acceptance (#24). Sense

of Insecurity/Instability (#5) transforms to Sense of Stability (#31) and so on. Moreover, by reflecting upon feelings associated with one, or more, themes, one can observe that most of the negative emotions felt at the beginning and the middle of the story are replaced, in the end, by positive emotions. This symmetry brings the experience to a completion, however, it should be noted that not all feelings go through a complete transformation. Some feelings such as Missing Home and Conflict with Parents only change in degree. Also, worthy of mention is that throughout the process relapses do take place and the woman may vacillate, from time to time, in her emotions.

Among the factors hindering the process of adjustment are: feeling rejected and/or misunderstood by Canadians or Canadian institutions, resentment at being forced out of one's country, conflict with parents, scope of differences with the mainstream society, language and financial difficulties (the latter two were not common across all interviews). Some of the factors that facilitated the process are: realizing similarities of cultures, language and skills acquisition, work and school accomplishments, receiving understanding and acceptance from others--especially Canadians, coming to grips with a more certain break-away from home, the multicultural nature of the Canadian society and the freedoms this society provides--especially for women.

Among the studies reviewed in Chapter II, those of Stonequist (1937) and Adler (1975) seem to render the most support to the findings of this study. Stonequist examined the experience of immigration from a phenomenological angle and assumed that the marginal person is only created when he or she experiences the conflict of cultures inside himself or herself. This, in a way, is reference to the "being-in-the-world" concept as discussed in this study (Chapter II). Stonequist stated that the experience is marked by fear of the unknown, homesickness and loss in its initial stages. The immigrant, Stonequist argued, is thrown into imaginations about what he or she has left behind. The above feelings are clearly present in Act 1 of the narrative description. Sense of loyalty and attachment to

the homeland, however, seem to be more strongly emphasized in the findings of this study. This latter finding seems to support Westwood and Lawrance's (1987) study in which involuntary migration tends to strengthen attachment to the land of origin and hinders the process of adjustment to the host country.

Like Stonequist's (1937) "Marginal Man," the co-researchers of this study felt "dépaycé" and, to some extent, "déclassé." Although the women in this study, at no point felt completely stripped of roots, for their emotional attachment to their roots remained strong to the end, the concept of "déraciné" applies to them inasmuch as according to Stonequist the *déraciné* "has lost something of his former self and has not yet acquired a new and stable self" (p. 6). Acts 2 and 3 of the narrative description tell of a loss of context which, when turned inward, leads to a loss of self and disorientation. Stonequist also touched upon the sense of struggle and defeat (theme #19) and argued that the immigrant blames others for his or her own failure to adjust, concluding that the differences are too great to bridge.

Stonequist (1937) likened the stages of adjustment to "the protected environment of childhood, the widening of social contacts and ensuing conflicts of adolescence, and the necessary accommodations of maturity" (p. 122). This analogy seems to fit the overall experience as described by the co-researchers where in Act 1 the woman seeks protection from the familiar, and in Acts 2 and 3 she becomes conflicted and confused upon facing realities of both cultures and in Act 5 she strives for personal growth. Stonequist states that, in the end, the adjusted immigrant finds herself or himself again and reconstructs a new concept of self and a new place in society--a process which he referred to as "re-birth." This seems to fit the experience of the co-researchers in Act 5. The women in this study are seen to assume the role Stonequist coined "intermediary," which leads to an "accommodation and rapprochement" between the two clashing cultures. Stonequist's conclusion about the significance of understanding one's self and never denying one's heritage in order for a successful adjustment to take place supports the women's

experience of re-affirming their roots (theme #32).

There are also many similarities between the co-researchers description of factors affecting the process of adjustment and those described by Stonequist (1937). Both studies indicate that experience of rejection from the host society, lack of skills and language, experience of great gaps between the two cultural orientations, lack of emotional support from one's own cultural group are among hindering factors. Acceptance in a host culture via work and friendships, pride in one's accomplishments, language and skills acquisition and the experience of equality and freedom of cultures (i.e., pluralism/multiculturalism) are among facilitative factors discussed by Stonequist as well as the women in this study. Moreover, Stonequist found that sense of identification with a meaningful movement or task significantly facilitates the process. This view is supported in themes #29 and #30 of this study in which the co-researchers discover meaning in their individual experiences and see their roles as significant in fulfilling a mission, either for themselves or for others (e.g., CR₂ said: " So there is a point to be here for me, . . . maybe the point is that here I can have a voice and talk for those who have no voice there."

Adler's (1975) alternative model of culture shock also seems to render some support to the findings of this study. Adler, too, assumed that the individual is forced to re-define his or her identity upon the awareness of cultural differences (Act 2). Although ignoring the significant feelings of loyalty and attachment to the homeland, Adler's first stage (Contact) bears some resemblance to Act 1 and parts of Act 2 inasmuch as the women in this study tend to look for "insulation," shelter and reinforcement by clinging on to their past and to the familiar. Sense of similarity of cultures, however, does not come to the foreground of the women's perception at any time in the first Acts of the narrative description.

Stage 2 of Adler's (1975) model (Disintegration) supports the findings of this study as illustrated in Act 3 of the play. Confusion and disorientation and loss of identity are felt most strongly in this Act. Stage 3 of Adler's model

(Reintegration) resembles, to some extent, the experience of the co-researchers as described in Act 2 of the play. It is in this Act that, as Adler stated, (in Stage 2) rejection and blaming of the host culture takes place. It is important to note that neither Adler nor Stonequist place any emphasis on the experience of disillusionment with, and estrangement from, one's own cultural group, which has been a significant component of the women's experience in this study.

Adler viewed the negative reactions of immigrants depicted in this Disintegration and Reintegration stages of his model as healthy and constructive for forming a basis for personal growth. This dialectic approach seems to support the findings of this study, since in Act 4 of the play the women are compelled to review themselves and to begin striving for personal growth. Stages 4 (Autonomy) and 5 (Independence) of Adler's (1975) model render support to Act 5 of the narrative description. Sense of acceptance, strength and groundedness are among experiences discussed in these two stages and resemble themes 24, 25 and 27 of this study. Adler's study most significantly supports the theme Openness to New Possibilities (#28). At this stage, stated Adler, "the self and cultural discoveries have opened up the possibility of other depth experiences" (p. 18) and the person, having discovered meanings in situations (themes #29 and #30) feels ready and open to explore the diversity of other human beings, to explore new discoveries, to undergo further transitions and to be challenged again (very similar to what the co-researchers express in theme #28). As apparent in the five Acts of the play and very similar to Adler's conclusion, the transitional experience begins with an encounter with a new culture and evolves into an encounter with the self. The individual views the experience as an integrated gestalt and the process of growth continues.

Stonequist's keen observation of the experience of immigration done in 1937 and Adler's (1975) alternative perspective on the experience of culture shock support much of the findings of this study. However, I believe that this study, pertaining particularly to women, and based on the as-told description of their experience, adds

to the richness of both studies and unfolds a more detailed understanding of the many steps involved in the process. This is particularly true of the phase which Stonequist refers to as "re-birth" and Adler calls Autonomy and Independence. This study, via themes #23-32, presents a much more detailed description of the adjustment phase in the experience of immigration.

Atkinson, Morten and Sue's (1979) Minority Identity Development (MID) model, also, bears resemblance to certain significant aspects of the experience of the co-researchers as presented in the narrative description. Stage 1 of the MID model (Conformity) does not apply to the co-researchers of this study, since as confused as they had felt, at no point did they view their own group's characteristics as sources of shame. The confusion and conflict emerging in the Dissonance stage of this model (Stage 2) are present in Acts 2 and 3 of the play and are most apparent in themes #15 (Conflict with Parents) and #19 (Sense of Struggle) of the study/ At Stage 3 of the MID model (Resistance and Immersion) the individual rejects the host culture and returns to his or her own group, held views in search of acceptance and self-worth. These reactions are present in parts of Acts 1 and 2 of the play and are most apparent in themes #10 (Search for Belonging) and #13 (Feeling Different and Out of Place).

The next stage, Introspection, is typified by the individual's discontent with his or her own group views. Themes #11 (Sense of Estrangement) and #12 (Superficiality of Connections) seem to resemble this discontent, but are more strongly expressed in this study. Also in the Introspection stage of the MID model, (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1979) the individual is seen to feel torn between his or her desire for autonomy and that of allegiance to her or his group. For the women in this study, this inner conflict is most strongly felt in the theme labelled Conflict with Parents, since parents most apparently represent views held by the women's own group. Moreover, in the Introspection stage the individual is seen to go through a process of selection based on his or her experience with individual members of the host culture. Similar to the above process, in Act 4 of

the narrative description, the woman goes through a process of reviewing herself and others and chooses those positive experiences which lead to a more realistic understanding of herself and others in the overall experience. Themes 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 32 are present in the last stage of Synergetic Articulation and Awareness of the MID model, where the individual establishes his or her identity, is led to a strong sense of self-worth, self-confidence, self-fulfillment, autonomy and freedom of choice, feels proud of her or his cultural background and feels accepting of individuals regardless of cultural differences or similarities.

Being primarily a model of identity development, the MID model has, naturally, emphasized that particular component of the experience of minority group members, who may or may not be first-generation immigrants. Identity development, though one of the most significant elements of the co-researchers' experience, constitutes one aspect of the overall experience of immigration. Therefore, I believe, the findings of this study encompass a wider scope of experiences and add to the significance of Atkinson, Morten and Sue's (1979) observations.

The three models of acculturation discussed in the beginning of Chapter II touch upon segmented aspects of the overall experience of adaptation. For example, Goldlust and Richmond (1974) observed that the adaptation process is affected by the three factors of pre-immigration conditions, length of residence in Canada and situational determinants in the host culture (e.g., pluralism). Among facilitative factors in the adjustment process of the women in this study coming to grips with the reality of the situation in Iran and the multicultural nature of the Canadian society seem to resemble the factors discussed by the above authors.

Berry's (1980) findings resemble those of this study inasmuch as a phase of conflict follows contact with the mainstream society and the person feels an urge to act and to adapt. However, Berry viewed adaptation as the process through which the individual tries to reduce the conflict--a rather hedonistic approach. Whereas adaptation and adjustment, as described by the co-researchers in this study, goes

far beyond a mere reduction of conflict (though it may begin with it) and develops into a meaningful process of growth and integration.

Padilla (1980) developed a typology model of acculturation. He categorized as highly acculturated those immigrants who have: a) low ethnic cultural awareness (e.g., lack of familiarity with ethnic language and/or history) and b) low ethnic loyalty (e.g., preference for American food over food and/or choice of English as language spoken at home). This view, together with that of Goldlust and Richmond (1974), in which the authors measured acculturation partly by measuring the transference of the immigrant's loyalty from his or her country of origin to the new, are both rejected in the themes and the narrative description emerging from this study. The women's stability in this country is seen to be strongly connected to a re-affirmation of their roots and their cultural heritage. Loyalty to the homeland, in their case, remains strong to the end.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study can be expanded upon in a number of different ways. One way is to replicate this study interviewing a larger group of Iranian women and continuing until reaching saturation--the point at which no new themes emerge. Researchers may also find it useful to replicate this study with a different group of immigrant co-researchers. Men or women from other countries may be interviewed. Married women or immigrant families may be looked at. Moreover, other approaches may be used. For example, researchers may find it useful to use the Critical Incidents method (Flanagan, 1954) to investigate more specifically those factors which facilitate or hinder the process of adjustment for immigrants.

I believe, however, that questions which emerge from the findings of this study--from the content of the story itself--are the ones most worthy of attention and investigation. For example, researchers may want to investigate whether the

descent, the rock-bottom experience (depicted in Act 3 of the narrative description), is a *necessary* component of the adjustment process. In other words, does one have to hit the rock-bottom in order to have a successful adjustment and to grow? If yes, is the scope and degree of descent a determinant of actor in the degree and pattern of adjustment? If so, how? Finding answers to the above research questions, I believe, can sharpen the findings of this study.

Also emerging from the findings of this study is the question of age in relation to the phenomenon of immigration. One research question worthy of investigation is: would the process have a different ending if the women were at a different stage of their lives. Or, would investigating the experiences of a mixed group (age-wise) of women render similar results?

The results of a similar study using a group of voluntary immigrants in this country may also add to the significance of this study and provide more understanding of the phenomenon of involuntary immigration versus that of a voluntary one. Another key finding of this study has been the significance of self-validation/invalidation in the process under investigation. Future researchers may wish to use the existential-phenomenological approach to investigate the meaning of the above depth experiences for those who migrate to this country. I believe that investigating research questions discussed above (and many more that may emerge from the results of this study) will cast significant light on the experience of immigration for cross-cultural counsellors and researchers.

Implications for Counselling

For the counsellor, understanding one's client is the starting point of any successful counselling experience. Apparent from the results of this study is that feeling misunderstood by Canadians and Canadian institutions had been a significant hindering factor in the process of adjustment for the co-researchers. Feeling misunderstood is also discussed as a major contributing factor which led the

co-researchers into feeling invalidated. Therefore, I believe, that cross-cultural counsellors can use this study as significant material that can help them more fully understand their immigrant clients, particularly those with similar backgrounds to that of the co-researchers of this study.

The results of this investigation have been presented in a narrative form, in which the process has a beginning, a middle and an end. Hence, it is very important that the counsellor assess the point at which his or her client is when presenting his or her problem. In other words, it is crucial to make interventions at appropriate times in the process. For example, trying to help the client discover meaning from his or her experience (Act 5) may prove ineffective and futile if the client is still struggling with his or her sense of loss and attachment to the homeland (Act 1). An appropriate intervention, in this case, would be to, first, acknowledge and deal with the loss, allowing the client to grieve over it. Having understood the client's feelings and behaviours depicted in the beginning Acts of the description, the counsellor can, then, become effective in helping the client realize his or her strengths. Also, validation of the self is an important component of the overall process. The counsellor can become a significant agent in facilitating this process of validation by: respecting and understanding the client's past, helping the client understand himself or herself, emphasizing similarities of cultures, sharing with the client similar experiences and values, and helping the client change according to his or her own choice.

Only after having "walked" (and not rushed) the client through these processes, can the counsellor help the client extract meaning from the experience. Based on the co-researchers' own descriptions, this final process, of viewing the experience as meaningful, completes the process of adjustment. Hence, discovering meaning in the experience is therapeutic and is to be viewed as an important component of the counsellor's intervention. The counsellor, at an appropriate time, may even want to share with his or her client the themes and narrative description of this study, since according to all the co-researchers the mere telling

of their stories and discussing the themes and the narrative description was a valuable process which sharpened their insight into the overall experience and brought into it yet another meaning.

As for myself, listening to, reflecting upon, and writing about, these stories have helped me to feel even more grounded in Canada and have added so much more to my experience of immigration, giving it a new meaning.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the meaning of the experience of immigration as it is lived. The question asked was: What is the experience of immigration for Iranian women? To answer this question, an existential-phenomenological approach was used. Four Iranian women who had migrated to Canada and were feeling settled in this country were interviewed. During the first set of interviews the co-researchers were asked to describe their experience, telling the story from the beginning to the time they felt adjusted in Canada. During the first interviews the researcher was fully present to the person of the co-researcher. Using questions appropriate to each co-researcher and the content of her story, the researcher probed for understanding the meaning of the experience. The first interviews were audio-taped and transcribed into protocols. The protocols were analyzed according to the method described by Colaizzi (1978). Significant statements were extracted from each protocol and arranged in three groups labelled "beginning," "middle" and "end." Using the process of creative insight, meaning units were formulated for each statement. Meaning units common to all protocols were, then, grouped together and labelled as themes. The themes were organized in an approximately sequential manner and were, then, woven into a narrative description of the experience of immigration.

During four audio-taped validation interviews the themes and the narrative description were verified by all the co-researchers. Suggested changes were

incorporated into the final results (Chapter IV), which were, in turn, validated through a short third set of interviews.

The narrative description, which was created on the basis of the thirty-two themes emerging from the protocols, tells the story of immigration as lived by the co-researchers. Further reflection upon the cluster of themes and the description of the experience produced a play whose five acts each highlighted significant steps involved in the process. The play presented a flowing symmetry of the experiences which started with a sense of loss and attachment to the homeland, continued into an awareness of differences and conflicts, a sense of self-invalidation and disorientation, reviewing oneself and the experience, and found completion in a process of personal growth, discovering meaning and stability.

The story, though supported by a number of previous studies, provides a more profound and complete picture of the meaning of the experience of immigration and adds to the richness of available literature in the field. As an immigrant woman and a cross-cultural counsellor, I found the study personally and professionally fulfilling and meaningful.

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APPENDIX A

Interview #1--Case CR₁.

A: Do you now feel more settled in Canada? More adjusted?

CR₁: Yes I do. It's not like I'd really like to stay here, but I'm more settled that five years ago. It's much better.

A: Okay. You just start from when you were going to come out of Iran. What was it like? What were

CR₁: I came out in September 1979. It was the first time I was leaving home, leaving my parents, leaving Iran to be alone. So the time I was coming--it was really hard for me. Like, I had my sister here and I knew my parents were coming, but still I was alone, it was really hard for me to be alone. So the time I was leaving--it was really hard. I knew I had to leave all my friends--and I thought I wouldn't be back for a long time. And I really loved Iran. I was not very old, but still, I loved it there. I spent most of my life there. So it was really hard for me to leave. And I thought, well, first, I thought: "okay, I'll come here, I'll stay and then I'll go back if the situation stays." And when I left, it wasn't very bad. But still when you are leaving . . . everybody at the airport--oh! It was very hard! So I was coming--I was 17 when I left, I was a kid at that time--and I had lots of dreams about Iran. I had good times. I had good friends. So I did not want to leave! It was mostly my parents who wanted me to come.

A: CR₁, you're telling me you had lots of dreams--can you tell me what you mean by that?

CR₁: Like, I had good friends there, I had good times, when you're young you have good friends to be with, to go out with, you know, you skip classes, and it was really fun for me. I had good friends and we were really close. It was hard for me to leave all of them behind, so when I left

A: You said that your parents wanted you to leave

CR₁: Yeah, they wanted me to come

A: Can you talk about that?

CR₁: Okay. My sister was here. First, they asked me if I wanted to go. So I said "no, I don't." But then it got serious and I thought more about it and then I really didn't want to go. And I thought: "No! I really don't want to go! I don't want to leave here!"

A: What was the feeling you had when you thought "God, it's serious now?"

CR₁: It was very bad. It was awful! I didn't want to leave, I didn't want to, first of all, I don't know, I felt very bad. Like, the night before I left, it was awful for me. I had all my friends over and I was crying and I said: "I don't want to go!" But then my father and mother said: "It's better for you to leave. You cannot study here. It's much better for you--much better future for you there, especially when your sister is there." But as I said, when you are young you think . . . and the situation in Iran wasn't still very very bad and I thought: "It's always going to be like this, it's always going to stay" and I have always

enjoyed my life in Iran--you see I never thought about the future--what's going to happen next--what will the future be. I thought this is life--it's enjoying yourself! So that really bothered me. And I was young. I was seeing someone. I didn't want to leave him. And that really hurt. Well, I was young and right now when I think about it, it feels so stupid but at that time you didn't want to come. Anyway, I went through all of this and then my parents said they're also going to come.

A: CR₁, when you say "all of that," I can feel your experience. Can you use an image or a metaphor to tell me what it was like--when you were leaving, what was it like? Use a metaphor if you can.

CR₁: Ah, it was like, I knew I could go back, but it was like, when you are leaving something, there's something that you are losing. There was something, you had something and you are losing it, and you know that it is hard to get it back. There was a girl working for us in our home, she had been with us for 20 years and we were very close and the most important thing for me was losing her. She used to tell me: "I know, if you go, I know you're not coming back. I won't see you again!" So, right now, still now, the most important person I really miss is her. I haven't seen her for five years! She really, we really well she was 11 years older than me but she was like my mother, we were really close, and I really loved her. She really cared for me, she was always there for me. And I know, right now, I think back and I can see that it really bugs her. You see, as a kid I always was cared for (by her). I told her to do this for me, to do that for me, and really didn't want to leave her, I didn't want to leave her, and my friends and Iran and everything. So I came out of Iran, and I was crying the whole time. It's seven hours to London or something. And I was crying the whole time. It was my first time on my own like that. I didn't know what the outside world was like. I'd never been alone. Always my parents were around me, whenever I needed them. So it was kind of scary, in a way I was glad that nobody was around me at that time--not that I was leaving Iran, but that I was alone . . . that "I can take care of myself . . . independence . . . but in a way I was scared, I was hurt, I

A: Hurt?!

CR₁: I didn't want to come--I don't know how to say it. It was painful! When I left I was glad that my parents aren't around me, I can do things on my own--I can be independent--but on the other hand, I didn't want to leave, I didn't want to have that! I thought: "I still have a lot of time for that independence." But Iran and everything else back there was more important for me than independence. And you know the life I had back there with my girlfriends . . . you know parents won't let them grow and . . . you know what I mean? They're always there . . . they don't let them become independent . . . to take care of themselves . . . they always shut them down. So I had that feeling, even till two or three years ago . . . it was . . . till I had to prove to them that I am grown up or something, so it was always them around me.

Anyway, I came to London and I had to wait for another flight to come to Vancouver. Then I came here--I was so excited! I hadn't seen my sister for four months, I missed her. So I came. The first day I was happy. I didn't feel . . . I said: "Okay. I'm out!" I thought "I'm going to stay here for four months, then in the summer I'm going to go back, visit my friends and everybody"--so I had that hope in me. I came with the hope that every summer I will go back. I came. I visited my sister--my brother-in-law came to pick me up. My sister and my aunt were all here but they didn't come to the airport to pick me up. I was kind of upset. I thought: "where are they?" I expected to see them there,

but my flight was two hours late. So that's why they came to the airport and then they had to go back.

Anyway, the first day, it was really good. They showed me everywhere and so on, but the first week passed and the second week I started to feel homesick. I started to say, "Okay, so this is Vancouver!" There was nothing special, I didn't know anybody! My sister, they knew some people, but they were all old. They were not my age. So I had no friends here. I couldn't talk with people, I couldn't understand English very well. I couldn't understand television. I felt homesick. My aunt was going to classes in the morning. Same with my sister. They were going to school and I had to stay alone the whole morning. I sometimes watched T.V. or wrote letters. That was my only thing. My hope was writing letters to all my friends and getting excited about what's happening back there, to see what they are doing as a group, and I kept telling them: "I'm going to come back in the summer, I'm going to come and see you guys." So when a couple of weeks passed, my parents called and said they were going to come in a month or two. And I think what really got into me was that . . . my sister, they weren't settled down. They were deciding on going to the States, moving from one place to another--that really gets into you--and you move from your home town and you leave your home--if you go somewhere and settle down, it's okay, but if you don't know what's going on--whether you are going to the States or you are staying, which school are you going to, you don't know English--it was hard for me. First, they decided to go to the States. They did everything. But then they decided to stay here. Then we moved from one home to another in North Vancouver, then to another one, then I went to a school, the same school that my aunt and my sister were going to for English. I went there for four months. Then I started to know some Greek people. There was another Iranian girl there. So I started to know some people. But I couldn't communicate because they didn't understand English well and I didn't know English well. Most of them were older than me, so it was much better than the first days, but I still felt upset--I wanted to go back.

A: So you still missed

CR₁: I still missed Iran! I still do!! But at that time it was, it was about two months that I started to go to that school, but I still missed Iran. I started to get to know a Greek girl. Her name was Nina, we went out together and we were getting close. But you see, at that time my parents were not here and my sister really didn't let me go out much, most often, so I couldn't go out with her--I didn't have any permission to go out at night or anything, because my sister would say: "Your parents are not here, I have to be careful. I am responsible and I have to take care of you." So I just saw her at school. Well, once she came to our place and once I went over. Anyway, I went to that school for two months. Then my parents came and by then I missed them very much so I was glad to see them. It was some kind of a change for me. I spent a lot of time with them. We went to places together. But we still didn't know anybody. Like I didn't have any Iranian friends and I really missed that. Because at home I had lots of friends. And I had to talk to people! I had to talk to someone my own age! And you know, it was really hard.

A: How about Canadian friends?

CR₁: At that time I really couldn't speak good English and I couldn't communicate with them--I couldn't tell of my feelings--especially when you, even now I can't--they don't understand. But when you can't even speak the language, you can't explain to them at all! You know what I mean? And the school I was going to--there were hardly any Canadians. They were all immigrants, not even

immigrants, they were mostly tourists and visitors--yes; it was hard. And then, as I said, my mom and dad came and we were doing things together. And I told you that my sister and her husband were going through difficulties at the time, you know, not having jobs, not having settled, and so on and so forth. And I went through the same things. You see, before I came here I hardly knew what life was. I didn't know what money meant. Do you know what I mean? When I came I wanted to spend--I wanted things for myself, I wanted to buy things. And my sister kept telling me: "You have to be careful. Life is different here. You cannot have everything. You cannot afford everything." That upset me! It felt as if I could not have anything! First I had to move out of my country without wanting to, and now I was told that I was going to be deprived of things I wanted for myself. I remember very well that when I had first come I told my sister that I was going to buy myself a nice bedroom with everything! But you know my sister said: "You are still dreaming! Wake up! This is not Iran. Things are different here. You have to be careful how you spend!" And it really, it suddenly got into me: "What am I doing here?! Why did I come?! I had the best things in life back there, how come that suddenly changed?!"

A: So you were starting to question

CR₁: I was questioning myself, the situation--I was a child! I didn't know much really. Right now as I think back, I really didn't know what was going around me, I don't know how to explain it. I was naive, I was real naive, and I started to question myself: "Why did I come?" I wanted to go back. I remember, sometimes I cried alone--I went to my room and cried. I really felt homesick. Whenever I told my sister she tried to help me, but there was nothing she could do. I really wanted to go back, but it was too late! I'd already come and it was almost three months. I couldn't go just after three months! So I cried . . . and sometimes I talked to my mother on the phone and told her that I missed home and that I wanted to go back, and my mother kept saying: "We are coming pretty soon. Please don't say you want to come back. Wait and see--you'll forget when you start going to school." And that went for four months. I still felt very homesick. I didn't know anybody. I hardly had any friends. My only hobbies were to watch television and understand nothing or to go shopping and buy nothing! (laughs). So that was the only things I did--it was very frustrating--real hard! For me, leaving home and being alone, well my sister was there, but she wasn't like my mom, being there always to do everything for me--that was good actually! But she wanted me to do everything myself and that was hard for me. I was coming to a world that I didn't know anything about. I hardly knew people and I had to do things by myself. I had to go to the bank. Withdraw money, be responsible for money--I had hardly ever done anything like that before.

A: So you're saying that you missed the safety and security that you had at home.

CR₁: Yeah, I missed that.

A: And you were here to deal with reality now.

CR₁: But I didn't want to accept that! At that time I didn't want to be independent! I didn't really know what it meant! How it feels to be independent, how free you feel after you have your independence! You know, I thought: "For now, I have to be dependent." Because I didn't trust myself! I didn't have the self-confidence that would assure me that I could take care of myself, well especially here, in another world, in another culture, with another people! I didn't have that self-confidence, I didn't have the trust in myself to become independent.

A: So you didn't accept it.

CR₁: I didn't accept it. I said: "I have to depend on somebody, there has to be always someone to take care of me! Then my parents came and they were protective. They were taking care of me, so I did feel good. You see, I was the last child and I was spoiled, kind of. I still am! Sometimes I am overly protected. I want to get away from that! Anyway, one day me and my sister were shopping and we met an Iranian lady. She found out that we were Iranian and she told us that she was holding a New Year party that if we didn't know anybody we could go to her party. So we did go and met some people. That was the first time we got to know some Iranians. And I met some of my own age, my own group. I started to make friends with them that night. I was there for about three to four hours and I kept asking for their phone numbers. I wanted to be friends with them. I *needed* friends! I needed to be friends with them! I did meet some people over there and they would sometimes come to my place or I would go over. But my mother did not really trust me, then. You see when I was back home (laughs) I was going out with that guy, but I was hiding everything from her, and then when I came, she found out everything and she couldn't trust me any more! She would not allow me to go out at night or she would not let me do this or that! When I came to Canada, I was smoking and my sister and my mother didn't know, but after I started school they found out, and so you see . . . Well, when I got to know these people, I did go out with them. Mostly to movies in the mornings. But, you see, I wasn't in school and they were, they had been living in Canada for three, four years . . . Well, then I went to Columbia College in January. It was there where I got to know some Iranians. I got to know A. (her best friend) and everybody else there. So at that time when I started to go to the college I felt a lot better, because I knew more people. But still, . . . and then I said: "Okay, I'm here! There's nobody to take care of me. I can do whatever I want!"

A: Can you elaborate on that a little?

CR₁: You see, after four months that I had been here, I thought, "okay. My parents are not here," that's before they came, I was alone. My sister was here, but she really couldn't concentrate on me so much. Then I felt: "I have all these friends. I know a lot of people. I can be with them. I want to go out. I can do the things I couldn't do in the last four months!" So I felt a little bit more free. So, *now* I wanted to have that independence. I wanted to be *free*. I was happy then. I wasn't in my childhood. I was excited. I was full of life now! I still missed it. But you know how young women are like. To be happy and to be with people. To know people, to start learning some English. And, I hardly concentrated on my studies. I was just, what do you call it, . . . (trans.: childlike excitement, in a playful mood). Let me explain: I was in a place very unlike high schools back home. Where you're instructed and pushed to study. Here I was on my own! And I didn't understand how it feels not to study, I didn't feel the consequences of not concentrating on your school work. I thought: "Well, there's nobody to tell me to study. And my parents won't find out if I failed a course. So I really wasn't into studying at that time. I was just making friends, I don't know, I didn't want to study. I wanted to live! I spent most of my time in the cafeteria. I missed my classes because there was no one to make me study. And always in my life, there had been someone to push me into studying or into doing things. At that time there wasn't anybody! Well, when I came home, I spent some time studying. But at school I felt like a grown-up who can do whatever she wants. And I felt free to choose not to study. "If that's what I want," I said to myself, "that's okay. Who cares anyway? If I miss a class or two, it's my problem and there's nobody to tell me what to do, to push me. There's no punishment or anything."

A: Tell me what was the difference between the system you were used to in Iran and the one here?

CR₁: Well a big difference. I was in grade 11 in Iran. And you know it is, there they make you take courses and you have to pass them. They really push you and the teachers are strict, real strict. You have to study hard. You can't miss classes, they keep in close contact with your parents and so on. But suddenly I came to a different school system. Columbia College was for Student Visa students. It was completely different. I was all on my own in school. The teachers wouldn't push you. They would just give you assignments and you know what colleges are like--you are on your own. You either do it or you fail. And it's all up to you. So there was no external pressure, and that was good, for a while I felt good. I felt I could be on my own then. And you see, most of the Iranian students there were older than I. They were around 24-25 and I was only 18. There were young me there and I was so excited to be among them. I felt like an adult. I thought: "I belong in their society. I'm an adult now!" Well when I was back home my sisters were older than I was and they were both married. I was the youngest and they always thought of me as a child. They could never accept me in their circles, in their group. If they did . . . right now I feel that most 14-15 year old Iranian girls go through the same thing. They are not children, but they aren't adults either. I always felt older than my age. Like when I was 18, I felt like in my twenties. I always wanted to be part of an older group, part of the adult society. But they had difficulty accepting me because of my age. So in college I felt glad to be part of the adult society. They were treating me as a person. Do you know what I mean? You have respect, you're somebody!

A: So you felt significant.

CR₁: I felt I'm a somebody! They have respect for me. They are polite to me. The guys respect me not because my parents are around me and they feel they have to respect me, but because of me!! I felt like somebody. They talked to me. They sometimes shared their secrets with me. And I felt good. I felt I belonged to a group! I was being an adult, and that really felt good.

A: CR₁, these were only Persian guys?

CR₁: It was only with Persian guys, with Persian people. I felt like that amongst Persians. But still, at that time I was trying to keep myself busy so that I would not think of going back. I was trying not to think about Iran and to keep myself busy. I was trying to think of some other things besides Iran. And then my parents came and told me that I cannot go back for the summer. That I had just come. No, they didn't let me go back to Iran. Because they thought I had just come and had been here only for four months and that it was too soon. They told me that nothing had changed since I left. They thought that I should at least stay for a year and then go back. So I did not go that year. And I had lots of fantasies about going back. I had been fantasizing about what I would do, where I would go and about seeing my friends. I was here in September and I wanted to go back in June sometime, it was about eight months or something.

A: CR₁, you tell me you were trying not to think about Iran. I want to ask you--what happened when you *did* think about Iran?

CR₁: I felt homesick. I wanted to be there at that time. And I thought about it and about my not being there and my not going there. It really bothered me!

A: What was it that you felt when you thought: "I can't go there!" What was the feeling you had? I know it bothered you, but there must be something else there--can you use another metaphor? What was it that you felt?

CR₁: About not going back?

A: Yes

CR₁: Uh, I don't know. It felt real terrible, I don't know how to explain it (long pause). I felt like I cannot have (pause), I felt like I cannot have what I want. I can't (raises voice) I have lost it! Like it's not there for me any more! I cannot go, you know for about two years I had this hope in me that I'm going back, that I still can go back. If not this summer, maybe next summer, or the one after that. So I always had that hope in me. But then when I thought I couldn't go back right then I wished so bad that I could. I would say to myself: "Oh! I wish I was there right now! I wish I could see my friends, I wish I could see my sister." And I felt like just wanting to be alone, at that time when I thought that I cannot go back I felt like being alone somewhere and screaming. You know what I mean? Like, as if you were in a jail and you want to get out of there, but you can't. They won't let you. They say, "next year!" You want to tear up everything and get away from it! But there's nothing you can do. You cannot come out of there. So you want to scream! You want to say: "Please let me go! Let me free!" And that's how I felt. Then I thought, Okay. This way I'm hurting myself. There's nothing I can do about it. *I am here.* Whether I like it or not. You see I did not have much money of my own to buy my ticket and go home. To decide for myself. I was younger and I just couldn't decide for myself. So I thought, "well I can't go back. The only thing that I can do here is to try to find friends and to keep busy. So that's all I could do at that time. That's all I felt I could do. But it really hurt me. I was really upset. And as I said, my sister and her husband were going through a lot. They had a lot of difficulties and they weren't settled. They didn't know what to do, whether to stay or not. Whether job opportunities were better here or in the States. And they didn't know what to do. Once they decided to stay and they bought a house in North Vancouver. We moved in. Then they decided they wanted to go to Richmond. And my parents would come to visit and go back, they were here and there. So then we moved to Richmond. I lived with my sister then. I was in Columbia College and much happier, with more friends. And I was a bit more independent by that time. I was doing more and more things on my own. And I was glad about it. But still when there was a problem, I had difficulty facing it. I had to go to my sister. I couldn't solve my problems by myself because it hadn't been very long since I had begun to be on my own. It was always my parents who dealt with my problems. I wasn't used to the freedom and independence. They they decided to go to Richmond. And for you when you are young and you go to another country and you are not settled, moving from one place to another, it's a hassle! Like, for two months, the second month I was here, they were living in a house in North Van. that they had rented. Then they decided to go to the States, they gave back the house. Then they changed their minds. They said they're not going. The house was already gone. What they decided to do was to go to a motel for a week. We went to the Canyon Court Motel and then my brother-in-law thought this is a good place till they buy a condo. in North Van. So we were there for two months. It was my sister, my brother-in-law, their children, my aunt, her child and me! There were two rooms. My aunt, myself and my cousin in one room. And the rest in the other room. And the children were young, one was three and the other was two and when they got together they screamed! I'm telling you! In a small motel room, they screamed and yelled. I was really on the verge of having a nervous breakdown! I couldn't stand it any more! So whenever the children were

together, I would spend my time in the other room. I didn't want to be in the same room with the children because they really bugged me. They were fighting all the time. Fighting and screaming! That was the hardest time I went through in these five years. We were not settled. We didn't have a job. I wasn't going to school. I didn't know anybody. I was living in a motel in a small room. I could hardly speak any English, I had just started to understand a little bit of T.V., we had no entertainment. I couldn't go to the movies. Imagine, a young girl. She wants to have some entertainment, but nothing! Nothing that a young girl could do by herself. I didn't know around. I didn't know anybody. Nothing! My only thing was going to school, staying in, actually the only entertaining program that we had was going to McDonald's! That was the only fun we had!

A: CR₁, I have this image of you when you said "in jail," I have this image of you being boxed in, being trapped?

CR₁: I was! My sister was very upset about this. She would say, well *we* are going through this, I don't want you to go through it with us. But I had no other choice! I couldn't live by myself, I couldn't go back. And my parents had said: "Whatever your sister does, wherever she goes, you go with her, because you're young" and so on--I had no other choice. I had to tag along with them and they were upset because they didn't want me to go through the same things they did. And that was hard!

A: You said that you had no other choice. Can you tell me how that felt? That you didn't have any other choice--how did it feel when you realized that?

CR₁: Well, at that time, I really didn't understand. I said, "I'll have to tag along with them." I didn't want to, but I would say, "that's okay! I have no other choice." I always thought: "What would happen if . . ." I mean, I wished, I dreamed that it would have been nice if I could have my parents here. We'd have a house. I'd be in my own house to be able to do what I wanted to. To be more settled, you know, that choice I did not have! Or the choice of going back to Iran, where I had a place, I had friends and everything. Or at least to decide and to go to the States and settle there. You know, I wanted to settle down! I was tired of moving from place to place! And I hated that motel! Whenever I pass that place, I don't even want to look at it!! Not only me, even my sister and my aunt . . . it was the worst time we'd all been through. They were new here too. They didn't know what to do. They came here on decisions, because they thought my brother-in-law's business was good then . . . but then he thought that the States was getting better. His brother was there--that's why they thought of going there. But then they stayed. You know he got all these ideas from other people. He didn't know here. It was his first time to work out of the country (Iran). So from other people . . . that's why they made all these decisions. And I was caught in them--I had to tag along with them. And it really bothered me. Oh! It was so hard!

A: CR₁, I have a sense that what you are saying is that it felt kind of unfair.

CR₁: It felt very unfair! It wasn't their fault though. It wasn't my sister's fault. She had her own life too.

A: Who's fault was it?

CR₁: Well, at that time I thought it was my parents' fault. But now, when I think about it, I think it was nobody's fault. Because they wanted me to be happy. They wanted me to be outside of Iran, because they knew what was going to happen. They didn't want me to go through all of this, but they didn't

want me to stay there either. Because they said: "you're going to be much happier there." And they thought that since I had passed the age of 14-15 I could accept things easier. And that I don't really need them to be with me all the time. So right now, I don't think it's anybody's fault. Because my sister had a life of her own. She had her own child, her own problems. She wanted to be settled. She was more upset than I was. My parents . . . then I thought it was my parents' fault. I thought: "they don't understand what I'm going through!" Well they didn't! But even at that time, I didn't blame them. No! I didn't blame anybody. I said "I don't want to go through all this, but this is the way it is." All my life I wanted to do things that made my parents happy. Even now, I don't want to hurt them. I still want to do things, if it makes them happy, I'm happy too. Not always though. There are things I want to do that wouldn't make them too happy. Now, I'll do them! But then . . . and I had some fears. From my mom and dad. First I didn't want to hurt them, then I had fears. I was scared of them . . . if they wanted me to do something and I did not do it, what would happen? Do you know what I mean? Like, I was smoking and I thought, what if my parents found out?! It's a fear that every young girl has. If you're not telling them, what will happen? So I had those kinds of fears in me. But when I came here I didn't really blame them. Because I thought if that's going to make them happy, or if they think there's a better future for me here in Canada, then that's where I should be! I still had the hope that I could go back to Iran one day and to visit my friends. Really, even after about eight months, I had letters. I thought: "I wish I could be there right now! I wish I could be with them, as happy as I used to be. I wish I could go to the same places with them!" Even when I made my own friends here I told them of how I wished to go back, and how I wanted to go back! For three years I would get so excited when talking about Iran! Whoever didn't like it back there, I wanted to fight with them. I would say: "No! That's your country! You *have* to love it! You *have* to go back!" I was full of energy for Iran! I always, mostly at the beginning, had arguments with some Iranians. Some of them had been here for a while. I didn't like the government at that time--when I left Khomeini had taken over, but I still wanted to be there! I didn't like his government, but I still felt that that's Iran! That's my country! So there were people who supported Khomeini's government and I was always into arguing and fighting with them. I would say: "You have no right to support them. Because you haven't been there for a long time. You don't know what's going on there!" Anyway, all those kinds of arguments that Iranians usually have. But I was always excited and I wanted to fight, not for, well I believed they shouldn't talk like that about something they didn't know. See, I had been there throughout the Revolution. They hadn't! They didn't know what people had been through, or how many people had died. They just sit here and say: "we needed the Revolution!" or "we didn't need the Revolution," or "the Shah was good," or "the Shah was bad!" All these stupid things that they have no idea about! And I did get mad at them. Well, that's beside the point anyway. So at the College I made friends, and I remember that whenever I talked to them about Iran and whenever they asked me how I felt I would say: "I want to go back. I miss my home. I still love my country and I am not happy here!" I wasn't! I did have friends then, but I wasn't happy as an 18 year old girl. There was something missing, and I didn't know what!

A: Do you know now?

CR₁: I still don't know. No. I don't know, but there was something missing!

A: Are you telling me that you didn't feel *whole* at that time?

CR₁: Yeah! Yeah! I didn't. You see things were okay. I had friends. I

went out with them . . . I wasn't alone. But I wasn't having fun. Do you know what I mean? Like, having entertainment without having any fun. I wasn't happy. I would only say: "Okay. This is just to kill my time." Then I started to make a very close friend. I talked with her. She was Persian. I felt very close to her. Well for a few months we had met and knew each other but neither of us trusted the other . . . and she was going through . . .

A: How long had you been in Canada?

CR₁: Let me see--it was about five months. So I started seeing her. I liked her. She was going to the same college. She was also going through a hard time . . . and well, so was I. We would go for coffee occasionally. But she didn't trust me and I didn't trust her. Suddenly

A: What do you mean by trust?

CR₁: To share feelings, experiences, secrets. She thought that, you know, we shouldn't talk to each other about ourselves. Let me tell you something else: when I came here, it was my first time away from my parents. It was my first time in a place with different people. When I was back home the people around me were mostly family and good friends. It was a rather closed setting. You are familiar with what goes around you. You know the people. You know the people are nice--they are sensitive like you. They don't take advantage of you. Then I went to Columbia College and met these people out of the blue. I thought them to be the same as the people I knew. Like my friends, my family, my relatives. I thought I could trust them just as much. I thought I could tell them everything, that they won't take advantage of you. That they are sensitive like you, that they are nice people, and that they like you the way you like them. Like a child, I trusted everybody. And I'm talking about Iranians. Well, the College hardly had any Canadians anyway. Besides, except for the last couple of years, I have spent most of my time in Canada with Iranians. All my close friends have been Iranian. Anyway, at that time, I thought of the people I met at the College as nice and trustworthy and I just went right on and shared with them my feelings and my secrets. I talked to them and I told them whatever I felt. And then I realized that they were taking advantage of me, or hurting me with what they say. A. knows what a bunch of stupid people they were! But at that time, I couldn't tell. I didn't have the ability to be a judge of character. Simply because I'd never had the chance to meet such different groups of people. As I said those around me were either young like myself, and they were real nice, or they were older and they were family and relatives. They were all people that I knew.

A: So there, you were familiar with the situation

CR₁: Yes, and I knew what to do, how to behave. Here when I started College I thought I knew well how to behave and what to do. I thought this was the same society and I should treat these people the way I used to treat my friends back home. I didn't know people could be, they are not bad, no, I can't say that people are bad, but they are so different! I couldn't believe that people could be so different!

A: Did you feel betrayed?

CR₁: Well, kind of, I can't say "betrayed." I felt used. I felt I had been used. Or I felt, I don't know, see, I used to tell them everything about myself and some took advantage of me, some didn't like me and some, who were more understanding, felt kind of sorry for my innocence. They understood my sensitivity

and innocence. And some of the nicer bunch felt close to me. Like, the ones who could understand you better knew that you don't have the evil in you, that you are an innocent person. So they, the good ones, like A, actually, she was the only good one! (laughs loud) No, A. and B. The rest . . . I couldn't count on. And because I did trust every one of them in the beginning, I got hurt. Some hurt me with what they said. For instance there was this one time that I remember, well, you see, when I was in Iran and went out with my friends, everybody treated everybody to something. Once I would treat them and once they would treat me, so it didn't really matter. And I started to do that in Columbia College. For instance if somebody wanted coffee, I would say, "okay, I'll buy it for you." And I did it without any thoughts in my mind. And with no expectations. And I had done that a few times until that day when everybody was there and I said: "who wants ice cream? I'm going to buy some ice cream!" Then I went and bought ten ice cream cones. I came back and gave each one a cone. I thought we were friends! Then one of the guys came to me and said: "You're trying to buy friends! You are trying to buy friends with your money! That's not good!" That really hurt! I felt awful! I felt so embarrassed! I felt shocked! People were so different from what I had known. Why wasn't it the same? How could they be different?! All my life, the only thing I never thought about was money. Spending money was always a pleasure for me. I had never thought of buying people with money! I wasn't rich, or anything, but to go and . . . I could have had any friends I wanted! I didn't need to buy them! I did not tell him anything. He was actually a jerk! I'm sorry to have to say this, but he was! But as I said, I was just a kid and not a good judge of character. Some people around me knew him, but I thought he was nice. Everybody who was nice to me in the beginning, I thought was a nice person. You know, just like a five year old child--you buy them candy, they think you're a wonderful person. I was like that. Do you know what I mean? I was like that! Then I got so hurt! I was hurting inside! I had tears in my eyes. I didn't know what to say. I didn't talk to him. Then I decided to talk to A. about it. Now we were kind of friends we were more close. And I did talk to her from time to time. Actually she was the only one I trusted and could talk to. She was the only one who understood me. So I talked with her and she comforted me and said: "I don't like him either. He doesn't know what he's talking about." She comforted me and made me feel better and since then I stopped talking to that guy. Actually I felt sorry for him. As I said, I was so naive and so sensitive. I felt good about everybody. I couldn't have that hate in me, you know, not to like. I didn't think of dislike. Because as I said the people around me in Iran were so different.

A: CR₁, I have a question. So you think if you had stayed in Iran and gone to university there you would have had the same kind of experience?

CR₁: I don't know. I don't know! Because I'd never gone, I don't know what the situation in universities back home were like. High schools are quite different than universities and colleges, as you know. So I can't imagine what it would have been like. It might have been the same. I might have gone through the same . . . of course I would, because universities are much bigger and you meet so many people--different kinds of people. And it's not the same as meeting your high school friends. They are different, it might have been the same in Iran but I have no way to know. Anyway, I got really shocked thinking how come people can be so different here. Why do they change when they come out? I still feel that!

A: Okay. So you're saying that you felt they have changed because they have come out?

CR₁: At that time I thought they had. At that time I thought, "well maybe this had not been the case in Iran. Maybe they really have changed. Maybe they were different in Iran." So that's how I felt then. And with this guy, I was hurt. He was the first one that really hurt me. Then, I didn't go to that college any more. We moved to Richmond and then I went to Lord Byng High School on 16th Avenue. I went there for English and some grade 12 courses for university and so on.

A: Before you get to that do you want to tell me a little more about your friend? You had just started talking about this Persian friend, and it seems to me that

CR₁: Yeah! I was very close to her. I still am! She was really the very best thing that was there for me at that time. Because, as I said, she was going through some difficulties. I was going through some, so we kind of found each other. She had good friends around her. She had a good sister and good friends. But our relationship was different. It lasted long. It was one of those very nice relationships. She could understand me. I could understand her. So we really had a good relationship. I used to talk with her and tell her all my problems. I still do. And she always tries to comfort me, to give me advice. I learned so many things from her. And I was happy being with her. I had never had such a friend! Even back home. Even with my friends back there. You see, even there, because I was such a sensitive girl, they were good girls, but I that sometimes even they used me. Actually this is what I think now, then I thought differently. Now, I think that maybe they didn't really want me for myself. Maybe I'm wrong, I don't know. But this girl, she was the only one, the only one I figured liked me for myself, because of who I was and who I am. Not because of whoever I am. She didn't and doesn't care whether I'm this or that or rich or poor, you know, what people sometimes want you for. Anyway, she's always liked me because of who I am. And she never expected too much of me. She was always understanding. She was always comforting to me and I always felt happy with her. I was happy with her.

A: Do you think her being there for you has helped you settle in Canada?

CR₁: It did! It did! It really did! Actually I never thought about it that way. But now, as I thought about it, I think it did. Like, I felt, when I was with her, just being with her made me feel I was somebody. She had the most respect for me. She treated me like a somebody, like an adult. You know, as I said, I learned a lot from her. And yes she was and has been instrumental in helping me settle in Canada. She was my best friend! When I felt upset I would talk to her and that helped me get things off my chest. It did help. And, of course, I started to meet more and more people, and I went to that high school. That high school! That was really hard for me too. It was the first time I was entering an all Canadian setting. Well, they were young, but still, I was going through something I had never experienced before! It was a year after I'd come. It was the first time I got into a Canadian society, you know what I mean? It was really hard! The first days, I was alone. I didn't know anybody in the school. I only went to my classes. I had lunch hour breaks by myself. I had lunch all by myself. I didn't talk to anybody. They were snobs. Well, they weren't really snobs. They just didn't seem to like strangers. You see, they had been going to that high school for some time. When they had been younger, since grade 9, they'd been together. So they'd built up their friendship. And I was new there. I was a grade 12 student they had just met. I was new to them. And I was also new to them because every time they looked at me, they thought of me as an Asian, that I am not Canadian, that I am not like them. They thought I am different. Then after two, three months

A: CR₁, did you feel different?

CR₁: Mmmn, not really. I didn't. Well, I was shy. I've had that shyness since I was a child. I still do and that sometimes really bugs me. Because there are some things in life that you want to do or say and that shyness will not allow you. So you know what I mean? And at that time I was shy. *I felt out of place!* In that school, not outside school. In the school I felt I was out of place. Even after I started to know some of them. Still, I felt "I don't belong with them because they are different." They were completely different than me. They were thinking differently. Their ideas were different. Their behaviour was different. We were completely different! I was with them because I needed them. They didn't need me. I needed not to be alone. But they didn't need me. They had their friends. But I wanted to be with them because I didn't want to be alone! . . . just sit there and have lunch alone!

A: That must have felt very

CR₁: It felt very lonely. It felt awful, especially the first days. As I said, I saw them together, all the girls were together, and as I said, I was shy. I wouldn't go to them. I didn't go to them. Two or three of them, they came to me. I didn't go to them first because I thought they might not accept me.

A: So you didn't go to them because

CR₁: Well, that was the first reason--the fear that they wouldn't accept me. But the second reason for my shyness was my English. I thought they might make fun of my language. Thirdly, I thought: "They are different." See, I'd never been with Canadians before. I was scared of how they would treat me, how they would behave. So, I had all these feelings. I was scared. I didn't know what to do. With Canadians, I felt pretty lost. There was one girl. She was a very nice girl. You know what Canadians . . . they were kids too. She was nice to me. Her locker was beside mine. That's how we got to know each other . . . she was, her parents were from Yugoslavia. So she wasn't really Canadian. Yes, she was different from the rest and she was a very nice girl. She was very, one of those people who can manage everything on their own and can talk and she was quite outgoing and assertive and competent. She initiated conversation with me and found out that I was alone and that was my first term in school, actually, now I remember, it was her first year there too! She was in grade 11 and it was her first year. So she was kind of alone too. But by the end of the year she knew all the school because she was the type who would go around and meet people and talk. She was the type to talk.

A: Very outgoing.

CR₁: Yeah.

A: So are you saying that what brought you two together was mostly the fact that you shared something?

CR₁: Uhuh, yeah. And we were also in the same class, one of our classes we shared, and she sat beside me in class. She was the one who started to talk to me. Sometimes, see, sometimes, I still have this thing. I'm shy. Not when I am in a Persian party or when I am in the Iranian community. But when I am at school I am not the first one to take the first step.

A: Okay. CR₁, tell me what's the difference.

CR₁: What's the difference of what?

A: You say you are not shy in most Persian settings. You are very outgoing and different, and I've seen you and I know that you are pretty outgoing in, say, a Persian party. But say that in school and when you are around Canadians . . . ?

CR₁: It was then. It was three years ago.

A: Okay. Three years ago, what was the difference you perceived between a Persian setting and a Canadian one? What made you feel different and behave differently when in one setting or the other?

CR₁: The difference was, first, I thought their culture is different.

A: Okay. What does that mean?

CR₁: Well at that time I didn't think that I knew it, the culture, because everything seemed so different. I would see them--the people I saw at that school--some of them were very rude. Some were very impolite. Some did things that I didn't do, I didn't dream of doing. Like smoking joints, or living on their own and by themselves at that age, or, to have the freedom of having all those boyfriends and not coming home at night! So I would see them and I would tell myself: "they're" Well, but you see, I wouldn't let that get into me, I didn't let that separate me from . . . I didn't let that be the reason. I guess I didn't want to see that just because they are freer than I was they were any different. I didn't want to say that that was the reason for our difference. But at first, I thought: "Well, I have never been around Canadians. I don't know how to act. I don't know how to behave, what to do . . . or what is appropriate to do!" Also, then, my English was not good and I thought, well, you see, the younger generation is young and they can't understand my situation. I was kind of scared and embarrassed and shy. So I wasn't the one to go to them. She was the one to come to me and I was happy that she did. I was glad to find a friend. We had lunch together. She met other people and through her I started to know others and I started to talk to them. They were different! Like, I don't know. I really didn't figure it out. I thought maybe it was because they're younger or something. There were two . . . Okay, the ones who were smart and into studying, they were more understanding. They were more friendly with me. The ones that were really outgoing and into fashion and smoking joints and boyfriends, they couldn't really accept me. They weren't too friendly with me. We had nothing to talk about. Like when we were together, we couldn't talk. We didn't have much in common. And sometimes I think it was my own fault too. I couldn't communicate. I felt we were different sometimes and more-so I felt we couldn't communicate. Or, I don't know, sometimes I feel that it was my own fault. Maybe, if I were not shy, or if I could talk more, I mean I didn't have to be very outgoing or anything, but just to talk more and be more talkative. I didn't have to be like them, but maybe if I were more friendly. You see then I always thought that they were not friendly with me. I never thought that it could have been me. I never went to them, and yet I blamed them for being unfriendly. I always blamed them and not myself. But maybe it would have been different if I was different. And, well, that was a high school community, a high school setting. It's much different than a college setting. People are more mature in college. It's completely different. Actually, I can't say I never had a good Canadian friend. I just had one and I lost contact with her. Or, no, I think I had two. Anyway, my friend in this college, she was really something! She really was a good friend to me. She was different. That's what I felt. I could easily talk to her. She could understand me. She helped me. You know,

she didn't have the same cultural background as me, but she *could understand* me. She was 33. She was mature. You know, like, you could tell. Anywhere in the world, older people are more understanding, are more sympathetic. Like those kids in high school were--I felt a lot older and more mature than them. You see, all my friends had always been older than myself, throughout my life, almost. Those kids in school, they seemed so childish! They thought so childish! They were into, I don't know, things most 16, 17, 18 year old Canadians are into. Like, into discos and, I did think differently.

A: And you think that if they were a group of Persian kids, they would think differently?

CR₁: If they were the same age, they might have been the same. Because I had younger Iranian friends here and

A: How about back home? What would a 16 year old be like in Iran?

CR₁: It would have been quite the same. When I was going to this high school, I had been there for about a year. I had a little bit more experience in life from the time I was in Iran. A year is not a long time, but still, I'd been through experiences. Even when I was in Iran I sometimes thought some of my friends were so childish. Still, I would think that it would be kind of the same, however, the language and culture differences still exist and there should be some difference . . . To get back to the school, the first month there was terrible for me! I was so lonely! I didn't know anybody. I was alone and I felt awful. I sometimes felt like going to my counsellor, the school counsellor, and talk to her. And I was, I don't know, I felt very lonely.

A: Why *didn't* you go to her?

CR₁: I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to tell her. I thought maybe she wouldn't understand. Maybe she would have thought this was so childish! I don't know! I wish I did, but I didn't go.

A: You thought maybe she wouldn't understand?

CR₁: I, uhuh. Uhuh! I thought she wouldn't understand.

A: Why wouldn't she?

CR₁: I don't know. I don't know. I wish I did! But I did go to her and told her that I wanted to work in the school area or something. So since there was a French kindergarten behind our school and apparently they needed some workers to take care of the children, she asked me if I was interested in working with the children. She told me that I could work during my lunch hour breaks or after school. And I started my volunteer work at the kindergarten. You see, this was at the time when I was very lonely, when I had no friends. So I got myself busy there and I was happier this way, it helped. Even, even when I began to know some of the girls in school, I was still alone. See it wasn't just a matter of talking to them, I guess, like we would be sitting together and having lunch together. We would be talking about this class and that class, or they would be talking about their boyfriends or about their date "last night." They would talk about: "I went out last night" or "I didn't study the night before," and I still felt alone. I still preferred to go to that kindergarten than to stay and talk with these girls. I preferred to keep myself busy rather than to talk to . . . Because I had nothing to say! I don't know, I preferred to be in that kindergarten than to be there at lunch hour. And in the beginning, I hated those lunch hours! I

wished I had more classes during that hour. But then

A: So that you wouldn't have to face the loneliness?

CR₁: *I didn't want to be alone!* When I was in Iran, all my life, I was always around people. I was always with somebody. I always had friends. It was hard for me to be alone! But you see, after a while you get used to it. I got used to being lonely! It didn't hurt me as much any more. After a while, I tried to be with the others, I still was lonely, but it didn't hurt any more. Like, I was getting used to it. I said to myself: "Well, there's nothing else . . . I cannot go home for lunch." I didn't have a car. So I said to myself: "Let's make the best of it! Let's be with them. When they're talking you listen and see what they say" and so on. So I kind of got used to it, and then I started concentrating more on my studying and going to the library and studying harder and harder, so it was kind of . . . I had an art class where I learned to make ceramic pots and drawing. I kept myself busy. So that went by. But then out of school, that year, out of school, I felt different. It had been a year and I had so many friends by then, Persian friends, all my Canadian friends were inside the school. Outside, I didn't have an Canadian friends.

A: And you didn't have any close friends in school?

CR₁: No, not in school, not a close friend. They couldn't understand me, sometimes, I don't know, they couldn't understand me, I never tried to talk to them. To share my secrets with them. Well, anyway, outside school I felt differently. I would say: "At least, I have my friends. I can enjoy myself being with them and I have this good friend of mine!" You see, it was different. I thought: "Well, I'm lonely in school right now, but outside, I'm not like that. I'm not this lonely!"

A: And what did that do to you? How did you feel about it?

CR₁: Oh, it gave me hope! It gave me hope to go through the day. I was looking forward to the weekends when I could be with my friends. And every weekend I used to, well, then we lived in Richmond, and every weekend I used to come to North Vancouver to party with my girlfriends and to be with them. At that time it was good for me. I tried not to think, I didn't think about being homesick a lot, and I wasn't that homesick by then! By that time I wasn't feeling the loneliness and homesickness that I felt when I first came. I didn't have that extreme homesick feeling. I *was* homesick, but it wasn't that hard. It wasn't as strong as in the beginning. It was still kind of hard, but less. And my parents would come and go. They were here for four months and then they would go back, and then come again. The longest they were ever here was a year. So they were here and there.

A: So you no longer felt as homesick. What was different? Tell me what feelings were different--did you dream about home? Or

CR₁: I did! I did! I'm not saying I didn't dream. I thought about going back. But then I also started to say: "Okay, I want to study, and I have to stay." I started to think more, and the situation in Iran was getting worse. Let me get to that too. The situation was getting worse then. I thought: "No, I don't want to be there now. I miss it very much but I don't want to be there at this time. It was exactly at the time of the American hostage situation, and nobody could come out and it was kind of scary and my dad would say: "If you come and they close the airport, then what will happen?" You see, it was also the situation that made me not think about going back so much. So then I said, "Okay! This is

it! I'm going to stay here. Finish my education. And then go back!"

A: So you still had the hope of going back?

CR₁: I still had, I still *have* the hope of going back! After five years I still, when I think of back then, I don't know, this good Iranian friend I told you about, she used to say, "I know what you're going through, because I know right now you are imagining--you had good times there--you still think that if you go back you might have the same things, the same good old times. But things are different now. And until you go back and see for yourself that everything is different, you will never get over your dreams. You'll always think that things are the same." *Now*, I know it's different! *Now*, I don't have those dreams. About two years ago I started realizing that things had changed, that things are different, that they are not the same as they used to be. But then, even after I had made all those friends, I did have those fantasies and dreams. All those fantasies that being in Iran was much better, and that if I go back I'll be much happier, that I'll go to places I loved, remember Pahlavi Street? How pretty and how fun it was? Yes, I thought of going to all those places, places I loved, you know, but now I know it's different. But then, I thought I had to see that it's different. I had to see for myself. I couldn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it!

A: What do you feel now?

CR₁: I feel I know it's different.

A: Do you believe it now?

CR₁: Yeah, I believe it! I started believing it about two years ago.

A: How was that for you? How was that experience of finally coming to grips with

CR₁: I missed it! I don't want it to be different! Because the best times of my life I spent there! I had the best times. I used to have lots of fun! You know, those things, I miss. Those places, I miss. The good times, I miss. I miss it, of course! But it's different, of course. I know I'm older and those kinds of things don't make me happy any more. I was then. But it's different! Even if it were the same, I know it wouldn't make me happy any more. I don't dream of that right now. But I first came here it was the beginning and I still had those feelings. But now it's different. I'm older, I think of other things now.

A: Okay. You said that you still hope to go back some day, but you know and now believe that Iran is a different place and you are a different person and you know that even if you do go back things are not going to be the same, right?

CR₁: Yes.

A: Now I want to ask you a question. When you started realizing this reality, when you finally believed that everything, including you, has changed, what did you go through? What were the feelings? What was that experience like?

CR₁: I felt very upset, because, as I always say, I love Iran, I really love Iran. And in the beginning, it was so hard for me to believe that Iran is different, that I'm different. It was hard to believe, but you know something? Actually in some ways I was glad to realize that I'm growing. But no, I wasn't glad that my country was changing and all that. Yeah, and you see by the time I started

College thinking about Iran as much as I used to in the beginning. Yes, I started life in college and that's another thing. After high school I began to be more on my own, to be more independent and to be more free. To have grown up. By then, my ideas were different, glad to have had to go through all those experiences. They weren't pleasant, but I'm glad to have gone through them.

A: Do you think that you went through all that because you are in Canada?

CR₁: Because I was in Canada, because I was in a different place. If I had stayed in Iran, I would've matured very late, much later. I wouldn't have had those growing experiences. I wouldn't have known life the way it really is so early in my life. I would have thought that life was all joy and fun. To recognize that life really means having to go through hardships would have happened to me a lot later and I'm really glad to have gone through all of this and to have gained the kinds of experiences that I did. Because it really changed me very fast, it helped me grow faster.

A: Okay. CR₁, I want you to focus on the changes and tell me what they were. If you can specifically tell me in what ways have you changed, in the ways you think or do things, in terms of your values, for instance, or your ideas

CR₁: Yeah, some of the values have changed and some of the ideas too

A: Can you give me some examples?

CR₁: Yeah, well I started to think about things more seriously. Like, I don't know how to explain, I started to think more seriously about life. The things I wanted, or want, are different than before. I want now to study, to really study. I've loved to work, to be on my own, to be alone, to do things my way, to do things I wanted to do for a long time, to not be dependent, to get to know myself, still now I don't know myself very well. I need the time to be alone to get to know myself better and right now, maybe I'm unsure what things I want for my future yet. There are things I want. I say: "I want to be this, I want to be that. I want this or I want that." But, still I need more time to know myself and to see what I really want and who I really am.

A: So, what you are saying is that when you were in Iran you really didn't have a good sense of who you are, or were. Right?

CR₁: No, no, I didn't, no. I never thought about it! And when you are young you don't really think about these things. You really don't consider what life is or who you are or what you really want. You don't think about these things. I guess part of growing up is that things happen in your life and you start to think more seriously about yourself, what you want, what your values are, what's your goal in life, what you want to be

A: And you think coming to Canada was a turning point?

CR₁: It was a turning point! You see, for instance, I started working in different places within almost a year after I came here. I started to realize that life really meant working hard. You cannot have anything easily. For everything you have to work hard and that things are not there for you to have unless you work hard for them. And that there are things in life that no one will provide for you, not even your parents. So it's you, it's only you and you have to go for it. You see if I were in Iran, I wouldn't have been able to work, I don't think. Young women my age hardly work. They usually go to university there. Here, working, being around people really taught me things and made me see the world

around me more clearly. And mostly, I think it was working that brought about the changes. To get some experience in life, on jobs, with people and to see how people are and to get to know people better, to be around them, to become able to judge people better--when I first came, I couldn't do that, but after a while of being around others taught me all this. In Iran it was different. I know if I had stayed in Iran, and if I were there right now, I would've never had these experiences. Because I hadn't ever worked. I was too sheltered. There I would've had to go to school. I know I would have not had the kinds of experiences I gained here and I wouldn't have learned this much! So, in a way, I'm really happy that I came here and it really made me grow faster.

A: It was like a maturing process?

CR₁: Yes. It was a maturing process! It was very good. *Now*, I'm not sorry that I came because, ah, I'm not saying that I hate it here. No. I like Canada, because it's like my second country, this is my second life. I started to know myself here! I started to grow up here! So, if I hadn't been here, I think, the process would've begun in two or three years from now.

A: So growing would have been delayed for you.

CR₁: It would have been delayed. Yes, being in Canada has helped me mature. By having older friends, by being around more mature people, by talking to them, and, mostly when you work, when you're independent, when you have your own income, you feel better, much better and more mature.

A: CR₁, you talk about work and I'm assuming that you have worked in Canadian settings.

CR₁: Uhuh.

A: Okay. How was that experience? I know that your close network of friends have all been Persians. But at work, what's the experience like working with Canadians?

CR₁: It's good! I get to know them better. I get to know what Canadians are like. I become more familiar with their culture and I've also gotten to know that it's not good to be around Iranians only. You get to know the society you're living in and, of course, that's not just Iranians! It's your day-to-day life. It's a day-to-day process. You work, you meet people, you see their demands, what they are like, what they want

A: And what are they like?

CR₁: Well, they are, you know, I worked in a plant shop, I worked in a restaurant, I worked in a bank, they are, everybody is different. So, Canadians are different, one from the other. They're like us, they are not really different, if you know what I mean. Their demands, things we're after, we want, are the same. But the culture is different. But in general you might find a lot of Canadians who think the same way you do and want the same things in life as you. So, it's

A: How does that make you feel?

CR₁: It doesn't really affect me. Of course, I'm glad that I'm getting to know some Canadians and how they're like.

A: Have you ever been intimate with any?

CR₁: No.

A: And why is that?

CR₁: Well, I had some friends. But I don't know, I never felt comfortable with them. Maybe, it's me. It's not them. I feel more comfortable with Iranians. I feel

A: What is the wall between you?

CR₁: I don't know. I haven't figured that out yet. I don't know!

A: What happens that blocks you from getting close?

A: Maybe I don't want to get close. I haven't seen any real reasons for not getting close. But the situation just provided for me to be closer to Iranians than to Canadians. Like the school situation was mostly talking about school stuff, or talking about my culture or theirs. We never got into our private lives, as to what they're like, or what I am like. So I never got anything deep going on with them. The relationships were never very deep. So really I cannot tell what the wall is.

A: So you still feel different? When you are with Canadians?

CR₁: Not really. Now I don't. Now Canadians for me are like those Iranians I'm not close to. Like some of the people that I see or meet and we just have casual conversations.

A: What's the difference between you and them?

CR₁: It's just that you can't be close to them. It's just people you see every day, casually. Some Iranians you just see occasionally, and Canadians for me right now are the same. I see them, we talk, we go for coffee or something. But there was never the time, or maybe they just never developed into a good friendship.

A: I want to ask you a question. Earlier you mentioned understanding. You said that "they" don't seem to understand you and I wonder if that's got anything to do with it.

CR₁: Well, right now, I don't think so. At that time, when I was younger, when I talked with them, because, as I said, my ideas were different then, I felt they don't understand me, and they didn't. But now, actually, I haven't been talking with any Canadians about any serious matters lately, so maybe there is more understanding now. Maybe now it's better. Maybe now we can understand each other better. You know, I really can't tell for now. Because actually, last year, or was it last term, I had a Canadian friend at school. She really could understand me. I was really comfortable with her. I felt that she was a very good friend of mine. We only saw each other in school. We never went out or anything. But whenever we had time we talked. I used to talk with her. Sometimes, I told her of my problems. And she really understood me.

A: What did she do that made you feel understood?

CR₁: She came close to me, she got close to me. Sometimes she tried to give

me advice. Then I thought that she understood me. By giving me advice and by telling me what's right and what is wrong. Just like a friend. When you talk to a friend and when they care, you get some advice and tell you whether you should or should not do this or that, or

A: So then her being Canadian didn't matter?

CR₁: No. No! Until then, I didn't know that it doesn't matter. I used to think that maybe it did matter. But by being with her and talking with her I realized it doesn't have to matter. Because I don't always feel comfortable with Persians. There are some you wouldn't want to get close to at all, so I think right now it really doesn't matter.

A: CR₁, now I would like to take you back to your story, if you're still willing to continue? Remember, we kind of went through a journey and I would like to get back to the journey

CR₁: I went to college, I was in a place, very different from high school. There were different kinds of people, there were mature people, and there were younger students. The situation was different. I was on my own in college. In the beginning I felt the challenge of trying to get used to the place. I wasn't used to that kind of a place at all. It was new to me.

A: What was strange about it?

CR₁: It wasn't the people. It was the place. It was a change in place. It was like when you go from one stage of your life to another. It's the transition from high school to university. That was the difference.

A: Were you, then, self-conscious about not being a Canadian?

CR₁: No, no. By then, the time I started to go to college, I didn't feel that way any more. I actually wanted to have more Canadian friends. And I actually did meet more and more Canadians. Like last year, I started going out with a group of Canadians. They were very nice people. They were, I can't really say understanding, because we never got into anything real serious, but we were friends. We went out together for drinks or something. Some weekends we went out and had a good time, it was like my other Iranian friends. It was okay for a short time, for a casual relationship, nothing too serious. And I think I didn't enjoy spending a whole lot of time with them not because they were Canadians, but because it just wasn't my kind of fun they were having and they just weren't my kind of people. They were different from the kind of person I am, so our interests and entertainments are not the same. They enjoyed different things in life, things that I didn't really enjoy, but, I tried to tag along with them because I liked them. They were nice people. I *tried* to have fun! I said to myself: "That's okay, as long as I'm with them the rest doesn't really matter." They were just different from me and don't think it's just because they are Canadians. No, that's not necessarily the case.

A: Somehow, though, I'm hearing you say that "amongst Persians I can find friends who share common interest with me, whom I enjoy being with a lot, whom I can become close to. But I haven't found enough Canadians whom I can become real close to, with whom I can really enjoy myself, like a good friend.

CR₁: Yes.

A: Am I right?

CR₁: Oh yes! But I don't think the reason is that they're not Iranian. Maybe it's a matter of finding the right person. Even among all the Persians I know I had to look for people who shared with the same interests. Maybe there are Canadians like that around. But I have not found them. So maybe I haven't found the right group of people!

A: Okay. Go on.

CR₁: So, yes I got to know more people in college. I had friends. I wasn't alone! Well, in the beginning I was alone. But even then I didn't feel the kind of loneliness I felt in high school. Somehow it was different. I don't know how. In the beginning, I didn't have friends, but I just didn't feel the loneliness. There were people around me. They were more friendly, they were understanding, more interested in you. They didn't think that because you are Iranian or something, you're different. They could understand your situation, or the reason you are in Canada and all the other things. So it was easier for me and during the past two or three years I've been in this college I've met different kinds of people. I've met a lot of Canadians and people from other countries. And they were all very nice people. I can't say I met anybody I didn't like, anybody who hasn't been nice in this college. They were all nice. They were all different kinds of people. I got to know them, to be sort of like friends with them. And I was really happy to know them! I met Indians and Canadians and Yugoslavians, and people from all over the world. You see, basically we're all the same! It's some of your desires that are different. It's the individual personalities that make you different, the person you are, that's different, more than your cultures. And I was working at the same time. Working and studying was kind of hard for me, but I was happy about working! It was tiring. I couldn't keep up, but I was happy about it. Because most of my time was gone. I was going to school during the day and some afternoons, and evenings I worked, so the time was gone quickly. And I enjoyed both my work and my studies. Sometimes it was really hard for me. So, throughout college (about three years) it has been fun. You get to know a lot of people, and at your breaks you talk, you see, when I first meet Canadians, that's when I talk most with them. Because as soon as they find out that you're Iranian they want to know more about Iran. And you talk about your country and all that.

A: How do you feel when you talk about your country?

CR₁: I feel upset! I feel mad! I feel angry!

A: Angry about what?

CR₁: Angry about what we have lost. Angry about what we were and what we are now! So when I talk to them I try to explain what we were, how beautiful it was there, how we had visitors from all over the world! I try to explain to them that we are not what they see on T.V. I try to explain to them that we, the Iranians who live here in Canada, are not such a fanatic, traditional and stupid bunch of people. That we were different back then, and some of them, they know a little bit about Iran, but some hardly know anything. So when you talk to them they kind of become surprised at what we used to be and what has happened to us, especially those who didn't know

A: Do you think they understand?

CR₁: Some do. Some understand. Actually, most of them do understand, and as I said, for those who don't know much about Iran, it's sort of like a shock. They say: "Oh, I don't believe that!" But I've met some who know exactly

everything about our country and I feel happy about that because you are known to them and that feels good! But then sometimes I tell them I'd rather not talk about it because of how I feel when I talk about it. They want to know about the Revolution and I say: "I don't want to talk about it because it upsets me! Talking about it upsets me!" You see, I was there during the Revolution. When I see what a loss it was to go through all what happened throughout the Revolution, it makes me mad! To fight for nothing! To lose lives and people for nothing! It's awful! And they sort of understand and tell me that this has been the case with most revolutions. Sometimes it happens for the better, sometimes for the worse. So mostly, they understand what you're saying. Then, I had my social life, and I had my school life. And my social life was mostly with Iranians. I'd be going out with them and, and up until last year I wasn't really, really enjoying myself the way I wanted to. I went out. I had some laughs. But deep inside, it wasn't really what I wanted. Like, to go out, to dance or to just sit around and, not even enjoy yourself. They were okay. There was nothing wrong with them really. But they were just not like me. They were different from me. They enjoyed things that I didn't enjoy.

A: Then why did you go?

CR₁: I, I, I wanted, I didn't want to stay home. Every time I thought to myself, "maybe this time, maybe tonight will be different". About three years ago, I was going out with them and at first I enjoyed myself, especially the parties we had. There were lots of people. In the beginning it was good. But then after a while I started to grow up, and then the things I wanted were different. Things I enjoyed were different about three years ago. But ever since that time I didn't enjoy myself with them. I thought it was me. I never thought it was them. I wanted to go because I didn't want to spend all my time at home. So then I started to get to know other people. I started to find the people who enjoyed the same kinds of things in life as I did. Since then, I enjoyed being with people more and more. I liked being with this new group. And it was also fun for me. You know, up until last year or so, during the first four years, before I found my kind of people, I was always sort of depressed. I don't know why, I just couldn't really be happy. I used to make a big fuss about everything. I always made a big deal out of every little thing. Of my smallest problems. I couldn't enjoy my life to the fullest and was never really happy. After I met this new group, I realized something and said to myself: "Hey! You are not growing any younger! This is the time you can make the best of your life. This is the time to enjoy your life in any way you can! Because when you become older you will always wish that you were younger and that these days would come back again!" So that's when I thought that I should enjoy life and at this age try to make the best of what I have! Because I knew that I would never be this young any more, and will never be this free any more! I'm not saying that my problems all went away and that I had no more problems. But when I was with my friends I forgot all my problems and figured: this is not the time to think of the things I don't have any more or of the things that are bothering me. This is the time to be happy and to enjoy life as it is, to forget about everything else.

A: CR₁, when you talk about "problems" and things you don't have any more, is that somehow related to your being out of Iran?

CR₁: Well, some, well, mostly they were related to going through financial problems which was, yes, very much related to being out of Iran. And as a young girl there were things I wished I had and did and our financial situation did not allow them, of course. When I was younger, that really bothered me. Because you see, I was used to a different lifestyle in Iran. But now, when I think about that I don't see it as a real big problem any more and I see a lot of

other people are on the same boat with me. And I accept the realities that are there. I'm okay with that now. I've realized the fact and they don't really bother me any more. I see a lot of people in the same situation as myself and it doesn't seem to bother them as much! So why should I let it bother me? Really, because I can enjoy my life more by not thinking about it. There is a lot more to life, that's really true. You can be active in other ways. Sports, work, or being around good people who make you happy. That's really what matters now. To make the best of everything! Studying, work, career, all of that, you make the best of that, and there are times when you need to not think. And you make the best of that too. You enjoy the moments and not think of what you long to have, but don't have. Or of things that bother you, I could have had those enjoyable moments with Canadians, I don't know. But it just so happened that I shared those moments with Persians, I guess because those were the people I was more with. Now, I still say I miss Iran very much! I still want to go back, at least for a visit. I still want to be there, at least for a few months, to see what's happening to my country, what has changed. All you know is what you hear from others. But you cannot believe it. Because what they see may not be what you'll see. Maybe you find it different. Maybe you will enjoy it, like it. So I still think I *have* to go back! By myself, to see for myself and judge for myself, whether I can live there or not. If after I finish school here, would I be able to live there in the present situation? Have I gotten used to living in Canada? Is it really like they say it is? Or is it different? I still believe that I *should* have the chance of going back. I know financially, that's not possible now, but I still have the hope that in the near future I will be able to go and see Iran again, see my family and friends and see the changes.

A: Do you think you would want to live there, ever?

CR₁: I don't know. I can't say that. I've really thought about it. But I would have to see what it's like for myself. *Now*, I cannot say anything. Maybe I can live there and maybe I can't! Being here for five years and not knowing what's going on there, you really can't tell! It's like talking about the unknown. It's an unknown place, I don't have an answer for you being this far away for all this time!

A: What does it feel like, CR₁, to not be able to tell, to not be certain about the place you love so much and miss?

CR₁: Well, it doesn't feel good at all! It feels awful! Because I want to live there. I *want* to live there! But I'm not sure whether I can or not. I really want to go back and be there, so not knowing, not being able to tell is because of this uncertainty. Because I don't know what has happened to my country, because I don't know what's going on there! But I really, I really want to be there! I want to live there!

A: So on the one hand, there's this desire to be there and on the other hand, there's this uncertainty. And I'm wondering what this uncertainty is like. How's the experience of being so uncertain about something like?

CR₁: Actually, it's terrible! To be uncertain about something, when you don't know, when you're not sure about something, something that's important to you, it really bothers you. You wish so much that you knew. Sometimes I feel, it's like feeling lost! Yeah, sometimes I feel lost, like I don't know any more! Can I really live there? And I won't be able to answer that! I would have to find that out by myself, and besides, now, even now, I don't think that I know myself really well. Sure, I have matured, but still there are many things about myself that I haven't discovered yet. And maybe that is because for most of my life I

have been around my parents, and even up until now! They are around all the time! I'm overly protected. Sometimes I feel that I cannot think for myself. They always get into your life. It's not that they always want to, but they're used to it. So sometimes I want to get away from all that. I want to be alone to see what being alone is really like.

A: And do you think being in Canada will help you in that way?

CR₁: Yes, help me more, because I think that if I go back and stay there alone it would be a lot harder for me to get to know myself.

A: Why?

CR₁: Because of the situation, I think. If it were like before the Revolution, it might have been different. But now, if you want to live on your own, you wouldn't be safe. That's what I think. But here, there, you would hardly have a chance to work. Here you can work, you *can* be on your own! There, it's different these days. It's hard to be on your own, especially if you are woman! Now, here, being alone (more than I get to be sometimes) will help me to get to know myself better. I have more opportunities here. Before the Revolution, things might have been a little different in Iran, you know, for women and all that, but now I don't think so. As I said, I've been away for five years but the things I hear tell me that things have changed from what they used to be like.

A: I hear you saying this over and over again, that you have a yearning to know yourself better, a desire to know yourself better. And I also sense that being in Canada has put you on the track of coming to know yourself better. Now I want you to clarify for me that what is it that you mean by "knowing myself better?" What is the experience like?

CR₁: Okay, for example, if you face problems and you're more on your own, you will get a chance to know whether you can handle the difficulties or not. You get to realize your strengths and abilities. It's like examining myself. It's like examining to find out whether I could take care of myself or not. Whether I can handle my own problems or not, or would being on my own, being independent, make me happy or not? Is it what I want? I would never be able to tell until and unless I experience that. And being here I think has provided me more chances to experience that. You see, I keep saying "being here" and the reason is because I feel that I grew up here. The period between childhood and adulthood, I've spent here, in Canada. I've gone through the transition here. I went through the experiences here in Canada. So it will be easier for me to go through the rest here as well. I don't know, maybe if I had gone through this stage in Iran, it might have been easier to stay there. But I was young. I kind of grew up here and that's different.

A: You're saying that although the growing up experience has been rather difficult, you have gained a lot and you see it in a positive light?

CR₁: Uhuh. And I wasn't like this until a year ago. I felt unhappy up until last year. I made a big deal out of nothing. But now I think more seriously about things and about life. Life can't be without its problems! Life is not easy and there should be hardships. This is life! Without hardships you won't enjoy life! And let's face it. I haven't been through any real disasters yet. Really they are just financial and family problems and I used to get run down by them easily. Now it's easier for me to face them.

A: CR₁, we talked about changes, and you said that you have changed, that you

have matured. You also told me that some of your values, attitudes, behaviours and ideas have changed. Now, I want you to compare yourself now with who you were when you first came, or during the first couple of years you lived here, and tell me more about these changes. Maybe we can start with values. Can you tell me about the changes you've experienced in your value system? For instance, around sex, family bonds and ties, the role of women, work values, etc.

CR₁: Oh, values have changed. Money-wise, for example, I was in a situation where my parents would provide for me whatever I wanted. Here I've learned that I cannot have what I want just like that, and I don't want to have everything just like that! Now working and making money has a different value for me. I've learned not to take comfort and the good things in life for granted and I think about what and how you have to give of yourself in order to gain something, to be happy and satisfied. In terms of my relationship with my family and my closeness to them, I don't think much of that has changed. My feelings towards my family is still the same. I feel strongly about them. They're so important to me! They always were. Right now, there are some decisions I have to make, but first I'd have to consider my parents. And sometimes this does bother me, because there are some things I want to do, but they don't want me to, and they won't say: "you can't," but I know it would hurt them if I did. There are some things that hurt them so I have to think about them before I decide. That's why I'm going through difficulties right now, my problem is to see what they want. And my parents' expectations from me are very high. I never can be what they want me to be! And right now I'm going through a stage where I have to think about certain things in my life, which I want for myself. But I also have to think of what my parents think first. If it really hurts them I won't do it! So I still have strong values about considering what my parents want. But it is hard and sometimes it hurts. Those two are good examples, I can't really think of anything else. Well, just that right now I feel more mature than even about five or six months ago, I don't know the reason, maybe

A: What has happened in the past few months, do you know?

CR₁: I don't know! People around can tell! I can't tell myself!

A: What is it like for you?

CR₁: Oh! It feels real good!

A: What has happened inside that makes you feel you've grown up?

CR₁: As I said, I couldn't notice it at first. People around me made me think something has changed. They say I've matured, you know, in my ways. Then I thought: "Maybe it's my friends, the people I was with, the things I learned from them, the way I behave now"

A: What's different? What behaviours are different? Can you give me specific examples?

CR₁: I act more mature now.

A: And what does that mean to you? What is mature?

CR₁: I act, before, let me give you an example. For instance, when I was in a crowd I used to act so careless and jump around like a kid, and get excited, but now, I'm more serious, more "lady-like," more quiet. I don't talk as much as I used to, you know, like just talking all the time! I'm not so glib any more.

It's not because I don't enjoy the company of my friends any more, but now I just don't jump into any conversation, I think before I talk! I've changed. I feel it.

A: And do you like that?

CR₁: I like it! I like feeling more mature and I do. I don't know the exact reasons, but I feel it being there. I feel more mature. And as I said, the other thing that's a sign of maturity for me is the way I deal with my problems now. I don't panic at the thought of a problem any more. I handle them more calmly. For instance, something happened to me last year and I thought: "this is it! It is the end of the world for me!" Not any more! It's kind of a sense of strength that I feel. I feel stronger now, although I still don't have a lot of self-confidence. In Iran, you see now, I cannot compare really, because then and there, I was only a kid. I never thought about myself, who I was, I never thought about my values, my desires. Now I think. I'm into thinking and it's much different. What I thought then is different from what I think now. Now I think more about life. About what's happening around me. About what life, work, school and especially finishing my education mean, about what I want for my future, what do I want to be, and who do I want to be with. What is it I want from others? Or how do I want to like somebody, and what do I see in love? And you know, all these things. Then, I never thought about them, now they are on my mind all the time. But still, I don't feel self-confident. I never have!

A: So you feel that your self-confidence decreased when you came to Canada?

CR₁: No, it hasn't changed much. My self-confidence hasn't changed much and I'm not happy about that. I want to feel more confident about myself. I want to have more self-confidence.

A: What is self-confidence to you? What does it mean to you?

CR₁: Not being sure about myself, about the way I am. For example, if I want to do something other people can influence my decision very much. If I, for instance, want to buy something, I ask other people if they like it or not. If there is nobody around then I decide on my own. But sometimes, even after I've bought it, after I've liked it and bought it, if I don't get compliments on it, then I'll have my doubts, and I will say to myself: "maybe it's not such a good buy after all, maybe I made a mistake!"

A: So what other people think is important for you.

CR₁: It influences me. Sometimes it's not even important but it influences me. I know that what I think is important no matter what others think or say. Nevertheless, what others say or think has an impact on me, it influences me. Then I get second thoughts about what I've done. Even if I like for myself what I've done, what others think gets into me, it gets in the way, it influences me.

A: And among those who influence you are there any specific people that influence you the most?

CR₁: First, are my parents. Then my best friends. These are the ones whose ideas can influence me the most. The people who care about me. The people who like me and love me.

A: And am I right in assuming that they are mostly Persians?

CR₁: They are *all* Persians! It's not important for example when a Persian whom I don't really know thinks something about me. What she or he thinks doesn't really bother me, or influence me. I don't care! But those who matter to me, that's different.

A: You talk about being yourself a lot. Compare yourself the first couple of years that you'd come to Canada with when you were back home in Iran--when did you have a more definite sense of yourself?

CR₁: Two years ago. That's when I started to have a more definite sense of myself. When I was in Iran, as I said, I never thought about myself, but two years ago, or a year and a half ago I started to think more about myself and all that. It started about two years ago.

A: What about before that? What about the three years prior to that?

CR₁: I was lost in my identity. I didn't know what I wanted. I didn't know what I wanted to be. I didn't know what makes me happy or who makes me happy, what kind of people make me happy, all these questions, then I didn't really think about them, because then, I just wanted to be with people, to spend my time with people and not to be alone!

A: Do you think that being in Canada had anything to do with your feeling lost about your identity in those days?

CR₁: I don't think so, I think that even if I had been back home I would have felt somewhat lost. Well, the society you're in does help, so being in your own country with your own culture does help of course, and being in a different culture with different things to learn can make it even more confusing, so sure, it does help, but it's also a stage in your life. When you pass your mid-twenties you don't change as much as you do when you are younger. You know the years between 15 and 25 are the years for learning and change, that's when you change a lot. That's when you grow to become an adult. It's your bridge from childhood to adulthood, your ideas change and take form. Of course you change all the time. Every day in your life is a new experience, a new learning. But I think the stage I told you about is the time for the most change.

A: So you think that it was mostly the stage you were at.

CR₁: It was, for the most part, a stage, I think. But I know I reached the point I am at, when I did, *because I am* in Canada! Having the experiences I've had in Canada have helped me reach this point. If I were still in Iran, this might have been delayed, but because I was able to work, and did the kind of job that I did, nobody cared if I worked in a restaurant! I couldn't have done that in Iran, you know. I wouldn't have been allowed to work in a restaurant! No. Good Persian families don't allow their children to work at jobs like that, in a restaurant as a waitress! I see my sisters, for instance, they got married when they were 19, 20. They went to school, they got married. They were never on their own. They never had a chance to work. They didn't know the value and meaning of making money on their own and for themselves. The value of getting for themselves what they want, of deciding on their own. They didn't go through that, but I did, on my own. So I can compare myself with my sister back home, the one who is still in Iran. She got married when she was 20. It's seven years now. I don't think the experience I had which helped me she went through. I don't think, I don't know how to say it. Well, she's older than me but I think I think better than her. My values in life are much better, my expectations are much higher, my aspirations in life are much higher. If I were back home, I

think I would have been married by now. And like her I would have hoped for a big, nice house and lots of money and a comfortable life, like the one I had when I was in Iran. I know that that's what she thinks about most, that's all she wants for herself, nothing else. And I know I would have been the same. Depending on other people and having a comfortable life. But my values are different now. Now I know life doesn't come easy, and it shouldn't come easy. You have to work hard for make it worth living. It's you who helps you. It's you who can find your values. It's you you must rely on. And I think what helps here is being on your own and independent. They haven't ever been on their own. They haven't had the experience. They haven't seen a world apart from their married life. My sister in Canada, for instance, she does live around Canadians, she sees and meets them. But it's different for her than for me. I've been to school with them. I've worked with them. It's different. So I think, even she doesn't have the same values I do. So that's how I've changed in Canada.

A: Okay. Can you tell me where you belong to? Do you feel that you still belong to Iran, or that you belong here, in Canada?

CR₁: I don't know. Because sometimes I say: "I belong here." But then sometimes I still feel that I belong there, because of my strong feelings for Iran. I love Iran! I can't accept to belong anywhere else, to some other place. But I don't know. Maybe if I go back I wouldn't be able to live there any more. I may lose a lot of things that I have here by going there and maybe I wouldn't be able to take that and it might bother me, so it is possible that I might not want to live there any more.

A: CR₁, do you feel that you have a home now?

CR₁: No! I don't feel that!

A: Tell me about it.

CR₁: I don't have a home. No, I don't! I don't have a home. I don't really belong anywhere. I'm not a Canadian. I'm not like Canadians. And I'm not in Iran! So I'm kind of in between. I have lived here for five years. And, yes, I do have some things from here. But I also have a lot in Iran. *This is not home!*

A: You said: "I'm kind of in between." What does being "in between" feel like? What is it like to be "in between?"

CR₁: It is not good at all. Because you want to belong to some place. You don't want to be in between. When you are, you always think: "Am I, is it right to go this way, or is it right to go the other way? Do I really want to go this way, or do I want to go that way?" So it's very hard to just be in between. Not knowing where you belong.

A: Can you give me a metaphor for that? An image of the "being in between?"

CR₁: It's like, you can't tell really when you have to make decisions or to make choices. It's like when you want to go one way, but you *have* to go the other way. It makes you go the other way.

A: *It makes you go the other way?*

CR₁: Yeah, it's by force! My being here is because of the situation in Iran,

which forces me to be here. If the situation were different in Iran I wouldn't stay another hour here! So it forces me to stay. And when you are forced to be somewhere, I'm not saying that I'm unhappy here, as if I were suffering here. No, that's not true. Right now I'm happy here. But it's not what I want. So I'm confused. I don't know which way to go. It's like being suspended up in the air. Like not having your feet on the ground!

A: Like not having a solid ground to walk on.

CR₁: Yeah. Yeah, something like that.

A: CR₁, you talk about being forced and I wonder what your reactions are to that force, to being forced. You just said that if the situation was good in Iran you wouldn't have stayed one hour longer and that you feel forced into this situation now, so you must have some reactions to being forced into it and I'm wondering what they are.

CR₁: As I said, being here doesn't torture me. Right now I'm not suffering. In the beginning I was suffering. Now I feel more settled, so it is easier. But in the beginning, I resented it badly. I was mad! Oh yeah! I was mad! I used to say to myself: "I wish I'd never come! I wish I didn't have to go through all this!" But now, I don't feel angry any more. Actually, I can say that I'm happy that I had to go through this experience. Now I don't resent it that much.

A: Have you ever felt guilty about not being in Iran?

CR₁: No. I never felt guilty. No.

A: Have you ever felt a void inside?

CR₁: Yes.

A: Tell me about it.

CR₁: It's like being nothing, to be empty inside. In the beginning I did feel that. I would think: "I'm nothing. I'm good for nothing." I guess that relates to my self-confidence. Now it is a little better, it is less. I told you my self-confidence hasn't changed much. But that's not the case. In the beginning I felt I was good for nothing. I felt like an empty nothing. I wasn't doing much for myself then. Not working, not going to school, not meeting people, people I liked and made friends with. I felt empty, like: "Well, who am I? What am I good for?" And I think that was also part of the stage we talked about.

A: Along the way, you said some things helped you feel more settled in Canada and more whole--one was a friend, the other was the overall experience of growing up here, like working and so on. Now can you think of any other things that have specifically made this settlement easier?

CR₁: I think it was mostly friends, having them and being around them.

A: And what about being with friends made you feel more settled, more whole, more adjusted?

CR₁: Uh. Maybe, they helped me to grow faster.

A: What did they say or do?

CR₁: Their behaviour. The things I learned from them. By being with others, you learn. They don't necessarily teach you how to behave, but there are things that you learn by talking to them, by sharing with them, by sharing the same experiences, and by them listening to you, understanding you and helping you. You learn from their problems. You learn from watching them handle their problems, some of them being similar to yours. There's this commonality, and the way they handle the problems helps you learn.

A: And did you find your problems quite similar to theirs?

CR₁: No always, no. But watching them handle more devastating problems than my own and handling them more easily and calmly taught me a lot. And helped me realize that, first, I'm not the only one, and second, my problems are not as terrible as I thought they were! If they can do it, so can I!

A: I'm assuming that they've also gone through a lot of difficulties trying to adjust to life in Canada. Are the difficulties something you talked about mostly and shared mostly with each other?

CR₁: Yeah, mostly those kinds of problems--problems of immigration and the experiences related to it.

A: Okay. Anything else that helped the process of adjustment?

CR₁: No, not that I can think of.

A: Are there any things, experiences, etc. that slowed down the process of settlement in Canada? That hindered it?

CR₁: Financial problems, mostly financial problems. They did slow it down.

A: What about anything inside you, anything about yourself?

CR₁: Well, my negative feelings about being here, I guess didn't help much--my resentment and not accepting the situation in the beginning.

A: Anything in the environment, or about the situation?

CR₁: (long pause)

A: Do you think that the situation in Iran helped or slowed it down?

CR₁: It actually helped. If the situation hadn't gotten so bad, the process might have been slower. I might have thought about Iran more, and about going back. But when the situation got worse, it helped me to not think about it as much, it sort of helped me to accept the situation and the reality, the fact that I am here.

A: Did it kind of break down your hopes of going back?

CR₁: It sort of broke down my hopes of going back to live there for for ever.

A: How would you explain your overall experience in Canada?

CR₁: The overall experience wasn't pleasant. I mean it was very difficult. But I'm very glad to have had all of them. I don't regret any one of them! I'm glad that I did go through all of the experiences and that I did go through it all at the time I was growing up.

A: Would you like to add anything?

CR₁: Well, I can say that right now, to conclude it, I feel happy that I came and went through all of the experiences. I don't regret anything--the good and the bad. It's all part of my life. It helped me grow. And I hope that I get to know myself even better and to really become what I want to become, to achieve what I want to achieve, to have what I want to have, and hope that one day I will find out whether I can, once again, live in Iran or not! I hope to find out one day whether I can be there or not! This is a question I will always have until I find the answer to it. I *have* to find out an answer. So that's, that's really what I want to know for now.

A: Have you ever asked yourself: "What am I doing here?"

CR₁: In the beginning. "Why am I here? What am I doing here?" But not any more.

A: You're telling me that now you know why you are here

CR₁: Uhuh! Uhuh!

A: That your being here now has some meaning for you.

CR₁: Uhuh.

A: Can you explain to me what meaning has the experience of being here, of immigrating to Canada, had for you?

CR₁: Well, the meaning has been that I have found the freedom to choose, to do what I choose. I am more free!

A: Do you have any questions to ask me?

CR₁: No.

A: Well I have another question to ask you: What was *this* experience like for you?

CR₁: It was very good! I felt very good. Because it made me think thoroughly about myself. It made me go deeply, like, as I was talking I felt the experiences again. I'd never thought about them so deeply before. There were some questions that were hard to answer because I hadn't thought about them in any depth before. So when you asked me I really felt the questions and the experience. I couldn't always be precise, but I tried to. So it was a real good feeling to go through them and feel them deeply again, and to think and talk about them. Because there are things that you should really talk about in depth with someone and have them to listen to you. And if there is somebody who really listens, you may say something and you'll find out whether it's right or wrong just by saying it. You know, it's like listening to yourself talk. It puts it all into perspective for you. Do you know what I mean? You can judge what you're saying. Even if they don't say anything, you can, just by talking about it, judge it for yourself. It makes things go clearer for you. When you are by yourself, you may not go so deeply into it. But when you talk it over with someone else, it really makes it clearer for you.

A: Well, I'm glad to hear that. And I have a sense that this was an insightful experience for you. That you gained some insight into your whole experience of

immigration. Yes?

CR₁: Uhuh! Yes, I did!

Interview #1--Case CR₂

CR₂: I've thought about this question many times. I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't have sex and that is not common in this culture. But I have good friends among those who drink, and who have sex. I guess I could say that after three years I finally found out how to become adjusted in this country and this is only because I could find out how understanding these people are in this country. In terms of, you know, living in a multicultural society, which you can't easily find in any other part of the world. So we're lucky that we're in Vancouver, actually. And it is hard--I wonder what is your definition of being adjusted?

A: Feeling more whole, more settled. This is a second home, kind of thing, you feel settled in Canada, you don't feel . . .

CR₂: Maybe I should say that compared to my brother and sister's experience, I didn't have a culture shock, I wasn't in culture shock--and I believe that's because I go to high school here in Canada. And things that they experienced as a foreigner, I didn't. The difference in culture that you experience in high school is far more than what you see in college. And I knew very little of English.

A: CR₂, let me take you back a little and ask you to start with the experience you were going through when leaving Iran. What was it like when you were in Iran--just tell me a story, think of it as a journey we are going through together, take me through the journey and tell me about your experience from the time you were leaving until now. The events are not as important as your experience and feelings. Let's go through this journey.

CR₂: Sure. I'll try to make it very brief. Actually, we left Iran after the first year of war. So I was living there for two years after the Revolution. I went to school after the Revolution--you had to wear a veil and so on. But I was lucky I was living in a part of Iran that was the last province to force women to wear veils. And then from the south (where the war broke) we moved to Karaj (close to Tehran) and that was the hardest part in the last seven-eight years. We'd lost everything--it was very hard financially, we didn't have a house to live in, we had relatives, but you know when you're going through hard times--everybody was tense, everybody was under pressure, so we couldn't rely on them for a long time either. Everybody was under pressure. And then, I was in university in the south, and you know as Baha'i they simply said I couldn't go back to school and it was really hard for me to believe that! Because everything was going so well in my life up to that point. Everything was just perfect! Just the way I wanted it--so although I was in my country I couldn't feel adjusted--and for one year after the war, we lived there and . . . and then things just got harder and harder for Baha'is specifically, and for women and in general. We decided, we were thinking of leaving the country--"how do you leave?" Try to find out about it--we'd heard stories--and I don't know, but somehow we found a contact and we were on our way--and it wasn't easy--it was very expensive--and so we decided to--we were a bunch of youth to leave Iran with my dad and after getting to the countries our parents wanted us to go to, my dad was supposed to go back to Iran and live there. But after leaving from Turkey he found out that he couldn't return to Iran--in Iran he wasn't told this, he found out when he'd already left.

A: So you escaped

CR₂: Yes, we escaped

A: By foot?

CR₂: And by horse--it was quite an experience by itself--it was 3rd of January, it was extremely cold and the guy in Iran who arranged it didn't tell us how cold it would be, he didn't tell us what kind of clothes to wear, what kind of territory we were going to pass. You know border areas are different and you should know which area you should cross, and nobody told us really. When we went to a village there was a woman--she really had something to tell us. She checked out clothes and she said "you're going to freeze to death" and "have you ever rode on a horse?" and we said "no!" and she said "my God! These people are your kids!" and I was the oldest one. So we had a hard time on foot and on horse--I remember we had a long, long walk, for 18 hours, without any stops or anything, and by the time we got to a village in Turkey, I mean, you couldn't even lift your fingers to grab your cup of tea or anything, we were so completely tired!! But I'm glad we did it, because it was a very good experience for me as a woman. I always wanted to see that part of Iran, you know that Kurds (a tribe in Western Iran) won't let you, it's hard for them to trust you. And you know for a woman in particular, especially in those countries, you can't ever get a chance to see or experience such journeys and I'm glad--I'm really thankful that I had that chance.

A: It was a unique experience.

CR₂: It was, believe me, it was. And there were many, many moments when a number of men surrounded us, and they could do anything, Afsaneh, but none of them, none of them even touched us--and my father was the only man, I mean, what could he do? We didn't even know what time it was, who were these people, we didn't know where we were, we didn't know how to survive in those conditions, we didn't know anything! The interesting experience, for me, was my feelings and my emotional reactions--it was really interesting to me--that I wasn't terrified, I wasn't nervous, I mean, I could handle everything very well.

A: Where do you think that came from? What happened?

CR₂: I don't know. I think my subconscious decided to, I had to, I guess, to survive the situation! Because I know many people of different ages that panic--they panic--but it is not the time or place to panic! I mean, what could you do?! You're, you look around and all you see is mountains and snow--you don't know where you are. You don't even know whether you are in Iran, or in Turkey or in Iraq, or what! You have no idea. And things just start gradually, you know, they prepare you, it's a natural process. You can't say good-bye to your grandma, for example, because neighbours might get suspicious, you know, things start that way and then there you are in Rezaieh (a border city)--don't wear new clothing, do this, do that, don't speak Persian, now you pass the border, so go and get into the Kurdish area, do that! And you know it's quite a thriller movie by itself! You know, things that you can never imagine happening to you. And there was one thing--the only time I felt like panicking was what happened to my sister after she fell into cold water and she was frozen! She panicked! Her mind was blocked and she was not able to function at all, and I remember my reaction to that--I was shouting at her, "B, you have to . . ." and she had no reaction at all and that point I thought "my God!! It could've been me! My father! What if it was him!" At least my sister was small, we could carry her. Or "what if two or three of us had fallen into that situation together!" Anyway, in that village in Turkey, my dad had to leave us and go with one Turkish man. They said the girls could wear costumes and be taken by car which they used to

Taxis. But my dad had to go with another man by horse. So there we were. All girls, no man in the group and they could have done anything-believe it or not--and nothing happened, and I always thank God! I could really feel him with me, really, every moment, and so

A: I just want to back-track a little bit. You said that everything was fine until you left the south after the war. Can you tell me what you were going through--what kinds of experiences you were going through?

CR₂: I finished high school, and you know how it is in Iran, when you want to go to university, you take the entrance exam and then the computer decides for you what to study and I was lucky because I got my number one choice. I was studying Education, I was close to my parents, and at the same time I had moved out, which I wanted to, so everything--my parents were happy, I was happy, I liked the, well things had changed, I had not been to university before the Revolution but I knew that if it were before the Revolution things could have been much better. See, I had long hair and I used to leave it open and these guys (Muslim fundamentalists) wanted you to wear a veil (head cover) and they wouldn't look into your eyes to talk to you, or they wouldn't talk to you at all! On the other side, Communists wanted to attract you, and our Assembly (Baha'i administration) had told us not to mention that we were Baha'is unless they asked us. And these people didn't even ask us, but they were wondering which wide do we belong to, we were two Baha'i girls, they were wondering, but I had a great time. We were 18 Baha'is in that university, we were very, very close. We were very united in a sense. I had many friends before and after that, but that was something else, something real precious, we were really united, we could do anything. Especially in those days that every day was a revolution in itself. We could really protect ourselves, help ourselves, and . . . After the war we couldn't stay in touch any more, I can say they are now living in five or six different cities all around Iran and because they were all Baha'is it was hard for me to find them, they were hiding, escaping, they couldn't have an address, they could not settle, find a job, so they moved here and there, you see the whole situation . . . in that way. One of my friends was even in prison at that time, and we were all in constant danger.

A: What about before the Revolution? How was life for you then?

CR₂: Well, it was a good and fun experience, in high school and all. It's not like Canada, kids don't usually work, parents could and did support them. Even after university I wanted to find a job and the reaction of my parents in Iran was totally different from what I got from them here. They said: "Oh good, you got a job!!" here, but in Iran they said: "But why do you want to work?! We will give you money!" They wanted to give us a very comfortable life, they wanted me to have fun and study well.

A: Did you have fun?

CR₂: Yeah, of course, what I expected those days, yeah I had a great time.

A: Okay. Now let's go back. You said that you escaped to Turkey and all they way, all along the way you were thankful for this experience and you felt that God was with you all along.

CR₂: Ah, probably I should mention that there were other things, like we did not bathe for two weeks after my father left with our things, and we did not have a toothbrush in the villages in Turkey, so you can imagine that after being used to brushing your teeth three times a day how not being able to brush your teeth for

about a month would feel like! And other things--you have your period and you have nothing whatsoever, not even a piece of fabric!!

A: CR₂, what was it like to decide to leave Iran, what was the experience like? What was your feeling about leaving the country? (leaving behind mother and brother)

CR₂: That's what I am leading to--with all the things happening at the same time, I had no time to think about this, that "I am leaving my country." I just think that that's why I wasn't thinking. I remember it was about 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning when we were crossing the border and this guy said: "Look, do you see that block of stones?!" And we said: "What is it?" He said: "That's the border!!" And God knows that I wasn't thinking that: "Hey! You're leaving your country!!" And for me, I don't know about other people, but I was studying Persian literature. I was in love deeply with my country, Afsaneh. I, I always wanted to finish my bachelor's degree, come to Canada or England, get my degree (Master's) and come back to my country and serve. I wanted my kids to have Persian names, I wanted to travel across Iran. I, I was deeply in love!! You know that most Persian youth don't listen to Persian traditional classical music. I loved it! I was deeply in love with it!. I would listen to other kinds of music, from other countries, I was very open to other kinds of arts and music too, but I could really appreciate what *we* had. And also my religion, so at that point, I don't, maybe I was so, I don't know, something, so depressed maybe, that my mind wasn't thinking about it as we left. It's very interesting, actually I would like to study it some day and see what was going on inside me emotionally. And even when we were crossing the border everything was so new, you don't have time to think about any borders--there was snow all over, very beautiful! The horizon was red. It was so beautiful! I'd never seen anything like that in my life! It was so beautiful! It was so cold! My ears were painful! My hands were painful! I know that at one point I was crying out and telling my guide: "I'm losing my hands! I know we'll have to cut them!" It was so painful! And the guy took off his gloves and gave them to me, which I didn't accept and so he had to massage my hands. And you know, so many things happening at the same time. I was very tired. I wasn't hungry at all. And I hadn't eaten for a long time, but I wasn't feeling hungry, but I was very, very weak-kind of dizzy--it was really strange, so I think that's why I had no time to react emotionally to the situation--because if you want to survive, you sometimes don't think. Anyways, you see, in Turkey you don't really need a passport, as soon as you get to a police station and say that you've escaped your country you can stay. And we didn't know that--so after one week of living in that village we found out that there was a road that we could get to in ten minutes walk and then after half an hour you could get to a police station. So we didn't know about all this. We were in a car wearing Kurdish clothes, we didn't know one word of Kurdish or Turkish. My cousin, she knew a little Turkish. We were told that the Kurdish women didn't usually have any pieces of identification or cards, and that it didn't because they wouldn't ask for it. We would only have to say that we had a bride to take to the city. And they were really confused themselves, and so within about 200 kilometers there were seven police stations (this was because of the political situation in Turkey) and they all stopped us, every one of them, and they wanted to check everything. And this old lady who was with us from the village changed her station at each station!! At one station, I was supposed to be the bride, at another station I was supposed to be sick and they were taking me to the hospital! It was quite a funny story. We four girls wearing those big, floppy Kurdish dresses on the back seat! We were squeezed, we were pressed. We hadn't had lunch! I had such a headache! I was feeling nauseated. You know, it was such a . . . I remember I said in Persian to my sister that each day we think this is it! It couldn't be any worse! But the next

day something new happened and started thanking God for your yesterday, of God it was so nice sister, can we go back to yesterday!

So we finally got to a hotel in a small city. This hotel was checked by the police all the time and the manager took our passports, and we simply handed them over to him. And we asked for our passports back--you see, passports were very important to us. We had several sweaters on and had made sort of secret pockets in them and put our passports in them. You see, they were very important to us. And my dad didn't have any money. All we had was about 5,000 liras, which is really nothing. So he handed us 1,000 each, in case we got separated, so we each kept a passport and 1,000 liras in that pocket all the time. Now we had lost this precious passport. He said he would give them back to us. And I'd been in many hotels before and I knew he had no right to keep our passports. So the next morning he came to us and he was very nervous and he told us that the police was there and we had to make up a story very quickly. We didn't know where my dad was. We didn't know whether the police had him, nothing! We only had one hotel number in Ankara to check and see if he was. We did, but nobody knew of him there. And we didn't know. The police could have gotten my father and he might have given them one story and our story had to match his! So we decided to just tell them that we have lost my father and that we are Baha'is. Because they were against Communists. Even if you were a political refugee from Iran, if you were a Communist they would want to return you. And since it was very cold we had scarves on, head covers, they thought we were Muslim like the Mujahidins and they didn't ask us. And we had a translator and he told us in Persian quickly: "Even if you are Communists don't tell them because they will return you!" And then there was this guy from the army and he was honest and nice and he said that he understood us. And we told him that we'd lost my father and he said that we hadn't and my father was in such and such city and he is in prison. And we thought "Well, at least he's safe! And he's not somewhere out in the mountains!" And we were going to join him. It was funny that we had gone through all the seven police stations and this police officer would show our passports to his poor and very young policemen and say: "Are you blind and are you stupid or something? To let four girls single-handedly escape your stations without noticing that they are not Kurdish?!" And he was amazed, he used to call us "Lionesses"--very brave and very powerful, that we could do something like this in such a country. And he was also amazed that none of these soldiers had touched us!! I guess it was very unusual.

Anyway, we joined my dad and we waited for the Ankara head office to tell us whether it was okay for us to move to Istanbul and wait there for a visa or whatever. So up to this point nobody in Iran knew what had happened to us absolutely. Nobody knew. The first thing we did was to contact our relatives in the States to call Iran and tell them about us. And one of my cousins in the States, I don't know how, it was really amazing, but he could find my dad in that remote, far, very small border city, in prison, find him and talk to him on the phone. This was almost impossible! Because in Turkey you cannot contact different cities--the phone system is so awful, it is really ridiculous.

So we took the bus to Ankara and to Istanbul. It took us about three days, I guess. That is another story, because I wasn't able to sleep on that bus ride, I had no appetite and it was quite hard, really. By the time we got to Istanbul I was exhausted. And we were in Istanbul for I don't remember, one or two weeks. Because we had very little money we were in a very, very cheap hotel in a very, very cheap neighbourhood--uh, even after all the hardships we were glad to be safe and could wash your face and brush your teeth and so on, but there was no hot water in that hotel and it was really cold in Istanbul. I remember I used to wash our clothes in the sink with cold water and then hang

it in the room and cold water would run all over the floor and we didn't know how to mop the floor and things like that! We were five people in a room for three with three beds. But it was okay because you could feel that you were doing something. You are moving from a war. Something is happening. Then people in the U.N. office said that "Baha'is should leave Turkey because they're not safe here because there are many spies from Iran." I wanted to go to Canada. My cousin wanted to go to Germany, also my dad. The other one wanted to go to the U.S. and we didn't know how hard it was to get a visa. So this lady at immigration told us that the best to do is to go to Spain because they didn't require visas at that time. So we did. And after eight months my mother and my brother joined us. Anyway, in Spain we almost lived for two years.

A: Why did you want to come to Canada?

CR₂: I'm not sure. I used to, you're from Iran, you know what we thought of education in the West, rather than in Iran, besides, it was very hard to enter university in Iran, and it didn't mean that you were dumb or what, you might have been the best student and still not pass the exam, so you always wanted to be on the safe side if you could afford it, so before I graduated from high school, my attitude was to prepare everything for Canada. So I gave my translated documents to the embassy and send them to Canada--for education's sake. But then I passed the exam and got into university in Iran and I forgot about Canada. But again, sometimes I thought of getting my bachelor's in Iran and coming to Canada to finish and then go back. So when I was in Turkey I had nothing in mind. The first step was to leave Iran and then decide. We knew it was hard to get a visa for any country. We didn't realize that it was almost impossible. So I thought, I'll get to Turkey and then decide. And then when they asked me I said Canada and it's stayed with me for forever! And I guess I started the whole thing. Because immigration-wise we could have stayed in Spain but education-wise and the kinds of things that were happening were exactly like before the Revolution in Iran, politically. Like university strikes--and I thought, "I don't want this! It is much safer in Canada and much more stable and--once was enough!" I didn't want to have to go through the whole experience of uprooting again! But I really liked the place and the people.

A: CR₂, I have a question to ask you. When did the thought that you are really out of Iran first strike you?

CR₂: Well, there is one thing I want to say, but it has to be very confidential. I mean, I don't want anyone to know about it, but since it's important for this--I had a boyfriend whom I wanted to marry and in fact it was him who said I should leave the country and go for my education, otherwise no ?? how dangerous it could get I wanted to stay and after a year I was with him I understood that we were in love, that was true, but our marriage couldn't be--couldn't work out, I mean we were two different people and, but I was ready to sacrifice--it wasn't logical but I was ready to do it! And he was the one who sacrificed and said that "you should go." And I did! And the first time that I really realized that I'm not in Iran, that I'm in Turkey--one night I looked at his picture and decided to tear it and threw it away. And, at that point I understood that: "Here I am! I cannot go back! I knew what I was doing. I'm here. I'm trying to go to another country, and then another and another until I establish myself somewhere. I'm not going to see him again. It is over and so . . ." I was, yeah, that was the first time after so many hard moments that I cried. When I threw his picture in the garbage. You know, those little pieces of picture . . . didn't look like him any more but, it was something I knew with my heart and I *cried* so hard, and so badly and everybody came to me, you how Iranians are, they all ran

out of their rooms to see what had happened. And that was the first time! I just found deep inside that the most precious thing that I had was gone and that point, you know, I wasn't thinking of my country as much as I was thinking of him. Yes, they were in a sense related. Leaving him was leaving the country and leaving Iran was leaving him and so on--that was the first time. In a way, throwing his picture away was a symbol of breaking away from my country. That was the first time. But up to two years ago it was really hard! It is now five years that I've left Iran, but in the first year that I was in Canada I had dreams that I was in Iran. I also had dreams of being in Canada and even speaking English in my dreams, but being in Iran, being with my friends, things that could happen, they always happen to my friends, you know, it was a real, real strong attachment.

A: What do you mean by dreams?

CR₂: Well, you know, the kind of dream that something happens to you during the day and you have a dream at night. Okay, the whole thing happens in Canada, but you want to react to it you react in Iran with your old friends. You relate everything to your past--I was still living in the past, unconsciously.

A: Okay. Tell me about the time you came to Canada. What was that like?

CR₂: Well our trip seemed so endless that I remember when I saw my cousins and aunt and uncle at the airport (here) after seven years, I was so tired and so sick of the flight that I had no reaction and they (laughs), they were really hurt!! I had no feelings at all! I just didn't want to get into any other airplanes. I wanted to be on the ground and walk! I was feeling sick, you know, and very tired. It was really, and when we arrived in Canada, this lady in Montreal asked me something in French, and I didn't speak French, I could speak a little English, so I thought: "I should tell her somehow that I don't speak French," so I started speaking Spanish! And at that point I stopped and thought: "My God! I'm not even speaking Persian to her! Why Spanish?!" I knew enough English to tell her that I don't speak French!

A: How did that make you feel?

CR₂: Oh! I was puzzled! I wasn't able to say one more word at all! I was . . . And that was when we were mixing all other things. Everybody was in a hurry, rushing from the immigration office (at the airport), carrying out baggage, and this lady was asking for something! In terms of my English, I had learned a little bit of English in Iran. I was able to manage in Turkey and in Spain. But after some time in Spain, we used to do everything in Spanish and so my English was a mixture of Spanish and English. I wasn't able to concentrate on English and that happened for a ?? in Canada. When I got here, I went to Douglas College. After four months I went to college. I had English assessment and I don't know why but they said that I was able to take course 130. This was an English course designed for ESL students but it was considered as an English course. As well, I took two Spanish courses, second year Spanish. Because I wanted to learn more and not forget what I already knew. But the English course was *very* hard. I wasn't able to understand what the teacher was talking about, what I was supposed to do and in Iran, they never taught us how to write the way they're expecting us to write here. So I remember, a Persian Baha'i girl was in our class. I used to call to her and say: "What'd he say? What are we supposed to do?" and so on. And even when she translated things to me I didn't know how to do things! So the whole thing was *really* disappointing and hard. And I failed the course. I got an N which means you have to take it again and after that I didn't want to speak a word of English to

anyone!! I remember I hated it! Meanwhile I had my first job in Canada which was another mistake! It was phone publicity! I wasn't even able to convince these people to buy these things that I was selling. And besides that, I didn't believe in what I was doing either! You know, it was a bunch of nonsense! So I lost my job after the first week! I wasn't selling anything. It was hard! I mean, there were Canadians who lost their jobs too. But to me it was more personal.

A: What did you feel? What do you mean by personal?

CR₂: Well, my English was so poor I wasn't able to keep a job! And I hated the supervisor from the first day, even when I was filling my application form. Anyway, so I didn't want to speak any more English. I used to love speaking English when I was in Iran. My English wasn't great, but it wasn't . . . I mean, for that environment and high school my English was pretty high! I was proud of it! And I had a very good English teacher, here, at Douglas College. And he knew what the problems were and he was trained to work with ESL students and he was advising me himself. So I talked to him and he told me what courses I should take, ESL courses. So I finally took the same course the next semester and I passed with a B!! But, you know, now I look at my papers and I'm so thrilled, I can sit there and laugh at them for hours, when I read them!! Anyway, I could feel the progress of my English. Like I used to go places, youth conferences and meetings and not understand a word of what they were talking about. And after six months I would go hear the same person talk and understand a little more, and after six months I understood more!

A: What was that feeling like?

CR₂: Oh!! It was great!! And what I always do with languages I'm studying is that I underline words I don't know and then go back to them after a few months and it's amazing how many of these words you've learned without studying or thinking about them. I'm not great in languages, but I'm not bad either. I'm just used to comparing myself with my sister. She's very good in learning languages, but I also think she's also six years younger and that can make a difference. And also like my mom, who's having a really hard time learning it and adjusting and adopting a new culture and language.

A: Tell me about your process of adjustment to this culture. What was it like for you to adjust? You told me about the language . . .

CR₂: Well, even in Iran I wasn't really very Persian and I always used to do some things that others couldn't accept. You know, like I was a strange kind of person. I remember once my aunt called me a gypsy who was against every tradition. But I wasn't! And I never considered *that* as a generation gap or anything. And even now, the kinds of friends I like to have, to most of the Persians they look strange. The way I like to dress looks strange! Last week I sent to a . . . They said: "Oh, you're so punky tonight. We couldn't recognize you!" I said, "No, I look the same!" There's something about me, I don't know what? I never go too far in anything, but, so in those terms there wasn't any shock to me in taht sense. There were exceptions though, like, being a Baha'i, I remember once we had this meeting and one of the Canadian Baha'is laid down right there in the middle of the living room while everybody was sitting in their chairs and he just felt tired and laid down. Ah! I couldn't keep my eyes off him, I was so shocked! My God! What on earth is he doing?! He is such a gentleman, he's so knowledgeable, so well respected, a Baha'i, you know! I couldn't find any answer to that. That was three years ago. So it was harder for my sister and my brother. They would come back from school and say: "They

did this, they did that! I found this in the corridor." You know, and I would say, "My God!" They were really strange. I couldn't accept them. But I didn't face them myself. I heard them from other people. And besides, being in Spain which was like a bridge between these two cultures, because Spain, the whole country was like a Persian being in Canada, because the new generation was bringing up something that the old generation could not accept at all. Like free sex and nude beaches and things like that, which was very new for Spanish people as well. So we were getting ready in those two years, you know, like people kissing each other on the streets and things like that.

A: CR₂, you mentioned being a Persian in Canada. Tell me what that means to you. What does "being a Persian in Canada" mean to you?

CR₂: I guess I faced this way and felt that difference a few times, with different experiences. I'll tell you one of them: I went out with this gorgeous guy. He's very tall. He didn't look to be the same age as I was, but he was. He was a doctor, he, you know, you cannot find a girl who would say "no" to him.

A: And he was a Canadian?

CR₂: Yes, and for a 26-year-old guy who had accomplished so much, he was a real gentleman. He had a very good education, very good family, but still he was from this culture, you know, it was nothing for him to have sex with someone.

A: How long ago is this?

CR₂: Oh, recently. So we went out, we had dinner and that night I had tried to get the car so that we could go here and there and have fun, but I couldn't. So both of us had to take the bus from two different directions and meet somewhere. I mentioned that "it's too bad I couldn't get the car and he said: "Yeah, I wish you had the car." I said, "What would you like to do? Maybe we can still do it?" He said, "I would like us to go to my room!" It was such a shock to me that for a while I wasn't sure if I had interpreted it correctly. And he could see the shock. (end of tape side)

CR₂: Anyway, he smiled, he was about to laugh even, and he says, "Come on, relax, I just want to have fun with you!" and he had no idea how insulting that sentence was to me. You know, I just, I thank God that we were in a restaurant, otherwise I would have slammed him right away, and it was so insulting, because before that he was talking about how sophisticated I am, how wise I am and so on. At one point he thought that I was twenty-nine year old and I laugh and said "Come on, you're kidding!" and he said "No, really!" and I said "Why?" He said, "because you're so sophisticated when you speak, you're so wise" you know, and . . . and then I couldn't believe him, that he was twenty-six because, I thought, well, he was a doctor, so at least thirty, you know. So I told him that he wasn't, after what he said, I told him that he wasn't as sophisticated as I thought of him to be and he said, "I just wanted to have fun!" I said "Well, I'm sorry. I spoiled your night!" He was from Toronto, he was here to stay for two nights. I said "I'm really sorry that I've spoiled it. I can go home and then you can have fun, however you like, and he said "Oh come on! I'm really enjoying being with you" and so on. So it was *really* a good experience for me because I thought he was a doctor, I had a whole different image of him, you know. I thought I knew everything after being almost three years in Canada. I didn't, I mean, him being a doctor! He was so seductive! I realized I didn't know! Because then he changed. It wasn't his fault, it was my fault, because, only because he had accomplished so much, I was expecting too much from him, you know, I forgot that he is, he's Canadian, his background is Yugoslavian. But

they drink, they have sex, and it's nothing to them, I mean, he's so good-looking that I'm sure none of the girls that he has been in touch with so far said no to him. So he was shocked and so it changed the whole conversation through the night and I wasn't able to handle it. We started to get to know each other--we were just kind of walking, spontaneously, in Vancouver, downtown, just walking for, God knows, three or four hours.

A: This is after the incident?

CR₂: Yeah, after the dinner, just asking questions, a funny conversation . . . especially 'cause he had a beer and a glass of wine, so he was high, he could laugh and talk, but he was conscious, but we both knew what was going on, and he was able to carry it the way he wanted, I wasn't able to.

A: What was going on for you?

CR₂: We both knew that we're very different now, ok, we both knew that we are not kids. Biologically we could enjoy each other. He liked me, I liked him, he was really good-looking, really attractive. But there was no point, I mean, at least if I was in love, I would say, you know, at one crazy moment would say yes. But I'd only known him for two days and then, tomorrow he's leaving, and he didn't even want to have my address or give his address to me--what was the point? Was I a prostitute he'd take? You know, so I looked at him and he was the same person! I could still respect him! He had the same knowledge that he had before, he had the same looks as he had before. Nothing had changed, it was only my expectation of him, it's too much, I guess I was hurt, you know, I don't know how I can explain it. I was hurt within myself, my foolishness.

A: What was going on, tell me what was going on within yourself?

CR₂: I remember we were walking, it was funny, I was doing two things at the same time. I was talking to him, I was handling a conversation with him, which I had to be very wise, because that conversation was so amazing after that! At the same time I was checking all the people that I knew that I knew and I respected so much from this culture. I was checking them one by one. What was wrong about them?

A: All men?

CR₂: Women too, you know, things that might be going on in their lives which is none of my business, but could change their image. And where at one point I felt that, it's okay, having sex is, it's joy, especially if you are attracted to each other, so what is wrong here? You know, so it was only when I got home, my mum was teasing me, my cousin was, everybody was teasing me: how was he, he's good looking, a doctor! Hurry up! Do something! I didn't say anything. Next morning they started again, just teasing, they didn't mean anything and I know I got mad, I turned to them, my dad was there, my uncle was there, my aunt and my mum. My mother first and then my cousin, teasing me, and I turned and I said "we won't meet each other again!" My father said "Why?" I said "because he wanted me to do something that I wouldn't do!" And that was enough, because they knew what I was talking about. And my dad "oh," no-one says anything, we don't communicate about these things at all. But everybody was open, we talked about it, like my aunt asked. Well, you see, this cousin was with us when we came to this part of the world, and my mum joined us after eight months and her mum joined after two-three years, so it wasn't a long time that she was here, so she turned to her daughter and said: "So tell me, would it change anything?" and my cousin said, "what?" She said "Well, would he fall in

love because she said no?" And my cousin said, "No! He wouldn't care!" And my aunt said "why! Wouldn't that change the image?" She said, "sure it changes her image, now he would think of CR₂ as a crazy, stupid girl who said no to such a wonderful opportunity to be with such a wonderful guy!" And I was thinking that, "My God, this is what happened!" I didn't want that to happen. I have his address and God knows, I will find him someday in Toronto, only because I don't want him to have that kind of image of me, if he does by any chance. Because at the end of the night we also talked about the Baha'i faith, which he was very interested in, but we didn't get a chance to talk more, but the funny thing for me, Afsaneh, was that I couldn't get rid of that strange feeling. I didn't know what it was, I couldn't figure why I was depressed for a few days. And I decided to see a counsellor. And it took the counsellor to give me an appointment after one month maybe, so this thing was with me. And I guess I was thinking of not being able to solve it, or find out what it is or analyze it by myself and I needed to talk with someone. So there I was, my counsellor was there. I wanted to see a woman, . . . was a man, which, I didn't want it to take any longer, so I said, "that's okay." He asked me, he said, "Would you rather see a woman?" and I said "No." And I was there, and he said, "Okay, go on" and I told him, I had to explain, right? So I talked for maybe fifteen minutes and then he said "Great, you did the right thing" and "I'm glad to hear this. You have no problem!" So I didn't know what to say, so I looked at him, and I said "I know, logically I have no problem, but I still have that feeling, which I'm not sure what it is." And he wanted me to leave his office with the same feeling, same situation, he didn't change anything, and he said "what do you want me to tell you?" And at the very moment when he said that, I realized that there is no problem. All that's going on was that, well I was 26, I can have sex and enjoy it, but I cannot accept it.

A: Why?

CR₂: Not the way he wanted sex. I want love, you know, I'm not a machine, I'm not, you know. No matter how attractive he is physically, I want to enjoy it emotionally as well and I can not do that without love. I don't know how these people could enjoy it that way! I don't think they could actually and I felt, I know the whole Persian, the whole Baha'i community would be against me, but I might have sex before marriage someday, but I must love him and trust this love, it has to be a relationship that is going to end in a marriage. It has to be something that I can trust to last forever, you know, and that was it, I guess. The other thing that was bugging me was that why, why on earth should I give him so much credit for something he wasn't. On the other hand, you cannot blame him either, he is a fine person too, as a product of this culture, he is okay, I am okay, there's nothing, what is wrong is this culture, you know, he has learned to have sex because if he didn't, they would make fun of him and I've learned not to, because if I do, I would be rejected. But that smile on his face that he found me shocked is bothering me.

A: But what's he telling you? What did you hear him say with that smile?

CR₂: That, you know, I felt that he was looking at me like in a nun from a church on top of the mountains that has never been touched by a man and doesn't know how to react and is nervous but wanted, you know, like I wanted you badly, but I was nervous, I was afraid, so I said no, and by the end of the night I changed that part of it. He knew that, I knew what I'm doing. He knew that I very well knew whether I will do it or not, and why not. He thought I was wrong, but he respected me, he respected all my culture, everything, I respected him. He couldn't understand that, because we were two completely different people. you know, we were too . . . He was respecting me, at the end of the night he

was respecting me even more, but I guess being a Baha'i helped, and if I hadn't discussed the Baha'i faith at one point, I have to admit it. He was, we were both really tired after walking so much and talking so much and, you know, he had drunk, so he was really dizzy at that time, poor guy had to take the bus and it would take him one hour to get home and everything was like. But he could feel that there was something precious somewhere here, but he didn't really figure out what it was, and that's why I want him to know, I have no problem, I can find in Toronto and I will find him too, you know, I'm sure, because the way he said goodbye we were good friends but we knew that we don't have to be involved at all, other than a normal friendship.

A: You mentioned being a Baha'i. Do you think that being a Persian has much to do with feeling the difference between you?

CR₂: I have asked myself this question! I don't know if I can discriminate, but I guess if I were a Muslim things could be different.

A: . . . Baha'i . . .

CR₂: . . . affectionate, you know, . . . the kind of person that I am, I'm really open to . . . he was saying, I mean, he even asked me . . . tell them that . . . such and such situation what would she do, they would say that she might do it, you know, that's the kind of image I know that some people do have of me. But, so a non-Persian, a non-Baha'i Persian girl, chances are maybe eighty percent that they would do it! You know!

A: He was that good-looking, huh!

CR₂: Oh boy! That was a test for me. I came home and I sort of prayed and I said "God, thank you! I don't know how you got me" I could feel the detachment at that point

A: Did you find it difficult? I mean, amidst all the emotional feelings that you had because . . .

CR₂: Okay, I'm sorry, I should clear up something here. That Persian girl would say no, but would be willing to get more involved with him, yeah. But I didn't, I mean, I have his address, I never contacted him, because I want to meet him in a situation this time, you know, to create an opportunity for him to meet the Baha'i community, and know the Baha'i faith, like me, that's the only thing I'm thinking about now, you know, so I don't think any Persian would unless they had experiences before.

A: Yeah, they had the experience before. Okay. CR₂. you've touched on something that's very important, okay, and that's about values and I want to keep it at that and get on with this journey that you're taking and tell me more. You can use more examples like this one and the feelings you had. I'm not interested in the events as much, but more what you experienced

CR₂: in Canada

A: Yeah, in Canada

CR₂: Well, I've been so involved in going to school, and finding a job, you know, that look! There is a point I should say maybe could be of interest that it has been quite boring for me in the last few years, quite boring, quite boring. Things that you can do in Canada, for instance: skiing or ice skating, which I've never

learned in my life. It was after the Revolution when I really started out of home life and, you know, most of my time was spent in school, and I've never been the kind of person to go out after school and these activities. So in that way I miss on, so many friends, so many--fun. Then financially I can not afford to have fun. Like, we get together and they want to go to this restaurant and then go to that movie and then go to that disco and by the end of the night it turns out to be forty, fifty dollars--I cannot afford that, and

A: "They," who are "they"? Canadian friends or Iranians?

CR₂: Both. Some of them understand, and some of them don't. Some of them don't try to understand at all. They'll say "she is boring, we don't want to be with her." Some of them at least come to you and say: "Why?," you know, "you're not coming?" And things like that. In terms of Iranians, Persian, Baha'i community that I am involved with, I can't find friends, I don't know why, it's very hard for me. Usually my friends are older than I am. Like, before, in Iran, for example, I was in university. They were one year older, or one year younger, or my age, but I could always have good friends among older people. In Canada I have some Canadian friends who are older ten years, 20 year, five years older, but I want . . . the same age and younger. I cannot, I can not find someone in Baha'i community in particular to be really interested in and enjoy being with

A: . . .

CR₂: Whatever, I guess I cannot

A: Are you talking about Persians or Canadians?

CR₂: Both, in the Baha'i community.

A: Okay, so you're telling me that you could not find a good friend. Someone you can get close to . . .

CR₂: Yeah

A: I wonder why?

CR₂: I don't know

A: What is it that they make you feel? . . .

CR₂: For Persians, I guess I could divide them into two major groups: some who are very rich and no matter what nationality, what religion, I cannot get along with them, because, um, I would be different a person, anyway, even if I had the same amount of money. They haven't had experiences that I had in the last few years. They don't understand me, you know--the kind of movies they want to watch, the kind of activities they want to have, the kind of conversations that they have, they're so, I won't say that I'm more mature, but they're just, they have a long way to go, you know. And the older ones, well, they're usually married and I'm not interested in them, you know, I always felt that I shouldn't be really involved in any relationships, you know, friendships, with married people, no matter if it the wife or the husband, I don't want it. And, you see, the other group, Persians, I mean, those who are not as rich, or probably are the same as I am, they are very different. Most of them, I'd say, very, very, they don't seem to be from this generation, they're from two generations, you know

A: Iranian

CR₂: Yeah, and of course nothing can change for their kind of behaviour, whatever. So, again, I can't blame anyone, I am the one who's having problems in this case. But it's hard for me to understand but I was the one who used to receive calls, now I am the who makes calls, you see what I mean. I was the one that people were willing to be friends with. Sometimes I had problems like I didn't want to be friends with someone and they kept calling and inviting me and so on, now it is the other way around.

A: What do you think has happened?

CR₂: I don't know, I'm just, I'm actually willing to be lonely and have my moments, especially with the kind of things I would like to do, coming from an art background, things like that--you must have a calm and quiet environment. People who are with you must be able to understand what you are doing, otherwise it is a distraction so, you know, that is changing me, especially in the last four months, which I had to go to school from, I was in school from eight-thirty in the morning till nine, nine-thirty at night in that kind of environment. So you have to do certain things as assignments or whatever for your own personal interest, that other people are not familiar with and can't understand and I'm not that kind of person to show off, so I'm not willing to explain to them either. So, you know, this has created two different worlds

A: So if you keep turning them down, then they won't come back?

CR₂: No, I won't turn them down, no, but in the last few months, that's the way it has been. Not in the last four months, the last four months nobody has called me, I know, even some of them think that I've moved to Toronto and they're surprised, they think I'm here for a holiday or something when they see me, but even before that, I was wondering what had happened because I'm very open, I love everybody when we get together, I'm fine.

A: Let's make a distinction here. Are you talking about Persians or Canadians?

CR₂: Everybody. In general.

A: Oh, so you feel you have experience with both groups, not just one group?

CR₂: Yes. That is, that has become a personal thing. Before, well I have had funny experiences with Canadians not being able to understand what I was saying, you know, made funny mistakes, things like that.

A: Tell me about that. What's . . . do you have any close Canadian friends?

CR₂: At the moment I don't have any close friends at all, very close, you know, the kind of friend that you get home and you call them in between and you want to talk to them or you see each other

A: Yes, in terms of intimate friends.

CR₂: No, I don't have any

A: Have you ever had any close Canadian friends?

CR₂: No.

A: You didn't have any close Persian friends?

CR₂: I had a friend from Australia who was living here for a while and he could be a close friend, I mean, we were really open, and he left. He wasn't Canadian, he was from Australia. But

A: Let me ask the question in another way--do you find it easy to get close to Canadians?

CR₂: It is more difficult.

A: So you choose options, is that what you're saying?

CR₂: I guess there aren't many opportunities. There are people that I can get along with--they like me, I like them, they're very busy, I'm very busy, so we meet every six months or once a year, so there isn't much chance to get close. But I can see that we could be close friends.

A: So you don't see any walls?

CR₂: No difficulty, no. It was mainly in the beginning, when I first got here

A: Oh, so it's a language problem?

CR₂: Yeah

A: A communication problem?

CR₂: Actually, Afsaneh, I know we're trying to cover the whole period of being in Canada but I'm facing these cultural differences now, you know, where I am, because that school, we are in our groups, so we are going to be together for two years, every day, for many hours, and we become friends

A: And previously you would not have the experience of facing a Canadian

CR₂: No (end of tape side) The interesting thing is that it's happening after three years being here now I can communicate, now I can understand what they're saying and at school they're mostly teenagers because they're coming out of high school. There are some students, quite a few, who are my age or older, and usually married, and obviously I get along with them much better. But in particular those people that I'm really interested in talking to and I can get along very well with, are my teachers. And they like me, too. It is an environment that there are no barriers between teacher and student.

A: Here, comparing it with Iran . . .

CR₂: Well, even in Canada, I mean, in that particular program, that Fine Arts department, there is no such thing, there couldn't be. There are not that kind of people any more, and . . .

A: What school are you going to?

CR₂: Langara. Even someone from another department in Langara would come down and feel strange about it, they're really close, you know. He is your teacher, you go out with him and dance with him, so on, they're really open, and there are the people I might get along with. But this is the time that I can really feel the differences. You know seeing these teenagers change boyfriends and

girlfriends, every day in the same group. One day they would really get involved with someone and, you know, and next day it's someone else, and I go, "Oh, what happened?, you know, and then I look at other people--nobody's surprised, I'm the only one who's surprised, like, what is going on here! And then I go and talk with some of them, you know, what is going on? I want to see how they feel. Because I sometimes see that nobody's surprised. These are machines, some kind of machine or something, something wrong with these people, and there is something wrong with it, they *are* having problems, this is not me, who has the problem, but then I talk to them, they're surprised too. It's just not, so maybe it is not normal for them to react, they think maybe. And they have understood me by now, you know, it is not easy for them to, I mean, they are having problems understanding me, in terms of culture and behaviour, for example, we had this party and they knew I wouldn't drink--that was okay, many of those Christian Canadians didn't drink either and, for example, I was dancing--they knew that I was religious, as they call it, and so I went and almost started the dance and they were surprised. "We didn't know that you danced" and I said, "look," you know, where did they get this idea? Of course I dance, I'm crazy about it, I dance crazy." And then one of our teachers was drunk and he sees me, so he came up to me and he said, for weeks he had been trying to resolve to be able to dance with me at least once and I always said "okay, okay" and that night I just didn't, so he came and said "I know you hate me, but please dance with me, pretend." I said "okay," so as we were dancing he said, "You don't mind when I tease you in class?" I said "no, as long as you don't mind if I tease you." He said "no." I said "that's fine." So he had his shoes off, dancing, and I decided to hide his shoes somewhere, just teasing, so I told some other people and they did it all together, they went far, I mean, some of them moved the shoe again and again and finally, I didn't know where the shoe was any more and later I found out that the poor guy wasn't able to find one of the shoes and he had borrow a running shoe from one of his students and, you know, it was. . I mean, after he obviously wasn't drunk any more, he was mad anyways, he had fun, and I had fun, and. . But he would come to me, still, after two weeks, come to me and laugh, and say, "I couldn't imagine you'd do such a thing, you're so quiet, you're so this and that, you know, and I thought, I always tell them "well, you don't know me"

A: How do you feel when they say that?

CR₂: Well, they know my age, they know that I'm, as they call it, religious, you know, I've talked about it and they know I don't drink, they know I'm, they don't ask, but I'm sure they know, or they can guess, that I won't have sex as they might. So, and they respect me a lot, and I know more than most of them do, you know, I'm not a teenager any more, and the kind of life I've had, they haven't, so it's normal, they time to know me and on occasions like that, parties and dinners and going out together

A: So you accept that, so you . . . ?

CR₂: Yeah, yeah, it's okay. But I always tell them that now you realize that you were wrong. But they still laugh, I mean, it was unimaginable for them to see me do such things and, because *they* are the weird people, and nobody did such a thing at the party, which, . . . They are so weird, They might dance in the middle of a teacher's lecture, but they didn't dance at the party, whereas during the lectures I am quiet and, you know, but in the party I would dance, so I guess I'm more balanced than they are, you know, and they're starting to understand that. Things like that. Sometimes I get really surprised, or maybe shocked, at school, at the stories I hear from them, you know, using drugs and so on. But considering the kind of people that they are, you know, they're going to

be artists, they think they have to be open, there shouldn't be any traditions and customs and so on. And the kind of environment that we are having at that department, I think that these are very nice people, they could go really far in using drugs and having sex and so on. So considering all these things they're really good people, they're really nice teenagers, they know what's going on, and so there aren't many opportunities for me to be culture-shocked, yet! But, you know, and these are the things that I already knew, you know, but you hear them from other people. Now you can actually see someone who has done such and such, so you go "wow!" But I talk to them, and they are not, they come out of that obscurity after I talk to them and I start to understand that it is not really their culture either. This is a generation, there's social problems, . . . different things are going on at the same time.

A: Do you feel that they understand you and your background?

CR₂: They started out asking questions, many questions and they say that they are not able to understand, but after a while they do. But again, I'm not that far from what they were, you see. I am somehow different from what other people might be in my culture as well, so I'm not a stranger, or an outsider

A: Are you saying that you did not, for the most part, feel understood by Canadians?

CR₂: Most of the time, for these people, in particular, most of the time I'm a question

A: You are a question

CR₂: Yeah, there are many things they don't know, and they come and ask . . . "how do you write?," "how do you speak?" . . .

A: Do you feel frustrated when they do?

CR₂: No, I enjoy it actually, I enjoy it. Because I want them to know

A: Can they know? Can they understand?

CR₂: They have to ask many questions to understand it, they have to discuss it, and they do. They have learned how to open something and really analyze it.

A: Do you feel judged?

CR₂: Well that one example that they're so surprised of what I did at the party--I didn't know that I was but I guess I was, but I didn't know it.

A: Do you feel judged by Persian . . . ?

CR₂: I think so, I have some examples with my relatives when I talk I'm real frank and sometimes they don't like it, and they don't like it because they know that CR₂ knows how to behave like a Persian girl and they don't understand why I would behave in that way and

A: So they'd say "you know better"

CR₂: That's part of their logic, I mean I respect them, but something, you know, when they go too far there is no point, I just tell them, you know, that's the way I am, and they don't like it.

A: Was that the case in Iran too?

CR₂: Sometimes, I told you my aunt called me a gypsy once, because she was so mad at me, you know.

A: Has that increased in Canada?

CR₂: Well, how can I answer you? You want me to . . . judgement

A: Okay, do you feel more judged by Persians here? Do you feel the judgement?

CR₂: No, and I have two reasons. Or, there are two reasons. One is that they are living the same situations, same culture, you know, they've been trying to adopt a new culture themselves--all of them have young children around, I mean, I am okay, you know, they have younger kids who are really having problems and I'm not in contact with them, I'm not in touch that much with many Persians And they don't really know much about me. All they see is the way I act in meetings and there isn't much to do and you sit there and listen and discuss something, so they haven't had a chance yet. I guess they would if they had the chance.

A: When they had a chance. Okay what about you mentioned about friends, and how you don't have any close ones and I wonder how it feels?

CR₂: I sometimes tend to think about it, and I don't like it and I have noticed that I tend to think about it when I need a friend and I don't have one. And that hurts. I don't like it. You know, but I cannot expect it because I think I'm being selfish that way and I'll tell you why. I have friends who I can always go to but sometimes I'm waiting for someone to give me a call and, you know, that is when you want to satisfy yourself that, oh, I'm being attractive or important, or whatever and I don't like it. So at that moment when I need someone, if I was ever to analyze the situation get to those points that's fine, if not, that hurts, you know, you start feeling lonely and "why is this happening? Why me? Why did everything change so much?"

A: Why do you think that everything has changed?

CR₂: I have changed.

A: How?

CR₂: I'm not sure. Well, I'm older in my age, then I'm older experience-wise, I am expecting, I'm not being reasonable, actually to expect more of myself, more than what I could do. For example, the doctor that I told you about, well look what's happened in his life, so he's a doctor at the age of twenty-six, I am not, so what. I cannot blame myself for what's happened, you know, I'd no control. But for a moment, it can upset me.

A: Okay, so what I'm hearing you say is "I can put myself down and I can blame myself"

CR₂: Exactly, but . . . I did the best that anyone could do in those situations. I tried to learn something--there was no use for those things, like learn how to type or how to drive, or how to be a good nurse or so on, there was no point, yeah, you couldn't use any of those, nobody would hire you or anything, but I had this hope within myself that something would happen, I will use it someday, so I never gave up. And I didn't, it wasn't easy, we knew that it is hard to leave Iran,

you know, but I did it. It wasn't easy to learn Spanish, after a few months, after five months I was able to do everything myself, you know, it was an . . . I haven't given up yet, so if I try to be just and think about the experience, I'm happy, otherwise, of course it hurts, I mean, I could graduate at the age of twenty-four but, twenty-four where was I? I was in Canada taking an English course and then failed it, you know. Not to be able to have a job and we needed money as well as the experience and everything. So that of course hurts, but it's not your fault. But sometimes it's hard to remember that. I mean, you are not blaming anyone, but it just hurts, so you have every right to be upset at that point, you know. I just, that's all, that's it.

A: CR₂, when you say, you talk about changes, that's something that I would like us to cover. You've been here three years. I'm sure there have been many changes. What are they?

CR₂: Okay. One change is what you would call the adaptation of a culture, or being adjusted. My dreams are not in Iran any more, they have come to Canada now. Many things

A: Your dreams are not in Iran any more? Or in Iranian?

CR₂: Neither one. Oh, I sometimes have dreams of my grandma and I speak English to her frequently, things like that

A: Okay, so you don't dream of Iran

CR₂: No, not any more

A: And you did when you first came?

CR₂: Oh a lot!

A: What did you dream about, going back?

CR₂: Okay, tell you what one thing, it is not a dream, but that's what happened in Spain. I used to take afternoon naps, you know, really, I love it. And one day I closed my eyes, I wasn't asleep, but I was in Iran, and I knew that I wasn't, I knew that I was in Spain, but I wasn't able to take myself out of that situation. So here I was, I was in my city, I was taking a bus to go to university and so maybe, I don't know how long it took, but anyways, I remembered every detail in the road, in the city, every detail in my dormitory room, every detail of my friends, everything. And I was suffering, Afsaneh, I wanted to open my, I wasn't sleeping, I wanted to open my eyes and get rid of it, but at the same time, it was so tangible, I mean, I was actually in Iran and I did want to open my eyes, I used to think "what's wrong with it?," you know, you ride in Iran

A: What were you suffering from?

CR₂: It wasn't true. I knew I wasn't in Iran, I knew that it wasn't even a dream, and at one point I thought "I'm going crazy" I thought, "that's it," you know, "you're at the edge! That's it!," you know. And then I, it was very funny, actually, I always wanted to tell it a psychologist someday and see what is it? You know, and I wasn't dreaming and I wasn't daydreaming, I mean, I guess, daydreaming, the definition is when you are willing to fantasize, or when you think of some--I wasn't even doing that. I guess I just wanted to be in Iran so badly, and it was amazing, that now if you ask me to tell you all the details

I can't remember, but at that moment I was able to remember every detail, every house on the block, all the names, all the places, all the streets, and how long it takes to where I used to sleep, and all these things. And it scared me, I mean, I really felt, "that's it, you are crazy, you're finished!," you know.

A: CR₂, do you miss Iran?

CR₂: Oh sure. But on occasion, sometimes I can easily, some of these people say "would you go back?" and I say "No." And I guess that's when I think of Iran as what it is right now I'm not stupid, it is hell! Who wants to go back, I mean, there is no way, but when I find a good book, a good poem, you know, everything comes back, of course, I loved it.

A: When you think of Iran, what do you think about, go back to?

CR₂: I don't go back to the moments I had. I go back to what I wanted to happen. I always wanted to study more, literature and travel in Iran, things that I wanted to do and I never did and I always think that I will never do.

A: What's it like to come to grips with this?

CR₂: It is terrible. It is terrible, because it has become a stereotype-thing, you know, if I read a poem or something, and on occasions there'll be song or something, and then it brings me to this world, to Canada, and in my relationships to all these people and I try to imagine myself married to a Canadian, you know, the best could be Canadian who is willing to learn Persian. I don't know a Canadian, you know, who can accept me as a Baha'i, then everything would be just fine, we'd love each other crazy, but, you know, there are going to be points when he is not Persian, and I want to be Persian like crazy, now what would happen then? And that is the rejection, you know,

A: Rejection?

CR₂: Yeah, kind of, I don't know . . . It becomes a pain in the neck, you cannot do anything about it, at that point you think, so what, that's it. You are here, you have to be here, you chose to be here, you are, you cannot go back to Iran, you can go to another country, and start all over again, learn another language, or whatever. You cannot go back to Iran, and that hurts. That is not a good feeling. I hate it. And I feel very sorry when I find out that my parents are having more problems than I do, at least I can lose that side of me by being with my friends at school. But they cannot, even when they are surrounded by Canadians. Even when they are enjoying themselves being with Canadians, they remember Iran. They're Iranian.

A: How about you?

CR₂: No, not any more. On occasions, I told you, some special thing must happen to

A: Has this changed from the beginning when you came?

CR₂: Sure. Sure, naturally. Especially when you want to say something in English and you can't. I think then you know, you know the answer or you know this and that, and "God, I wish these people knew Persian!," you know. I don't have that kind of frustration any more to be able to express myself. My language is not great, but doesn't get me frustrated.

A: I asked you "what is the feeling to know that you can't go back?" Can you use a metaphor to explain that?

CR₂: I guess it goes back to why you can't go back. Because I always wanted to come to Canada to study. But you could always go back on holidays. You could ask your mom to send you a Persian tape, you could ask for a this and that book. You know, the situation is different. You're locked out of your country, not by your own choice and still that is okay, what hurts is that, the hard part is that they are destroying everything that I love in that country, and I could give you one example. When we were leaving Iran we went to Tabriz and one mullah was trying hard to destroy one of the historical monuments in that city. And he did, he tried three times, he put bombs and dynamite everywhere, to destroy that beautiful, whatever, I mean, we cannot have that any more, he was trying to destroy just to have a piece of land to say prayers on Friday morning, which he could find that piece of land anywhere. And nobody was able to, everybody was upset, but nobody was able to stop this guy, and to me, from the moment I heard it, to now, I cannot understand, you know, this is our culture, this is our history, some guy doesn't feel like being Persian, someone who obviously has no values, as a moslem or as a Persian, has the power to do such a thing, and nobody says "don't!" Nobody even. Nobody! Everybody's crying, you know, but nobody says "why?" nobody says, "hey, you can get that piece of land," you know, and that hurts!

A: What is it like?

CR₂: Everything. Everything, you know. I will marry, I can even marry to a Persian, I would teach my kids Persian, I would talk to them, I would tell them stories, I would show the pictures. Of course, how can we replace that? suppose that some day we go back to Iran--this guy has destroyed that thing! What would be your feeling to go and say, "yes, this guy came and he tried three times" and they were to say "no." At least your kids would ask you, I'm sure, that "what did you guys do? Did you try to stop him?," you know, things like that. And of course when I was in that city I tried to imagine myself going there and stop him. (end of tape side) . . . And of course you, I mean, you can feel that, every day. You turn on TV they're talking about Iranians, you go and you say "I'm from Iran" it's "oh, you're the guys being persecuted" and "you know, those crazy people who are doing so-and-so." I talked with my teachers, and they all are fascinated by the Persian arts and crafts and so on and they never turn to me and say, "oh, I know you have this," they always turn to me and say "isn't that a pity they're destroying everything," you know! Or, for example, our fine arts, our art history teacher--he had been to Iran three times and has lectures on Persepolis, for example, and he has to, he has to mention what is going on in Iran or, he has to turn to me and say something, because I'm the only Persian there, so kind of

A: It's a reminder . . .

CR₂: Yeah, and it's sort of evidence that, hey, this is *really* happening! I know many Persians don't care. I know many Iranian youth who don't care much. But I was there, I was there and I'm the kind of person--my mum doesn't care much about historical monuments, but I do, I'm always fascinated being in one, so you can see how it can hurt when you hear that a bunch of crazy people, without having any reason, are doing so. And it is a loss, for sure. The kind of thing that you used to read in history textbooks, like Chengiz Khan destroyed everything, and you'd say, "oh, too bad." How could they let him do that! And now, in your time, someone else is doing the same thing. So you cannot blame those people any more--what are you doing--nothing. You just escaped Iran, and even

those who are there do not do anything

A: You just escaped Iran?

CR₂: I know what you want to get to!

A: Come on, . . . What do you feel about that?

CR₂: It again goes back to being a Baha'i as well as Persian. I remember when I was in Spain, we were in a small community and we had our first spiritual assembly at that city, and there were mostly Persians, so I became the secretary. So I am the one who received the letters and news, and I'm supposed to translate. And you hear about them executing ten women or ten men and so on and you say, "my God, what on earth, why am I here?!" and you feel kind of guilty, and at the same time sometimes I think, you know, if God doesn't want you to do something, you cannot do it, no matter how hard you try. So there is a point to be here for me, and maybe I don't know yet, I'll find out sometime, or maybe the point is that here I can have a voice, and talk for those who have no voice there. It is kind of feeling guilty, sometimes, not much for me, because I also believe that those are in prison, those who get killed--they're being selected carefully, they're far more, I don't know, important, maybe, or precious than I was, when I was Iran, I don't know.

A: What about the Muslims? Do you feel guilty about leaving them? Or the country?

CR₂: My friends, because I know how much they want to study, and they're good students, they're wonderful, and cannot afford to leave the country. I especially feel that whenever I'm in a school, I don't know why. I really, I really remember them?

A: Do you feel responsible?

CR₂: No, I don't feel responsible for anything. I wasn't able to do anything and those who are, what are they doing, they're just being . . .

A: So you don't think that your being there could change anything?

CR₂: No. I'm glad that I could get out.

A: You said it was a loss. Do you feel, now that you are here, not in Iran, that you've experienced loss? Of a home? A country?

CR₂: I did once. I went to the closing ceremony of EXPO and I had no feelings for the national anthem--people were hugging and crying, you know, they were so excited--I had no feelings whatsoever. Yeah! Although I'm going to become a citizen. But I just--maybe, if I live here for many years and I go to another country, then I miss Canada, but you can never have two loves in your heart, Afsaneh, I mean, the day that I miss Canada is the day that I'm not missing Iran. It has to be either way, you cannot, you cannot . . .

A: So you're telling me that

CR₂: You cannot be . . .

A: Canada, is Canada home . . . ?

CR₂: I guess somehow, because you start something over again here, and you establish something here. Yeah. Besides, Canada is not . . . , it is really, you know, a multi-cultural country. I mean, you could be in France and . . . but Canada doesn't have any typical

A: Do you feel you have any roots in Canada?

CR₂: No! Okay. No.

A: Where are your roots?

CR₂: They're in Iran. And when you talk about adjustment and adaptation that is when you, you lose something, I guess. At my age, I guess, at least, you don't gain something, you don't get something new, you just

A: Is that how you feel now?

CR₂: I guess so. It has been three years, though. I guess if I live here more, I finish my studies, if you marry, you have kids here, then this is home, you know, you've established so much in here that half of your roots are here, you know. It's very slow to lose your culture.

A: . . . ?

CR₂: Only . . . I've just told you, about destruction. That's the only part that

A: You said that you feel that you're here by force, as most of us do.

CR₂: Well, the good--I'm lucky because I wanted to go to Canada anyway, even before the revolution, so something had been accomplished in this way, but in a different situation.

A: Yes. Okay, because what I was getting at is that you told me that you are here and you cannot go back because of the situation. That's not of your choice, it's what the situation is. How do you feel about this force. This is it, that's the situation, that's why I'm here?

CR₂: My first reaction is to try to find the good points in it and adapt it, and enjoy it as much as possible.

A: Is that something you've learned to do in Canada, was that the case when you first came?

CR₂: That's what I've learned from the moment I left Iran. Because if you don't then you suffer more. It doesn't change, it doesn't solve any problems.

A: So you accept, you learn to accept it.

CR₂: Yes, any person, you go to a party, if you want to enjoy yourself, you will, otherwise, it can't be helped, it's up to you.

A: CR₂, let's go back to the values--you told me about the date you had with this doctor and how you feel about sex before marriage. You gave me . . . There are certain things that have changed your values. Did they change, did they make your values change since you were in Iran?

CR₂: I'm not sure, when you say values. There were things that I wasn't able

to accept when I was in Iran--now I can. I don't know if they are values . . .

A: Values--sex, sex before marriage is one example

CR₂: For example, marriage of a woman with a younger man, for example, I wasn't able to accept it in Iran, for examples. And now, I cannot accept it for me, I cannot imagine, but I can accept it for people. I can accept divorce. Now, don't get me wrong, I still think that the number of divorces that we see in this country, I cannot accept the reasons behind those, I think they could work it out somehow, but it is not a disaster any more.

A: Those are the things I need to know--you don't look at divorce as a stigma any more . . .

CR₂: No. Or single mothers--fine, you know. I guess

A: Single mothers meaning women who have children out of wedlock?

CR₂: Yeah

A: Okay

CR₂: Those who aren't married.

A: Did you feel the same way about sex?

CR₂: If they're in love. I thought about it in Iran. I thought it was, you know, they have to be very careful because you never know, really, if you are going to marry. Things can happen, I mean, between my and my friend, we could have sex, we didn't and it didn't work out, although it was so strong that everybody was a hundred percent sure we would marry, but we didn't, you know. And in that case . . . it depends on the person who is having sex. I shouldn't, because I am sure I cannot forget it for the rest of my life. It could even bring up problems in my later relationships with other people, because there has been love in it, it is just like a divorce. Be married to someone and then you have to marry someone new and how can you forget the first love or how you are going to deal with it. I never thought it was a stigma. I wasn't, I never did it. I never could reject someone because of this. I had friends who had sex before marriage, but I never rejected them. I never looked at them as strange or alien.

A: Anything else, family relationships, family bonds, the role of women, so on?

CR₂: Well, I see changes in my parents, for me, you know. I've said things in the same way I used to, I used to believe in equality and suffer of things my dad wouldn't do because he was a man, and so on, but now I see that he does, automatically.

A: He's changed?

CR₂: Yeah, he has changed. Like my mum had a job but he didn't want her to, because Persian men don't want her to. Because people would say, "oh, he cannot, he is not able to support. Now my dad is working, my mother's trying to get a job and my dad cooks, my mum works, I mean

A: You're pleased about

CR₂: Yeah, because now he knows that it's not a big deal. Even if you're

dealing with the Persian community only, this Persian community is in touch with the Canadian community, with a different culture, and they are able to accept those things.

A: Has that changed since you've been to Canada, have your values in terms of sexism and equality of sexes, or women's role, changed?

CR₂: In Iran I had to struggle more as a woman. Here I have to be careful because the situation, I mean, you cannot really find any equality, you know, in this society, we are having problems, but it is seductive, you might think that women have achieved something. But the problems here are more complex, they are hidden. You must look at the single mothers and the problems they're having, for example.

A: What do you, in terms of your own values. Have they changed? Was there something in Iran that you don't any longer . . . ?

CR₂: I guess I'm expecting of myself more here, because I have more opportunities, more, so I'm obviously expecting of myself more

A: The expectations of yourself has risen?

CR₂: Um-hm. And comparing my values to Canadians, I'm respecting myself more . . . I am getting to know my values more, as a woman, and again, expecting more. You know, they go together. And I guess it has made it hard, in finding a partner--I'm not married yet, although there have been Canadians, Iranians, Canadians and Iranians, have proposed! And I've said no, I've said no like this (snaps fingers), and I had good reasons. I still believe in my reasons. But sometimes it's a bit scary because maybe I'm getting too fussy for nothing and, you know, what am I doing? I sit down and think about it and try to consider and see, "did I do the right thing?" Because I want to marry. I always wanted to have kids by the age of 25, and here I am 27.

A: So what you're saying is that because you have come to a point to believe in yourself more

CR₂: I expect more from other people . . .

A: So you don't take just anybody? . . .

CR₂: No. I never did, but it is getting harder and harder now, you know.

A: CR₂, do you have a good, solid sense of yourself, of your identity?

CR₂: Not lately in the last four months, or last two months, because I threw myself into a world that I was always interested in. But I wasn't involved in it before, now I'm involved, now I can talk to those who have finished their studies in these courses, I can talk to artists and see where they've got to and things I can do and necessarily, it is a different world, you know.

A: It's a new start.

CR₂: So I have to decide something. Things have to change, they will have to change, if I want to be something in this work. Now it doesn't mean I will have to change my values, it doesn't mean that I have to have sex as they do, but the way I'm living, it has to change, obviously, and I am sure I am not going to have my support in my family, especially my parents, because they're not living in

it. They don't understand me and that sometimes, it's like an identity crisis, maybe, sometimes

A: You have to change some of your values in order to . . . ?

CR₂: It doesn't mean it is a change for the better, to me, because it is a new vision of life, you know, what is going on around me, everything, every detail, every single thing around me, will have a different meaning to me, you know, this is a whole new thing. So it's not a change to be worried about

A: What are you worried about now?

CR₂: It could be really different. But it is that family thing. I guess I was a little bit concerned about because if I choose to be in that world, then again it becomes important who I'm going to marry to, okay, and as a Persian family, when you marry, your parents want you to add something to the family, they don't want you to go away and be separated and have your own new world, new life, they want to gain something that way, they want to be able to enjoy being your and Yeah. And that bothers me a bit. I'm not sure what it might be yet, I'm not there yet

A: Am I hearing you say that you have to become a lot more independent in order to gain what you want?

CR₂: I guess I always

A: Break off

CR₂: been independent more than anyone else in the family, and they all know it, always knew it. But, okay, maybe, but it is something that is not known by me yet even. I'm not sure how it would be I just know that it would be different, it has to be different, I'm not sure what kind of difference yet, so I'm just expecting something to happen, you see what I mean. And that is maybe that identity question, because I just feel that something's happening, and something has to happen, but I'm not sure what.

A: Okay. Did you have a strong sense of yourself when you were in Iran?

CR₂: Um-hm.

A: You did.

CR₂: And maybe too much sometimes! I was so sure of what I was doing there!

A: How about when you came, did that shake, when you first came to Canada? . . . Did you have a lot of questions then about who am I?

CR₂: I guess so. Because I was so independent always, and now in Canada I had to, you know, sometimes people had to translate something for me, I had to ask for a ride home, I had to ask for address, you know, things like that in the early phase always family, relatives or friends, but I was so independent . . . people would come to me and ask me, I wouldn't go to them, I never had a problem to ask, you know, but it wasn't usually the case.

A: That you needed people

CR₂: And now I did, and I wasn't able to communicate, I wasn't able to manage . . . to find a job and to keep it, you know, things like that, but

A: What about in terms of your values when you came?

CR₂: I'm not sure, I don't think so, I was so busy trying to learn and survive, and . . . I had a few Canadian friends and they're Baha'is, and they're so nice and, you know.

A: What about going back to the changes. Have any of your behaviours changed since you've come to Canada? As a result of being in this society?

CR₂: I guess I am, now I can really speak openly about everything at home to my parents now and before I just wouldn't bother, you know, now I do, you know, like some things on TV about sexual problems, they ask what is it and I just turn around and tell them straight what it is about and even give them my own opinion which might be shocking sometimes Yeah! And, there is a change, I should confess, actually. Sometimes I, you know how it is in Iran with a woman having a baby without a marriage and that is, of course, considering other marriages if we are not, we cannot find someone and you don't believe really in other marriages and so on and if you feel it's getting late and you have a right to want a baby and so on, and what's wrong with it, I mean, logically, really, what's wrong with it? And I sometimes tell my parents and the funny thing is they cannot tell me what is wrong with it! But they cannot accept it either! So I always tell my dad, "okay dad, one day, I do it and, for a while, Persians wouldn't come to you any more, or talk to you--they'll be backbiting, they're hating, you can't, you know, look into their eyes any more, but you say you love me more than you love them--I'm more important, and you have a grandchild and so on" and he laugh and said "don't be crazy" and I say, "just imagine! He cannot throw me out, he will not kick me out, I know that and that's the temptation here, because I know they won't kick me out! I'm not saying that this is the right thing to do, you know.

A: I understand . . .

CR₂: So we have this . . . Yeah. If there is a reason, give me the reason, you know. And sometimes I have the reason, they don't, so when I tell them, they say, "oh yes, maybe that's the reason why you should." But I have a teacher, he is funny, he always goes to the girls and says "would you marry me?" and he makes funny comments and one day he came to me and said "did you have a nice weekend?" I said "no, not really" and he said "why not? Didn't your man take you on wild nights and so on?" I said "what man?" and he said "you don't have a boyfriend?" I said "no." "Come on, such a pretty girl." I said "well, I don't" and he said "so what do you do?" I said "I work." He said "you go to school five days a week and then you work." I said "well, I have to." And he said "would you have a boyfriend if you didn't have to?" I said "I've had opportunities, but I didn't have one yet." And then I thought "my God, now he'll think that there's something wrong with me" and that's very, it just didn't happen, I haven't met someone who I like (end of tape side) So next time he started asking questions, you know, just as a friend: "how come?" and "it must be hard" you know, and he knows about the Baha'i faith and everything so, and he started talking and then he said "okay, can I fill out an application form and give it to your dad?" and so I said "come on, be serious!" But as he was talking we got to this point, he wants to marry too but he just doesn't meet the right person, . . . that would be his second marriage, by the way, if he did, and so, you know, I came home and I thought, he is so popular at the school, everybody loves him! But he has nothing to do on his weekends? Nobody calls

him, nobody invites him, he cannot find anyone to marry to, and so it is not a problem, at least, it's not my problem. It's something that you want to do it the right way and it is hard, you know, it's just your luck, or whatever. And he said that, I said "how come?" and he said "well, I'm not in touch with anyone. I'm so busy I just, I get home, I'm so tired" and he has a young kid, and he said "and I have to take care of him and then I go to bed and the next morning I'm here at school and so I don't meet anyone." And I thought, well, what do I do, I mean, people even don't know that I'm in Vancouver any more, they think I've moved to Toronto, and no wonder! So I think that that's the key, but in terms of changes, you see, I had all these ideas in Iran, but here people would accept them.

A: You feel free to express them

CR₂: Yeah, or to do them, but I must be careful, of course, you know, in Iran you would have a child and they can kill you. Here you can have a child, have your own problem, nobody's bothering you, but did you do the right thing, you know? Only because people don't mind. Doesn't mean . . .

A: you can get away with it, although it's tempting

CR₂: Yeah!

A: What about attitude, CR₂, what about your attitudes? I heard you say that you're more accepting now of people and of your own situation, anything else that you want to add?

CR₂: My attitudes? I don't know, I've no problems, I don't hate anyone, I can love everyone, I can, what is the expression? I can overlook the mistakes that people do, you know

A: But what, is that new or is that . . . has that changed?

CR₂: I think so, I think so. I mean, the weird people that I'm coping with at school, you know. They make their hair pink, and you know, shave it one day, the other day, you know, things like that, strange kids. Now I have the chance to talk to them and I'd say oh, that's a normal person, you know, or if they say something I don't like, I've learned to go to them and say, you know, because I don't want to hate them, so I've learned to go to them and say "I didn't like what you said. Now what do you have to say?" And they're normal people, they would usually apologize or explain to me what they meant, maybe they're mad at me. Maybe they have been misunderstood, so I can explain, you know, I've learned that there is a solution to everything, so in terms of weird people outside home, I don't get mad at them like before, even when I don't have a chance to talk to them about it, I always leave a chance for something, a good reason, maybe he has a problem . . . so I can accept people better now. And that of the different people in Vancouver, I think, you know.

A: Because of the multi-facet. How would you describe your overall experience of living here and of coming out of Iran. How would you describe it?

CR₂: So far, it has been a change for the better. I don't know how far it can go! Maybe ten years from now I'll be crazy. I never liked the way Iranians limit themselves. Especially for expressing their feelings, and I, for a while I was shocked at the way these people are so open and careless, you know. They're more individualists than we are, we consider everything, I mean, you can be tired, but you never lay on the floor, but they do it.

A: And you like that?

CR₂: Yes. Again, I will try to be moderate here. I won't, and I will, I will consider some things but, before I had problems, I would never do it. Now I do it when everybody's Canadian

A: So you've become more individualistic

CR₂: Well, for my own sake because I think that's the way it should be, you know, but no, not individualist, I don't like that, no, because, again I consider everything. I consider their comfort, for example, before mine. But I feel I can express my feelings now, I can, if I don't like to do something, at least I'd tell you that I don't, and I would and in Iran you wouldn't, you would just say, "oh sure," you know how it is. Yeah, and I think it's, people would take advantage of you. I didn't like that, and now I don't like it any more. I don't want to say "I hate it" I just don't like it. I like that part of their culture, I guess they sometimes go too far, so I'm just trying to have a balance . . . change or whatever, you know, pick up the good things of both cultures.

A: Has the experience been a struggle. You said it was positive, has it been a struggle?

CR₂: Yes, sometimes really frustrating sometimes

A: It has been a challenge?

CR₂: Yes, um-hm.

A: Do you think that you would have had the challenges that you've had, had you stayed in Iran?

CR₂: I guess surviving the situation back home is a challenge, for sure. I would think that my friends have done a good job, that they have survived the situation. But our challenges are different. I mean, here I have opportunity to improve myself, if I don't, I've failed. There, you don't have any opportunities, your challenge might be like Baha'is will have: "Are you a Baha'i?" "Yes," they'll kill you, you can say no and they won't. So challenges are different. I don't know. To be, to come out of *this* challenge, here in Canada as a good product of all these things, is a challenge, for sure, I'm not sure about the one in Iran. Yes. To really do a good job on each one of them. Because I used to write to one of my friends and, God, they expect a lot. They know it's hard here, financially and everything, we are not in Iran and so on, but they always mention that "you're lucky you can go to school, you're lucky you can," so they're expecting you to be something at the end, and that is the challenge.

A: Have you ever thought, "what am I doing here? What am I doing here? Why did I leave Iran?"

CR₂: I felt that for the first year and it wasn't "why did I leave Iran?," it was, "why did I leave Spain?"

A: Why Canada? Why did I come to Canada?

CR₂: Yeah, and then I always remember that it was because of going to school that I didn't stay in Spain, you know, it was a good reminder, go back to your books and study hard. Because, so what, you could have the same problem in Spain.

A: Are you happy? When you look at the overall experience, are you happy that you had this experience?

CR₂: Yeah. Yeah. You say "happy," that is when you have a choice. My choice was to stay in Iran or leave Iran, right? Okay, and that goes back to the actual situation in Iran. Yes, I'm happy. What could I do in Iran?

A: That's what I wanted . . . Are you happy that the situation brought you here?

CR₂: Sure, it wasn't my life in Iran, I would have been married and had kids and stay home. You have to adapt it, it wasn't, I mean,

A: So now you feel it's you who's deciding for yourself. (Yeah) Now it's your life. . . .

CR₂: Sure, um-hm. One of the reasons why I didn't marry that guy was that I knew that he would want me to stay home and I wanted to work. At least to prove myself that I could do it. That I could look after myself, and those days, what could you do, I mean, you know, because the job that all men have in Iran, there is no place for a woman. I'm glad, I always appreciate what he did, actually, I don't know, maybe it would have worked anyways, but Yeah! He kind of started it

A: Because he loved you very much

CR₂: Oh sure, he really did, and I'm glad I did it. I have more opportunities and, it's a better life, especially, I mean, it isn't before the Revolution, before Revolution we were able to go back and have a combination of what you wanted, now, this is it! Whether you like it or not! Yeah, and maybe it is far better, but only because we have no choice, that's why it sounds so hard for us, we cannot say Canada is good, and I guess, I'm very happy, it's much better.

A: I just want to ask you the question, and if the answer is no . . . Have you ever felt a void inside, an emptiness? In Canada?

CR₂: Only because it's the only time I'm not being in Iran?

A: Yeah, well the experience, coming here, being here, have you felt that void here?

CR₂: Hard to say, no, I guess, no, because there was always something ahead that you have to do, you know, day by day. I guess as long as you understand the challenge, you don't feel empty

A: And you have that inside?

CR₂: Yeah, I do.

A: I just wanted to. There's one very important thing that I want to . . . Okay, there's two things that I want to discuss. This is the one that's most important which is the focus of the study. Tell me, if you were to describe in a few sentences, what is the meaning, What has been the meaning of immigration, of coming to Canada, been for you?

CR₂: Yeah. I have always found a general kind of meaning, not just me, any immigrant, or in groups of people, I think it is a success for humanity as a whole

that those immigrants bring something with themselves to this country, they add something to what is already there and as human beings, they learn something, you know, they learn things that they didn't know that existed before. So this whole process is a positive constructive thing that happens. So, before I thought, oh my God, poor guys that they had to leave their country, now I think, because it's going on so much all around the world, and I felt that when I was in Spain, you know, you see immigrants from all the countries going to all other countries, and I think, we needed it!

A: Who is "we"?

CR₂: Humanity, humankind needed it, and most of it is happening in this century, and I think for individuals as well as for the world it is a change for the better and, but the next generation will see the results.

A: I understand that. I want to go for focus on you as an individual, more personal. You said: "you come, you add, you learn." Now tell me about CR₂. That's what I'm interested in.

CR₂: I think, for me, it was like a little kid, you know, your mom would force you to do something that you don't want to do but it is for your own good, and you do it, and later on you learn that it is, it was so good, it was hard, and you always remember that thing that you wanted to do badly and they didn't let you do it. But of course it is *my* understanding of it, a religious person, maybe, I'm sure many people won't, yeah, I feel I did

A: I mean, that's your personal

CR₂: Yeah, that's mine . . .

A: . . . Tell me, it turned out for the better, you learned . . . What did you learn? What was the mystery in it. I know what you mean, I agree with you. It was "fate" . . . What was it you learned? What was it for you?

CR₂: I learned more about other people in the world, my world is bigger now, and I can think big, there is more diversity than I can imagine now. It is open now, my life can be anything; before it was so limited, because of the environment and because of my experience before. But now I can improve myself because of what I see, all the good and all the bad that I see. Now I can see the choice that I have, you know, now I can understand when someone gives me an advice now I can see that I could be very, very good up there or low down there, because I have seen so many examples and I've had so many chances to be either.

A: So you have had choices

CR₂: My world is, has no limits, has no end now

A: Do you feel you are confident that you can now follow your dreams more?

CR₂: Yeah. Sure, yeah. Like I said before, although I listened to western music and I have some favourites, I have some favourite poems from western culture, but somehow I will feel somewhat prejudiced to what I have, you know. Now I can experience the other kind of love that there is in the world and before I loved, many different kinds of it. But now I can say that I was somewhat prejudiced before. I'm sure now, even now, I'd have to push hard and learn more and improve it, but you see what I mean? Something happened, I didn't want it,

because I didn't know what it is, I didn't know what was going on, but I'm glad that it happened now.

A: Do you feel stronger now?

CR₂: Sure. Yeah. Well, I always believed that if you can imagine something, it means that you can do it, it can happen, and now my imagination can go farther, does that answer the question?! So I can do anything!

A: That's great. CR₂, what has been helpful in your adjustment? What things have enhanced?

CR₂: I guess the understanding of Canadians.

A: Their understanding of you, or your understanding of them?

CR₂: Of immigrants, you know, because they helped, whether they know it or not, and they understand because they have seen so many immigrants. When you make mistakes, what you want to say, when you cannot do something, teachers, my friends, that I've been in contact with, they were always so patient and willing to help, and willing, although they said they'd never experienced the same thing, but they really understood the problems that you're facing at that time. I'm sure if they were prejudiced it could turn out to be a crisis really

A: Anything else that has helped?

CR₂: My faith

A: . . . I wondered if . . . my belief . . .

CR₂: My faith in what was going on, in general, in why were things happening and looking at the Baha'is being persecuted in Iran and then feeling guilty for a while, but then I thought, well if somebody like me should leave Iran and come to a country like Canada and be able to tell people what is going on in Iran, for example, so this is again a destiny, but I'm being useful again, I can do something here. And then I should do it as a duty, as a responsibility, so yeah, there was a meaning. So I just . . . And also most of the Baha'i community, even in Turkey, some Baha'is helped and you never feel lonely, you have a family that is already there, I have never seen them, but we can communicate, they understand you and you're never lonely, and I've seen many non-Baha'is who have problems, but I've never seen a Baha'i having that kind of problems because of the moral support of the Baha'i community. That's, yeah, I guess I should have mentioned it first because that's very important too.

A: Okay. Has anything slowed the process down?

CR₂: First of all the language and then the financial situation, which they work together. You need the experience and you had to know the language to get a job. They go hand in hand. Especially in B.C., you know, where even Canadians do have problems finding jobs. And then, it takes time to learn to live like Canadians. They might have \$100.00 and enjoy themselves and manage everything, which Iranians are not used to doing it. They might have \$6,000.00 and they don't feel safe and they say, "God! I don't have money, what should I do?" Things like that, security. And they're right because it's not their country after all. They don't know what will happen next. Yeah, financial problems. Those two are important and, well, the culture, of course. Well, I never felt in my life that I had to do what people are doing in order to squeeze myself

somewhere. I know many young people who have to drink, they have to smoke in order to be adopted in this culture. I don't think so. So I didn't have problems in that sense in this culture. You know, if they cannot adopt me as I am, it's their problem. They're so ignorant if they can't and always when I talk to them they understand. So I didn't have that kind of problem. Because I had confidence in what I was doing so I guess that solved my problem in Canada. I know many young people who have that kind of problems.

A: So you came here with a stronger sense of identity and that helped.

CR₂: Yeah, I guess.

A: Anything else?

CR₂: No.

A: Any questions you want to ask me?

CR₂: Ah, no. I guess I'm curious about your other interviews. What did they say, what kind of problems they had? Although I know the common problems.

A: I will explain that later, for now. I just had a question to ask you. What has this experience been like for you? This three hour interview?

CR₂: Oh, this?! So many people have asked me about my experience and the problems, and the escape and the journey and the changes. I've had daily conversations like this interview so I'm used to it. But this has a different motive behind it and I'm interested in it, in the results.

A: Sure, I'll give you a copy.

CR₂: Yeah. And, do you think it will be of any help to anyone?

A: (Explains the study and procedure and the nature of it once more.)

CR₂: So we're doing the research together.

A: Yes.

CR₂: So, and the only thing I want to add is that before, for example, I was scared to death of drunk people. But now, I know that when they're drunk, I'm more powerful and I'm not afraid of them any more. That is an extreme change. Of course, I don't like it because, my first reason is that, when they're drunk they're not themselves any more and I don't understand why they do it and I don't like it. And I know that they might do things that they might regret later and I cannot understand, just cannot understand why they do it then, but I also found out that they enjoy it, I can accept it, so it doesn't destroy their whole image any more. They're drunk tonight, tomorrow they're the same people. So that's one other thing that I came to accept. I, now, can make friends with people who do get drunk. And that's very important to me, because before I wasn't able to. Before I never wanted to attend parties which they would serve alcohol, for example. But in school, for example, I did and I enjoyed it! You know, because I also found out that there are some people who don't drink. So I don't go by the typical "Canadian" image in my mind any more. I know that people are different from one another which is good. Which was, I guess, a kind of discrimination before which I wasn't aware of. So there, I'm less prejudiced now. But also living here, let me know the kind of prejudices that some of my

own relatives do have. Like I would mention how gorgeous I thought black guys are. They'd say, "But they're black!" And they don't know what they're saying and I get into some hot discussions with them and they finally find out and it scares them. They didn't know how prejudiced they were and they'd say, "you're right, but this is hard to accept." Like one of my uncles married an East Indian girl. They live in the States, so we're in touch. And we are not very white ourselves, by any means, but they would turn and say, "you know, she wants to wear white." I say "So what's wrong with it? She likes it." "But she's black, she's not white! She's not beautiful!" And for me they would say "it doesn't suit you," but for her, she's a little darker than me, they'd say, "but she's black!" She's not even black. What if I wanted to marry a black one day? The only difference it does make to me is: he's black, how interesting, how different! Not "My God, he's black!"

A: I think black men are gorgeous!

CR₂: Oh, I love them! But you see, these little things we didn't know, weren't aware of. But the scary thing is when they understand it, but they don't do anything about it. And at the end of the argument they would say: "Yeah, I must admit that I cannot accept a black guy."

A: Did you come across any other prejudices that *you* had?

CR₂: No, not really.

A: Okay. Thank you very much, CR₂.

Interview #1--Case CR₃

A: . . . settled in Canada

CR₃: . . . enough to want to stay here rather than move to another country and live in another country.

A: Okay, that's good enough. Okay, so if you want to start, you can just start, from the beginning until the time you felt adjusted, until now, until the time you feel

CR₃: Yeah, I was living in Tehran, and I was about sixteen or so. I used to go to American school and our school changed and we had to go to a public school which was very difficult for me because my Farsi wasn't that good, so I had a lot of problems and I wanted desperately to get out of there--I had so many problems in school, and so forth. And finally my dad left and became a Greek immigrant and he sent us these papers and so forth so we could get out of the country.

A: This was after the revolution?

CR₃: This was after the revolution, yes. And so we left, I think around March '83, '82, sorry, and we went to Greece and I went to the international school there, so we were there for a year and a half, which was really fun, I really enjoyed it, and then . . . Athens, and then, oh I was planning on staying there and going to university there, and then one of our friends came up with this idea that we should move to Vancouver and come to Canada, because it was easier over here, and so forth. So we moved to Canada, this was in August '83, and I graduated in Athens. . . . we came here, so the first week was terrible!

A: Tell me about it.

CR₃: Well, it was the first day we arrived here. We went to . . . and so we had some lunch and so forth and then it was night, around nine, ten o'clock, and I looked down at the streets--we were in . . . --it seemed like there should be a main street, that should obviously be busy . . . there was hardly any cars, so I was looking down, this was Sunday, and I came out and I asked my dad if these people are mourning for something, what's going on . . .

A: Very different from Greek . . . everyone's up until four o'clock in the morning. So I went to my room and I didn't cry but I was really upset and just wished there was a way that I could go back to Greece and stay there.

A: What did you feel?

CR₃: I was really upset, down,

A: What did you think?

CR₃: very angry

A: Angry at what?

CR₃: Angry at this person who made us come here, who suggested it--that Vancouver was a very nice city. So that first week was very, it was really terrible, I had no friends. And I met a couple of people . . . over here people

were very different, the kind of socialization that you had here was very different from that which you had back in Greece.

A: What about Iran?

CR₃: Yeah, they were Iranian too, so it wasn't that much of a difference, but still they weren't friends, because in Iran my friends were people I grew up with since I was three years old . . .

A: Um-hm. When you left Iran you said you were looking forward to coming out of Iran, right, was that? Okay, because of the situation and because

CR₃: Yeah

A: Okay. Okay.

CR₃: And it was mainly because of . . . not really for the education! No, but education was very important to me. . . . I really didn't want to stay in Iran, and especially I wanted to go to university. And I knew there was no chance for me to get into a university in Iran, and especially then there were no universities then--they were all closed. There were just a few that were open. So the first week went by and we met a couple of people, and it just began, from that week, that I just started going out, so I wouldn't be at home and thinking about all this. Of going back to Greece or things like that that would upset me. And so I went to, I sent my papers to U.B.C. when I was in Greece, and they told me that they would accept me, so I came here and took my grades to them, my final grades and all that stuff and went to a counsellor over here, and she said "I can't accept you because you don't have Math 12." Well, I had finished my Math 12 when I was in eleventh grade, and practically all my sciences, because I gave an examination and just finished everything. And she said "no, I can't accept you on that, so you have to go to a college and ". . . another sort of

A: A blow?

CR₃: A blow, yeah. So I went to S.F.U. and they just . . . my grades, and so I got accepted there. And I went there the first term and I had to give this examination . . . and I enrolled in five courses, so I went to school in September, around end of September, they called me and they said that "oh, you have to go, take these English courses at Douglas College" and I said "no, I'm not going to take an English course" because my English course, my English is good enough to do university work. And they said "no, you have these low grades in . . . " reading and writing . . . So I said okay, and so I went to Douglas College and I went to these classes. And the people who were in these classes were people who didn't even know how to write an essay in English. They had no knowledge of paragraphs

A: How did that make you feel? Think about the feeling you had--to have to go through that.

CR₃: I felt low. I just felt that all these years of education went down the drain. It was depressing. I just, gradually I lost my self-esteem, and I wasn't aware of this, obviously, until later when I looked back. And actually, first it was U.B.C. and then what happened at S.F.U. that really started off this whole chain of not studying or losing my self-esteem and then going into a depression, so. So I went and talked to the instructor and I phoned him and I said "I'm not going to stay in this class, because I'm not going to learn anything. It's just a waste of my time to drive all the way down here and do nothing." So he moved me to

another class and I kept the other two, which are . . . Because I thought it was ridiculous to take a note-taking class, because note-taking is something that you have to take and you're going to read it off your notes, so you have to, in your kind of way. And so I had to drop three of my courses at S.F.U. and obviously I just lost interest in school and I didn't study for it, and I didn't write one of my exams and I got a D in math, which I usually have As in math. And then next I took chemistry, physics, English, philosophy and this math again, and I got straight Fs. And so it just got worse. Because I knew, I finished an O Level in physics and I got an A in it, so I knew I wasn't dumb, I just didn't want to do it.

A: CR₃, tell me, what were going through when all this happened? What were you going through, what were thinking and what were you feeling? You were depressed, I know, you told me you were depressed. But what was it that you wanted, what was it that

CR₃: It just didn't make any difference any more after what happened. It just was, you know, so what? And I had this feeling when I was back in Greece that nothing really mattered, but that was more like a, I was more free, like a free person that took everything, relaxed about everything, and so forth.

A: What about in Iran. Were you like that?

CR₃: Oh yeah, I was very . . . I never studied that much in Iran, but I always had relatively good grades. And if I did every study I would get higher grades, As. But I was always like that, I was always very relaxed about everything and take it easy sort of attitude. But in Greece my grades were really good. I graduated with a 3.75, something like that. And I still have that kind of attitude, but over here it was just like a dead-end, like, it felt like, I'm going to die, so what? Should I? There was just no hope.

A: I'm going to die. There was no hope. So there was no future. Okay. "I'm going to die." Tell me about that a little bit. That is . . . it's very profound.

CR₃: Why did I say that. I don't know, it was just, well, my mother left. That was very important, I guess.

A: Your mother left?

CR₃: Yeah, my mother left for Iran in December, she went back to Iran. So I was here with my brother, and that was the first time that I was alone, without my parents. And my father had left earlier, in October, and it just. I was upset about a lot of things that . . . was in England when the revolution started. And then we moved to the States and I wanted to stay there, and I actually enrolled in a school and I was placed in a very high class, and all that stuff, and I was on the basketball team, I was captain of the team, and so of course I . . . in the basketball team in this school, and so I was just--I had all these dreams since I was a kid, of going to a basketball team, not becoming a basketball star or something, but just . . . go to a higher level and then go to the States and go to school. I was interested in either psychology or archeology. It just seemed that all that had, all that had been gone, just finished, there's no hope, I can always go into a basketball team. And another thing was that all that happened to me in Iran was sort of catching up with me in that period between December, or actually September and . . . a year after that when I first came here.

A: What do you mean?

CR₃: Like the time period?

A: All that was happening to you in Iran was catching up?

CR₃: Yeah, like all the things that I went through, all the fears and the tension, especially, were just coming back for me, because I was so, just pretended they never existed when I was living in Iran, when there was any trouble I'd just say "forget it." Just let it sort of stay in your unconscious, don't think about it. And I guess it just, in that period there was a, when I came here in September . . . they just found a way to get out and especially all that . . .

A: What was your reaction to it then, here?

CR₃: Then, at that point?

A: Yeah, when you first came what were your reactions to all those fears?

CR₃: At that time I knew that since I was repressing them so much they were coming out. But I wasn't sure. Actually, I wasn't sure about anything, it was sort of like, maybe you don't know something . . . just want someone to take your hand, show you the steps. . The worst thing was that when I went to S.F.U. it's a large school and I had no knowledge of what was going on, and I didn't know anyone there. And I just felt so helpless and whenever I wanted to go to talk to an instructor or something, there was a huge line-up. And I just felt so, what's the word, so frustrated. I was always very independent--I could take care of all my stuff, since I was five, six years old. . . . that time I knew that I needed someone to depend on, which obviously I . . .

A: You talked about your self-esteem, can you tell me a little bit more about that?

CR₃: Yeah, I just felt dumb that I couldn't do this work, school work, and then, I don't know if you've lived in Europe for a long time, have you ever lived in Europe?

A: I haven't lived there, I've been there but I haven't lived there.

CR₃: When you compare, well, then I was . . . a teenager, then I was 18, so people in my age-range over there are very, they're very socially bright, they know about most countries, their political system, everything, compared to what we . . . which . . . very ignorant, and so I found it very difficult to socialize. I just didn't have anything to talk about with these people--Iranians and Canadians, it really didn't make any difference. And with the Iranians, . . . just had some kind of ideology that I wasn't used to at all, although I lived in Iran most of my life, but I just couldn't understand them. They would say things like what they stand for, active that way--I just had no knowledge why these people are active this way. So I found it very difficult and I found myself being alienated from my own country. So that was very difficult to come to grips with, with what Iranians are really like, and especially the school that I went to, they were people from a specific class, to afford to go to that school, so obviously most of the kids in that school had the same kind of background, not exactly

A: In Greece, you mean?

CR₃: No, no, in Iran.

A: In Iran.

CR₃: Yeah. So that was a bit, I guess, different than over here, which people . . . different class. I'm not talking about economically, but just, the kind of attitudes that they had. And outside of school I used to socialize with my own relatives.

A: Go on

CR₃: Okay. So that was a bit different here than it was over there.

A: What about Canadians? Did you

CR₃: Oh! no!

A: What do you mean, come on, tell me!

CR₃: My! I had nothing in common with them at all. I couldn't find anything to talk with them. I took an English class, because I really like literature, especially English literature, British and some American literature. So I went to this class, in S.F.U. tutorials, so there was only, like, ten people in the class, and we have a T.A. and we talk with them about whatever comes to your mind about the book you've read. And things that these people came up with--and these were books that I had already read in high school. And I couldn't believe they were so stupid! Like, they would go off and talk about Peter . . . And I thought, well, I can read that in Cosmopolitan, why should come there, two hundred dollars to sit in a course, you know, it wasn't worth it. Especially since I took an . . . English course when I was in high school, which is a college course, and if I had actually gone to the States I could have gotten credits for it. So I had read a lot of books from Dostoevsky and, much heavier books, and I just felt that I was wasting my time in this class, which was really stupid. Another thing I just remembered, that mainly . . . when I went to U.B.C. and then to S.F.U., was that I got accepted at Michigan State University at Ann Arbor, and I wanted to go there. And I didn't want to come to Canada at all, I wanted to go to the States. And when we finally made up our mind to come to Canada and what happened at U.B.C. and then S.F.U., they did not accept my A.P. course, and when I went there they go, oh I guess I can take that up in English 12, when it was a university-level English, so that really made me upset too, that I could have gone to the States, and here, especially in the English class, I'm here in this class and we're talking about irrelevant stuff in this class, and it's so stupid. So as far as my school goes, so I just lost interest in school and, and with my friends, I had two friends which, one I did not trust very much

A: Iranians, Canadians?

CR₃: Yeah, Iranians, from Iran

A: Two?

CR₃: Yeah, two girls. And the other one was, she was okay at that time, she was going through the same thing that I was going through, we practically had the same experiences in school--she'd lived in Paris before she moved to Canada. And at the same time I was going out with this Persian guy, and that relationship just broke off

A: Was this your boyfriend from Iran?

CR₃: Yeah. No, not from Iran

A: Okay

CR₃: Over here. And we just sort of went our own way without ever saying, "okay, we broke up" or anything like that--I was really upset about that too, for a while. Until, I guess, it was some time in April and I started dating this other Persian guy. And at that time it was sort of like, I think, I'm not really sure about this, that when I went out with this second guy it was more out of desperateness than just liking him and going out with him.

You were lonely?

CR₃: Yeah, very lonely. And actually I never realized how lonely I was until about two years after that, when I went away. Yeah, then I thought, just thought back at what happened that first year, and I was really lonely because I usually don't talk to people about my private things--I always keep them to myself, and the only people that I ever did talk to about this was either my aunt or a friend of mine back in Iran. And so I was so lazy about writing letters and so forth, so I didn't want to write letters, so I couldn't talk to her at all and the same thing with my aunt--she's still in Iran too. So that was really bad.

A: Did you miss Iran?

CR₃: Oh yeah.

A: Tell me about it.

CR₃: I missed my aunt most of all, not Iran, as much. So when I left Iran, when I was leaving the airport, I said, "I'm not going to come back here any more. I just hate . . . stay away from it . . . in Iran after the revolution. It was so strange because you were used to the specific kind of people and then all of a sudden, and I was away from Iran during the revolution, so I wasn't in the changing phase of the country, then I come back and it's totally different. I just felt left out--it wasn't my country any more, these were strange people that I didn't know.

A: What about before revolution?

CR₃: When I was in Iran?

A: Um-hm. What was it like for you then?

CR₃: I liked it. Of course, I might not like Iran right now to go and live there, but I'm still very patriotic, and it really bothers me if someone wants to insult my country, or my countrymen or anything like that, unless it's true, and then, obviously. But, I like Iran, I liked to live there, but I wasn't really happy about the whole system, especially when I was younger, I was very much to myself--I used to think a lot and I just felt that everyone was so superficial--it just, when my parents friends came to our house, when they'd start talking they never made any sense. And I always thought "they sit here and talk for hours and what do they have to say--nothing." So I didn't really like this as a way of life, that people have there.

A: What did you miss in Iran the first year that you came? You missed your aunt, you said. What else did you miss, about Iran?

CR₃: The food! All my friends. I guess that's it. Especially my aunt . . . whenever I talk about Iran. Because she was like my mother, she doesn't have

any kids herself and she's, and also her husband, they were like my second parents. So I really miss them, very much. And usually when I do get upset I always think of them. So it was in April that I start dating this guy and, oh yeah, I got a letter from S.F.U. that if you keep this kind of average you cannot stay here, so you have to leave. So I went and I talked to this dean and I told him my problems and all that stuff, and he said, "okay, I'll let you leave for one semester"--this was the summer semester that I had to leave--and he said "just take one or two courses, just relax yourself, and when you're ready, come back in fall." So I went to Langara, and I just stayed there. It was just like when you're walking down a hill, you don't really have to walk because it would just get dragged down anyways, and it was like a pit, just fall, and you'd just go down and down. And I was happy, like, when I went out and things like that, I was happy, I . . .

A: Who did you go out with . . . ?

CR₃: With this guy that I was dating, and this girl, that I told you about, the Persian one.

A: The Persian one. And you were happy when you were out with them? What made you happy?

CR₃: Well, we used to talk a lot, like laugh and, you know, things like that, but I never felt that I achieved anything from going out with these people, which was really strange, because when I look at socializing with people I think that when you go out with someone you have to achieve something from that conversation or going out, whatever you do, no matter what, even if you go to a nightclub, you have to have achieved something from that. Either exchanging knowledge or, for example, you go to a nightclub, something extraordinary happens, things like that, and with these people, nothing like that ever happened and . . . felt achieving something

A: So why were you happy with them?

CR₃: Oh, just laugh, like it was in, I can't say it was a kind of laughter that was really deep down inside, it was just, I guess, like a hysterical laughter from being so tense and so frustrated--that kind of laughter, that kind of happiness. So I stayed in Langara and my grades were still very . . . stay there until December, and then in the spring I went to Cap. College another thing is that my father insisted that I had to go into sciences and I didn't like sciences at all--I never enjoyed them that much--I had good grades but I never really enjoyed them. And I really was interested in psychology, especially after Greek, where I did take a psychology course, I really wanted to go and study psychology. And for here it was like, out of the question, no way. And so they said okay--when I started at S.F.U. I was . . . computer science, and then they said, "okay, go study biology" and I couldn't do biology because I pass out when I see blood and things like that. So when I went to Cap. College I decided I'm going to study psychology, finally--I just . . . I just got the courage to say "now I'm going to study it, now if you want to pay for it, you can, if you don't, too bad," I think I'll get a job. So, I was always like that, it's just that during that year and a half I just lost that, so I didn't feel, because of my self-esteem or something like that . . . and say "no, I'm not going to do it." Well, when I was a kid I always did that, no matter what. No-one could ever tell me what to do and what not to do--I would do it anyway. So I finally said, "no, I'm going to study psychology" and I did, I did take some courses, and I still didn't

A: Was it a struggle, to get that . . . your dad, or?

CR₃: No, because somehow they did know what was going on during that year and a half. My mother came back, she . . . stay in Iran for about four months and then come back stay five months here and then go back again.

A: They did know

CR₃: Somehow I think they felt it, they felt that there was too much pressure and that I wasn't happy with what was going on. And so I did go to Cap. and I still couldn't do the sciences, I just had a mental block for any science course. And I guess that was because when I went to S.F.U. and I took those science courses that I despised them so much--I just didn't want to have anything to do with them. And at the same time when my mother came back she was very upset that I was dating this guy, so there was this whole fight until like, past our new year, March or April. And I wasn't very happy with it either--he just wasn't my type. Right now, when I think back, I say, "what did we have in common?" Nothing. So I finished that term and then mid, I think it was around June, something like that, I told my parents that I wanted to go to London, because I had some of my schoolfriends in London, so I did, and I went to London. And I was there and I saw one of them that I grew up with since I was three and I had lots of fun, and it also gave me some time to think over this relationship and I had--on the other hand I didn't want to break it because I felt sorry for this guy, and on the other hand, I couldn't stay . . . didn't like it any more. So that gave me some time and I went and saw a couple of my other friends and when I came back I just told them, I just broke off the relationship. And I guess it was after that that I started getting my self-esteem back and sort of, being myself again. I took, . . . science course and I failed, but I took psychology courses and I got Bs in them, and during this period we had, with this guy that I was dating, we had some mutual friends and there were lots of help, especially one of them, this guy, let's put an initial "S" for him, so it will be easier for me to . . . So he really helped me, he kept taking me out and like a close friend, and there was this other one, "B" and he did the same thing, so they were all around me all the time, and I don't know if they really knew what they were doing sort of like not letting me get upset or anything like that, or was it just a coincidence that happened. But anyway, I never felt upset about the broken relationship or anything like that. And I started meeting some guys and so forth and I got close to another girl and the other girl that I used to be friends with, our friendship sort of . . .

A: . . .

CR₃: Yeah, . . .

A: Okay, you talk about friends a lot, CR₃, okay, and it seems to me that friends are very important in your life, okay. And most of the people you are talking about, the S. and the B., and the girlfriend are all Iranians, right? And you said that they kept you company, basically, you said that they were around you, they kept you company, they did not let you feel lonely. I want to go a little deeper than that, for you to go a little deeper and think, or feel, what was it about these friends, these certain friends, or the friendships you had that gave you that stability, maybe, or strength, or made you feel good, not feel as upset and as lonely? What did you do . . .

CR₃: . . . age range is from, they were, like, 24 and above. One of them was 25, 28 years old, this B. . . . so I guess that helped, because these were people who had gone through the same experience that I had gone through, so they were familiar with it, and regardless of their age, forget about their age, they were mature people, and they weren't silly persons. Since I was a kid I always got

along better with people who were older than myself than people who were my age-range, and because they so reminded me of myself when I was back in Iran, of my wildness, because I was always very wild, especially when I went to Europe and I came back, my friends over there, they just didn't recognize me any more, not facially, but personality-wise, because they said I was always the class clown, and they couldn't believe I was so quiet--they always thought I was sick or something: "do you have a headache, are you sick or?" "No, I'm fine." They just couldn't believe that I had changed so much, and when I met these people, it just reminded me of myself five years ago, of what I was when I was back in Iran.

A: What were you? You were wild?

CR₃: Yeah!

A: You're not wild any more?

CR₃: No, no, compared to what I was then, I just

A: What has changed?

CR₃: Well, I've grown, obviously, probably much more, more than my age. I've seen a lot that obviously a lot of people might not ever see in their whole lifetime. The . . . revolution, then going living in Greece and just probably going all over the world, in a matter of eight years, I've been living in four different countries, so

A: Do you think coming to Canada and living here and the experiences you've had here as an immigrant have had anything to do with it?

CR₃: Being an immigrant?

A: Yeah

CR₃: I don't understand

A: I mean, coming here to live has had anything to do with it, with your growing up?

CR₃: I guess, in the sense that this was a very different kind of culture, obviously, so it took me a long time to get adjusted . . . and it's even different than the States, because I found, well, I grew up with Americans, so I never had that . . . but over here it was totally different. So I guess that really added to my . . . I never felt like an outsider, though.

A: You didn't

CR₃: No. Not like an outsider in the sense like a lot of Iranians experience in the States, with people bothering them and things like that, I never had that experience over here. No-one ever insulted me or called me "immigrant" or things like that--never happened. And actually, about a year ago, a year and a half ago, I met this Canadian guy who is a very close friend of mine right now and for him it was at first difficult to understand my kind of mentality, but now we get along very well, and he understands practically everything and he does socialize with . . . and knows a lot of Iranians. . . . I never had any problem with that, over here.

A: How did you feel inside? You told me that you did not experience any kind of animosity towards you as an immigrant or as an Iranian, but how did you feel inside? How did you feel when you were, say, in a class with Canadians, or in a party with Canadians?

CR₃: It wasn't really like, I don't want to say "Canadians" because it's really not fair. But I was say Vancouver as a whole, this kind of society in the world wasn't a place that I felt that I belonged to. It just wasn't my kind of idea of life. Over here it's mostly, for mostly North America, it's like you work, you live to work, and in Europe it's just the opposite, you work to live.

A: So you're talking about North America, okay, yeah.

CR₃: This kind of system, but nothing as to being a Canadian or American or Vancouverite . . . I just didn't feel that I'd . . . When I went to L.A., I went to L.A. the first year that I was here and I was more relaxed there than I was here, I just felt that that kind of lifestyle is more to my taste, not completely as much as it was in Athens or London, but still it was closer than Vancouver. So that's how I felt, that I didn't belong here. But I would probably have the same feeling if I was living in any city in the States . . . Canada.

A: Do you think that you will ever feel that you belong here?

CR₃: Well, I like it here, I mean, I really don't like living here, because I want to go and live somewhere like New York or London, but Vancouver will always be my home

A: It will

CR₃: and I, I've been on trips three times, and I've been away for two or three weeks, once, a month and a half, and I really felt homesick

A: Do you feel, do you think of Iran at all?

CR₃: No, not so much as I do Vancouver.

A: Did you, when you first came?

CR₃: When I first went to Greece?

A: Yeah, when you first went to Greece, did you feel that was your home, Iran was your home?

CR₃: Yes. But I, when I left Iran I just knew that I would never, it would take me a long time to go back. I wasn't that optimistic . . . I just knew that it would probably take another ten years that I would be able to go back and live there actually, not to go back and visit, but to live there. So I just

A: How did that make you feel? That you were not going to go back to your home?

CR₃: That never bothered me at all

A: It didn't

CR₃: Even when I was in Iran, I never *had* to stay in Iran anyways

A: For ever

CR₃: Yeah. I wanted to go and travel and live in different countries every once in a while, so that never bothered me. There was a time that I felt maybe I couldn't even go back to Iran to even visit my family, my aunt and so forth, and that did bother me a bit. That did bother me, the whole idea, especially when they were bombing Tehran and so forth and I felt that they might close the airports again. That did bother me, but not going back there and live there is not so important.

A: Do you think you can, you will be able to live there . . . in the future?

CR₃: Yeah, if somehow it fits my life . . . like the plans that I have . . . well, people are living there right now, so

A: Tell me, you talk about home, I want to go back to that again. When you first came to Vancouver, where was your home, where did you feel you belonged to?

CR₃: I thought about Greece a lot, but then, deep down inside I knew that I couldn't really live in Greece--it's not a place that you really want to live and go to school and so forth--you might want to go work there for a year or two, but you really can't live there.

A: Where were your roots? I guess that's what I'm asking.

CR₃: My roots? I guess in Iran, so (pause) that's where I grew up, my relatives, my friends, so I guess even now that I'm a Canadian, if someone asked me I would say Iran first, it's where I grew up . . . most of my life and most of what I am right now, I owe it to that, to that kind of lifestyle. So I can't really say it's Greece or Vancouver, because Vancouver has taught me a lot of things but still not as much as Iran has.

A: What has it taught you?

CR₃: Vancouver? To despise . . . No, I'm kidding. To love money, which I never did, I wasn't greedy at all, when I was Iran, just money didn't ever matter, but over here obviously . . . life over here. So I think about money all the time. It's mostly, when I look at Vancouver I usually look at the political system and how it works, the social system, so what it has taught me is in that kind of sense, of what I gather from that kind of . . . analysis that I make and then, if we want to come to more personal, it would be I learned a lot of lessons in friendship, which (end of tape side) As I said, like, not to trust so many people, because I was very young when I first had an experience with a friend, that girl that I told you about that I grew up with since I was three years old, and we were, like, twelve or thirteen years old and after that I just learned a lesson not to talk to people about my personal life. But still with that early knowledge, and I was always cautious about this, through high school and all that stuff. But over here I learned another kind of choice--that whatever people say, not actually what they say, there's so many scrupulous ideas behind it that . . . can't even start thinking about it--there's so much. So I learned that. And I learned that a lot of people who do claim to be your friends and they might do a lot of things for you, but on the other hand they might manipulate you or take advantage of you. Not that they really do it on purpose but just serves . . . a kind of human conditioning, not all of them really have the intention of doing it, just that it's something natural that they've learned somewhere. So I learned that

A: Are you talking about Iranians now, again?

CR₃: Yeah, because most of my friends were Iranians, most of my closer friends, most of my socialization was with Iranians.

A: Okay. I have a question for you. You had a choice, obviously, choosing "Canadians" and Iranians. It seems to me, it seems like you have chosen the Iranians as your friends. Why? What was different?

CR₃: Well, in the beginning I doubt that I really had that much choice because the only reason that I did meet an Iranian, when I first came here I didn't want to know any Iranians. Because I had already had some bad experiences back in Greece and I just wanted to keep away, unless I really meet people that I can consider to be friends and so forth, and socialize with. But when we moved here our next-door neighbour was an Iranian, and we were renting out their apartment, so obviously she started, and then she introduced me to a lot of her friends--it just started from there. And when I went to S.F.U. I started talking with some people and we just . . . why are you talking to me? And I just felt so weird, because in Greece it's not like that at all!

A: Talking to who? Iranians?

CR₃: To my classmates, no, Canadians.

A: Oh, Canadians! Oh!

CR₃: Yes. I just didn't feel them to be very friendly. I guess I really can't say that because it was probably what I wanted to see . . . really was there. Because I was away from Greece and I just wanted to be, any excuse to put down Vancouver, you know, I think that was it. And so it just, you know, like . . . this is how it was with my Persian friends, until I met this group who I'm friends with right now

A: Iranians

CR₃: and there are about four or five of them, and I won't give up any of them, I really like them and they're my life at the moment. When my parents aren't here they're like a whole family to me. Whatever I want, you know, they really take good care of me and then, it's just mutual--I take good care of them. So I really like these people, and I have a couple of Canadian friends right now . . . this guy

A: Okay, this guy you told me about, for instance, this Canadian guy that you feel close to. What is it about him that's so special?

CR₃: Well, he's very nice person, he's really very concerned, a very generous kind of person with his feelings, like you always feel welcome to go and talk to him. And obviously he always, well actually it started with him coming to me and talking to me about his problems. That's how we got close and we were actually in the same class. He's very charming--I really enjoy myself when I talk to him. He's funny--I really laugh a lot, you know . . . the kind of laugh that I enjoy, and that's probably what I really like about him. And we talk a lot about a lot of things that are, you know, private things.

A: What I'm hearing you say is, there is understanding.

CR₃: Yes. He really tries to understand our culture, and actually he was dating

a Persian girl and he had some trouble at the beginning and I went to him and I said "okay, these are these things, okay. You either have to accept them, or don't even ever make an attempt to go out with her. These are just something that comes with her culture, just the same way that she has to accept some of your kind of attitudes." And he's very understanding, when I tell him, for example, "no, I can't leave the house to go and live alone because of this and that"--he understands that. He might not agree with it, but he understands it, which is enough, really.

A: And do you find that not too common in most of the Canadians that you know?

CR₃: I can't make a generalization like that. But so far, of the people that I have met, yeah . . . a bit difficult to understand, unless they have had one of their parents from Europe, or they have travelled a bit to countries like Europe, and so forth, and then they might understand a bit of what's going on. But the others, I can't remember anyone except this guy and another one that really do understand and don't insult people . . . question it to death or something

A: Do you find it frustrating when they "question it to death?"

CR₃: No. It bothers me because it proves their ignorance, but then, that exists in every country in the world . . . just some people who do really care . . . who their neighbours are, who are the other countries and some people don't

A: Had you ever wished, CR₃, that you were not a Persian, not born in Iran? I'm talking about . . . culture, certain value system, traditions and all that

CR₃: Yeah, I have. But most of all I always wished that my parents wouldn't send me to American School when I was in Iran, they would have sent me to a public school, because we just can't think in the same way, just so different, that I can't understand

A: Who's "we?"

CR₃: Myself and my parents

A: You're different from . . .

CR₃: Yeah. And when I went to start school it was two different kind of cultures. It was like, western culture and this really strict eastern culture

A: At home?

CR₃: Yeah. In school, and then I brought it home and there were a lot of things that we couldn't agree on and they couldn't understand me and I couldn't understand them. And now, sometimes I feel that if I was an Iranian, I could have gone further. And just being an Iranian, it's sort of like closing down, but then, on the other hand I say well, you know

A: In Canada, you mean, or in general?

CR₃: No, in general, life. And . . . really want to do, do it, you know, I think.

A: Has this gap increased since you've come to Canada?

CR₃: Yes. It's gotten worse. Right now we just can't communicate. When my parents are here I just try to limit the conversation to specific subjects because there are just some subjects that they're too touchy and I don't want them to . .

A: Like what?

CR₃: Like marriage

A: If you don't mind talking about them. If it's too private

CR₃: No, no, I guess most people have that problem, in every country. What I'm going to do after I graduate, like I want to go do my Master's, then what, you know, that always comes up. "Okay then, why don't you come to Iran?" and I go "no, I don't want to go back to Iran. I want to go there and there and there"

A: Do they live in Iran now?

CR₃: Yeah

A: Oh, so their home is there--that's where they are?

CR₃: Yeah

A: Uhuh, okay

CR₃: And then they come here every once in a while . . . So it's really difficult. I can't get through to them that, well maybe I would never get married, you know, it's okay. There's no problem in that, why are you getting yourselves so upset? But then on the other hand I think, well, she's my mother, she's worked so hard for me, at least I can give her this, but then I think, well, I have to live with the guy for the rest of my life. So it's really difficult.

A: Have they, are they, I mean, this is maybe personal, but are they trying . . . to get you introduced or whatever?

CR₃: They won't ever, because they know . . . asked them never to bring someone home with them or take me somewhere that this guy is there, because if they know that I, if they do I'll get upset and I just might leave that place . . . so they would never do that. But they do suggest like "Well, how's so-and-so, or how's so-and-so?" Things like that and . . . And I say "Oh, they're fine."

A: How are they with your dating, I mean, do you have

CR₃: Problems, yeah

A: So they just don't want you to date, period? Or?

CR₃: . . . I don't think they really mind as long as it doesn't get serious, and if it does get serious, it better be someone they like. But then, I haven't dated anyone for a year-and-a-half . . . after I broke up . . . that just . . . like the last one

A: CR₃, you tell me that you were different back home in Iran and you've changed as well here. Let's get to values--I'm wondering if you, any of your values have changed since you've come to Canada? You know what I mean by

values? . . . for one thing, you said you've become more money-conscious. Family ties, sex, whatever, work values, values about living, whatever you can think of--have any of them changed since you've come to Canada?

CR₃: The first thing that changed is, I've become more . . . I'm sorry to say, than I was when I was back in Iran

A: What do you mean by ". . .?"

CR₃: When I was back in Iran I was very soft-hearted. No-one knew that, though, they always thought I was very cold and everything, but deep down inside I really cared about everyone and especially my buddies at home, our servants, that were like, my buddies to talk to and I never felt like they should be lower than I was, or anything like that. If I was home, they would come home, I would get up . . . and things like that. . . . I've lost them, and I do care still, like I do help charities and so forth, but sometimes it just gets, it's so weak now and it was really weak like last year, and I worked on it to bring it back again.

A: What was happening last year, that made it go weak?

CR₃: I just, I had so much fun last year, I guess lots of other things became so important--money, getting rich and things like that . . . like these are for people who are so idealistic or things like that, I don't belong to them any more, I have to think about . . .

A: You're telling me that you lost some of your ideals?

CR₃: Um-hm. Like my, we were talking about

A: These are more real, those were idealistic?

CR₃: Yeah

A: A shift from idealism to

CR₃: Reality

A: Reality. Okay. Okay. Do you like that?

CR₃: Well, in a sense it's good because I was really caught up with that kind of idealistic ideas . . . going to make a utopia, or things like that, and I'm glad that I left it, and leave some of it behind, and I look at life more realistically than I did. But still, there's a lot of things that . . . down with that too, and that's caring for the people around you. Not really . . . but whoever is in this world. So that's one of the things that was really upsetting me last year, so I've fixed it now, on my way. About sex, yeah, I was always liberal about it . . . even when I was in Iran . . . sex never meant very much anyways. I always thought that in a relationship there was something not as important as being really friends in that relationship. It was just part of the steps in a relationship and the ultimate goal was to become close friends and to understand one another and trust one another and things like that. So it was always not as important as . . . in our culture, which is . . . we never talk about it

A: No. So that hasn't changed when you came to Canada, that hasn't changed . . .

CR₃: Well, now I'm more relaxed about it . . . with these, I have male friends

and female friends--we always talk about it, and tell jokes and things like that, while in Iran, I don't remember . . . I've never ever done it, but then I was younger.

A: What about, I'm not attempting to talk about your personal life but it's just about how you feel about having sex before marriage. Has that changed or has that . . .

CR₃: No, it's, as I say, it's not important, you can either, it's really up to whoever wants it, I'm not condemning anyone or supporting the other, it's just their personal choice, and I always had that

A: You felt that you always had that choice . . . body?

CR₃: Yeah, so that never changed. Sometimes I've thought about it, I'd say "well, maybe it's best to stay a virgin" but then it was more, like, sort of looking at it more professionally rather than just . . . an everyday subject which is . . . well, what about being . . . things like that, rather than saying well, . . . what would my parents say?

A: Or what will my future husband say?

CR₃: Yeah. And what else were we . . . values

A: Family ties, family bond, role of women. Has anything changed?

CR₃: With my family now, when I was in Iran I could never bear the thought that I would be away from my family, I just never could think about it, and now I've been away for five or six years now. And it doesn't, I guess I can live with it now, without having so much trouble. So that has really changed, I think. And I'm really happy about it. I don't know what would have happened if I had always been in Iran with them and then all of a sudden, at this age I had to leave . . . So that has changed. And with the role of women, I never, when I was in school I never separated myself from the males, it was always one, unless some things like, even clothing, I always dressed like boys, so right now, because I have a brother, who's only a year and a half younger than I am, there are a lot of things that he does, my parents tell me . . . "that you can't do" and I say "No way! I'm sorry, I'm living here, I have to adapt myself to," "oh well that's an excuse" but I have to adapt myself to this culture or else I won't be able to survive here. But then . . . won't be able, in a sense it is true, because you won't be able to survive in the world. And I've never worked, until this summer that I worked at EXPO. And I . . . things like sexual harrassment in jobs and things like that had been gone, like, they were gone ten years ago with the women's movement and things like that, and when I worked there I was surprised that there they hadn't changed at all, from the things that I had heard before from people who were older--they hadn't changed at all.

A: You said you had never worked before this last summer. Why?

CR₃: I just--I wanted to work, just my parents went "Oh no, why do you want to work?" You know, "go to school." And I finally said, they wanted to take me to Iran to see my family and things like that, and I said, "no, I'm going to stay here." And that was another good thing that happened to me, that I was able to stand . . . and I said no, to say "no, I'm not going to come back. I'm going to stay here and I'm going to go to work." And I did, and I . . .

A: So you had to fight for it?

CR₃: Yeah, and I did work and I really, I started from the basic, like the lowest rank, and I went to the highest, which was really good. They were really surprised!

A: Your family? How did, I mean, I gather that the work has been a positive experience for you in terms of your growth. What has it taught you?

CR₃: That it really gave me a sense of independence, which was really imp, independence has always been an important issue in my life, so that was good. It boosted my self-image, because, as I said, I moved like five steps, during the six months period, which was good. My ability to work, and be, this was a work that I had never done, I had no knowledge about, I was able to learn it in a day and do it, with perfection and specially being able to . . . my co-workers, which I thought that I won't ever be able to do. It was difficult, because I'm the kind of person that I'm just, it's either my way or no way, kind of thing, and I thought that it would be very difficult for me to work with other people. And I did, and it was okay, it was difficult, because I couldn't . . . someone would reject my commands, and they did, but I just got used to it.

A: So you . . . at it . . .

CR₃: It was painful.

A: Yes

CR₃: And so it was a very good experience. I really enjoyed it . . . six months. There were a lot of bad things that happened and a lot of good things that happened, so. I learned . . . by myself and specially right now a better knowledge of how I'm going to be acting in a working environment, so it really helped me to decide what I want to study and see if I really have the capability of doing it, and really working in that kind of environment. And as I said earlier, when I was back in Iran I was very patient and everyone used to say that "you're cold," you know, because I was extremely relaxed about everything, people could come and swear in my face and would just stand there and smile at them. . . . really didn't matter, and I had lost that when I went to Greece and over here. I was so nervous and actually, I went to a doctor and he told me that "you'd better watch out, the way that you're going . . . you're going to get an early heart attack, so watch it." And so this work brought that back again, I was able to control my anger, because I can't, I used to be able to do it when I was back in Iran but right now it's very difficult, so it really helped me, because I couldn't scream at all those people every day, you know, so I had to control myself, so that was really good.

A: I wanted to take you back to the first year, when you talked about failing your courses and your grades going down, and the responses you got from U.B.C. and S.F.U. and that you lost your self-esteem. I wonder if you started questioning yourself as to who is this person, you. Questioning your identity.

CR₃: Yeah

A: Tell me about it.

CR₃: . . . biggest trouble is when I was back in Greece I used to go and be by myself the whole day, by the beach or something like that, and I used to think and it really relaxed me. I used to question my deeds and things like that and say "why did you do this, why did you do that?" and then try to find out what the motive was. Somehow that year, I wasn't able to do it, I just didn't

want to face myself, sort of thing. I was so disappointed and so disgusted, I just didn't want to have anything to do with myself. And, as I said, when I looked at myself I just saw this failure, this person who cannot achieve . . .

A: Do you recognize her?

CR₃: Myself. And I knew that I had to sit down and go over all this for the . . . that if I go over all these, and I face these facts, it just scared me so I put it off. And I didn't even want to look on my report cards and find the reason that I did start to bring my grades up and just gain my self-esteem again. One of the factors was facing the reality of what had happened, and faced myself with "yeah, you've failed your first year university, you're still getting Fs in your sciences, you can't do this, you can't do that" and finally with these I was able to, sort of like a self-analysis, I was able to face them and do something about them. And then I just didn't want to face it. Just didn't want to face reality. I was sort of like in a dream-world that I had created for myself with these friends . . . and going out. Sometimes, when I think about it, it's like when you're walking, you're just walking, you know, not thinking or anything like that, and you don't even know where you're going--it's just walking . . . sense of emptiness? That's how I felt then.

A: What was that emptiness like?

CR₃: Oh, it was terrible. I wished I was . . . go back to Iran--I can't remember very well . . . I thought about suicide a couple of times, but I always did since I was a kid, so I wasn't very scared about that. I wanted to leave Vancouver--there was a time that I just said "okay, I'll pack, I'll go to the States, and I'll just leave a note that I'm gone, and I'll just make it on my own." But then I didn't have the courage to do it. I couldn't leave the security and go off on my own.

A: The security of being where?

CR₃: With my parents . . .

A: Did you feel, back in Iran, did you have a strong sense of identity . . .

CR₃: To some extent, but not very a hundred percent, no. But to some extent, I knew about my ambitions, and I was very determined, there was no question about it. My values at that time were very, I was very, so to say, very sure of them, and would never question them. I did change some of them, or I would change them from one day to another, if I got more information . . . okay, this can't exist this way, yeah. But that's what a lot of people used to tell me, that "you're so sure, at this young age, about everything" . . . I might change them, but now I'm sure.

A: You talk about questioning. I'm wondering if, did you question, yourself, your roots?

CR₃: Yes

A: You did

CR₃: Yes. My biggest question was how would I survive in this society? As a person with my kind of ideology . . . how you can live here? You can't live here. You either got to learn to accept some of these . . . ideologies, or you won't be able to survive here. And I always, my biggest fear was that I knew

that I couldn't survive, if I had stayed there . . . and adapted that kind of culture. And I can't remember, as I said, when I was a kid I used to think a lot. A lot--most of my day would be things like that--thinking about myself, how my family is . . . my parents' problems, like individual problems, or my brother. I can't remember right now, these are just some of the most important things I remember.

A: CR₃, . . . come back to Canada. Can you tell me some of the existential questions that you ask yourself? What are some of the questions? You know what I mean.

CR₃: I know a lot! Give me a topic . . .

A: Well, we mentioned one of them--who am I? You know, where am I going? What am I doing here? Have you ever asked yourself "what am I doing here?" What am I doing here in Canada, in Vancouver?

CR₃: Yeah, but then, you always ask that, wherever you are. I do . . . I don't think it's that important for me to, I will say that . . . what am I doing here? I . . . to be somewhere else. But I'm sure if I go to that other place I will still ask the same question. I'm sure, and I'd be more relaxed in that kind of environment, but the same question's going to come up. Because then it brings up, when you ask something like that, you can interpret the question ten thousand different ways. What am I doing here as a being in this world? As a being in Vancouver? But I always wonder will I ever be able to live here, or do I really have to leave here.

A: Does this feel like home?

CR₃: Um-hm

A: It does

CR₃: Yes

A: Just as much as it felt like home in Iran?

CR₃: Yes

A: It does

CR₃: Yes. But then, over here, I think I'm just a bit more comfortable than I was back there. And I have more freedom--I'm not talking about the revolution or anything political, but social-wise, I'm talking about socially or culturally-speaking, I have more freedom of choice and there is no-one to come and pressure me. Over here, unlike Iran, people don't make it their business, I guess, to question your basic ways of life. Right? Like, for example, what kind of sex you prefer. Just something personal. If you get more serious, like what kind of party do you want to join, communist party, people might question you, but things that are not . . . threatening to the other people, you're just free to do it and no-one really cares. Or even if they want to make a comment, they know that it's not very sound to make such a comment, you know. But in Iran it's because you have your family, you're so close to your whole family and it's sort of like, thirty people that ask you "what should I do?" . . . your uncle, your aunt

A: Do you feel trapped, in a way?

CR₃: Yeah. So I feel more comfortable here. And then, obviously, because I'm alone, like, right now my father went down to the States and my parents . . . back to Iran again, so I'm going to be alone and it's going to be myself and my kind of ideology.

A: You're going to be on your own

CR₃: Yes

A: Is that a challenge?

CR₃: On my own, but not financially on my own, because I . . . my father. Well I've been on my own for three years!

A: Was that a challenge?

CR₃: Yeah

A: It was a challenge

CR₃: I already told you, when my mother, when my parents first left, it was very difficult. Because I didn't know even how to cook! I was just, and I think I didn't really like, it was good in the sense that we learned to be on our own. On the other hand . . . created a lot of those other problems. But I don't think it would be that difficult, except that I really would probably miss my brother most of all, . . . than my parents. So as long as I have these friends I doubt that I would really feel that lonely.

A: Okay, you talk about your friends--I wanted to ask you something. You said that some of these friends of yours remind you of yourself and I wonder if that's a grieving for?

CR₃: To go back to what I was?

A: Um-hm

CR₃: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. As I said, when I was younger and I'm talking until the age of fourteen, fifteen, not after that--after that . . . have changed--but I was an intellectual, when I was . . . I was a philosopher, you know, sort of thing, I always fought with myself, you know. But, explanations for everything, and I sometimes do wish that I could gain back that kind of ability to think, and think in a wild way like, there was no barrier to my thoughts, I could just go through thousands of different subjects and right now I find it so difficult to even concentrate on one. And I guess, well obviously you have more things to think about right now than you did when you were younger, but still I should be able to at least concentrate or be able to think in that kind of way. So I really miss that, and as I say, I was very relaxed when I was in Iran and right now I worry a lot, most . . . I'm very frustrated and tense.

A: Did you feel more secure then, more certain?

CR₃: Yeah, I guess. Right now it's, I really don't know if I'm going to be here, where I'm going to be next year, and it's something that I'll obviously have to get used to if I want to travel around, but it's difficult, I guess, in the first stages of it, till I get used to it. And I just don't know. I want to make a stable home somewhere, and I want it to be Vancouver, so I can come and go whenever I want. I guess that's, if it's not possible, then it's not possible.

A: Do you feel you have had control over

CR₃: My life?

A: Your life so far, and what's happened to you in the last couple of years?

CR₃: I guess the first year that I came here--that's when my problems started, so that's why I concentrate on that. I just felt that I had no control. I knew that I could do a lot about it, I can't remember if I knew it then or not, but now. But I wouldn't do it . . . just felt that I had no control. . . . always taking care of me . . . not taking care of me in a sense of giving me security, but determining my life so it would go well

A: . . . ?

CR₃: The world, . . . the environment in Vancouver.

A: Okay.

CR₃: Right now to some extent, it depends on what we're talking about, yeah, I do have some control, but I really wish that I had control of other things too. Like right now, for example, we want to move. I want to be the person who makes the decision to move where

A: Move in Vancouver

CR₃: Yeah. Like move to another . . . or I want to have the control bringing my parents out . . . making them stay here, rather than staying in Iran. Or taking myself to the States and staying there. Just some of the things that I just feel that I don't have the control . . . which is true to some extent, but which is, like, I really *don't* have any control over, you know, I can't just pack up my stuff and go down to the States, I really have to . . . my school, how am I going to work, you know. So it's somewhat frustrating, but then, you know, that's life.

A: Um-hm. Do you feel more in control now than you did two years ago?

CR₃: Oh yes. Oh yes. Three years ago I would just be dragged anywhere, I couldn't care less. The only thing that I'm happy about is that I was still strong enough not to get involved in drugs or things like that, which I, the school part I don't give a damn about as long as I don't get involved in drugs or alcohol or any kind of that stuff, or God knows, you know, when you are in that state you can do a lot of things, so I'm really happy about that.

A: When you look at the overall experience, has it been good?

CR₃: Oh yeah.

A: It has been good

CR₃: Yeah. Sometimes I think that well, if I had passed that year and so forth I would have finished university this year, but when I think back and I say, well, I experienced something that hardly anyone else has had the chance of experiencing and maybe I don't see the advantage right now, but maybe in ten years or twenty years from now, I'll see the advantage. And just like . . . something makes you more conscious, sort of thing.

A: Do you feel stronger?

CR₃: Yes. Yeah. I'm more proud of myself. I sometimes doubt myself, but still I'm trying to get over that. I don't want to be very sort of conceited in a way anyways, to say "no, I'm perfect," I don't like that at all. But I like to sometimes doubt myself and question myself, but just when I get a bit hard on what I am right now, . . . build my self-confidence a bit more.

A: Okay, we talked about value changes--I'm wondering if you can tell me about any of your attitudes that has changed. I guess you mentioned some of them, like coming to grips with reality or accepting the situation. Do you have any, can you think of any attitudes that have changed in the past few years since you've been out of Iran, especially in Canada? (end of tape side)

CR₃: I guess . . . the way that I look at the world has probably changed, in the sense that, an example is that, I always trust, for example, the U.S. Constitution . . . their . . . and right now I trust in the . . . or any other government in the world. And I've learned that you, I've the theory behind individualism, which obviously was not very familiar to me when I was back in Iran, because individualism does not make any sense there. So I've learned that.

A: Have you become more individualistic, do you think?

CR₃: Yeah, I think more about myself, I come first and then the rest, yeah. To a certain extent it's good, and I want to keep it to sort of like a balance between

A: Was it a shock for you when you first came here?

CR₃: No, because I had that anyways--that kind of independence-seeking and things like that, which I picked up in school and so it wasn't that foreign to me. So that kind of basic questioning of everything, things like that, not taking everything for granted--that has changed.

A: You do more of that now--that's what you're saying?

CR₃: Yeah

A: Okay

CR₃: More involved, as I say, when I was younger there was some sort of government of people . . . were my idols, and I've learned right now that they're not worth anything, things like that. I can't really think of any attitude that's really changed drastically right now. Like . . . for money and for . . .

A: What about behaviours?

CR₃: Behaviours? Well, I've changed, as I said, I'm much quieter right now, while before I would a lot of crazy things, I could care less what they would tell me, like even if they kicked me out of school, I could care less, and right now I'm very cautious with what I say, what I do. I guess it's because living here and, as I say, most of my socialization was with Iranians when I first came here, with Persian families, with these people that I am, I say everything, like

A: Is that your little group?

CR₃: Yeah. I just absolutely have no control over any of my . . . But then,

when I go to a party or something like that, I really have to watch it. So I guess that has changed, because I had a couple of bad experiences with that.

A: They'd judge you, is that what happened? . . . why you have to watch yourself?

CR₃: Yeah. They come up with these kind of, it really doesn't matter--if I was living here alone I could less what they would say. But since my parents come and here and go, they have friends over here, it just is sort of like, protect them, I don't want anyone to come and tell my mother or my father that, "yeah, your daughter did this," and especially when they exaggerate everything so that by the time it gets to them it's like, God knows what--"she killed someone in the street." So I don't want that to happen, so I'm really cautious about that, but with myself I could care less, because I'm the type of person that, whoever talks behind my back I'll just go up to them and say "why did you say that?" . . . who was involved in it. So I really don't want to do that to(o), so obviously I've become more inhibited in that sense. That's one of my biggest differences, that I don't like that at all. But at least I have the opportunity to do whatever I want . . . so that's fine. But even with that, it's funny that when I do sometimes do crazy things, they just look at me with awe, you know, "is that you?," because they're so much used to me being so quiet and, you know. And I just have it in me any more. I come up with these thoughts, but I just don't have the, just don't care about it, don't care, like, it was funny, it was a funny idea, to do a practical joke on someone. Who cares? I'm not going to drive all the way there and do this. It's not that important any more.

A: You think you would like to get some of it back? I hear that yearning for it

CR₃: Yeah. And then the problem is that I need someone with me to do it, like when I went to London I had someone, like this girl which I grew up with, and we used to do a lot of crazy things in the streets and so forth, and I really enjoyed myself. But I had to have someone with me to do it, you know, it's one of those things, it really takes two to do it. And I don't have that kind of person . . . right now, unless I see my old friends again, we do some of it.

A: You told me, you said you've become more cautious and more conservative in a way.

CR₃: Yeah. It's just, as I say, I don't really like it. I just noticed that this term, . . . usually in class, before I came to Canada, I used to argue all the time . . . I could care less if anyone would think that my ideas were stupid or not, I would just say them. I was shy, sometimes, to raise my hand and ask something, but most of the times I could speak, especially on issues that I thought I was . . . doctorate in, you know, things like that that I just knew that I knew everything in that subject, and I find myself doing that again right now in one of my classes which, I just realized it the other day, and I . . . God, I talked too much in my class today . . . coming back again, so I was really happy . . . glad I'm gaining back again. And . . . jokes that I play on people, I do it still sometimes. I really don't know if, I guess there are some people still at my age who do crazy stuff, so, . . . part of growing up

A: It's what?

CR₃: It's not part of growing up that you become conservative, but there's still people who do keep . . . childish attitudes . . .

A: And you lost most of that after coming to Canada . . .

CR₃: After leaving, well, when I went to Greece it started. Because I just, all of a sudden I got involved in my studies, obviously because I didn't know anyone, so I just, and then, that was like, I was in the school for like, three, four months and then there was summer. And then in September it gradually started, I met some other people and we did start doing some wild stuff. Like, for me, sleeping made no sense, it never did until I guess when I came to Canada. I would always say that my parents used to tell me "you have to get at least ten, eleven hours of sleep." I'd say "no!" I mean, . . . only live a couple of years, why should you sleep? You know, you can sleep till eternity when you're dead, why do you want to go to sleep now? That was my attitude toward sleep, and right now, I would give *anything* to sleep, you know, I really want 12 hours of sleep every day.

A: You do!

CR₃: Yeah! I guess I get . . . I just, as I said, I'm just more relaxed, because I was never like that, since I was a kid I was always so . . . I would never sleep. . .

A: Okay, let us see. You said that the process of immigration and getting settled was a difficult one but it was worth it. Is that what, did I hear you right--I just want to make sure that, is that what you said?

CR₃: I remember that I said . . . that it is.

A: Oh, okay, go ahead then . . .

CR₃: It's worth it because I have a home right now here. And if I was to go to another country I might have not really felt at home. As I said, one of the most important things that I've talked to a lot of people about--Iranians in different countries, and their biggest problem is that they feel as if they're really actually aliens, because we are aliens when we come and then, and they were telling me that their friends in school were . . . make insults and things like that, which I've never experienced such a thing over here, never. And so I really don't, I really like Vancouver . . .

A: What about the changes that you have gone through, or is that one of them?

CR₃: Yeah, I told you about that.

A: Okay. I want to ask you--you told me that when you left Iran you thought to yourself that you would never go back to live there. Do you still, or have you, yearned for Iran, longed to go back to be there?

CR₃: Yeah, sometimes I do. Sometimes when I, you know, Vancouver is like north of Iran

A: Yes

CR₃: . . . Sometimes when I drive through Stanley Park and the smell, it's, once, it happened to me the first time, I was driving through Stanley Park and there was this part that reminds me of Pahlavi Street, and all of a sudden I just felt that smell and it was amazing, because I felt that . . . there were birds in the afternoon and just, I could smell the street, I could hear it and for like two or three seconds I could see it, just sort of like a flash, like that.

A: What did you think?

CR₃: Oh, it was fantastic. That was, I really wanted to go back, that night, I was . . . , "God, I wish I was there." But I do sometimes, when I think about, or when I'm somewhere and just something reminds me of it . . . like that, I do wish that I was back, especially now that I'm planning to go back for a month or so. Sometimes I really wish that, "God, I wish I was there!" But I know that I wouldn't be able to survive there for long, I know that wouldn't really want to live there.

A: You know that

CR₃: Yeah. So, and I know when I go there, and I have a hard time leaving, because obviously when you go there for a short time you're taken to parties and things like that, but I know that it won't be like that if I wanted to live there.

A: How does it make you feel to know that you no longer can live in what used to be your country?

CR₃: Oh it feels bad, as I said, one of the biggest problems that I had after the revolution was that I just couldn't come to accept the fact that these are my people, it just, they were so strange.

A: Do you feel homeless in a sense?

CR₃: Yes, especially since my school was closed. That really made me upset, like whenever someone talks about Iran and the revolution and things like that, the first thing that comes to my mind is my school, the first thing. My school and my home--I really felt it was my second home. And I really loved that school and the people who are in it, and part of my . . . intellect or academic education I owe it to them, they really opened up some of the doors to me to see many things which I would probably not have seen if I had ever gone to the public school, because that my relatives who did go to public school I always compare myself to them. Yeah, I guess it does bother me that I might never be able to go back there and live there. But if I really want to, I guess I can.

A: When you say "it does bother me to think that way," can you use a metaphor, tell me what it's like, what does it feel like?

CR₃: Frustrating

A: Use an image, if you can

CR₃: An image? I guess it's like I don't want to use the word, I don't want to use "prison," I guess it's just so you know you're in a room, and if you open the door there's just space down there, you just can't

A: Can't step out

CR₃: Can't step out, and stay there, but you want to go out there because, okay, here's . . . there's something out there in the sky, and you want to go get it, and you just know you can't go because there's space in between, there's no way you can get out of that room and go get it--just that kind of image. The frustration part comes in because I just know there's no way that I can change it, there's just that sense that, either way that I go I know that I cannot make any change--that's what bothers me most of all. I would say that if it was a hundred, two hundred years ago, we could have, I could have gone there and done

all that my energy would allow me to and right now, no matter how much I spend my energy there, nothing would come out of it, it's just something that has to be done and that's it, it's something . . . and that makes me so frustrated.

A: "Plan" in terms of political . . .

CR₃: Political plans, yeah, and I just, it's . . . I just hope for God's sake, just let these superpowers realize that they can't go on with this kind of political policy . . . that's all that I can hope for

A: So you do have this maybe yearning, I should say, to rescue that home of yours or that country

CR₃: Well, I have a choice in a lot of things, it's just not Iran. About a lot of issues like homeless people in Vancouver, I still have the same . . . and I just feel that the whole system has to be changed . . . couple of years . . . how I would do something about it, I don't know.

A: Do you feel guilty about not being able to do anything?

CR₃: Yeah

A: You do. Tell me about it.

CR₃: I just feel that I have to do it, as a human being, I just. When I, for example, when I used to go to work I had to drive through Hastings and Pender and these were people who were, I don't know why they were standing in line . . . for welfare cheques, I don't know what, anyway, I couldn't see an office there, these were people who were standing in line, most of them were native Indians and drunks on the streets and obviously very, like these bag-women whatever, and it really made me, when I passed that street it just made me so sick for these . . . "God, how could I pass here? And just pass here!" You know, and so I really felt guilty.

A: What about Iran? Do you feel guilty about Iran?

CR₃: Um

A: Not being able to do anything about . . .

CR₃: Yeah, whenever I hear about the war, I know whenever I try to get . . . I know that it's something that would really hurt me, and the war in Iran is one of the things that I always just let it go along. And it really does hurt me.

A: You don't want to think about it, that's what you're saying.

CR₃: It does really upset me because, as I said, I was in Iran three years after the revolution and I've seen a lot and it just, when I was there it really bothered me. Because I really got, I got into trouble a couple of times with the revolutionary committees and I knew how frustrating it could get, that these people are so unrealistic, I mean, they're so stupid, irrational people! And they accuse you of doing something--you haven't done it--and these are people right in front of you telling you you've done it, when you haven't done it, you know. And then this whole trying to explain to them, no you haven't done it, and so forth.

A: Do you feel sorry for the country? For the people?

CR₃: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I sometimes feel sorry for our ignorance, but then I really can't blame them, because it's just part of the history of our people.

A: You said that you try not to think about the war. What happens when you do think about it?

CR₃: I really . . . I really, like, I can feel my stomach

A: What do you feel in your stomach? Come on!! . . . become a psychologist!

CR₃: Once, have you seen "Missing?"

A: No, but I know about it, Jack Lemmon

CR₃: When I first went to see "Missing," this was in Greece, and

A: That was . . . , right?

CR₃: Yeah. It had some scenes in it, it just automatically reminded me of Tehran, and it was amazing, because I was just sort of stuck to my chair, I couldn't move, I just, . . . I was sort of like paralyzed for two hours sitting in the movie, and it just, I was seeing the screen and then I could remember all these images from back, of what I had seen. And I just felt like, my chest was burning, my heart and my stomach was, so I felt sort of like nauseated. And I left, and I came home and I couldn't sleep until four o'clock in the morning, my heart was beating so fast that I felt that I'm going to die right now, I felt like my heart's going to come out, and that's how I felt when I first saw that film, it just reminded me of that. But then, now, when I think of the war I just get a heartburn . . . my chest

A: Do you cry?

CR₃: No I usually don't cry anyways. I don't

A: You talked about emptiness, with relation to moving here in the beginning. Have you felt that emptiness or void, a void inside with regard to other things . . . Canada?

CR₃: . . . sure. Like I'm trying, avoiding something?

A: Void, no, a void, just an emptiness, just it's, why don't we forget that question. It's confusing.

CR₃: Well, why don't you say it again . . .

A: It's basically the emptiness, you know, emptiness, feeling that there's nothing inside or that I don't feel, that I'm empty, I'm nothing, that I

CR₃: You mean, that I did actually lose all my feelings?

A: Feel that way here, yeah

CR₃: As I said, a lot of things just did not seem so important any more, I could care less. I would see them on TV, and actually this mostly happened when I was with friends, which was . . . , because when I was home I remember the slightest news on TV of a plane crash, or something like that, I would cry.

A: At home, you mean

CR₃: When I was alone

A: Alone, uh-huh, uh-huh

CR₃: Which I, as I told you, I usually don't cry at all, I'm not a person that, when I get upset or something like that, starts crying. Actually I really have to work hard to cry, so I can get it out. And I would just start crying, and I usually don't cry after like sad movies I would cry . . . very dramatic movies or news . . . like a plane crash and some of them survive and they would meet with their relatives I would just start crying! So, but the sort of emptiness that I felt, or lack of feeling was mostly towards things that were much closer to myself. And I just, that kind of emptiness that I felt wasn't always, like it wasn't something that I felt like a whole month, it was something that would happen maybe in the morning of some day once a week or something like that, it wasn't continual.

A: Okay. Thank you. You know, this research, as I said, is about exploring the experience of immigration . . . With the word "experience" comes meaning, to see, because in the end what I will do is I will come up with a description of the experience, a meaning, this is what immigration means to Iranian women, or some Iranian women. Can you tell me what the meaning has been for you, can you think of a meaning that you can, I mean, throughout the interview we've talked about it, but if you can put it in your own words and say

CR₃: It would probably be . . . displacement from, or movement from where you consider your home to another place where you are foreign to or do not have much of a knowledge of as you have of your home, and I guess the rest would be some of the consequence of that migration.

A: That's okay. That's okay. Don't try to think of . . . just tell me what the meaning has been for you.

CR₃: Migration, for me, when I talk about immigration . . . bring about ideas of how to get adapted to the new situation, the possibility of some value changes in order to survive in that society, wherever you are. So that's basically what, whenever I think about immigration. And whenever I think about, when someone says, well, no matter what country they come from--they can come from down south or from Britain--I always think of this family which is tired and sort of fatigued and things like that, and they have all these suitcases and big boxes and they're carrying them with them to the airport, I always

A: That's the image

CR₃: That's the image that comes to my mind, and just, like I see a chest-burn, just because whenever I'm upset I get that, so I always relate that to . . . upset, it's like entering a cave but you don't know what's in there, things like that, so whenever someone talks about immigration, things like that, that's the first thing that comes to my mind. And I always remember the fear . . . ask about it too, God, what you have to go through in order to get there. So that's basically what comes to mind.

A: Okay. And the outcome, to bring the . . . and the outcome. There has been learning for you.

CR₃: The outcome?

A: The outcome of this immigration has been that there has been some learning for you, and I want you to tell me about that a little bit. What do you see as . . . why I came here, something brought me here, whatever it was, and now I know why I came--I came here to learn this, learn that, to--do you know what I mean? To put it in perspective?

CR₃: I would say that my main purpose was to come and get educated here and that changed into living here and making my second home. And I went through a process of adaptation--it was difficult, but I'm still trying to get out of it, and I'm succeeding (end of tape side) succeeded so far to try to get myself out of it, and I hope to make it better. So that's for the adaptation part; and if there are already the values that I've had, I sort of adjusted them so I could survive here, but still not lose my identity as an Iranian, because I think when I came here, migrated here, I brought my biggest asset, and that was my culture, my ideology from another country. And my biggest gift is that, to Canada, and nothing more than that, no matter what I achieve here, that's the biggest one, so it's from my experience . . . that others can learn. And that's basically

A: What have you learned, about life? Briefly, in one sentence, two sentences.

CR₃: Briefly, I would say that life has ups and downs, just a cliché, and you just have to, if you're down, give yourself time to get up and don't push yourself, to just take everything when you have the capability of doing it, not to exhaust yourself, get stuck in . . . as an experience migrating. And since it's a foreign country if you're migrating to, just watch your friends, don't be ignorant, because ignorance pays off, and just learn whatever you can of whatever is around you, just go out, go to the post office and ask as many questions as you want, and just learn the system, don't neglect it, it's important for your survival.

A: And you learned that, sometimes the hard way.

CR₃: Yeah. Yeah.

A: Okay. Do you have any questions to ask me?

CR₃: No.

A: None?

CR₃: None.

A: I have another question for you . . . How do you see this experience? This two and a half hours

CR₃: Of talking?

A: Yeah, talking.

CR₃: Oh, it was really good. Because I've never talked about this before, so I've learned--these were issues that I just never, some that I'd never even looked at, never mention of, even in my own mind, so it was really good. It really brought back a lot of perspectives of looking at things and that I, obviously you get so occupied with what you're doing, especially right now with my school, I hardly have any time to think, so this was really a good time to come and think and sort of to get it off my mind, off my chest . . . just get rid of it

A: Um-hm. Oh, I'm glad

CR₃: Yeah, me too

A: Good. Did you learn anything from this experience? I think every experience has a learning aspect, so

CR₃: As I said, just what I told you right now about ignorance towards what's going around you--this was a very common thought that I had when I first came here. And I knew that I was doing this wrong, but I just forgot all about it until right now that I mentioned it to you. So this was good that I just remembered this.

A: Ignorance?

CR₃: As I said, like, learn of what's going on around you . . .

A: It was a common thought that you had?

CR₃: Yeah, but I never, I knew that I had to do it, but I never did it.

A: Okay. Okay. So now you learned it. Okay.

CR₃: I just remembered that I didn't have that thought then. . . and it just opened up some more moods . . . going about to achieve whatever goal I'm having.

A: Talking here . . .

CR₃: Yeah

A: Oh, that's great! I'm glad. Actually a lot of women do say that, and it's interesting because you talk about your, always busy brain, that you're always questioning things and analyzing--you're a very analytical person, I can tell you that, and it's interesting that, you know, you mentioned that, I'm glad to have given you the chance, or your analytical mind a chance to go through this analysis.

CR₃: Yeah. It's really good, it's like self-analysis or . . . then you have someone . . . person there, so it was really good.

A: Okay. Thank you very much.

CR₃: Well, thank you.

A: I really appreciate it, CR₃.

Interview #1--Case CR₄

CR₄: I feel settled in a sense that I, actually within, probably if you would have asked me this question a year ago I would say "no," but right now I feel much better, I feel I am at home, Canada is my home.

A: You feel that Canada is your home--you're settled in Canada?

CR₄: I think so

A: And you're adjusted.

CR₄: I don't think you can get adjusted 100% but I have adjusted more than before.

A: Okay. You feel more adjusted. The study--what I've been doing, interviewing other women like yourself--is for me to get a sense of what the experience of coming to Canada has been like for you, and for the other women. And I'll go over the transcript of all of these interviews and I will extract from them themes that occur during this story--it's like a story. I want you to give me the story of your coming to Canada and how you adjusted to life here, okay?

CR₄: Okay.

A: I'll ask you some questions to lead you and we will have a second interview after I have extracted the themes, common themes that are common throughout the interviews, yes. And then I'll come up with a description of the experience of immigration for you. Okay? And then, in the interview, I'll show you the description and I'll show you the themes, and you can tell me whether they're right or wrong, whether you feel that

CR₄: How I feel about it, okay.

A: that that is the case for you or not, okay, and

CR₄: You'd better ask me questions because I don't know how to tell the story!

A: Okay. I'm going to ask you some questions. Okay, CR₄. I want you to tell me what is the story of your life in Canada. Give the whole story, from the very beginning until the time you felt settled, okay? And we can start from what was it like when you left Iran. I want you to tell me about your feelings--what did you feel when you were leaving Iran, what was the experience like for you to leave Iran and what has it been like ever since, in Canada for you?

CR₄: Okay. For me it was a bit different because I left Iran before. I was living in England for four years. But when I left Iran to go to England, it was a complete different experience because I knew I, one day, probably, I'm going to go back and I knew that every summer I can go back to visit my culture and everything. But this one was a bit different because I had a feeling that I would probably not be able to go back, and it was a bit hard, it's a hard feeling to think about that you will not, you're leaving the country that you've been born in and you're, you have memories there, everything--families, friends--you have to really break up with that, with all your memories and everything, and it was kind of hard. But on the other hand, with me, it was probably a little bit different

because I love my country, I still do, but I always wanted to go away from it and live some other places.

A: You did want to

CR₄: I did, yeah, so in that sense it wasn't that difficult. But it *was* difficult because my country . . . by a situation that I thought that I would never go back.

A: So you left Iran with the knowledge that you probably would not be able to go back to it. And what was, tell me what was that like when you realized that when you were leaving? That's about, what, seven and a half years ago?

CR₄: Eight years ago. It was like leaving a part of you, a part of your, the feeling was like you are one person but you had to divide yourself between two, and one of you had to stay in Iran and the other one had to come out. And, I don't know, it was hard, but I wanted to do it, like, I was willing to do it

A: Why did you want to do it?

CR₄: Why? I don't know. I wanted to experience other things. As I said, I used to live in England before, and before I went to England, even, I wanted to see places, to do things, to experience other things. I didn't want to become like my mother

A: Which was like what?

CR₄: Which was like, like she was sixteen years old or seventeen years old and she was, and they were in a family which was the father was the head, and then she got married and her husband was the head, and this wasn't me. I couldn't, I just wanted in between to have some other experience that I would like to see, would like to do, would like to find out, would like to study, you know what I mean, like, I wanted to see some other life, some other experience, some other things to learn, things to do, things to see.

A: So in a way you were looking forward to that separation

CR₄: Yeah, I was, yeah. It was hard, but I was looking forward to it.

A: So you got out of Iran and you came to Canada. And tell me what was that like, coming to Canada, in the beginning.

CR₄: In what sense you mean, I don't know--maybe I can't remember, you know!!

A: What were you going through, can you go back--it's like a journey, I'm taking you on a journey, can you go back to the very beginning and think of what you felt, the things you saw, did that shock you, how was it like? What were the feelings, can you remember some of the feelings that you had?

CR₄: The thing is that, don't forget that I used to live in England, so before I came here, I've seen a little bit, I've experienced a little bit more, it wasn't like, like, I was in England and that's it and then I come to Canada. I was living in England and I had the opportunity to see more, to see things and experience other things.

A: But then you went back to Iran and lived there

CR₄: Then I went back to Iran and lived there for a year and then I came to Canada. So it's like, it was a bit different, because I had a little bit experience, I've seen the things that would have shocked me before, so when I came to Canada

A: What were they, what were they?

CR₄: The differences, the ideas, it was like I, what were they? People were different, everything was different . . . the relationships between people were different, everything was different

A: Can you give me an example of how one experience, or one difference, shocked you? In England or in Canada.

CR₄: God! What can I say? It really didn't shock me, let's put it this way, because I kind of expected to see these things. I knew I'm going to, I was ready for it, so it didn't really shock me. In a sense I can say it made me realize the differences between me and them and how much I have to work, how much I have to experience, how much I have to be open-minded, how much I have to see, how much I have to get my views larger, to be, to accept totally those views, do you understand what I mean? It really didn't shock me, I can't really tell you an experience that I had that really shocked me, and say, "My God, what do I see, what is this?" It didn't, because I was ready. I really wanted to see these things. But it made me realize how much I have to change myself. Not really change myself, how much I have to see and to experience, to do, to be adjusted.

A: And when you realized that, how did you feel? When you realized that you have to experience a lot, learn a lot, and change in the course, to become more adjusted.

CR₄: How did I feel?

A: Um-hm. What was that like?

CR₄: I felt that I had, to be honest with you, when I was in the line, how do you say, in the course of changing? Like, when I looked at myself and I saw that girl which I left in Iran, and when I looked at the other part of me which was in Canada, I felt I had the opportunity to see and to measure, to see Canada, to see what I can get from Canada and what I have which I can keep, and what I don't like I can lose and get it from Canada, and that made me feel good, which I thought, maybe a lot of people don't have it. That they don't have other things to compare, which I had, and that made me feel good. Before I realized that, it was a bit hard. But since, when I realized that I had this opportunity, it made me feel good, it really, it was a big chance for me, because I could choose, I had the opportunity to choose.

A: When did you realize that you had that choice?

CR₄: When did I realize? When I finally saw the differences and I sat down and I compared, and I thought. When I could feel the comparison, like I could compare myself, what I thought, what I believed in, and what I can become. That changed in my mind. When I was thinking about the change, I realized that, yes, there are things that I don't like to get and there are things that I'd like to get, from this culture. And in that sense of changing, I realized it, I realized that I had this opportunity.

A: How long ago was that? Roughly.

CR₄: Okay, I can tell you exactly how long ago that was. Six years ago.

A: Six years ago.

CR₄: Yeah.

A: So before six years ago what was it like? You said it was hard. Tell me about it.

CR₄: It was hard. It was hard. That's like, before six years ago, so many times happened, like, I could sit there and say, "okay," I was talking to myself, "right, you experienced, you saw this, you," you're a little bit, like, to be exactly like it was, I could see there was a ladder, ladder? The one that you go up on? I could see that I am in the step, see myself that I come up maybe five steps, and to go higher, like, I couldn't move, I was there, and I couldn't go back, I turned back and I saw myself on the first step, and I didn't want to go back, and yet I couldn't go higher, because I was stuck, I didn't know, I was confused. I didn't know, I really was stuck there.

A: What didn't you know?

CR₄: I didn't know what I want to change in myself, I didn't know me, I didn't know whether I want to see that girl back there, the one

A: Back there is back home, you mean?

CR₄: Back home, back on the first step, but I want to see myself--I couldn't see myself, to be honest with you, I could see myself back there, I couldn't see myself on the higher step, I couldn't imagine myself there, and that's why I, I probably was, I was in a sense that I, I felt as if I am fighting, but I cannot get anywhere, I can't go higher, because as much as I fought I was getting tired, like, you know what I mean, like I couldn't put myself to go higher.

A: Like you were drained of energy, maybe?

CR₄: Probably. Probably, because I felt maybe I am screaming, I am fighting, but nobody can hear me, nobody can see what I am going through, you know?

A: What were you going through, tell me? It sounds to me as if it was a big struggle and a fight within you

CR₄: Within me! It was within me

A: Yeah. What were you fighting with? What was it like? What were you going through?

CR₄: I don't know how to explain it. It was hard, it was tiring. It was like, as if you wanted to shout and scream, and yet the voice will not come out. I don't know how to explain it!

A: No, you're doing fine. I like the images you are using--they're great, they're great. But I just want you to go inside a little bit and tell me what was happening around you that made you feel that you want to shout and scream?

CR₄: Probably the changes, maybe, because maybe, I don't know, maybe because I was seeing, because I wanted to change myself and I didn't know how, I didn't know whether I should, I didn't know if it is the right thing or not, I wasn't sure

of it, I wasn't. Like even in my, because you're brought up in a way that you're told "this is right and this is wrong" and when you get to an age, all the way you're hearing "this is right, this is wrong" it's as if you're doing something, you're fighting with a giant, I don't know how to say it, like I felt as if my roots are in the ground, like an old, old tree that you cannot get the roots out, even if you cut it, it still has the roots in there, and there is no way you can do anything with the roots. And no matter how much you fight with it, the roots will be there, you can cut it, you can cut the tree, but the roots will be there. And to be able to get these roots out of my system, out of my body, because, do you understand? I don't know if I can explain because my English

A: No! Your English is great!

CR₄: But it was as if you're fighting with something impossible because, probably because within myself I didn't know if it is right or wrong--I didn't know, I was confused, I didn't know which to turn to--should I go back to what I've been told, or should I go a little bit higher, should I fly a little bit and see maybe I like something else. I didn't know, I was frightened.

A: Yeah, it was scary . . .

CR₄: I was frightened

A: Because you didn't know what's up there

CR₄: I didn't know what's up there, okay, and, I didn't know what's up there, and the way I was brought up, what is up there, it's bad. Okay? But within me, I didn't know if it is bad or not, but I still wanted to see it, to experience it, and it's a hard feeling--it's hard to get there, to fly a little bit more, just to see what it is. I wasn't sure whether I will be satisfied or not, even, I wasn't sure, if I go there, would I be, how do you say in English

A: Fulfilled?

CR₄: Fulfilled, as well as (Persian word)?

A: Oh, "regretted"--you would regret it

CR₄: "Regretted! I didn't know whether I would regret it or not. And it's a struggle, it is a struggle to see what is your priorities--do you want to do it? Even do it if it is bad, even do it if you regret it one day? And you sit on there: "I should have listened to my background," to my

A: To my upbringing

CR₄: To my unbringing, um-hm

A: I'm getting a sense that you, at that point, started asking yourself the question: "Who am I, really?" Did you get that feeling? "Who am I?"

CR₄: What, in the sense, you mean, "who am I?" in what sense?

A: In terms of, you didn't know yourself

CR₄: I didn't know myself, I didn't know

A: So your identity

CR₄: My identity was not, I didn't know myself, I didn't know

A: What did that make you feel--to not know?

CR₄: Terrible! It was hard, but, yeah, it was terrible--as if you don't have anything, you're not a human being. And it was hard because you don't know yourself, either. You don't know what are you, what characters you have

A: Did you feel a vast emptiness inside?

CR₄: Yeah. Yeah.

A: Tell me about it. You're doing great, CR₄, you're doing great. Continue! I can see there's doubts in you. But you're doing great.

CR₄: No, no! Talk about the emptiness. It affected, as I said, you feel the emptiness because you don't know yourself, you don't know what you're, you don't know what to do, it's as if you're stuck somewhere, it's like not being able to move, not being able to do anything, and that affected me in the sense that I was, in myself I was very, how do say that, I knew that word

A: Introverted? Withdrawn?

CR₄: What does that mean?

A: Withdrawn?

CR₄: Withdrawn. And I was very within me, like I couldn't talk about myself because I wasn't sure about myself.

A: Did you lose self-confidence?

CR₄: Self-confidence . . . I didn't have any self-confidence at all

A: Self-worth, maybe?

CR₄: Self-worth

A: What did you ask yourself about you?

CR₄: What did I ask myself about me.

A: What did you question about yourself? Doubt

CR₄: I didn't know, I asked myself, I am, how do I say it, because I wasn't sure about my, I didn't have any, I can't say "mind," but because I wasn't settled in my thoughts, I wasn't sure about myself, I couldn't talk about myself, I couldn't communicate with people, I couldn't, probably, be social with people, because I wasn't sure about myself.

A: What other questions did you ask about you?

CR₄: About me, in what sense do you mean, character-wise, or goal-wise, or?

A: You know, the doubts you had, you know, am I wrong or am I right, or

CR₄: Well, yeah, I didn't know whether I'm wrong or right, that's for sure, but

A: Self-worth, about your self-worth. I just want you to give me examples of the questions you asked. If there's none, that's okay. If you can't come up with any, it's okay

CR₄: Question to ask myself. Future-wise, I questioned myself what am I going to do? What are the things I want to do? Is there anything I can do?

A: Do you mean you felt incapable?

CR₄: Yeah, in a sense I felt incapable. Yeah, yeah. In a sense. You have to ask me questions . . . I can't . . .

A: Okay. Did you, when you were back home in Iran, did you have a stronger sense of yourself? Did you feel more settled in who you were?

CR₄: Compared to now?

A: No, compared to six years ago when you had a lot of confusion

CR₄: Oh yeah. I think so, because, the thing is that I was expecting, I wasn't expecting this in my personality, but I was expecting different things, you know. But because there wasn't, right in front of your eyes, you didn't see them. The differences. I was more settled in myself and my ideas, my way of thinking, and of course, in my future as well because I, back home I can't remember one day to sit there and think about my future, it was as if the future was, I didn't think about it because I didn't have to, like you could see your future, but it wasn't important. Like, you know what I mean? Like, it was so settled, so obvious, that it was forgotten. You have a future, you know you have a future, I didn't think

A: Did you feel safer there?

CR₄: Oh, I felt safer, I felt more safe, and that's the . . . Like when you go, it's maybe sound funny, but when I was in Iran, when I was in my country, when you go to sleep and sleep, you have a perfect sleep, because you are safe. I don't know how to explain it, but I didn't have to think about my future, I didn't have to think about, I had my father to look after me, I had my family there, my roots were there, I was in a place that everybody accepted me as I am, and I accepted them, not totally with me but, anyway, I accepted them as much as I could.

A: You felt at home

CR₄: I felt at home, I was safe, I was completely safe, nobody could hurt me, nobody could touch me, nobody could do things wrong to me, I was safe, I was like a, I could say like a queen. I had protection, I had everybody looking after me, thinking about me, protecting me, feeling for me, caring for me, but here, I didn't have that feeling. . . . you come to a country to live and you don't know whether you're accepted by the country, by the people, how to get to them, okay, you're here, you're totally different from them, and you're willing, within yourself, you're willing to try it, to show them that, yes, you can accept me, I can be one of you. But I didn't know whether I can be accepted, I didn't know if I am accepted, if I can go along with them, and, on the other hand, I didn't felt safe, it wasn't my country and, I don't know, I wasn't safe, as if I've lost all the protection, all the. It's like, okay, I've come up with something that I, probably I can explain myself. It's as if, I was, when I was in my country I was in a shell, okay. And this shell was made of gold, made of something really expensive,

really

A: Precious?

CR₄: Precious, and I was protected in that, and I wanted to come out of it, okay? I really badly wanted to come out of it, no matter what the shell was . . . but I wanted to come out of it, and when I came here it was as if, it's exactly like a bird, when you want to come out of your shell you try it, you break it, you come and your head is a little bit higher, but it's as if you, a wind or, I don't know, something happens and you have to go underneath again. It's exactly like that, but you struggle, you're there and you're struggling, you want to come out, you want

A: But the wind is too strong

CR₄: Too strong for you and

A: That was a great image! It was, it was. Okay, and you said that people were different, you wanted to be, you wanted to fit in?

CR₄: Yeah

A: You wanted to fit in but somehow you didn't know how, something stopped you--what stopped you? What did you experience from Canada and Canadians that made it difficult for you to feel fitting?

CR₄: A lot of it can be the language, at least some of it can be the language. You always had, I still sometimes feel it, not that much, but I still feel it, that because of the language you can't express yourself, you can't really, it's easier, it's much easier, to be able to speak in your own language, you can say it from your heart, it comes from within you. Maybe a little bit because of that, but it was as if you can't get close to them, it was as if, there is always a wall there, you can't really pass this wall, you can try and get to it, but once you go there, that's it, it blocks you. It's like you, I don't know, you're trying to touch somebody and that person is in a plastic bag, you can never touch, really touch that person. It was like that, with Canadians.

A: What did they

CR₄: I don't know, I can't say with Canadians, probably it was my own problem. Maybe. I'm not saying that, you know what I mean?

A: What did they do, though? What did the Canadians, let's just call them Canadians, okay, we know, we know what we're talking about, let's call them Canadians, non-Persians. What did they do? Did they do anything to keep that--did you feel that they were doing something to keep that wall, that distance? Not deliberately, maybe, but just they way they were?

CR₄: No, they didn't do it deliberately. It's hard, because I don't have that feeling now, I still

A: I want you to go back to six years ago, CR₄, I know, I know what you're talking about now but, we're still there, that part of our journey, we haven't moved on yet

CR₄: We haven't moved on yet?!

A: No, no, no.

CR₄: Ah, six years ago, okay

A: Before you felt, you know, you realized the good parts of it, you know

CR₄: What did they do? To block me, you mean?

A: That you couldn't touch them. What do you think they did that you couldn't touch them?

CR₄: Because I felt they're not warm enough. I felt they were within themselves, they can't give you a little bit more, like they are what they are, they have their own family, they have their own grouping, they have their own people and that's it. It was like as if, "do not come any closer, you're there and you stay there." As I said, it might be my own problem . . . that was what they did, really, that's how I felt

A: That's what's important, that's what's important. How you felt, okay. So they kept their distance, in that way. Did you talk to them, did you try to talk?

CR₄: Probably not, come to think of it, probably not.

A: Did you have a good Canadian friend?

CR₄: No, I didn't. Did I? No.

A: Do you now?

CR₄: Not Canadian, no. Yeah, no.

A: No Canadian friends real close?

CR₄: No Canadian friends really . . .

A: Okay. What keeps you from becoming close to Canadians? By Canadian I mean people who were raised here.

CR₄: Yeah. No, I have, I have friends who were raised here, but they don't call themselves Canadians. And I don't think they are Canadians

A: By Canadian I mean people who,

CR₄: I know what you mean

A: Who feel that, you know, whom you would put and say, well this is a Canadian character or, if you do that at all. Okay what stopped you from becoming close to them? That distance that they kept?

CR₄: Probably, yeah. And maybe I was frightened, maybe I was frightened that I wasn't accepted by these people, maybe I felt that way. Because I don't have any Canadian friends now but I don't feel it this way either. I don't think they, I'm not afraid that they're not accepting me or not, but then maybe I wasn't strong enough to accept that if they don't accept me, it's okay.

A: Why wouldn't they accept you. You had the fear of being rejected by them. Why would they?

CR₄: Because I was different, because I had different values, because I was thinking different, because I, at that point I was a lot different, I still am, but, probably because I didn't know whether, how can I say that, maybe because I was afraid to get to know it and I won't like it. And then I was thinking, "what am I going to do?"

A: To get to know what?

CR₄: To get to know their culture, to become them a little bit, and if I don't like it, what happens then? What happens then? All my hopes were to fly, to experience, to see, and if I do that, maybe I'm just, probably that was it, one of the things, if they don't accept me what am I going to do, and if they do accept me and if I don't like it what am I going to do?

A: Like a dead end

CR₄: Like a dead end. Am I answering your question?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, and you're making a lot of sense. Oh yes, and you're making a lot of sense.

CR₄: Don't know if I'm answering it or not.

A: Okay. What were some of the other feelings that you had? Did you feel lonely when you first came, six years ago, seven years ago?

CR₄: Did I feel lonely? Yeah, within me, yes. I wasn't lonely in the sense that nobody was around me. There were people around me, but I was lonely because there were not many people like me around, in that sense I felt lonely.

A: So there weren't enough people who could understand you.

CR₄: There weren't enough people that could understand me.

A: And that's including Persians. Is that . . .

CR₄: Oh yes.

A: Tell me about that. About your own group. Did you have a large group of Persians in the beginning that you?

CR₄: Yes

A: Okay. Why did you mingle with them? Go out with them?

CR₄: Probably, it was, now I come to think about it, why did I do it? I don't know why, because, as I say, come to think about it, I was afraid that I'm not accepted by Canadians, and yet I wasn't like Persians, or at least, I think I am not like that. Maybe they within them they felt the same way as I do, I don't know. But I felt that I'm different from them, because I was willing to change myself, and I didn't know whether they dared (??) the same or not, so come to think about it, I don't know why I was more comfortable with them, I don't know why because it's the same, like I didn't know whether I'm accepted by them even or not.

A: You had that feeling of maybe being rejected by them

CR₄: By them as well, because I didn't know whether I am like them or not.

A: You didn't feel at one with them either.

CR₄: Pardon?

A: Did you feel at one, at ease, at one with Persians? Did you fit in their group?

CR₄: I did and I did not. I did because I was probably more, I didn't have to prove anything with them. It was, within me I had my own idea, I didn't have to talk about it, I didn't have to prove anything to them.

A: You didn't have to struggle

CR₄: I didn't have to struggle. Actually, come to think about it, now I feel I am, I have to struggle more with Persian than with Canadian.

A: What happened that gave you this feeling? Made you realize?

CR₄: Because I think I am more adjusted to the way of living here, like, as I said, I've changed, I've changed my values, I've changed my, how do you say,

A: Say it in Persian

CR₄: I can't remember it in Persian either. Values?

A: Values is a very good word, we're going to get to values soon. Beliefs, attitudes

CR₄: Yeah, yeah.

A: Ways of being. What did the Persians do, in general, the Persian group, do to make you realize that you don't feel a part of them as much any more?

CR₄: What did they do? Their ideas, their way of thinking, their way of acting, sometimes.

A: Give me an example.

CR₄: Talking about other people

A: Gossiping

CR₄: Gossiping, saying that that person did that, which I think it was bad, or, I don't know, yeah, gossiping

A: So you felt they'd judge people.

CR₄: Yeah

A: Did you feel judged?

CR₄: Now, you mean?

A: Did you? Or still, you know, do you still have those feelings about . . .

CR₄: Oh, I'm sure they're judging me, but I don't care, it doesn't bother me any more.

A: Did it bother you six years ago?

CR₄: Yeah, probably it did, yeah, probably it did, because I wasn't sure about myself, I didn't know which is right and which is wrong. Now I know which is wrong and which is right and I don't care about other people's judging me. (end of tape side)

A: You're sure that they judge you?

CR₄: Yeah.

A: You don't care any more, but in those days, because you weren't sure of yourself

CR₄: Yeah. It didn't bother me that they're judging me, those days. It bothered me because I wasn't, I, myself, didn't know the values or right and wrong. Maybe with my close, close family, it bothered me how they think about me, if they're judging me, if they're, you know, but because I wasn't sure about myself, I didn't know what my values are, didn't know what to chose and what not to chose.

A: You talk about your close family and close friends, people who matter to you, right. Did you ever feel in conflict with them? Was there a conflict?

CR₄: Like, what you mean

A: Like you felt there was conflict, there was a struggle, . . .

CR₄: Oh yeah. Yes.

A: Tell me about it.

CR₄: Okay, ask me again.

A: Did you feel in conflict with your close friends, your family, do you ever feel a conflict there--a struggle--and how did you deal with that? What was it like for you? You can give me an example. If you can't think of anything, that's fine.

CR₄: Yeah, I did, I did feel the conflict there, and it's exactly like the same conflict, the same feeling when I came here, with the society, to change and, the other thing which really bothered me and it was because I was brought up with, I'm the only girl in the family, I have two older brothers, there were a lot of things which I could see in my family which was good for them but not for me, and that was the main struggle for me within my family. And I couldn't accept it, I couldn't see why it's good for them and not for me.

A: Did that become more apparent when you came to Canada? Did you feel that more in Canada?

CR₄: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

A: Okay. Continue.

CR₄: Still I felt it . . . one example I can remember when my brother was out

of high school, my father, or my family, suggested that he should go to America and study more, but I had to fight for it, so that they will send me . . . I had to fight for it before they could come and agree with me that, yes, you can go to England and study there. And they didn't *want*--at the end they *had* to, there was no choice because I didn't give in. For a whole year, actually I was really a bad girl, I did a lot of, what I mean, like I really pushed them, so that they would say "yes, go, go, leave us alone, go!" But, like I noticed it there, but here, I still do, I still feel it, I still see it. No matter what. I still feel that there are things that is accepted for them by everybody, but if I do the same thing it's wrong. And if I do it they will get hurt. This is what's the most, like, which within my family, within the people I love and I think they care for me, this is what bothered me and probably it's bothered me now as well.

A: What's the difference between now and then? In that particular case.

CR₄: In that particular case. To be honest with you, nothing. Because it's exactly like I said before, it's like going two steps up and I can see they're moving two steps up as well, so I can't, there's only the room there, like if I am going up, they're going up, and there's always that difference, like I can see there is a lot of difference with my own family's attitude as well. When I was in Iran I didn't dare to go, probably, out with a guy, unless they know him and unless they know why he is going out with me. But now I think I can go out with anybody I want to, they don't have to know him, they don't have to like him, they don't have to know it.

A: So you sort of do what you want now

CR₄: I sort of do what I want now, but I still, I don't think there is, how do I say it, there isn't much difference sometimes, in that particular sense, I don't see, there is a difference because I've changed and they have changed, but still it's not totally

A: It's not resolved, totally

CR₄: It's not resolved

A: But what I hear you say is that six years ago I might not have done it, but now I have the courage to do some things that they might not agree

CR₄: Not totally, no.

A: Not totally, okay. So you still feel that pull from your family and you don't want to go against their will?

CR₄: Yeah. I don't want to hurt them. I could do it. I could do it. But I know if I do it, they will get hurt.

A: So you choose not to hurt them.

CR₄: I don't know. I haven't, I don't know. I don't know. I can't tell you because, I don't know, I might do it, I don't know. If it comes to the point that I want to do it, I will do it. Right now it's okay, but I can't be sure that I will not do it. Do you know what I mean?

A: Yes. What about six years ago, seven years ago? Did you think the same way--that if you really badly want to do something you would do it?

CR₄: No, I wouldn't.

A: You wouldn't have done it.

CR₄: I wouldn't have done it.

A: So that's the difference.

CR₄: Yeah. No, I wouldn't have done it. No. Because six years ago I didn't know whether it's right or not. I wasn't settled in my thoughts, either. But right now I could do it because I believe in it, that's the difference, because I, six years ago I didn't believe in it. I wanted to do it, but I didn't believe in it totally. Right now I believe in it. If I think it's good, if I think it's right, I'll do it. That's the difference. Now I am stronger in my feelings--yes, it is right, and I will do it. No matter what the price is.

A: Okay, that's what I was looking for--the difference. Okay. Going back to six, seven years ago. Did you miss Iran?

CR₄: Since I came here I have always missed Iran, up to maybe a year ago.

A: Tell me about the feeling. What was it like, missing Iran, what did you feel?

CR₄: There wasn't a day, or a night, that would pass when I would go to sleep without thinking of Iran. Without thinking of her, without thinking of the feeling, the safe feeling that I had, the comfort that I had, my childhood, my memories, my, how would I say, innocent version . . . myself, do you know what I mean, like I would sleep and think about the part of me that I left there. And I couldn't believe it was me, I still can't believe it's me. It's as if, how can I say it, it's as if it's me and yet it's not me, and for that, and for all the memory and all the feelings, all the happiness that I had, there wasn't a day that I would go to sleep without thinking of Iran. I missed it. I really, really missed it. Do you want me to tell you about now, or?

A: Sure. Just . . . Okay. You told me about some of the things that you missed. Can you tell me a little bit more about what you missed in Iran. You missed that innocent part of you that you left, you missed the happiness

CR₄: I missed the happiness

A: The safeness, security

CR₄: I missed the safeness, I missed the smell, even, I missed everything, whatever you can think of, I missed. I missed the feeling, I missed the sun, I missed the feeling of being in the sun and sometimes, it's unreal, but sometimes I missed the people, whatever bad, I don't know how to say it, I missed that badness of the people, I missed that--do you know what I mean, like, it was amazing, you don't like something, but yet again, you miss it, you know.

A: When did you feel you don't like the people back home?

CR₄: I can't say I don't like the people, I still can't say it. I don't agree with the people, let's put it this way, I can never say I don't like the people, but there is so much difference, there is so many things that, the way of their thinking, it's in a way that it boils me, like, it really makes me boil, angry, like, you know, frustrated, that's what I mean I don't like, I don't mean that I don't

like

A: But you even miss that sometimes

CR₄: I even miss that sometimes. Yeah.

A: Okay. When did you, you said when you were leaving Iran you came out with the knowledge that you might not ever go back. When did you really realize that you won't go back?

CR₄: A year ago. About a year, year-and-a-half

A: So that's when you felt more settled

CR₄: That's when I felt more settled

A: You finally came to grips with the reality

CR₄: Exactly.

A: Okay. How was that?

CR₄: It's a good feeling. It's a feeling that you, okay, it's like, for six, seven years, you were carrying a disease within yourself. Something that it's eating you up, and finally you're getting rid of it, and it's a good feeling. I feel . . . sometimes

A: You feel guilty

CR₄: I feel guilty, but it's a good feeling. And I have, like it doesn't bother me any more to talk about it even if it be to Persian people. Like before, I felt ashamed to say that, to feel that way, because everybody is like, you know, I mean, they all love our country. But everybody is thinking one day they will go back. But I don't think this will be my case, you know, because finally I come to a settlement that I've got rid of the disease. It was something which was inside you and it was eating you so you're getting rid of it. And that's it. When I think about my country it's as if I am thinking about thirty years ago, forty years ago-it's so, so far away, it's so far away that it's like, thirty, forty years ago, it's behind me, it's unreal, it's like it's gone, it's finished, it will never come again.

A: Do you know Iran any more? Do you think you know it?

CR₄: Do I know it? Probably not, no. I don't think I know Iran any more. Because what I remember is not what it is now.

A: Because of the situation. Not only because of the situation, because of me. I'm not the person who I left there, it's, probably the country, it has changed, yeah, but I think I have changed more than the country itself, so I don't know it because I'm not that, I left half of me there, and that half of me can live there and be probably happy, but because it's not me any more, I've left it, it's like two people, two different people. It's me and it's not me, and I think probably that's why I don't know it because I remember it, let's put it this way, I remember it, but I don't know it. I can just remember things which have been three or four years ago, but

A: CR₄, let's go back to before one year ago. You missed Iran very much, you

told me that a day would not pass without you thinking of all the good things, and the bad things that you left. And yet you knew, you knew that there was very little chance of you going back. What did that make you feel like?

CR₄: Going back to live, or going back to visit?

A: Both. Either.

CR₄: I didn't want to go back.

A: Okay. Even to visit?

CR₄: Even to visit. It would frighten me, because what I remember, I want to remember, what I know, the country itself, that's what I want to remember, I don't want to ruin my image of my country, like I remember the safeness, I remember the feeling, the good feeling, the happiness, the child which I left there, myself there, the things that I used to do, the memory I had, the places I used to go, and I want to keep it that way, I didn't want to

A: So that's why you didn't want to go back, to see things different

CR₄: That's why I didn't want to go back. No. Yeah.

A: Did you feel that it was unfair, at any point, that you had to lose all that, leave all that behind?

CR₄: Yes, I still think it's unfair.

A: Tell me about it.

CR₄: Yes, I can say I've made Canada my country. But sometimes I think about it, wouldn't it be nice to go back, to have a home, where you were brought up, where you were born, where your memories are, where your childhood is. It would have been a nice thing to go back and visit once in a while, it's unfair. I still think it that way.

A: Do you resent that that's the case? What are your feelings when you think "this is unfair"? What do you want to do when you think "this is unfair"?

CR₄: What do I want to do? I don't think I can do anything! It's unfair but it's something that it's there, we can't change it, it's the reality.

A: What did you feel six years ago? Five years ago? That there is nothing you can do.

CR₄: You feel frustrated.

A: Do you feel angry at all?

CR₄: Yeah, you do. You feel angry because you feel as if you own something very, very precious and somebody's stealing it, and ruining it. In that sense, you feel angry. You're saying "Why? This was mine, and somebody's stealing it." And you wish, okay, if somebody's stealing it, take care of it. But when you see that they're misusing it, it makes you angry. It makes you frustrated, it makes you want to do something about it and you know you can't do anything. You can't do anything at all.

A: Did you dream about Iran?

CR₄: Did I? Or do I?

A: Did you?

CR₄: Six years ago, you mean?

A: Um-hm. Within the last

CR₄: Yeah, I dreamed about Iran but I hardly dreamed about, actually I did, a couple of times, I was in Iran, yeah, yeah, I did. Mostly, most of the dreams that I have, though, or I had, was when I was there, like I dreamed about Iran before, when I used to live there. There were hardly few, few dreams that I had which was probably what was happening then. Now.

A: What did that make you feel, when you woke up?

CR₄: The dream that I had which was before, like I could feel, I didn't see any changes or anything, it made me feel a little bit more comfortable there.

A: Comfortable. More relaxed.

CR₄: More relaxed, more

A: So it was like a soothing experience

CR₄: Yeah, yeah . . .

A: CR₄, . . . you could see the things you wanted to see, you left there and . . .

CR₄: Go back to it

A: In those days when you felt confused and you had all those questions and you weren't sure, you were stuck on that fifth step of the ladder, did you ever say to yourself: "What the hell am I doing here? I wish I had never come"?

CR₄: No.

A: You never did?

CR₄: Never

A: Interesting. Okay.

CR₄: Never did. I had a lot of, I was frightened, I wasn't in a comfortable situation, I had a lot of questions, I wasn't sure of myself, I wasn't in a . . . terrible position, but I never felt that way. Sometimes I felt, "yeah, what am I going to do? What the hell am I going to do now?" But I never felt that way that "what am I doing here? I wish I wasn't, I wish I was back there." No.

A: Okay. Did you ever feel guilty about leaving Iran?

CR₄: Yes. Yes, I did. I felt guilty in a sense that I felt my country needs me, and I left it. That's probably one of the things that helped me to be more

settled here.

A: Tell me. In what way?

CR₄: Like I would say that to myself, for example, "if one day the country goes back, back to what it was, would you ever go back?" I couldn't say yes. I felt ashamed, I felt, you know what I felt, is exactly, now, when I think about it, if my country goes back to what it was, would I go back, and it feels exactly, to go all the way back, when you come to Canada, to start all over again, whether they're going to go backwards, or whether they're going to accept me or not, my own country is going to accept me or not, I feel it, and that's why, probably, I can't think of going back, because I don't think they should accept me.

A: Why not?

CR₄: Because I don't belong there. I came out of the country in the position that the country probably needed me. I left it, now, how can I go back? I don't want to go back!

A: You don't want to

CR₄: I don't think I would, no, I really don't think I would want to go back. It's as if going back . . . as if going through all the problems that you had, again, and I don't think I can do it any more. Once was enough, I don't think I can do it again.

A: So it's, going back to Iran, it's like going to a new country again

CR₄: Again, yeah

A: And starting all over again

CR₄: It sounds so funny, Afsaneh, I can't believe it! It sounds funny, but it's true

A: It's a foreign country

CR₄: It's exactly like going to a foreign country. And I don't want to do that. I could go and live in another country. It's funny. But back home, it's like . . . I can't go back. It's amazing, you don't even . . . It makes you wonder how much you have changed.

A: Okay, good. Now I want to get right to that. In what ways do you think you've changed? Let's go further back, CR₄, what happened a year ago, that you realized that, okay, this is home? You told me one thing that happened was that you didn't, you finally got rid of that disease, of missing Iran so much, that's one thing that happened. What other things did happen a year ago or within the last years that made you feel "this is my country" or "this is my new home"?

CR₄: I think I finally, because probably I got rid of the disease, so I had more time to spend finding myself, like, it's as if you're busy thinking about the disease, you have a disease and you can't do anything else--you're sick, you have to take care of that sickness. And once you get rid of the sickness, then you have time to do other things, and then you can think about yourself.

A: So what happened to make you get rid of that disease? To get over that sickness?

CR₄: I changed. I finally knew myself, I finally become to open myself, open my eyes and see myself.

A: What did you see?

CR₄: I saw a woman who has struggled and I saw a woman who can depend on me, I saw my feet, my foot, straight on the ground and I saw somebody who is dependent, who is dependent on myself, somebody who is sure about, in, not all ways, I mean in my own ideas, in my own beliefs, in my own way of Somebody who is strong enough to live and, I saw a lot of changes like, do you know what I mean, am I answering you?

A: Yes. Continue, please! Yes. Tell me about your changes. Tell me in what way

CR₄: Yes. Tell you about the changes?

A: You talk about values, okay, let's get to values. You say that, you know, a lot of your values have changed. Do you wish to tell me what some of them are? I mean there's, I know, I'm from Iran, I know the struggles, there's values about family ties, there's values about sex, there's values about work, there's so many other values. You realize that a lot of those changed. Right, so you think differently now, you believe differently now. You would do things differently now.

CR₄: Yeah. Probably.

A: Tell me a little bit about whatever comes to your mind.

CR₄: Let me see what comes to my mind. My values have changed in the sense that there are a lot of things that I don't think its accepted by the society.

A: Which society?

CR₄: This society

A: Canada

CR₄: Canadian society. What we're living, and there is . . . think of it, just ask me a question again, Afsaneh.

A: Okay. Tell me more about your changes. You said now you're more open? Tell me about that? Open to what?

CR₄: I am more open. Open to new ideas, open to finding, open to probably not thinking, as I said before, not thinking about something right and something wrong. Probably before I was thinking whether, like, if you want to do it, is it right to do it or not? Now I, at least, the least I can do is see it, experience it, and then find out whether it's wrong or right. Whether you like it or not, whether it's you or not, whether you--in that sense, probably, I've changed. I have changed because I am more dependent in me than before, and sometimes it frightens you, like you're becoming, you think you're becoming too independent, you don't need anybody any more.

A: And that's frightening.

CR₄: That's frightening, but in that sense you've changed. You feel now you're a complete woman, you're not any more a girl.

A: CR₄, when you first came I know that you said you were looking forward to coming, and maybe becoming more independent, but did you feel that when you first came? Did you? What did you feel?

CR₄: No. Oh, do you mean the feeling?

A: Did you want to be on your own and independent when you first came?

CR₄: I wanted, but I didn't dare. Let's put it this way. I wanted, I really within myself wanted to do it, but I was so frightened.

A: But now you feel

CR₄: Now I feel I can do it. Back then, probably when I think about it, I would say "yes, I want to do it" but I didn't know whether I can do it or not.

A: Did you feel you needed help?

CR₄: Help from who?

A: People you can depend on?

CR₄: To, no, I didn't, I don't think so, I needed help from myself, I didn't think anybody can help me. You had to do it, you had to struggle it alone, within yourself, and you have to find out what you want to do within yourself, I don't think anybody can help . . .

A: Okay, tell me about now. If you, you say you feel more independent, but that also frightens you. But now you feel like a complete woman, not like a little girl . . . Okay, tell me more about that.

CR₄: It's a good feeling, but it's a weird feeling. You feel you are, you're totally on your feet and it's such a good feeling. You know you can go ahead and live, and no matter what happens you are, you can, like, put your head up and continue, no matter what happens. You're stronger, you are, or, I am! I feel stronger, I feel . . . I know myself now, I know who I am, I know I've come a long way, but finally I've found myself, I know what is wrong and also what is good and what my values are, what I want to do and what I don't want to do.

A: You have a strong sense of yourself.

CR₄: Yeah. I feel much better, I feel, it's probably in, I can say it happened to me in one or two years. I found myself, let's put it this way. I lost myself and then now I found myself.

A: What helped? What were the things that helped you to find yourself, and feel stronger, and feel more settled? I mean, anything can be it, anything.

CR₄: A little of it was what you go through some things, like a difficult situation which you think, if that happened to me, would I be able to stand up? And being pressured in that sense, I think that helped me. Another thing which I think I should mention was my job. That helped me a lot as well. When I first came here I tried a lot of things--nobody would accept me. You had to have experience and probably because I wasn't, I didn't know who I am either, that didn't help either, like you're not confident enough to go there and say "this is what I want." So probably, you know, that didn't help. And then you were a

person who'd say, "I can't do it. I can't do it." But I think my job helped me . . . like I can see the difference when I first started this job, and now. I was a frightened kid . . . I wasn't the kind of person who would talk to two people at the same time in the same room, because I was so frightened. Now I can do it, I can go to a meeting and speak my mind, say what I think, and that helped me a lot. Like I feel as if I'm progressing. And I think a lot of it, it's due to my job. I'm not saying that my job is a very, very--but it helped me

A: No, no, I realize, the achievements and the accomplishment

CR₄: The achievement and the accomplishment, and it's funny, but when we go to a meeting, it's such a good feeling, everybody is Canadian except me. That is, I don't know how to say it, that is an excellent feeling. Maybe I am crazy, maybe I am too, you know! I don't know, but it feels good. It feels really, really good. It feels as if you, it feels that you can tell them to accept you, it's not any more a question whether they're going to accept you, you're different, you still are different, and it's a good feeling, you think as if you've gone, you've had more difficulties, you were stronger, you had to do a little bit more, it's a good feeling

A: To be where they are

CR₄: To be where they are, it's a good feeling

A: So you've proven yourself

CR₄: I've proven myself and I've proven that they don't have any other choice but to accept me, you know what I mean? Like, it's not any more whether they're going to accept me or not, they will, they have to, they'd better, and it's a good feeling, it's a feeling of achievement, it's a feeling that, I don't know how to say it, it's great, it's a good feeling. You have, it's like I have struggled and I have fought and I didn't know where I'm going to, I didn't whether it's a fighting or not, sometimes. Because sometimes when I think about all the way I came sometimes I was so frightened and frustrated, and sometimes I would sit there and say "I accept anything" and I didn't know whether I can fight any more or not, but you've come all the way and you've proven to yourself and proven to everybody that you can do it and it's a good feeling, when I look at it, it's great! You feel really . . . yourself.

A: So now you feel that you do fit in?

CR₄: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

A: Any other things that helped you reach the point of feeling a complete woman and settled in this country?

CR₄: Any other . . . (end of tape side) I finally found myself, and I got rid of the disease! That helped me.

A: Any friends, any things?

CR₄: What else helped me was a little bit, maybe in two years, the two years that I, that passed, the two years that passed, this last two years

A: Okay, you were saying that something else helped, in the past two years?

CR₄: Um-hm. I had a lot of pressure in the last two years and last year I

moved to Victoria and I think experience was a bit helpful as well. I had a hard time there. I had pressure from my work and from the atmosphere there, I was really lonely. And that probably helped me a little bit, too. Because before I went to Victoria I wanted to get away for a while, and I did that and I realized that, "that's it, I don't want to be away."

A: From what?

CR₄: From, from here. From people I knew, from things that I used to do every day, I kind of got fed up and I think that pressure helped me to be more stronger and that probably was, probably did help me as well.

A: Anything else?

CR₄: Anything else?

A: Any friends? Connections with the outside world, with the Canadians, or

CR₄: Connections with Canadians. Probably friends, in the sense that, right now I don't have any close friends, any Persian close friends except for one or two, and most of my friends are not Canadian but are . . . and probably that helped me a bit as well

A: In what way?

CR₄: Also my manager, used to be my manager, now she's my supervisor, she's was a strong, how do I say that, when I see her, I see myself in twenty, thirty years, and probably that helped me a little bit in a sense that I know that she's doing fine and she's enjoying every bit of everything, every day she's enjoying it! And that probably helped me to see, to realize, "yes," you know, "you can be by yourself and still enjoy yourself and still be an achiever"

A: So you sort of had a role model

CR₄: Not really a role model, no, I can't say a role model, but I probably needed to see, to get close to someone who is a little bit like me, in a sense that, she's by herself, she has no kids, no husband, and she is still, she feels very successful, probably it needed me to see somebody in that position.

A: You really became close to her

CR₄: Yeah, I'm very close to her, actually

A: So that intimacy helped?

CR₄: Yes it did, yeah

A: To become intimate with somebody, to share, yeah, probably, yeah, true. Yeah, so you could say what your feelings are to her

A: Any Persian friends helped? Any other friends helped?

CR₄: Helped me?

A: Feel the way you are now, helped you reach what you've reached now?

CR₄: Maybe indirectly, but I can't think about anything now, maybe indirectly.

Any Persian friends who helped? Probably, yeah, okay. As I said, indirectly. When I, because probably when I came here, it was my cousin and my friend, and we were always together. When I think about them before, six years ago, and when I see them now, in that sense, indirectly helped me, and I could realize, "what a difference! What an achievement!" And that probably helped me to pull up myself as well and to think that, yes, other people can do it, why can't I? Maybe in that sense they helped, yeah.

A: Great!

CR₄: . . . !

A: If you have anything, if not, we can move along to the next question.

CR₄: Yeah, whatever you want.

A: Can you think of any other things

CR₄: Any other?

A: Any men that helped? Relationships with men?

CR₄: Getting to the good parts, huh!! Yes, I think so, yeah. Yeah, I guess probably indirectly as well. Not in a sense that directly they come and help you to pull you, but probably indirectly because you get into a relationship and that relationship itself has ups and downs and that probably will help you. It helps you, or it helped me, finding that, you prove to yourself what you have changed and what your beliefs have changed, you prove it to yourself at that, I don't know how to say that . . . There are things that you say, "Yes, I believe in these things" but once, it's easy to say it, but once you actually do it, it's different, and in that sense probably, you know, helped me, because in the relationship that I had, I could see that, I could see the difference in me

A: You got a chance to experiment

CR₄: You got a chance to, yeah, experiment and prove it to myself that, yes, you've changed, your ideas have changed, and yes, it really has changed! Because you think, yes I believe in it, and sometimes you say, "Okay, I know this is what I believe," but once you come to really doing it, then you hesitate. Then your background ideas will come and say, you know. Then you stop. But in that sense probably helped me, because, yes, I could prove it to myself that I've changed and I believe in something and there was the chance to do it. Even, you know, in family-wise, like, it was a help for me to see how my family have changed as well.

A: Um-hm. So what you're saying is, to see the changes in other people who are close to you, that helped you to be stronger about your changes.

CR₄: Yeah.

A: Okay. Have you dated any North American men? Has that been difficult? Has that been

CR₄: It has, yeah.

A: Because of the differences?

CR₄: No, I think it's, it's not so much the differences. I think it's your own interests, probably, your own tastes

A: That are different

CR₄: That are different. It's not that, how can I say it? It's not the differences, no, I don't agree with that.

A: It's their individual taste?

CR₄: It's their, I think with me, it's their individual tastes.

A: Okay. CR₄, we talked about the things that helped--helped make this process a little faster and helped you find yourself, helped you get rid of the disease, helped you feel more settled. Now, can you think of some of the things that slowed that process down? That were not helpful.

CR₄: Yeah. What slowed it? Okay. Number one, I think, sometimes I still feel it, which has slowed it, is still the struggle to show everybody, your family, your society, that you are

A: "Your society," you mean the outside world?

CR₄: Yeah, the outside world. That you are a woman and you don't need to be a man to achieve a lot of things. That, I think, it has been a difficulty, to prove it. I still think that I haven't really proved it, to myself, probably, but to my family and to close friends. That probably still restricts me from doing a lot of things that, I can't say you want to do, but you might want to do, okay.

A: You want to have the chance to be able

CR₄: I want to have the chance to be able to do it. And that really upsets me, it still does, and I think that has been one of the difficulties that pushed me away, because I believe you got, if I were a man, I wouldn't have these difficulties. I am sure it was much easier for my brother to get adjusted than for me. So I think being a woman has a negative, not negative, you know what I mean, like it has a, it's more difficult, it's more

A: It's more of a struggle

CR₄: It's more of a struggle to prove yourself than for a man. I don't think my brother's had any of my problems. They might have a problem of their own, but I don't, I do not believe that they had what I had.

A: Anything else?

CR₄: Anything else? . . .

A: You mentioned some of them before, like the language, trying to explain yourself, that wall you said, those kinds of things, but anything else, or in the same line, if you want to add

CR₄: Um,

A: Feeling different, people making you feel different?

CR₄: People making me feel different? In what sense you mean?

A: Did you feel that the society make it obvious for you that you're different--you don't belong, things like that? I'm just guessing, that might not be the case. Just say no.

CR₄: No. No. I was different, yeah. That's, we've talked about it, you're different

A: Did that slow you down?

CR₄: Well, yeah, obviously, because you're different and you're struggling to become like, not, probably, like them, but you're adjusting yourself, so you have to be different to do this struggle anyway, so

A: Did you feel forced to change?

CR₄: I think you do, yeah. I mean, I didn't feel forced in the sense that, I wanted to, to adjust, probably not much, you know, but you have to, to be able to live here, you have to adjust, you have to change, you have to, otherwise you can't! It's impossible to go on without

A: Does that make you feel angry?

CR₄: Did that make me feel angry? What, the?

A: That you had to change.

CR₄: I had to change? No, I don't think so. No, it didn't make me angry. It was sometimes frustrating, but the change itself was a good change, I think. So it really didn't make me angry in the sense that, why should I do it?, why not them? No, it didn't, because I believed that I'm here, I've decided, nobody forced me, they didn't come after me to get me out of my country to bring me here, and I believe that it was my decision, and it was the only thing to do, you have to, it's like. . . No, I don't think I felt that way, no, because you choose it, I was the one who chose it, I wanted to come here, so, I knew there is difficulty and you have to change. Sometimes it really frightens you, sometimes it really frustrates you, sometimes you think you're not getting anywhere, but certainly I wasn't angry with *them*, in a sense that, why can't *you* change yourself, why do I have to change myself? No, I didn't. Because probably I believed in the change or, not even believing, it was one of the experiences I wanted, and I hoped to do, so to be able to do that you have to change. Not totally, you still can have your values and your, I mean, everybody is different from any other person, so you still can be different. And I know I am still different, but everybody is, everybody else is different from any other person.

A: Anything else that slowed it down?

CR₄: Yeah. I don't know if that's the same as what we talked about earlier or not, but I think what slowed it down was the family ties, the feeling of wanting to do something and not being able to do it because of your family background, which is your family, which, the tightness of your family. That was probably one other reason.

A: Anything else?

CR₄: Oh God, anything else?! Yeah, being frightened, a little bit, at least I have to say that, what everybody will think about you.

A: So your fear of being judged?

CR₄: Being judged, probably, yeah.

A: That's loaded. p

CR₄: That's loaded! Right now I don't mind it--if they want to judge me they can judge me, but before, probably, one of the things that's loaded was the fear of being judged, by your own Persian group. Yeah, it's as if you don't know if you change, you'll be any more accepted by them or not. Probably.

A: And the fear has gone now?

CR₄: Most of it.

A: Now you think that whatever you do you will be?

CR₄: I will be judged, but I don't mind it, it doesn't bother me.

A: And you don't mind not being accepted by . . . ?

CR₄: No.

A: Okay. I have a question. You had a choice, and to me it seems at the beginning you chose to be with your Persian friends. What made you make that choice, even though

CR₄: At the beginning?

A: Even though

CR₄: At the beginning because I didn't have any, I didn't know any other society, I didn't have a chance to see other people. I still feel sometimes like that now, but at least I have a little bit more chance to get to know some other people. But then, because I, I didn't have any, I didn't go to school, so I didn't get to know anybody else in a school, I didn't work, really, in the, you know, that's why

A: With Canadian friends, you say you don't have, you don't think you have any close Canadian friends

CR₄: No, I don't

A: What, that's a choice, too. What stops you from becoming very intimate with Canadians?

CR₄: It's not a choice

A: What is it?

CR₄: It just doesn't happen! It just doesn't happen. It's not that I don't want to, I think I feel very relaxed with them, very confident with them, very comfortable with them, but it just doesn't happen, I don't know why! It's probably the wall still is there? I don't know, it's

A: What do you think the wall is? Can you describe the wall?

CR₄: What is it?

A: What is it keeps you apart?

CR₄: Sometimes I feel they don't have any feelings. I'm sure they do, but they don't probably show it, they're not warm, they're not, once you get to know them I'm sure they're probably warmer than, it's just probably they're, getting to know it, getting to, do you know what I mean, like . . .

A: Have you gotten to know any one of them? Closely.

CR₄: God, no, I guess not! This is bad! Canadians.

A: You know, what you would call, I mean, I don't know your supervisor, if she lived most of her life here, if she considers herself a Canadian

CR₄: No, she doesn't

A: No

CR₄: She has been living here for probably over thirty years now

A: North American, basically

CR₄: Yeah, no, she's English. Let me think. No, I don't have any

A: Okay.

CR₄: I don't! I don't know why! But I don't have any.

A: You don't know why

CR₄: I don't know why. I can't think of any reason why, except for because they're not, probably, warm. But that is not a good reason why, I can't think of

A: . . .

CR₄: No, because they're not warm, but you don't know them, you have to give them a chance to prove that they are warm, right? I think it just doesn't happen, I don't know. It just does not happen. Where do you meet a Canadian? I mean, you're in the country, yeah, but, do you know what I mean, like,

A: Socially

CR₄: Socially, yeah. I don't know.

A: Anything else that slowed it down? Slowed the process.

CR₄: Slowed the process, God, what else? I can't think of anything

A: Okay. CR₄,

CR₄: I probably will remember two hours from now, I can't think of anything now.

A: That's okay. Look at yourself now, and look at yourself when you were back in Iran, before you came to Canada. And I'm sure you see a big change.

CR₄: Yeah.

A: Okay. In a sentence or two, tell me what has changed. Differences--in terms of your behaviours, attitudes . . . I'm trying to wrap it up

CR₄: Okay. What has changed? Personality, your way of thinking, okay, let's put it this way: when I see myself back home, I see a small kid with lots and lots of hopes and lots of imagination, lots of

A: Dreams?

CR₄: Dreams! Exactly. But when I see myself now, some of the dreams have happened, some of the hopes have happened, I still have other hopes, I still have other dreams, but they're more to reality than before, and I see a kid there, but I don't see the kid here any more.

A: What do you see?

CR₄: I think I have, a woman, I don't see

A: You've grown

CR₄: I've grown, yes.

A: And you think that it's mostly because you came to Canada--you had these experiences in Canada. Would you have grown as much if you had stayed in Iran?

CR₄: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. One of the reasons I am happy and I can never regret it, I don't want to go back is really because I had a lot of choices, I had a lot of choices. And I believe choices is what makes you, what builds you, do you know what I mean? Like if you have a life, without any choices, I don't think you can grow as much, whereas you have a choice, you have to stop and think--if you don't have any choice, you don't think, you're told in a way, and you're going in that direction

A: That's why you were comparing yourself to your mother.

CR₄: That's right. And I'm happy, and I'm lucky that I had the choice, and I could find my way, and choosing that choice, like, being able to choose it, had to do a lot with growing up and with maturity and, you know. I don't think I, if I was living in Iran I don't think I would have had

A: Had as many choices

CR₄: Yeah!

A: Great. Okay. This is very much related to what you just talked about, but I want you to, this study is about the meaning of immigration, the experience, the meaning, look at and tell me in one sentence or two, what was the meaning of immigration, what was the meaning of this immigration for CR₄, for you, how can you describe the experience, the meaning?

CR₄: Probably, what was the meaning? Like what do you mean, I had to give to be able to?

A: Whatever, you see, CR₄, what do you think was the purpose behind

immigration, for you? What was the meaning that it gave to your life? What was the purpose behind it? Why did things happen so that you came here . . . and you had to go through all this

CR₄: Why did it happen? Because it had to happen. Because I want it to happen.

A: Okay. And what was the outcome?

CR₄: To know myself. To grow.

A: Okay.

CR₄: To be me, and I guess I had to pay a little bit in a sense that I had to leave half of myself in my country. But, I finally found myself.

A: And your self is a woman who is?

CR₄: Who is independent, who is looking for a life, for a fulfillment in life, . . . that is, and to be able to go for it and, like this immigration, this chance that I have, I think, like this chance I have in this country now, that I can do it

A: To find that chance

CR₄: To find that chance

A: Opportunity

CR₄: Am I answering you?

A: Yes! Yes. So was it worth it?

CR₄: Oh yeah! Yes, it was. It was, really. I feel fine, I think there is a lot of things that I would have never knew if I didn't do it. There's a lot more that I have to do, or to learn, and thank God I am in a country that they will give me a chance to do it.

A: So you look back at the experience and you say "Good!"

CR₄: Yeah.

A: Great!

CR₄: When you think about it, it's still, you feel the hurt, the time that you were in pain, but it's worth every bit of it, I think it's worth it.

A: Okay. Do you still miss Iran?

CR₄: Afsaneh, how can you say that?! I miss Iran. Yeah, I miss Iran, but not in a sense that I regret it, no. But I miss it, obviously, I miss it. But I don't regret it.

A: How do you see Iran now? How would you

CR₄: I can't, I can't see it.

A: You can't see it.

CR₄: I can't see it.

A: When you think of Iran, what would you call it? In a few words.

CR₄: What would I call it? You want me to say whether I call it my country or my home or not? My home thirty years ago. Okay? Yeah, I would call it my home thirty years ago

A: Long time ago

CR₄: Long time ago

A: Okay, so this is your second home now.

CR₄: This is my home home

A: It's your home

CR₄: Yes

A: Okay. Good!

CR₄: I feel I am here now, it's amazing for my . . . but I hardly think of going back.

A: Thank you.

CR₄: That's it?

A: No, go ahead if you want.

CR₄: No, that's what I was saying, yeah. No, I feel it's home here, I really feel home. I, yeah, yeah.

A: Do you have any questions?

CR₄: Do I have any questions? No. Well, no. Do I have to ask all the questions that you asked me?

A: No! Not a quiz. I had a question. A last question.

CR₄: You still have a question! Okay!

A: How was this experience for you--this experience of talking, the experience of being interviewed for, it's about two and a half hours, now, two hours?

CR₄: It was good. I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it. It's very seldom that you get a chance to talk about these things. I mean, who can you talk about it? It's been a good experience, it's been, I enjoyed it. I finally got a chance to say it, out loud! And yes, I call this country home, and I'm happy to be here.

A: Great! Anything else?

CR₄: No! Thank you!

A: Thank you. It was great.

APPENDIX B

AGREEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

I hereby agree to participate in Afsaneh Sabet-Esfahani's research project titled: "The Meaning of Immigration, A Study of Iranian Women." I have received complete information about the study and have no objections to the researcher's audio-taping and transcribing the information disclosed in the interview.

I have been informed that complete confidentiality regarding the information will be maintained and that the tapes will be erased after being used. I have also been informed of my right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Date

Name of Co-researcher

Signature of Co-researcher