

**A METAPHOR FOR DISASTER:  
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF THE LEAKY CONDO CRISIS**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of a process of metaphor creation on the meaningful understanding of a significant past experience - that of owning and living in a condominium that had been damaged because of excessive rain and poor building practises and/or materials. This natural disaster has affected the Lower Mainland of British Columbia predominantly, and the media have called it "The Leaky Condo Crisis."

Theory states that metaphors can be helpful in changing how people feel toward, think about, and deal with their experiences. In this way metaphors can help people toward a more meaningful understanding of those experiences. In order to explore these ideas, a structured intervention was developed and called the MetaForm. It involves the creation of metaphors for an experience in order to explore the similarities and differences between the metaphor and the experience to derive meaning from or add meaning to the experience.

To this end, each of four co-researchers was interviewed twice. The Intervention Interview introduced the MetaForm. The participants related their condominium stories, then they created metaphors for various parts of those stories. These parts were named after the elements of drama: setting, mood, props, cast, plot and theme. When a co-researcher suggested a metaphor, it was elaborated into a full story or drama by that co-researcher and myself. The Inquiry Interview explored the MetaForm for evidence of meaningful understanding.

Participants reported that the MetaForm intervention helped them, to varying degrees and in different ways, to develop a more meaningful understanding of their experiences of owning and living in water-damaged condominiums.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Metaphors have been considered important aesthetic devices in literature since the time of Aristotle. They have been used to structure and create meaning in domains of knowledge in the arts and sciences. Among others, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assert that they are foundational to all cultures. Metaphors are becoming increasingly important in the realm of counselling psychology where 'life as story' has become a dominant metaphor in theory and practice.

Many of the metaphors used by English authors over the centuries are direct references to Greco-Roman mythology. These metaphors can give us the impression that there is another story, perhaps a hidden or unconscious story, running parallel and alluding to the literal story. This metaphorical story is separate yet often thematically connected to the literal story the authors are telling. There is the conscious literal world and the unconscious metaphorical world, as Lacan conceptualised metaphor. He believed that the unconscious was structured like a language (Joel, 1997).

Jung (1978) asserted that we all live according to dominant unconscious archetypes, inherited patterns, forms and images we bring to what we experience and use to deal with that experience. In turn, archetypes have been described as "metaphorical prototypes" (Mills & Crowley, 1986, cited in Muran & DiGiuseppe, 1990).

Myths can be viewed as metaphors for our lived experience as many scholars, including those in the field of psychology, have noted (e.g. Campbell, 1993). They can act as a form of bibliotherapy in that they can enhance meaning and suggest alternative ways of thinking, feeling and behaving for people today, as they did for people in the

past. Related to this, Feinstein and Krippner (1988) suggested ways we could change the myths we live by and find other more appropriate ones.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) detailed a theory of conceptual metaphors. They asserted that we live under the constraints of the unconscious cultural metaphors that inform our schemas or networks of associated ideas. "In therapy...much of self-understanding involves consciously recognising previously unconscious metaphors and how we live by them" (p.233). A connection clearly exists between mythic patterns, archetypes and schemas: all these concepts assume psychological structures that bring order and meaning to our experience, set up cultural parameters to our range of choices, and essentially guide how we live.

If meaning, the structural patterns that help us make sense of our experience, is somehow compromised by our experiences, we naturally try to put meaning back into our lives any way we can. Just such a problem with meaning can result from experiencing a natural disaster, and metaphors can help guide us in reorganising or re-patterning our understanding of experiences like disasters to restore a sense of meaningfulness to them.

To this end, I created and explored an intervention that developed and extended metaphors which my co-researchers or study participants used in talking about a significant past experience, so they could enhance, discover and/or create new or different meanings for that experience. I thought the metaphors might help them to think and feel differently about their experiences now and perhaps act differently if faced with a similar experience in the future. This would in essence help them to change dysfunctional myths around their experience to more functional and meaningful ones.

The metaphor that suggested itself as a conceptualisation for the intervention was “experience as story”. This conceptualisation would include the structural components of setting, character, mood, plot, and theme, but it would not include things like tools, machines and other devices or materials that might be essential to the story. An equally obvious metaphor suggested itself, “experience as drama”. This would allow the idea of “props”, which includes tools, etc. Using this metaphor I developed the MetaForm, an intervention that mapped out experience in terms of its dramatic elements, sought out metaphors for a given element, then applied that metaphor by analogy to other elements of the drama. In this way a metaphorical drama or story was elaborated.

I invited owners of water-damaged condos to be co-researchers or participants in my study because it is well known that disaster victims can experience a sense of meaninglessness and/or a loss of meaning as a result of their experiences. In the last few years the problem of rainwater damage to condominiums in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia has become a major concern for hundreds of condominium owners. The media has dubbed this situation ‘The Leaky Condo Crisis’. It resulted from a combination of the excessive rain the Lower Mainland receives on a regular basis, a lack of foresight in provincial legislation, lax building codes, unrealistic architectural designs, sloppy construction, poor materials and insurance coverage that excludes payment in just such situations.

Media coverage of the crisis has highlighted its environmental and financial effects, but the social, emotional and psychological effects of the crisis on condominium owners has not been adequately examined. The water damage has made these condominiums structurally unsound and in some cases toxic. It has set back or financially

ruined many condominium owners. The crisis has turned neighbour against neighbour. It has left condo owners feeling, among other things, betrayed, anxious, depressed, disgusted, and outraged. It has become a major stressor in the lives of many. People have been forced to move, missed work, had breakdowns and even threatened suicide.

In short, the leaky condo crisis is clearly akin to a natural disaster. As with other natural disasters the devastation was not readily foreseeable and a lack of planning and preventive measures perhaps made the devastation worse. For many condominium owners, the leaky condo crisis has shattered their ability to trust other people, shaken their sense of meaning in life, and destroyed for them one of the three necessities of life, shelter. But the water damage to condominiums is more insidious and prolonged than a finite event, like an earthquake or a hurricane, because its effects cannot always be seen and develop gradually over months, even years. Most condominium owners continue to live in homes they know are structurally unsound, even while repair work is undertaken. They cling to what is theirs, even as it rots around them.

It is with these victims of the leaky condo crisis, my co-researchers, that I explored the MetaForm, and I discovered that, like the mythological metaphors that have informed and influenced the meaning we draw from literature, the metaphors of my co-researchers informed and influenced the meanings they drew from or brought to their experiences as they made more sense of those experiences.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

This literature review looks at past research that relates to the completed study. The study explored how a process of metaphor creation affected the meaningful understanding of a significant past experience. Studies of metaphor usage in the context of counselling, whether quantitative or qualitative studies, have involved case studies for the most part. These studies form the basis of this literature review.

Earlier studies of metaphor tended to be more quantitative and behaviourally oriented (e.g. Pollio & Barlow, 1971). They focused on issues such as the frequency of metaphor use and where metaphors occurred in therapeutic sessions. They also looked at differences between client- and therapist-generated metaphors and how those metaphors were developed within the counselling relationship.

Later studies were more qualitative and cognitively oriented (e.g. Ingram, 1994). They focus more on the functions of metaphor, usually from the therapist's point of view. Most involved anecdotal evidence from clinical cases and suggested a variety of functions that metaphors can perform during the counselling process (e.g. Fox, 1989).

Very few studies have employed metaphor as a structured intervention. Fewer still have considered the client's point of view regarding their experience of working with metaphors and the cognitive, emotional and behavioural impact of those metaphors. Rasmussen and Angus' study (1996) was one of the exceptions. It included Inquiry Interviews where selected metaphors from audio-taped sessions were replayed for participants, who then commented on their thoughts and feelings in retrospect.

## Development and Usage

Patterns of development and usage were the focus of several case studies on metaphor. Metaphors were generally found to develop within networks or structures of important associations and themes (Angus & Rennie, 1989). Novel metaphors tended to encapsulate themes, while clichés or common metaphors represented the structural dimensions of a client's self-world. Sinai (1997) found that metaphors also helped to develop and structure recurrent themes in client experience. These findings support the idea that metaphors are central to the process of drawing meaning from lived experience.

It should be noted that Angus and Rennie (1989) discovered during their Inquiry Interviews with both therapists and clients that important ideas and feelings regarding the metaphors often went unexpressed during therapy. This suggested the need for a study that makes the development of the metaphors themselves more explicit in relation to the themes of therapy sessions, and one that explores the immediate reactions of clients and therapists to the metaphor work. This study addressed both of these issues.

Some findings indicated that novel metaphors tended to occur in proximity to or concurrently with therapeutic insights (e.g. Pollio & Barlow, 1971). That there is a direct relationship between metaphors and insight has already been suggested above – metaphors help to connect thematically related material, and it is a well-known fact that associative thinking can lead to insight.

Pollio and Barlow (1971) found that metaphors occurred at a rate of 3-6 per 100 words, and that novel metaphors tended to occur in extended bursts. In another study a cyclical pattern was observed where formulated novel metaphors were followed by insights, which led to the formulation of more novel metaphors, and so on (Barlow, J.M.,

Pollio, H.R. & Fine, H.J., 1977). Since these early studies, others have pointed out that metaphors lead to insight (e.g. Martin Cummings & Halberg, 1992), but the location of metaphors in therapy sessions and rates of production are now viewed as less relevance research topics.

Who introduces and/or develops the metaphors in therapy - the client or the therapist - is another question which appears to have lost favour recently. Some studies suggest that spontaneity and shared elaboration tended to facilitate metaphor development, particularly when therapists elaborated on client metaphors (e.g. Angus & Rennie, 1988). The present study included this practise in its methodology. McMullen (1985) compared two cases - one deemed successful and the other not. She found more metaphor production in the therapy sessions of the successful case, particularly more elaboration of client metaphors and more joint elaboration of the metaphors used by both therapist and client. Interestingly, she also found that in the unsuccessful case the client more often used and elaborated on therapist metaphors.

On the other hand, Amira (1982) found that the rate of production of novel figures or metaphors did not distinguish successful from unsuccessful cases. McMullen (1996) has since abandoned attempts to find a definite relationship between the use of metaphors and therapeutic outcome partly because there are too many other variables to consider in successful outcomes. This is particularly true when work with metaphors is not the central focus of but only incidental to therapy. The present study focused on metaphor work to explore its efficacy through a structured intervention.

Rasmussen and Angus (1996) looked at metaphor usage in a comparative study of Borderline and non-Borderline clients. They found Borderline clients had difficulty



exploring or expanding on metaphors used in their therapy sessions. There appeared to be no previously negotiated meanings which could provide continuity or commonality to the verbal exchange, whereas the non-Borderline participants intensified and maintained their involvement in the therapeutic process by working metaphorically. Rasmussen and Angus (1996) make a convincing case against using metaphors with Borderline clients. However, borderline and psychotic clients appear to use metaphors as a communication mode because metaphors allow distance from conscious awareness, but not necessarily because they reduce the distance between client and therapist. Checking the credibility and dependability of shared perspectives and attitudes towards a given metaphor would probably be very difficult, if not impossible with these types of clients.

Turning specifically to the effect of metaphors on the counselling relationship, in their case examples of prison inmates, Romig and Gruenke (1991) found that the concrete language of the streets most inmates were familiar with could be useful in metaphorical communication. They found considerable success in using metaphor with this reluctant and difficult population to build a therapeutic alliance; however, they mention having less success with severely depressed and psychotic inmates.

Fox (1989) and Sinai (1997) also found metaphors helped to develop a language for the dyad and strengthened the therapeutic alliance. Metaphors formed a unique language in the therapeutic relationship - in particular they expressed a special understanding between therapist and client, regarding the experience of psychological pain, social problems and their implications (Migliore, 1993). Metaphors fostered intimacy by highlighting common ground between people and making some aspects of experience more shareable. At the same time, metaphors could hide aspects of self that

made it difficult to engage in the therapeutic process, and this facilitated non-defensive and non-intrusive discussion of personal qualities and problems (Ulak & Cummings, 1997) and allowed for more process fluidity (Fox, 1989).

Ensuring that the metaphors used are commonly understood enhanced the therapeutic alliance and process. The therapist's understanding of client metaphors and communication of that understanding were vital to ensure there was common ground or "meaning conjunction" (Angus & Rennie, 1989). They recommended making the metaphor explicit because the client and therapist often have a different view of or attitude towards the metaphor. This would seem to be one of the keys as to whether or not metaphor work is helpful for any client, including the borderline, psychotic or severely depressed clients mentioned in the studies above.

Angus and Rennie (1989) found that therapists with preconceived notions as to the meaning of metaphors did not work as effectively with them. This suggests that therapists need to be flexible and open-minded in negotiating the meanings of metaphors, whether they are client- or therapist-generated. It also suggests that a therapist with a strongly singular theoretical orientation may not be as helpful to clients while working with metaphors as more eclectic therapists might be. Sinai (1997) reported feeling more confident as a therapist by focusing on metaphors rather than psycho-dynamic theory in her work with clients.

Another precaution in using metaphors is that clients from certain cultural backgrounds may not see metaphors where the therapist does. Sharing cultural knowledge concerning the metaphor is necessary (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Migliore, 1993). This highlights again the need to be explicit in dealing with metaphors and their

meanings. "One culture's metaphor is another's metonym"(Sandor, 1986, p.113). He uses the example of the Kwaqitl First Nations who do not see themselves as *like* salmon but identify themselves *as* salmon through their totem beliefs. In cases like this it may be necessary to construct the world to fit the metaphor rather than vice versa. This again calls for flexibility, open-mindedness and the checking and clarification of metaphors and their meanings.

Two final precautions in using metaphor are present in the literature. First of all, metaphors can easily lead to irrelevant analogies or unhelpful connotations (Kirkmayer, 1993), and second of all, therapists may overuse them when other therapeutic interventions would be more appropriate (Fox, 1989).

### **Meaningful Understanding**

The bulk of the literature on metaphor emphasises their therapeutic functions. In broad terms, they have been found to work on clients cognitively, affectively and behaviourally to reframe their views of their lives, to alter their feelings about their experiences, and to suggest plans and actions for the future.

### ***Perspectives on Experience***

Metaphors can provide new perspectives on experience. This, in turn, facilitates teaching and learning (e.g. Hill & Regan, 1991). The heuristic value of metaphors can be seen in the way they fill in gaps in domain knowledge using other domains, so that new properties of nature are brought into view and a more complete picture is formed (Allbritton, 1995). Metaphors can also link past and present thoughts, feelings,

behaviours and events for clients (Ulak & Cummings, 1997). In short, metaphors can reveal, represent and integrate themes of experience.

By reframing knowledge or experience, metaphors alter views of reality and allow for insight or the discovery of new knowledge to occur in the process (e.g. Amundson, 1997; Cirillo & Crider, 1995), and implicit meanings can be made explicit, shared and deepened, either directly or indirectly (e.g. Angus & Rennie, 1989). In psychodynamic terms, metaphors appeal to the unconscious and allow access to it in the same way that dreams do (Fox, 1989). Clients become aware of unconscious material, which allows for increased understanding and insight to occur.

Metaphors also have the ability to represent experience vividly and incisively. This is due in part to their flexibility and expressiveness in expanding descriptions, clarifying issues and ideas, and creating or communicating more holistic impressions of phenomena (e.g. Migliore, 1993). Inner and outer experiences and self-identity can be elaborated through symbols that represent role-relationship patterns and/or construct and reflect social realities (e.g. Angus & Rennie, 1988, 1989; Ulak & Cummings, 1997).

Distinctions have been drawn between types of metaphors and their particular functions. Ingram (1994) found that novel metaphors and clichés operated differently. Whereas clichés represented the self-world structure, novel metaphors encompassed and explained the thematic content of that structure. This is reminiscent of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of conceptual metaphors, which found metaphors to be fundamental to the structure of how we experience reality.

Rasmussen and Angus (1996) also looked at novel and frozen metaphors but found both had unique meanings for their study participants. Other studies (e.g.

McMullen, 1996) have found that regardless of whether or not a metaphor is considered a novelty or a cliché, what is important is the function it serves and/or the meaning it has for the client. The general consensus now appears to be that the novel/frozen distinction was not useful. How a given metaphor affects the way a client relates to his/her experience now appears to be a more relevant issue.

Metaphors can access unconscious levels of cognitive representation and stimulate images and associations linked to unconscious fantasies and memories (e.g. Rasmussen & Angus, 1996). These representations can reveal unspoken assumptions about a client's self-efficacy and outlook on life and challenge those assumptions along with the maladaptive thinking behind them (Muran & DiGiuseppe, 1990). They can be used to disrupt old thinking patterns and highlight efforts toward self-efficacy. Metaphors can also capture how therapy has progressed (Siegelman, 1990) and how situations have changed (Amundson, 1997). In this way they can provide concrete illustrations of progress or change for the client.

Metaphors can also serve the important function of integrating therapeutic material. Past and present and inner and outer realities can be explored and linked together (Fox, 1989; Stanley-Muchow, 1985). Metaphors also help to integrate thematic material relevant to the problem at hand, linking past feelings, fantasies, memories, events, etc. to present ones (e.g. Cirillo & Crider, 1995). In the process of integration, they can help clients see patterns or similarities across events or experiences in their lives.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and others (e.g. Kirkmayer, 1993) assert that metaphors can organise entire system of concepts with respect to each other at various levels of experience. Sarbin (1985, cited in Cheston, 1995) believes that in novel

situations with no existing class or category of explanation, partial similarities may be found through metaphors in order to assimilate or make sense of the novel situation. In other words, not only do metaphors allow clients to link concepts but also to create new concepts to link existing ones. Ulak and Cummings' (1997) found the integration of therapeutic content was accomplished in part because metaphors allowed clients to become the focal point of the session material, which allowed them to explore alternative ideas and behaviours.

#### *Attitudes toward Experience*

Metaphors can also be emotionally evocative when used in therapy (e.g. Rule, 1983). This is generally achieved by either distancing clients from their emotions or by helping them to more fully experience their emotions in the moment. Martin, Cummings and Hallberg (1992) assert that clients usually need not a better logical, but a better emotional understanding of their situation. Metaphors can provide that understanding because they work more intuitively than logically. They express the inexpressible by bridging the discrepancy between feeling and words and making feelings concrete entities (McMullen, 1985). They can also condense and enhance emotional awareness by revealing our bodily experience (Kirkmayer, 1993; Seligman, 1990). Metaphors do this because they bridge bodily and symbolic levels of experience, and by evoking sensory and affective associations, they can produce shifts in attitudes or feelings (e.g. Cirillo & Crider, 1995).

Myers (1998) examines bibliotherapy, a technique in which clients experience metaphors through comparing their lives to those of characters in a novel or a movie.

Bibliotherapy is considered the creation and validation of client metaphors. Clients consume or create literature (or film) to enhance their emotional understanding of their problems. The literature is intended to motivate them to explore alternative reactions to what they experience, and the alternative feelings and behaviours that arise from this exploration can, in turn, be explored.

Several researchers have found that achieving some distance from emotions can enhance emotional awareness. Metaphors can externalise feelings and problems that are difficult to articulate, allowing the client the necessary distance in order to view problems more objectively (e.g. Stanley-Muchow, 1985). Metaphors can also be viewed as containers for overwhelming feelings, which again allow clients respite from difficult feelings (Cox & Theilgaard, 1987, cited in Sinai, 1997). Lakoff & Johnson (1980) assert that metaphors allow the distillation and expression of desire without detachment from it.

### *Implications for Action*

Metaphors can aid in the process of problem solving in several ways (e.g. Rule, 1983). They can help in problem-setting by making what is familiar strange, and what is strange familiar. This process allows us to view the metaphor's dynamics in relation to the problem's dynamics from "strange" or "familiar" angles (McMullen, 1985). This process can also develop client creativity and flexibility in solving problems.

As well, metaphors can represent concisely the complex associations of meanings that structure self-world and self-object relationships both intrapsychically and interpersonally (e.g. Ingram, 1994). This representation can aid in locating and solving problems. The ability of metaphors to highlight certain properties or aspects of

knowledge can also aid in the discovery of problem areas. Facilitation and clarification of problems and the development of goals are other functions of metaphors in the realm of problem-solving (e.g. Martin, Cummings & Halberg, 1992). Finally, metaphors can motivate us to explore problems by piquing our curiosity or reinforcing what has already been said with regard to a problem (Rule, 1983).

### **Metaphors and Methodologies**

The research literature on metaphor in the context of counselling has almost exclusively involved case studies. Several studies used raters who rated metaphors as novel or frozen (e.g. Pollio & Barlow, 1971). However, the validity/efficacy of the Training Manual used to rate metaphors was not reported by Barlow, Kerlin and Pollio (1971, cited in Pollio & Barlow, 1971 and others). Other studies rated other things: insights (Barlow, Pollio & Fine, 1977), experiencing levels (Ulak & Cummings, 1997), and themes (Pollio & Barlow, 1971; Barlow, Pollio & Fine, 1977). The dependability of all these rated items could have been enhanced by member checks, something that was included in the present study's methodology.

The prior relationship of therapist and client was an important limitation of some studies and could have contaminated their results in several cases (e.g. Barlow & Pollio, 1971; Angus & Rennie, 1989). A potential conflict of interest, where the therapist was also the researcher, is present in the Ulak and Cummings study (1997) which, in addition to this criticism, would have had better validity if a control group had been used. The study done involved clients (co-researchers) who had no prior relationship with the therapist, and the conflict of interest mentioned above was dealt with to some extent by



member checks and the use of an Independent Judge who reviewed the findings. In addition to this, the focus of the study was the intervention itself, so it was hoped that the dominant researcher role limited the therapist role significantly.

The methodologies used in the studies mentioned are tentative steps toward developing sound methodologies for the study of metaphor in counselling. There are problems. The small sample sizes in all but one quantitative study (McGhee, 1993) and volunteer bias limit their potential validity and/or applicability to other cases, resulting in very low statistical power.

There are also problems in how researchers have conceptualised metaphors, as mentioned earlier. For example, Barlow, Pollio and Fine (1977) and others have drawn a distinction between novel metaphors and frozen metaphors (clichés), believing that only novel metaphors have therapeutic value. This has been disputed by other researchers (e.g. Rasmussen & Angus, 1996), and conceptual metaphors, which are commonplace, presumably would not be included in studies where the focus is on novel metaphors. Yet conceptual metaphors have also proven valuable in working therapeutically with metaphors (e.g. Wickman, Daniels, White & Fesmire, 1999). It should be noted that Rasmussen and Angus (1996) limited their exploration of metaphors in a different way. They only included metaphors in their study that were used by both client and therapist, as if both parties needed to use it in order for it to be considered as valid.

### **Structured Interventions**

Metaphors were used as structured interventions in several studies. It has been suggested that those metaphors with strong symbolic meaning for clients, those that fit

their frames of reference, and those clients have already used in discussion may be best to focus on, explore and develop (e.g. Romig & Gruenke, 1991).

Muran & DiGiuseppe (1990) asserted that in using metaphors intentionally, the concept to be taught must be defined clearly. The client's language provides clues to domains that have been mastered. An analogue between the domain and the concept can then be developed. They further stated that metaphors can be rehearsed in difficult situations, as with Meichenbaum's self-statements from Cognitive-Behavioural Modification or the conditioning of imagery in Wolpe's Systematic Desensitisation.

Dilts (1990, cited in Bowman, 1992) suggested the therapist create combinations of the valued context and the problem situation using metaphor. This would include five levels of problem areas: identity (who), beliefs-values (why), capabilities (how), behaviour (what), and environment (where, when). Interventions using metaphor could be made at whatever level(s) at which a client is having difficulty. It is assumed that the metaphor will provide creative alternatives for solving the problem.

Again, bibliotherapy can provide another systematic use of metaphor in therapy (Myers, 1998). Clients consume or create literature to enhance their emotional and cognitive understanding of problems. Clients benefit from the purposeful nature of the reading, find similarities between the character's life and their lives, and take the opportunity to escape into another world. Bibliotherapy can provide metaphors for life experiences that help clients verbalise their thoughts and feelings and learn new ways to cope with problems (Pardeck, 1993, cited in Myers, 1998).

Erickson (1982) created stories based on personal life experiences of home, school and work that would communicate with the conscious and unconscious minds.

The denotative story would go into the conscious mind, while the connotative story would go into the unconscious mind. Others have since disagreed with this method, stating that the meanings of metaphors need to be made explicit and shared (e.g. Muran and DiGiuseppe, 1990). The therapist cannot assume that the client is receiving the intended message or that the message is being received in the way it was intended.

Adams and Chadbourne (1982) suggested using metaphors as a means of accessing a client's history, as a reframing device to help a client see reality, as a way of preparing a client for self-concept change, and as an adjunct to a behavioural program (e.g. developing metaphors that creates aversions to undesirable behaviour).

Metaphors are popular in family therapy. In particular, the pie metaphor has many analogous properties that connect to concepts in family therapy (Rule, 1983). Rule suggested bringing up these properties in therapy during relevant discussions. For example, in talking about who is most responsible for the family problem, discussion could begin by deciding how big a piece of the pie each family member would get.

Recently, Carmichael (2000) used a metaphorical group intervention based on the Wizard of Oz with disaster survivors. Elements of the story were used to facilitate discussion of feelings and ideas around a tornado that hit a small American community. Carmichael feels that metaphors are particularly useful in normalising emotions reactions to disasters, remembering details of events, and teaching survivors about what they may be experiencing in the aftermath of a disaster.

## Summary

Studies of metaphor have examined how often metaphors are used, who uses

them, how they are used, and what functions they serve. The functions of metaphor were found to be primarily those of facilitating cognitive and emotional change. They helped to reframe and allow for insight into experience. Their emotional impact could either connect clients with their emotions more directly or allow them an indirect connection, which would help them to view their experience more objectively. Although the problem-solving capacity of metaphors is clear in the theory, there is little information about the practical use of metaphors in problem-solving or how they facilitate behavioural change.

Very few studies have used structured interventions involving metaphor, and fewer studies have looked at how clients experience metaphors. None have looked at the impact of metaphors *and* the metaphor creation process from the client's perspective. This study addressed these issues to some degree.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore how an intervention involving the creation of metaphors, the MetaForm, affected the meaningful understanding of a significant past experience. The experience was that of owning and living in a water-damaged condominium.

### Rationale

Coming to a meaningful understanding of an experience could involve many variables, and I had little control over those variables. The focus for the research was a contemporary phenomenon in a real life context (the experience of owning and living in a water-damaged condominium), where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context were not clear. The MetaForm had no predetermined set of outcomes: clients and therapists seem to develop their own unique metaphors (Hill & Regan, 1991) that will naturally have unique uses and interpretations for each of them. For all these reasons, the exploratory case study was the method of choice for this research (Yin, 1984).

Since metaphors are pervasive in spoken language, and spoken language is the most common intervention in counselling practise (Muran & DiGiuseppe, 1990), direct study of the roles of metaphor in counselling is essential. Few studies have done this to date, even though metaphors have proven effective in facilitating the meaningful understanding of human experience (e.g. Fox, 1989) and play an important role in human development (e.g. Stanley-Muchow, 1985). Several studies have looked at the benefits of

using metaphors in counselling, but very few (e.g. Adams & Chadbourne, 1982) have focused on interventions that use metaphors in a deliberate and structured manner to explore those benefits more fully. This study was designed to address that lack.

It involved the use of the MetaForm in multiple case studies. The MetaForm was tested with co-researchers who had been directly affected by the problem of water-damaged condominium complexes in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The names of co-researchers were changed and identifying information eliminated according to their wishes. This was necessary because co-researcher participation in the study could affect their relationships with their neighbours and strata councils, their property and home resale values, and their ability to sell their homes.

### **Procedural Overview**

1. Initial contact with co-researchers
  - Orient co-researcher to the study
  - Obtain informed consent
2. Intervention Interview
  - Get co-researcher's case history
  - Administer the MetaForm
  - Get feedback on the MetaForm
  - Transcribe the Intervention Interview
3. Inquiry Interview
  - Get feedback on the MetaForm
  - Transcribe the Inquiry Interview
4. Data analysis
  - Analyse the intervention effects/outcomes for each case
  - Check analysis with that co-researcher and Independent Judge
  - Analyse the intervention effects/outcomes across cases
  - Check the analyses with the Independent Judge

## **1. Initial Contact with Co-researchers**

After my study was approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of British Columbia, I recruited co-researchers through advertisements on the internet and in appropriate newspapers and/or magazines. I set up face-to-face meetings with potential co-researchers by phone. Where this was successful, we met in their homes or at the university. I brought a copy of my research proposal and a Consent Form (see Appendix) for their perusal. We discussed the rationale and procedures of my research as outlined in the research proposal, the ethical parameters I would be working under as outlined in the Consent Form, and what would be required of the co-researchers in terms of time and energy. Where a co-researcher was agreeable to these conditions, we decided on a date for the Intervention Interview or began it immediately.

## **2. Intervention Interview**

There were two main points of data collection: the Intervention Interview and the Inquiry Interview. Both were audio-taped. During the Intervention Interview co-researcher related their condo experiences and the MetaForm was administered. Co-researchers were asked questions to draw out the dramatic elements of their experiences, i.e. setting, props, mood, cast, plot and theme. Brief notes concerning these elements were written into the MetaForm under the "Experience" column (see Fig. 1 below).

### Sample Questions to Elaborate the Drama

Where and when did the major events take place?  
 What feelings did you have about owning/living in a leaky condo?  
 Who were the important players involved in the problem?  
 What moments stand out for you in the course of events?  
 How did you view the problem over the course of its existence?

*Figure 1. The MetaForm*

Experience	Metaphor 1	Metaphor 2	Metaphor 3
Setting			
Props			
Mood			
Cast			
Plot			
Theme			

Using the dramatic elements of their experiences, I encouraged co-researchers to associate/compare their experiences to other domains of their knowledge/experience, e.g. “The rotten wood looked like the dead logs you see in the forest.” The wood here would be considered a “prop” in the drama. Once a reasonable number of comparisons had been elicited, the co-researchers chose the three that seem most appropriate. These choices were then developed and/or extended. For the example of the rotten wood “prop”, the forest could have been the “setting”. The “mood” might have been one of gloominess or suspense. The “cast” might have included animals, e.g. bears (the government – big, slow and intimidating) or cougars (the construction companies – greedy and fly-by-night), and so on. The metaphors were then viewed reflexively in order to determine their effects/outcomes on the co-researchers’ understanding of their experiences.



Questions to Guide Reflections on the MetaForm

How well does it fit your experience?  
What does it say regarding how you felt about the experience?  
What does it tell you about how you understood it?  
What does it say about how you dealt with your experience?

How has the metaphor changed how you view the experience?  
How has it changed your feelings about the experience?  
What alternate courses of action does the metaphor present?  
How you will deal with the experience/remember it from now on?

How did you feel about the process of developing the metaphor?  
What was going through your mind as we worked on it?  
What changes would you make to the metaphor now?  
Do other metaphors suggest themselves to you now?

The MetaForm was copied by hand or photocopied immediately after each interview for that co-researcher. The co-researchers then reviewed their MetaForms over the following week and could call me if they had any questions. I was be the only one with access to my phone so they could also leave a message. I also checked to see if I could leave confidential messages for them. The list of questions to guide reflections on the MetaForm (above) were given to co-researchers so they could reflect on their metaphors and the metaphor creation process. This was done to ensure the dependability of the data: I got their feedback on the outcomes/effects of the MetaForm immediately after its use, during the intervening week, and in the Inquiry Interview.

**3. Inquiry Interview**

The Inquiry Interview was conducted about one week after the Intervention Interview. It involved exploring co-researcher reflections on the MetaForm re content and process to determine its effects/outcomes. Reflections were explored in detail.

#### 4. Data Analysis

The data analysis of individual cases started immediately after the Intervention Interview. It was checked by the respective co-researchers and by an Independent Judge. This was done to ensure that I had correctly recorded each co-researcher's case history and the metaphors associated with that case history. It was also done to check my interpretations and elicit others from the co-researchers and the Independent Judge in order to add credibility to or call into question my interpretations. However, only the Independent Judge gave me feedback on my interpretations in the cross-case data analysis because, apart from me, only this person studied all four cases.

Participant-observer notes were taken as soon as possible after the Intervention and Inquiry Interviews. They were also recorded as I reviewed the interview tapes. Participant-observer notes included my impressions of the effects of the metaphors and the metaphor-creation process on co-researchers and personal feelings and ideas that arise from the interviews. Relevant accessible documents were reviewed during the course of the research. They included newspaper clippings, photographs, minutes of strata meetings, reports, letters, etc. that my co-researchers and I collected. All audio-tapes, documents and written information was destroyed after storage in a computer hard drive. Only I have access to the hard drive through a personal pin code.

I triangulated the data provided by the interviews, the co-researchers' written reflections, my participant-observer notes, the Independent Judge's feedback and the documentation to strengthen the credibility of my findings. My focus was on the common and unique benefits and/or outcomes of using the MetaForm. There was a high degree of agreement among the researcher, co-researchers and the Independent Judge.

## CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES

The four case studies involved in this research have been arranged here in chronological order. The eight interviews involved were conducted between 13 June 2000 and 31 July 2000. Participants or subjects have been called 'co-researchers' in the cross-case analysis to reflect more accurately their role in the study. Their actual words have been put in double quotation marks. Some of their statements have been rearranged and/or edited for clarity. I have tried to preserve the original flavour of their individual speaking styles, only adding to or explaining their statements at times for the sake of clarity. These additions are easily identifiable because they are enclosed in brackets.

I have also identified some of the comments I received from the Independent Judge throughout the case content and process analyses. In some instances I have identified information and/or interpretations given by co-researchers or myself and in some instances I have not attributed information and/or interpretations; however, all of the individual case analyses were reviewed by that particular co-researcher. Interpretations were either added, changed or left to stand 'as is'.

### **CASE 1: SHERRY**

“Home is a haven. It’s a place where you’re safe, and you can expose your vulnerabilities. It’s warm. It’s a place where you’re loved despite your malformations. It’s where you keep your treasure. It’s a place where you invite your friends and share gifts of friendship, joy and laughter, crying... Whatever happens, it needs to be a warm and inviting place.”

#### **THE EXPERIENCE**

Sherry is a 40-year-old white African immigrant. She is the married mother of a pre-school boy and currently works as a counsellor. Sherry came to Canada six years ago, after working as a nurse and attending university in Africa. She bought her condominium in 1996. It is located in a very large complex in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. She has so far paid \$27,500 for repair work.

Her neighbourhood is composed of suburban houses and condominium complexes. She described it as being on the border between “the mega-wealthy street of dreams” with its expensive mansions and the co-op housing where many welfare recipients live. When she first moved into her complex there was “a holiday atmosphere, warm, friendly, inviting...the gardens were beautiful...a feel of community, like two arms coming together holding the central court.”

The first leak in her complex was discovered in the latter half of 1996. When the repair work began, the scaffolding went up. “It was like being in prison. There was no privacy. We had to take down our blinds. It was like being besieged. It seemed to go on

for ages because we were involved in two phases of the reconstruction.” All leaks were finally repaired in 2000, although there is still minor work being done.

The dominant feeling regarding the problem was one of powerlessness because there seemed to be no resolution to the problem. Sherry also felt what she described as “fierce murderous anger” toward the developer, along with frustration because it was hard for her to do something as one person. She was astonished that Canadian law allows buildings like hers to be built. “We are supposedly in a first-world civilised country - you’ve got more recourse in Africa for things like this.” She also felt a sense of alienation, like “being in the wrong movie,” as she said.

Various props were important in Sherry’s condo experience. She provided the repair workers with a written report on the internal damage to her condo. The residents put up a banner at the entrance to their complex. Sherry also put a notice in her car window: “[Developer’s name] developed my leaky condo.” An air mattress was important because “we camped out for three months in my son’s room while repairs were being done.” She also mentioned that roller-blading helped her put her energy into something other than worrying about her home and reduced her stress level.

The main people involved in the problem were Sherry, her husband and son, the developer, the architect, city engineers, a repair engineer, the government, the strata council, the property managers, and neighbours. She particularly mentioned her immediate neighbours, “a small community” that supported each other with updates on the repairs and discussions of how the repairs were affecting them.

The first sign of trouble was a small leak in the building, which the developer quickly and quietly repaired. When more problems appeared, he refused to pay. Sherry

felt that “he wanted to be absolved of all blame in the future.” When the extent of the damage was finally realised, there were extraordinary meetings of the strata council - wrangling over choices, the advice of engineers, and the final decision based on the engineers’ advice. Payments for reconstruction “came in waves every six months” and were announced at the extraordinary meetings.

While repairs were being done, Sherry escaped on holiday twice with her family, and there was also a positive change in the strata council during this time. A more helpful and open council was installed. Sherry also began making plans for redecorating her bedroom during the eight months while repairs were being done, so she would have something to look forward to when the repair work was finally finished.

She termed the last phase of the problem “replenishment,” and she elaborated: “We were able to bring things out of storage and get our own space back...Every day is a celebration – you can move in other rooms now and go outside [onto their patio].”

Sherry felt the main theme of her leaky condo experience was survival. “I had to beat the odds in taking on a mess of institutions...I’m an immigrant...I come to the land of milk and honey, and it kicks me in the teeth.” The problem was disillusioning, but it also had some positive effects. It reinforced for Sherry that “money is only money” and that there are more important things in life like health and loving caring relationships. The experience reinforced these priorities. She also said, “I found small ways to be powerful.” She had involved herself in a protest that attracted media attention and put the notice in her car window to “name names” regarding her condo problem. Sherry felt ‘misapprehension’ was another theme. She had bought the home thinking it would be sound, but this expectation was not met.

## **METAPHOR 1: THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY**

This metaphor took place in "...The Land of Milk and Honey. That's Canada! It's la la land. The dream place of all dream places. Where everybody wants to go. Truth and justice prevail (laughter). Where you can find the American Dream without hurting other people." The time was an imaginary or possible future, and there was a holiday atmosphere. "It's fun, laughter, warm, friendly." Things you would find in the land of milk and honey were sunshine, balls, games to play, wine, good food, and animals that like people. The people were friendly and honest. What basically happened there was: "You come. You eat. You get fat. You have fun...You eat outside next to swimming pools." Sherry did not feel this metaphor had a theme, unless it was escape into a wish.

### **Content Analysis**

This metaphor highlighted for Sherry the differences between the reality and the dream of Canada through several ironies. She imagined Canada to be a "just" country, but instead she has paid for damage to her condo, which was not her fault. She characterised Canada as a dream place, but her condo experience has been a rude awakening. Canada is "The Land of Milk and Honey, but then you get kicked in the teeth." The sensory impact of this metaphor fully embodied the feelings of betrayal and hurt Sherry felt regarding her leaky condo problem. Finally, "The American Dream without hurting people," suggested a place where equality, democracy and material prosperity are possible, but Sherry *has* been hurt emotionally and financially by the irresponsibility and unresponsiveness of Canadian business and bureaucracy. The ironies of the metaphor reconfirmed for Sherry her decision never to own another home. "One

usually gets a condo and then moves up a little. It just ain't going to happen. We'll be renters probably."

There was, however, also a positive side to the ironies of the metaphor. Sherry felt they allowed her to view her situation with humour: "...so that's what you wished for [the land of milk and honey] and what you got was something very different [a leaky condo]. So it's like a sardonic thing. I dealt with things with humour." The metaphor thereby also provided some distance from the negative emotions that dominated Sherry's view of her experience because it contrasted so dramatically with her experience.

Along with the ironies inherent in the metaphor, it clearly brought Sherry into contact with and illustrated the feelings of disillusionment and disappointment she felt throughout her leaky condo experience. "Maybe you catch snippets of the dream place in the real place. But they're only snippets...[You get] brought down to reality, out of the dream world into - my God, life is just the same here as it is anywhere else."

Sherry also felt The Land of Milk and Honey was a way to avoid the problem. "It's not particularly useful except to let you know what you want. The leaky condo colours [the dream], even the good times that you have. Even when we went on holiday last year, we talked about it the whole time - the fact that we were spending money that we didn't have. So it's hard to find the dream place. It's hard to touch it."

The metaphor reinforced this truth for Sherry - that life is problematic wherever you go. But because the metaphor set up a vision of the future from the perspective of the past (her life in Africa), she said it also gave her hope for the future. And since it was a desirable vision, the metaphor may also act as a motivation toward realising that vision. The fact that Sherry did not wish to change the metaphor in any way during the Inquiry



Interview provided further evidence of its desirability and appropriateness. "Metaphor one stands as it is," she said.

During the Inquiry Interview she introduced another metaphor for the sense of alienation she felt around her experience – "...being in the wrong movie. You thought you were in one thing, and you're in another. You thought you were making a love story and suddenly you're in a porno movie. The love story would be you're in your home and you're happy in it, and actually it's far more obscene than that. Somebody's been breaking down the walls undercover." The Independent Judge felt that this metaphor of the love story/porno movie was more complete than The Land of Milk and Honey because it included the aspects of disillusionment and betrayal.

In the Intervention Interview Sherry disclosed that she had been the victim of sexual and physical abuse. This suggested that the porno movie metaphor may have bridged her experiences at a deeper level of meaning. The physical violation of her body could be linked to the physical violation of her home by water damage, where "breaking down the walls" could represent rape from a Freudian perspective. Both stories spoke to a violation of privacy where she was objectified by an unwelcome audience (the repairmen or the moviegoers). This linked to the Sleeping Beauty metaphor (see below) where Sherry mentioned how she was under the scrutiny of the condominium repairmen because she had to take the blinds off the windows for three months.

### **Process Analysis**

Sherry also felt the metaphor was an opportunity to escape from the real experience. She could go into her imagination and envision something completely

different from what she was living with. "I was more trying not to notice anything and just let it happen. Now that we have stopped, I notice that it's a throwback to Africa. [In Africa] there's sun and people are friendlier. I guess that's why we got this condo because it was somehow more home-like than other places. Standard Vancouver architecture - it doesn't leak, but it doesn't appeal." The metaphor here allowed her to make sense of her motivation in buying her particular condominium, which was clearly a bridge to a cherished part of her past.

She went on to say, "I work in metaphor. I'm very comfortable with it, and I love language, and I love things that happen around language. It's interesting. I was a little bit startled when the abuse thing came up, and I was thinking, *Okay that's where that came from*. That has more to do with you. [I told her I had worked with survivors of sexual abuse]. I like to play with those things so it was kind of fun, yeah, and then make meaning of it I guess."

Sherry engaged willingly in the imaginative play of metaphor making. She appeared to get lost periodically in the pleasant memories and images she associated with this metaphor, judging from the inward look in her eyes. It reminded me of the way some people dissociate from the outer world when they recall memories. Her comments about me suggested that the interviewer and what the interviewer says can affect what metaphors are created or selected in the moment.

### **My Process**

I was initially a little discouraged because this was my first case and first metaphor analysis, and it didn't yield a very detailed metaphor. However, as we

proceeded with the analysis it became clear how much this metaphor connected with Sherry, her condo experience, and also her experience of Canada. I was gratified to see the effect the metaphor and its analysis had on her in terms of engagement in the meaning making process. I also became very engaged in the process.

## **METAPHOR 2: THE BOYFRIEND IN AFRICA**

Sherry recalled an incident from her past as her second metaphor. It took place in her boyfriend's apartment in Africa. The year was 1980. She recalled "being pushed into a corner. It could be any corner anywhere. Just sitting here talking to you I'm thinking of one time when I tried to break up with a boyfriend, and he locked me in a room."

Sherry vividly remembered her fear, terror, shock and "anger because I am powerless. The anger part - that really sticks out for me. Being pushed into the corner just goes with the powerlessness. Being besieged and survival go together." Sherry would later pick up these themes of being besieged and survival in the third metaphor, *Sleeping Beauty*, linking this metaphor with her experiences in Africa and in Canada and thereby expanding the network of meaning.

The incident involved Sherry, her boyfriend, a glass of water, a knife, Sherry's fists and the key to the front door of his apartment. "I wanted to break up with him. He locked me up in a room. He threw the knife and a glass of water at me. So I dodged the knife. Then I think he got a fright that he'd thrown a knife at me. I managed to talk to him and get him to give me the keys. While I was unlocking the door he tried to stop me, but I managed to get out." Sherry had fought him off with her fists in order to escape.

She felt the major theme of this metaphor was survival. "When the odds are against you, you can still get out. You can still survive - save yourself. I'm just a major major survivor of many things."

### **Content Analysis**

This metaphor highlighted for Sherry her feelings about her condo experience, and, like the first metaphor, she noted this one was an escape, but a different kind of escape - a real escape from a real situation. She felt the metaphor presented "a very clear picture" of her real predicament regarding the condominium. Wanting to leave her boyfriend, yet needing to appease him enough to get his apartment keys, compares with wanting to sell her condo but not being able to do so. In this way the metaphor highlighted the similar feelings she has towards the boyfriend and the developer - the anger at being under their control. "The feelings are exact. If you ask me how I feel about this man, the developer, I could kill him."

The metaphor also illustrated her coping skills. "He [the boyfriend] seemed to shrink, and I managed to talk him into handing over the keys for five seconds. He threw them at me, and then he chased me and fought me for them, but I had them in the door. I got out." Sherry felt her "super cool" rage and her negotiating skills served as protective measures in situations like this. She said she uses those skills instinctively, but the metaphor work made her more conscious of how she uses them.

Sherry felt she needed to react defensively in both situations. Perhaps the metaphor served as a good defence by sublimating or re-channelling overwhelming or socially unacceptable emotions - the "fierce murderous anger" she felt toward the

boyfriend and the developer of her condominium complex. Perhaps the metaphor also validated her anger.

Being locked in a room by her boyfriend and being forced to pay for condo repairs were identified as examples of the misuse of power. Part of that misuse of power was deceit. "You think something is one thing and it's another. I thought this person [the boyfriend] really cared about me, and then they try to hurt me. I thought I was coming to a place [Canada] where at least the laws were enforceable, then to discover that the laws are basically flawed. I had these experiences [e.g. the experience with her boyfriend] to draw on, so I know that I can survive some strange odds." Sherry discovered connections between the metaphor and her condo experience and validated her power, taking an optimistic view of her ability to deal with her condo problem.

Although they were not discussed during the interviews due to time restrictions, other connections between the experience and the metaphors could be drawn. Having a glass of water and a knife thrown at her could symbolise the sense of personal violation Sherry felt at having her privacy invaded by the condominium repairmen. The Independent Judge felt the glass of water and the knife incidents were assaults rather than invasions of privacy. I agree; however, I was not comparing the actions but rather the feelings that could result from the actions. A sense of personal violation could be common to physical assault and invasion of privacy. Moving one step further, a connection could also be drawn between the indignities of being dowsed with a glass of water and the invasion of rainwater into her condominium complex.

Despite the indignities she suffered, Sherry said, "I found ways to be powerful where I had to be. So when I needed to speak to the property manager to pay the fees the

way that I could pay the fees, I did it. When I wanted to be mad at the developer in a public way, and the poster got taken down from the front of the condominium, I stuck it up in my car window. I *will* find a way to express my own power even if other people aren't going to let me."

### Process Analysis

Referring to the process of developing this metaphor, Sherry said, "It was uncomfortable but applicable, so it's okay. It's interesting that how far back it kind of relates [back to her life in Africa], but it also makes sense that that would be where I get my coping skills from. If you survive lots of things, you have lots of skills to cope with things. Sherry felt her "super cool" rage and her negotiating skills served as protective measures in situations like this. She said she uses those skills instinctively, but the metaphor made her more conscious of how she uses them. The Independent Judge also noted the when Sherry became enraged, her power emerged.

As far as changing this metaphor, Sherry felt it would not be as graphic. She also said, "I think if you hadn't worked with people who'd been abused, you wouldn't have got an abuse story. You would have got something closer to war imagery. I thought, *Well, he knows what happens to people*. The metaphor is created in the context of you and I."

Sherry began to make connections between her leaky condo experience and her experience with The Boyfriend in Africa metaphor during the Intervention Interview. This signalled that she had begun, cognitively, to move back and forth between her leaky condo experience and this metaphor, integrating the two, more so than during the development of The Land of Milk and Honey metaphor. The Independent Judge felt this

was because The Land of Milk and Honey metaphor was not as appropriate as the love story/porno movie metaphor which Sherry used while discussing the main metaphor.

Sherry also began to make connections *between metaphors* later during the Inquiry Interview, e.g. “I managed to get out. There’s the “dodger and weaver” again [referring to her self-description in the Sleeping Beauty metaphor].” I also think that going back and forth cognitively between the metaphor and the experience may have alleviated some of the painful memories of her boyfriend.

### **My Process**

I empathised with Sherry and the difficulty she had in working with this metaphor, which involved a real and painful experience from her past. I also felt a sense of safety for her and myself in that we had the condo experience to fall back on if the memories became too intense. This was a surprising reverse on what I had expected – that the metaphors might buffer the co-researchers from the pain they experienced at remembering their condo experiences.

### **METAPHOR 3: SLEEPING BEAUTY**

Sherry chose the story of Sleeping Beauty as her third metaphor. She described the setting as “my ivory tower, my castle in a place looking out. The castle would be up on a hill [and made of] brick, with turrets...from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century.” She described the mood of the place as “serene, until I’m besieged. It’s mute, quiet and light.” There was a spinning wheel on which she wove chains, and there were bars on the windows. Sleeping Beauty (Sherry) was there, along with servants, questioners, and besiegers. She was

inside the castle searching for a way out because “what used to be a nice place isn’t there anymore because there are too many people outside the castle trying to hurt her.”

“Sleeping Beauty is using the spinning wheel, but she’s not being pricked by it.” Still, she was sleeping, but “sleeping in the living sense” – chains weighed her down, but she could move around. “She’s not talking to anyone. There are servants who bring food and water, and people who question her so that she’ll say or do the right thing to get free of the chains, but she doesn’t answer the questions. They tell her, “If you just say the right words, (their words) then the chains will be undone.” But she doesn’t want to say those words. She wants to find her own way. The besiegers outside have put chains on her...It’s a kind of plot...She is trying to make her way out without being noticed.”

Sherry saw the main theme of this metaphor as “Sleeping until freed. Sleeping in the not-able-to-do-and-be sense. Her power is asleep, like a living death, waiting for survival and escape.” A secondary theme was that “Other people can’t prescribe [Sleeping Beauty’s choices for her because she has] autonomy.”

### **Content Analysis**

Sherry found the metaphor interesting and surprising, and she was curious where it would lead. “Who’d have thunk I’d have gone to Sleeping Beauty. *It kind of is like* - I’ve watched the comings and goings [of the repairmen], kind of done what I needed to do when I needed to do it. Made the connections when I’ve needed – talked willingly to people, but fairly consciously.” This metaphor clearly reflected and validated Sherry’s coping skills and problem-solving abilities with regard to her leaky condo problem. Her



comment about talking to people “fairly consciously” is similar to Sleeping Beauty’s way of getting things done (sleepwalking, but aware and waiting to act).

“This kind of magical falling off of the chains is a bit like when everything started clearing up. It *did* seem like they just disappeared. I didn’t think I would be able to let go of that, that I would be fiercely angry for a much longer time.” The metaphor brought Sherry a deeper sense of the change that had occurred.

Though it was not discussed, the plot element of Sleeping Beauty weaving her own chains on the spinning wheel was curious. Sherry felt this anger was useful because it protected her from her feelings of hurt. I felt it also implied that she was creating her own anger and imprisoning herself in it. The latter could be viewed as an unconscious symbolic act - what Sherry was doing to herself during her leaky condo experience. Although later in the metaphor she states that the “besiegers” put the chains on her, she is, in essence, responsible for her own feelings.

The metaphor also helped Sherry make sense of her experience with regard to the roles and interaction of the people involved. “I guess this [metaphor] speaks to the curious experience it is to have so many people [the repairmen] involved in your life that you absolutely don’t know. They were the “besiegers”. They see what you eat for breakfast, and if you managed to do your washing, and how you look first thing in the morning, and whether you wear pyjamas...[That] kind of thing. The “servants” were people like the caretaker who’s coming in and out and helping with things, and maybe even my fellow family members. We also had to keep functioning and doing things.”

Sherry felt this metaphor suggested that she retreated into herself to some extent during her condo experience. This was something of an insight for her, although she

recognised it as a coping strategy or problem solving technique she had used before. "It's comparable to being silent...The retreat is internal. That's the silence. Adopting a kind of observing mode. [This] enabled me to choose when I would act. You're not just being defensive. You can use your energy when you need it. So if an opportunity arises, you take it, as opposed to beating your head against the wall or pulling against your chains." Presumably this observing mode would allow Sherry to see where the opportunities were with more clarity, objectivity and detachment and to conserve her energy for those opportunities. It would help her stay calm and choose her battles wisely. Again here, the metaphor brought out this coping strategy in strong relief.

Sherry made further connections between her experience and the metaphor. "If you just say the right thing, you'll be freed from the chains. That's a bit like, everyone told me I couldn't put my notice up in the back window of my car. I'd get sued or I'd get my car bashed, and I just did that because I thought it was important for my mental health to do that. But even though people were arguing with me about it, I just did it. I didn't argue about it. It was that kind of thing – I'm not going to play the game the way other people think it should be played." Sherry characterised herself as a "dodger and weaver" in this respect, a positive reflection of her self-concept and sense of self-efficacy that was highlighted by the metaphor. She would do what she felt needed to be done, avoiding arguments and confrontations through a kind of passive resistance.

"Chains are something like, 'I'm going to lock you up. I'm going to put you in the corner. I'm going to do this thing to you. You are just going to submit to me.' Being captive. Not having recourse to escape. Not having choices. Being powerless. Stuck." Again here Sherry was integrating her experience with more than one of her metaphors,

tying in the idea of being cornered by her boyfriend from the second metaphor. The Independent Judge also suggested that her comments re the chains validated The Boyfriend in Africa and Sleeping Beauty metaphors.

Sherry also extended the Sleeping Beauty metaphor into a hopeful future, suggesting a plan of action. "She will find the way out. The chains will fall off when she sees it...down the stairs, out across the field, and into the forest. She's going to go quietly to evade the besiegers. The forest is the unknown, but it's covered so she's free from scrutiny." This freedom from the scrutiny (or the siege) of the repairmen was something she looked forward to. Again as "the dodger and weaver" she will make her escape.

This idea of freedom and escape also came up in the Inquiry Interview. Sherry was not comfortable with my calling this metaphor Sleeping Beauty, suggesting instead the title Sleeping Survivor. She was aware of feeling "confined because you've named that [metaphor] Sleeping Beauty." Sherry's alternative title certainly would emphasise the main character's role as an active agent in the story, but it would de-emphasise the many structuring and symbolic elements she drew from the fairytale, some perhaps unconsciously. For example, she included turrets in her description of the castle, and a turret was where Sleeping Beauty was spinning cotton. The thorn bushes that grew up around the castle are perhaps comparable to the scaffolding and tarps that went up around Sherry's condominium complex. These and perhaps other parallels were probably not recognised and were not explored during the interviews.

Finally, the forest Sleeping Beauty escaped into represented "the unknown future" which Sherry would welcome because it would provide relief from her lack of privacy

during the condo repair work. It would be her final escape from the scrutiny of the repairmen when their work was done and the blinds could be put up again.

### **Process Analysis**

This metaphor work made Sherry's feelings more immediate for her. While engaged in the process, she said she found herself re-experiencing the sense of relief she had when the repairs were completed. She was particularly relieved that her family did not have to go into debt to pay for the repairs, and that they were still all healthy.

"I'm pretty much an open book except maybe in the third metaphor. I wondered if I wasn't speaking to you, wondering if I'm just going to wait until I can escape from this situation [being interviewed]. That thought crossed my mind...So when I said that about watching [and] observing, it felt like the process I was undergoing here with you." The process, then, not only connected Sherry to her experience of the metaphor, but also to her immediate experience of being interviewed by me through the sense of having her freedom restricted. This suggested a deep level of processing involving three levels of experience, the condo problem, the metaphor and the interview.

Sherry claimed that "Metaphor three [Sleeping Beauty] could have been anything. I was conscious when we went there that there were a few things we could have gone with...There were many choices." This suggests that metaphor choice could be quite whimsical. A choice may or may not work, so having a good instinct for the most appropriate choice(s) could be important.

## **My Process**

Ironically, in view of Sherry's comments above, I felt this metaphor was the most appropriate because of all the connections it made to her condo experience. I felt this metaphor was the most engaging and evocative. When she was describing her condo coping strategies in relationship to those used in the metaphor, I found it a little difficult to follow her train of thought.

It was a bit discomfiting to have her bring my research and me into her process as potentially negative elements; however, it was also interesting to see how this played out. I became more aware of how the researcher and their research might affect co-researchers. I was grateful that Sherry felt she could be open, and that she trusted me enough to share her reflections in this regard.

## **CROSS-METAPHOR ANALYSIS**

### **Content Analysis**

Several patterns or themes became apparent in the analysis of the metaphors, which speak to the meaning Sherry created in developing her metaphors and linking them to her condominium experience. Her perspective on her experience did not appear to be directly affected by the metaphors; however, her perspective on adversity and how she copes with adversity was clearly affected in the Sleeping Beauty metaphor. There were also significant effects on her attitude and feelings about her experience, especially through The Boyfriend in Africa, although she felt there were no definitive changes in

this respect. Finally, the Sleeping Beauty metaphor suggested and highlighted coping strategies or problem-solving techniques Sherry used in dealing with her condo problem.

### *Perspectives on Experience*

WAR/SURVIVAL: Sherry said, "All these metaphors seemed to concretise a war image. The first metaphor [The Land of Milk and Honey] is what war isn't." Referring to The Boyfriend in Africa and Sleeping Beauty metaphors, she said, "...the oppression [is] from the outside, and somehow on the inside you must cope with this oppression, whatever it is." Here personal survival was emphasised and took place "inside" her in terms of dealing with feelings and thoughts around the oppression, e.g. being enraged in "a super cool kind of way" in The Boyfriend in Africa metaphor.

In essence, the metaphors allowed Sherry to reframe her condo experience as a war, and she recognised this as a dominant theme in her life. "It's part of a life metaphor for me, not just this experience [taking part in the study]. I grew up in a war zone. In my mind I'd escaped the war zone, but the stuff is here still. It gives you good survival skills. These metaphors [especially Sleeping Beauty] illustrate that. It illustrates that historically that's what my life was and still is in some ways." To paraphrase a line in the movie *Magnolia*, she may be through with the past, but it isn't through with her.

The Land of Milk and Honey alluded to Sherry's life in Africa and The Boyfriend in Africa referred to it directly. She viewed the former as a vision of what war is not, and the latter reflected issues and feelings around the battle that she had with her condo developer and the government. Finally, this war perspective validated Sherry's sense of empowerment in dealing with her 'enemies'. I would suggest that she won this war

because she managed to pay for the condo repairs and preserve her good health and strong family relationships.

TIME: Sherry noted that the metaphors were developed in reverse chronological order. The Land of Milk and Honey was actually two imaginary or possible futures - the one she would have in Canada (from the perspective of 1994) and one she will have now (from the perspective of 2000). The Boyfriend in Africa was present time (or real time), and Sleeping Beauty was "an ancient past" (imaginary time). The real escape in real time of The Boyfriend in Africa contrasted with the other two metaphors because they involved imaginary settings, which suggests they were a form of escapism. (They allowed Sherry to distance herself from the problem for a while.) As escapism they involved playing with words, ideas and images, something Sherry said was enjoyable about the metaphor creation process. Finally, she noted that time was an important theme in her life because "time and place alters [your views and feelings about things]."

ALIENATION: All metaphors took place elsewhere. This suggested that Sherry doesn't perceive Canada as the best place to be, perhaps because it doesn't feel like home. Canada may be "The Land of Milk and Honey, but then you get kicked in the teeth." Sherry was very much aware that she was an immigrant to Canada while exploring this metaphor.

She felt a sense of alienation in having to undergo repairs inside and outside her condo while still living in it. She said it was like "being in the wrong movie," and she had to fight against "a mess of institutions" in order to try to get some kind of compensation for what she went through. In The Sleeping Beauty metaphor Sherry mentioned she retreated internally to cope with the siege (the condo repairs and the lack of privacy).

This could imply alienation from the other people involved. This might be linked to the 'alienation of affection' she felt towards her boyfriend in Africa in that metaphor. Being physically cornered by him in his apartment connects to feeling cornered in her castle in the Sleeping Beauty metaphor. It might also connect to Sherry's feeling cornered because she had to keep her condo during repairs when she actually wanted to sell it. Perhaps there is also a connection to her feeling cornered by the Canadian government and laws. As she said in The Experience above, "You've got more recourse in Africa for things like this." Ironically, these feelings of being cornered may have intensified Sherry's sense of alienation by forcing her to detach or dissociate from what was happening to her and around her. The metaphor work reflected and perhaps aided in this detachment.

#### *Attitudes toward Experience*

Sherry did not feel the metaphors or the metaphor work has changed her attitude toward or feelings about her experience. "I will remember it with more and more distance I'm hoping, but not necessarily because of the metaphors, just because place and time alters." Her metaphors did, however, validate and perhaps normalise her feelings, especially her sense of empowerment and self-efficacy, like a third voice in the counselling process. She said the Sleeping Beauty metaphor "points out that I have the capacity to cope [with problems]. The Land of Milk and Honey points out "that I will continue to dream....I will continue to have that optimism." Finally, The Boyfriend in Africa indicates "I will deal with whatever comes."

TRUST: Sherry identified trust and betrayal of trust as a theme, and she used the Sleeping Beauty metaphor to illustrate how she would deal with trust issues in the future.



“Trusting in the landlord and trusting in the boyfriend. Well, the Sleeping Beauty metaphor - you kind of wait, watch, and check it out. It was also interesting for me in terms of trusting of you. I think if you hadn’t told me that you’d worked in trauma and abuse - I don’t think that story [The Boyfriend in Africa] would have come out.” Canada and its institutions might also be added to the list of what to “wait, watch and check out”. Sherry also expressed the disillusionment of broken trust in her condo experience. It’s clearly a major theme in her life even arising for her in terms of this study and myself.

**VIOLATION:** This theme suggests perhaps the deepest personal impact her condo experience had on Sherry, and it has close links to the themes of War, Power and Trust. Her privacy was violated during the repairs to her condo. The repairmen had access to her house, and the blinds were all taken off the windows. This violation was echoed through the besiegers in Sleeping Beauty, who also tried to violate her autonomy, i.e. the questioners were constantly trying to make her do what they wanted. Then there was physical violation in The Boyfriend in Africa, where she was threatened with a knife and was doused with water. This metaphor also involved a violation of freedom. Sherry was cornered by her boyfriend, so she couldn’t leave his apartment.

**WATER:** Water imagery came up in two of Sherry’s metaphors, The Land of Milk and Honey and The Boyfriend in Africa, and also in some of the metaphors she did not choose to develop (see Appendix E: Possible Metaphors). “In Africa where I lived you have periods of drought, and they last quite a long time, usually a couple of years...then you will have floods afterwards. They are fairly disastrous things because there’s no vegetation left, and you have flash floods. I was never thirsty myself, but animals died because the water had to go to humans.”

Water as a destructive force is common to Sherry's experiences in Africa and Canada. She also used water imagery to describe her payments for repairs which "came in waves." Those payments were financially destructive. Along with the prevalence of the survival theme, these water images illustrate Sherry's dire attitude toward the Leaky Condo Crisis on a conscious level and perhaps partly on an unconscious level as well.

### *Implications for Action*

Because Sherry's experience with her leaky condo was finished, any implications for action would have been made in hindsight. In addition to this, Sherry was satisfied with her coping skills and problem-solving strategies with regard to her experience and the metaphors. However, several themes regarding action were clearly identified and skills were more consciously realised and validated through the metaphor work.

ESCAPE: Sherry viewed her metaphors as "methods of escape." She identified the Sleeping Beauty metaphor as a "how-I-cope escape," The Land of Milk and Honey metaphor as a fantasy escape, and The Boyfriend in Africa metaphor as a real escape. Respectively: "You escape by waiting patiently, you escape by dreaming, or you escape by jolly well knuckling down and getting out [of the situation] somehow." These methods of escape illustrated or reflected how Sherry coped with her condo experience. Perhaps the metaphor work itself was also an escape as mentioned in the time theme above.

PROBLEM MANAGEMENT: The three metaphors formed a rough analogy of the basic counselling process. The Boyfriend in Africa represented where Sherry is, The Land of Milk and Honey represented where she wants to be, and Sleeping Beauty represented how to get there. In this way, metaphors may be effective in exploring and/or

illustrating the present scenario, envisioning a future one, and identifying the means to realise that future scenario.

SELF: Sherry noticed a pattern in the metaphors that led to a significant insight about her style of dealing with problems and relating to others. "Well, community is very important to me. Family is very important to me, but all these metaphors are about me alone, actually me surviving. That's how I survive – alone. If I take care of me, usually I'm ending up taking care of everybody else as well, so it's okay." The metaphors highlighted and validated Sherry's problem-solving style and sense of self-efficacy. She characterised herself as "a major major survivor" in *The Boyfriend in Africa* and "a dodger and weaver" in both *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Boyfriend in Africa*.

SURVIVAL: Survival was also a pervasive theme in Sherry's metaphors. It figured into the metaphor work, her experience of living in a leaky condo, and even her experience of participating in this study. "It was surprising that so much of it was survival because I guess so much of it is unconscious. I just do it. So I became more conscious that I was doing it, and the stories, the metaphors, talking about it makes it out in the open. You get an objectivity that isn't necessarily there when you're just thinking about it, but I don't know that the metaphors give me more objectivity." In the last sentence Sherry appeared to be drawing an important distinction between the metaphors' ability to bring objectivity to her experience and their ability to make her more objective. The metaphors objectified and highlighted her survival skills, making her more conscious of them. Distancing herself from negative emotions through humour was another means of surviving that was highlighted in *The Land of Milk and Honey*. The possibility of realising the vision in this metaphor was also a motivation to survive, but it was also

important for her that she survived on her own terms. As she said in *Sleeping Beauty*, “Other people can’t prescribe [my choices].”

POWER: The empowerment Sherry felt in dealing with the ‘wars’ of her condo experience and the Boyfriend in Africa and *Sleeping Beauty* metaphors again highlighted her skills and the confidence with which she uses them. There were her negotiating skills in *The Boyfriend in Africa*, her detachment and patience in *Sleeping Beauty*, and her assertive insistence on doing things in ways she felt were reasonable, e.g. she paid her fees for the repairs the way she could, not allowing herself to be dictated to.

She mentioned, “We had a banner out front proclaiming our state [of disrepair]. We had a gathering and invited the media. It [the banner] was up for two days. We had to take it down because it could have affected the developer’s business, so I put up a notice in my car window, so it could be read at the intersection. Just to not be whipped into the corner. You know, just cow-tow - “You can do whatever you want to me or us”. It was good to put that [notice] up and name names and say, “This is what happened.” It felt more powerful, so that’s useful.”

### **Process Analysis**

Sherry took up the process of developing the metaphors quite readily. Particularly, after developing the first metaphor, she began making associating between the metaphors and her experience at an accelerated pace, while monitoring her own process quite closely throughout. At times she even included this study in her process analysis, tying together her experiencing of the leaky condo problem, the metaphors we developed, and her involvement in this study.

She pointed out that the process of developing the metaphors would have been very different if we had done the work in the middle of the problem. "You know on any day there's going to be a different way of looking at things...If you'd talked to me in the middle of the process, you wouldn't have had me howling with tears, you would have had me raging, storming, swearing. You would have seen a different thing. This is quite sterile compared to what you would have seen in the middle of the process."

Sherry felt the metaphor creation process was "a little contrived", conceding that it was my research being done my way. "We are confined by the fact that you're doing research, and you have certain things you have to do, and I have agreed, contracted to do that. This [type of metaphor work] is not as familiar to me. It's not bad. I'm not dying from it (laughter)." Having said that, Sherry still appeared open to the process: "Well, let's just take this walk and see where it goes."

Sherry also mentioned that she didn't really need help in dealing with her experience, and that she had a political motivation for participating in the study. She suggested that the metaphors were not written in stone and that the process would probably change over time. "Any story in life is an on-going process. There's no change I would want to make now [to the metaphors]. I'm just thinking the more air-time this thing [The Leaky Condo Crisis] gets the better it is for most of us [leaky condo owners]."

"Mostly I was thinking in pictures and looking through memories. The most overwhelming feeling I had was relief going through this process. I realised how relieved I was that it was over [her condo problem]. In talking about the metaphors it's clear to me the problem is historic and not current. The worst part of the experience is over, and now I'm just going to be making meaning of it and looking back at it. I'm through it."

I asked Sherry if she would change any of the metaphors in any way in retrospect. She said, "I quite like the survival aspect of them. They fall into a nice rhythm. It's just a metaphor. I don't need to change it. You don't know what's coming your way. All these metaphors have this surprise element in them. This metaphor, The Boyfriend in Africa, works for what happened, and they [all the metaphors] work together. I like this. I like that I survive. I like that it all fits together. It's really nice and neat. It's a really nice meaning to come out of it."

### **My Process**

I felt we articulated and explored the meaning of her experience most fully through the Sleeping Beauty metaphor because it created a perspective for Sherry on herself and her situation, facilitated the exploration of her feelings, and made her more conscious of her coping skills – all in somewhat equal measure. I also felt most engaged in the process during the development and discussions about this metaphor. However, I was more cognitively engaged in the process with the imaginary metaphors and more empathically or emotionally engaged with the real life metaphor, The Boyfriend in Africa. The Land of Milk and Honey focussed mainly on the perspective of what her experience was not, and I think it was because of this that I was not as engaged in the metaphor work at that time.

I was surprised that a 'thumbnail' metaphor like The Land of Milk and Honey yielded a very involved and relevant discussion regarding the condo experience and beyond. Sometimes it was difficult to follow Sherry's train of thought because I was also shifting back and forth cognitively from the metaphor to the experience.

## **CASE 2: RITA**

“Home is my family. That’s why I’ve never felt that good here [in this condo complex]. But even after my husband had gone, the house still felt like home because he had been there. So home is a place with memories. Even my grandchildren were disappointed that I had moved here. They felt this wasn’t like home too. At home you make your own rules, but in condo life they set the rules. You decide what changes you want to make to *your* home. There’s nobody there to say you can’t.”

### **THE EXPERIENCE**

Rita is a 77-year-old widow and mother of two adult boys. Although she was born in Saskatchewan, her first language was German. She did not speak English until she went to school, and even after that, she continued to speak German at home and went to a German school. She married in 1941 at 17 and was a stay-at-home mother all her life, apart from some holiday relief work at a department store. “I was very happy and content with my life. All I wanted was to have a baby.” Rita’s husband passed away in 1978, and, left to her own resources, she had a difficult time learning to be independent. “I didn’t even know how to balance a cheque book.”

Rita’s condo problems started in 1991 and have not yet been resolved. Various sections of her condominium complex have been repaired over the past nine years. She has paid \$10,000 for repairs completed already and has another \$20,000 - \$30,000 still to pay for major repairs, which have not yet begun. Her mid-sized complex is located in a quiet suburb of Richmond among other such condominium complexes.

Rita identified a variety of feelings regarding her leaky condo experience: confusion, anger, hope, relief, depression, resentment, regret, self-hate and fear. "I wanted to sell, but I couldn't. I got angry at the builder. I was thinking about it all the time. I was confused – should I sell or not. I kept hoping things would be all right, but that didn't last too long. I worry about what I will do. I do believe in God, and I feel He will help me out of this. So I have hope, but at my age I shouldn't have to have all these problems. These were supposed to be 'the golden years'. It was no fault of mine, but I still blame myself sometimes. I could have kept my house. I've always had this fear of what would happen [and] fear of anger - they go together."

Rita considers herself, the developer, and the municipal government and their inspectors as the principle characters in her story. The developer had minor leak repairs done in 1991, for which Rita paid \$1000. She recalls seeing the workmen using crowbars to tear out the blackened lumber, pulling nails from a wall of the building, and throwing it all in the dumpster. She was walking by one day when the foreman spoke to her. He told her that where he came from in Germany they would condemn her building. She didn't realise this man was talking about something he knew about. She just thought to herself, *Well, the builders are fixing it.*

A group of fellow residents hired a lawyer who "was always coming up with different things we could do." When they found out where the company was building, the residents would go out and picket to bring some attention to their situation. Rita marched with a sign that said, "'I live in a leaky condo'...because they [the developer] couldn't stop us from doing that." Rita also decided to do some volunteer work with wheelchair bound people because it helped her to forget her problems for a while and made her feel



useful and needed. Despite these coping strategies, she said, "I got more wrinkles, I had problems sleeping, and I was often ill. It really is stress. I've lost weight. My doctor told me he thinks it's depression." She attributed these problems to her leaky condo ordeal.

The second round of repairs was in 1998 and took a year to complete. Repairs were later done to the north side of the building. This year the repair workers were back. The minutes of a strata council meeting regarding these repairs was slipped under Rita's door because she had missed the meeting. They contained her assessment as of May 2000, which was for \$30,000, although she says now it may be as little as \$20,000.

"I was in shock worrying about what I was going to do. I thought, *This can't be*. It was a nice day. I thought, *I've got to go out for a walk - just clear my head a bit*. I met a man I know." This man had just finished treatment for oesophagus cancer. "He asked me in for tea with he and his wife. His wife hadn't been well either. She has Parkinson's Disease. They have a lovely little fishpond. That's where they spend their time now because they had hoped to travel. But they have not been anywhere because they have both been sick."

"It just sort of hit me. They have lots of money, but they have no health. I'm well, but I don't know how to face this [the \$30,000 assessment]. It made me feel better about the leaky condo problem because I could have been worse off. I could be sick with this problem. It put it into perspective. I always think of writing to Ottawa and telling them what has happened to me. There was a radio talk show, and the host said, "Why should we help people who buy leaky condos? How stupid can you get!" Well, I called the station manager and said what business did she have calling me stupid."

Rita identified several themes in her experience. "I can't trust people like I did before I bought this condo. All that matters to people is money. It made me realise how much I miss my husband and how lonely I am without him. I realised how important it is to have somebody to share problems with. I became more aware that bad things *can* happen, and how unfair that is. People do things too quickly – "The faster we [the developers] get this up [the condominium complex] the faster we'll make money." There's more to life than that. Then they move onto the next one. They don't think about what this did to their reputation. [Actually] they didn't seem to lose it because they're still building today."

### **METAPHOR 1: THE WAR**

Rita described what she saw of her condominium complex during one phase of repair work. "It was a bombed building like in a World War II movie because you see all this black wood, and it was broken. It was just horrible. They put it in the dumpster. Sometimes I'd walk by and see it (gasp), and I'd say to myself, *Is that what we're living in?*" She felt the dominant feeling around this experience has been anger. "Why did this have to happen to me? Gasping for air, like a death."

Rita began to relate the possible characters in The War metaphor to her leaky condo experience. There was the enemy (the government who changed the building code), soldiers/victims (Rita and other leaky condo owners), and the ally of the enemy (the developer). Bombs and guns were used to fight. "We fought in Italy during World War II. When the people came back from the war, they saw their homes. It was all broken black wood...Now the enemy - government - is shooting us for complaining...I

remember these movies: there's always people running for shelter. We had our council meetings - like war meetings - and we'd have engineers come and explain this is how to do it... To win the battle is to have the repairs done."

"This kind of thing can happen to anybody. The battle is not over yet. There's another one around the corner. The repairs are done, then more problems come along. I have to surrender to a lien [on her condo]. I can't pay \$1000 a month. There is no answer. Wars do happen. It's part of life. And wars always will happen."

### **Content Analysis**

Regarding her activities around her leaky condo problem Rita said, "There was always something to do or some meeting. It *was* like a war. That metaphor fits. It's what I'm going through now. We should have had meetings beforehand. It really is just like a war, and it makes me feel right now like I want to fight back. It wasn't my fault, and something could be done. I feel it isn't as bad as it could have been."

The above quotation shows how Rita's attitude towards her experience changed as a result of this metaphor. Looking at her experience as a war made her feel like "fighting back" and optimistic that "something could be done," (although her belief in God also gave her hope and optimism). The metaphor also suggested how the problem might have been curtailed by having "meetings beforehand," (presumably before the first repairs were done – before the 'war' started) to ensure the repairs were done properly and completely, so the repairs would not have dragged on for years.

Further to this, Rita realised there were things she could do to solve the problem. "Now I realise I can fight back, and I was going to see that man [to get some financial

advice, which was my suggestion] and I'm into my letter writing. I'm at least doing something. It makes me feel good that I'm still capable of doing [something]." The idea of letter writing was validated by the fact that Rita wrote letters to her husband after his death (see the Husband's Death metaphor below). Writing letters in that metaphor was an outlet for her feelings, helped her cope better with them, and perhaps also helped her to organise her thoughts during that difficult time in her life.

"What I'm going through after The War fits what I'm going through now [with] the assessment. Both are devastating. The insecurity and fear, [but] I always feel I'll be taken care of. I would hope to give my children something [e.g. some property] after I died." The metaphor strongly connected Rita to her feelings about her condo experience in comparing the two, and led her to ponder the implications of her problem with regard to her family. Her use of the word devastating is notable. It could include the emotional and physical toll on her and the physical toll on her bombed (rain-damaged) home.

Rita extended the war metaphor, applying it to her state of mind and connecting her to her feelings more deeply. "That's almost like a war I'm going through with these thoughts in real life [wanting to leave something for her family and wanting to sell the condo]...I still feel depressed and a lot of anxiety, like in battle. I also have that feeling - the unfairness of it - like war."

Several other associations were made between Rita's experience and the metaphor. The foreman telling her the building would be condemned in Germany was like the proverbial 'rumours of war'. Rita also mentioned overhearing a couple talking to the same foreman saying their condo had leaked too and he had repaired it. Rita felt this was like another warning signal. "Another country warning you that they will do the

same to you as they did to that country. They've already attacked us. You'll probably be next." These signals suggest that action could have been taken earlier to prevent a prolonged 'war,' at least as far as war represented repairs and problems involved in getting repairs done. (Although we did not discuss it, the radio talk show Rita mentioned in her condo story can be connected to this theme of communication. The negative assertions made on the talk show (e.g. that leaky condo owners were "stupid") could be linked to the negative propaganda of wartime communications, which is specifically used to demoralise the other side. But Rita fought back by calling the radio station and denouncing the talk show host.)

The crowbars used on the condominium and the bombs of war both destroy, although Rita felt the crowbars actually were good because they helped in pulling out the wood that needed replacing. The rain could be associated with the shooting of guns - the building was assaulted by rain as people would be by 'a rain of bullets'. Hiring the lawyer and picketing at another of her developer's building sites were compared to fighting the war in Italy - they were both attempts to fight back while away from 'the home front'. Here the war is clearly viewed as being between the condo owners and the developer. Rita suggested that "running for shelter" was like her trying to find another place to live if she has to move out. She agreed that seeing her bombed home after the war [after the rain damage] was like receiving the news of her \$30,000 assessment (perhaps as in the cliché of 'having a bomb dropped' on her). This multitude of connections helped build a network of meaning within Rita's condo experience.

Regarding the couple in ill health with whom Rita had tea, she said, "Some people didn't get bombed the same way. Some were saved or had more protection... They were

also protected by prayer. They were protected more because God was really looking after them, yet He can't look after everybody. Some places were bombed more than others."

Rita readily assimilated this couple into her metaphor of war. She also gained some perspective on her situation by seeing that even though she didn't have money like the couple, she still had her health. Rita also raised a spiritual issue around the fairness of war (that could apply to her condo experience) and resolved that issue for herself – "He [God] can't look after everybody."

This recalls the question Rita raises about her condo problem in the metaphor – "Why did this have to happen to me?" and her shock at what she was facing, while "gasping for air, like a death." This, in turn, recalls Rita's third metaphor, Husband's Death (see below). Her husband had been in hospital for cancer tests when he suddenly died of a heart attack, which was also a shock to her. Here Rita may be unconsciously linking The War to her Husband's Death metaphor. If so, this suggests the gravity with which she views her condo experience - in some ways it is 'a matter of life or death.'

Rita suggested that the developers rushing around to make a quick buck was comparable to the building and rebuilding that took place after World War II. "Some of those houses probably weren't very well made, were they? And they were built quickly." Perhaps one implication of this connection is that some people (i.e. condominium developers) are more concerned with their own financial security and have a sense of urgency about it, to the detriment of others. It isn't difficult to imagine that after World War II people were very concerned about their own 'security' in the many ways that word can be interpreted.

Rita had two significant insights through this metaphor. First: "Two countries have to agree on things so fighting doesn't start. As soon as they [her developer, the government and her strata council] knew there was a problem, they could have stopped it so they wouldn't have had all those problems." This statement readily applies to Rita's leaky condo problem which, as she said, has dragged on for years because the repairs were not done properly and completely from the start. And second: "The enemy was really the government. I had never thought of that before. They are responsible. They should help us. I feel now at least there is somebody to blame, now that I've said it." This metaphor crystallised in Rita's mind where the responsibility lay for her ordeal.

### **Process Analysis**

With regard to the process Rita said, "It was alright. It doesn't bother me. Well, I was picturing this [war] movie and imagining what these people would feel. It was really worse for them than this is for me - what I am going through now...It [the metaphor] puts things in perspective. I can picture it...Writing these letters to Ottawa and trying to let them know my situation - I think I'm going to do that. [She did write]. I almost feel that's my way of fighting back." The metaphor was an opportunity to empathise with people in a worse predicament - the couple in ill health - and as Rita said, "It put things in perspective." The metaphor also led to the decision to 'fighting back' by writing letters.

### **My Process**

I was very involved with Rita in the process of discovering connections between her experience and this metaphor, consistently checking with her as to the

appropriateness of the metaphor connections I suggested. I also encouraged her in her metaphor work and validated her ideas in that regard because she seemed uncertain at times if she was doing it right or if it made sense.

However, Rita was quite adept at linking The War metaphor to her condo experience in very appropriate ways from the start, sometimes talking about her experience using the metaphor in spontaneous and surprising ways. For example, I was startled by her anger during the Intervention Interview when she said, "The government is shooting us for complaining." The metaphor connected her to her feelings with a strong and immediate impact.

I had encouraged Rita to put aside her experience while developing the metaphorical story because I thought her experience might limit or distort it. But she was quite aware of and adept at synthesising both her experience and The War metaphor while developing the metaphor fully, so I realised I did not have to worry.

## **METAPHOR 2: THE REFUGEE**

Rita imagined herself as a refugee who came with other refugees from the Ukraine to Richmond in Canada in 1990. She was escaping religious persecution under the communist regime. "I learned English from some Ukrainian Canadian friends and got work." She also got help settling in from refugee organisations, her church, and the Ukrainian Cultural Centre. (These were my suggestions.)

"I earned enough to buy a house that I thought would be mine...I was chased out. I'm not allowed to be there anymore." She felt lost, sad and confused. "I don't fit into this society anymore." Rita began tying herself as the refugee to her condo experience here.



"[I] fear the paying out will go on and on [referring to the condo repairs]. My son wanted me to live with them, but I don't want to because they don't have the room, [and she felt she would be a burden]. I have to get some place else. Someone will take me in and help me. I will have to find work to start looking after myself or asking for help from people or government."

Rita moved into her condo experience completely here. "It isn't my fault, but I still have to pay. I don't belong in this world that works that way. I belong in the kind that when you bought something, and it didn't last, they replace it. It's taken a lot away from me, from making my meals, which I used to look forward to - nothing like that does anymore. Why do I have to search again for a home? I guess that's how it's supposed to be. That's life for some people. They always have problems to solve. Other people have the money. I don't feel like this place belongs to me anymore because part of it belongs to the government if I put a lien on it."

Here Rita started to move back into viewing herself as The Refugee dealing with her condo experience. "I'm afraid it will go on [more assessments will come] and use up everything this place is worth. I don't know what to do so I'm lost within myself. Moving in and living with a community [in the condominium complex is] like learning a new language [and culture I suggested] after living alone for so long...In your own home you do what you want to do, but here you almost ask for permission. I had to learn to live that way. I have rules that I have to follow to live here." For example, Rita mentioned she had to keep her dog on a leash as long as he was on the property.

### Content Analysis

"It's so true. It's happened to me. I *am* that refugee. Like I said before, I don't feel like I belong. I lost the home I had before. I don't know where I can be at home anymore. I feel alone in this complex, this country. I feel more alone and undecided." Rita speaks again of the appropriateness of this metaphor for her condo experience. Keeping in mind that she associates home with family, when her husband died and she sold her house, she viewed both as losses. She connected the uncertainty of losing her condo to the uncertainty of the refugee who again lost his home. "You don't really know if it's the end [of the condo problems]. This is what is more frightening. They could have problems again because they did next door, and they had the same contractor...I'm always searching for a sense of security." Tying in her Husband's Death metaphor, there is a deep emotional connection between Rita and 'the refugee' in the context of loss.

She went on to say, "The metaphor tells me to do what I can do. Go for help, and if I don't get it, just try for making the best of the situation I can." Following the logic of the metaphor she saw how, as the refugee, she could seek the help of others and rely on her own resources, although she does not specify how she will do this. Still, the metaphor suggested that she has power and framed for her these resolutions to act using that power.

Other feelings were identified regarding the metaphor that reflected Rita's condo experience. "The refugee has a lot of hope of getting accepted and everything gets going with his life." The refugee feels "stressed out [and] frightened." The feeling of loneliness had social and financial dimensions with regard to her condo experience. Her fellow condo residents have the money to pay for repairs and spouses to share their problems with, and Rita was keenly aware she doesn't have either of these. "...our council meeting.

When they talk about this levy we have to pay, different people mentioned, oh, they have to cash in their RRSPs or whatever, this term deposit, and I thought, *Oh my God, I have nothing to cash in.*”

Rita has considered having a lien put on her condominium, so she could stay there, but she is also keenly aware that a government lien would take away from her sense of ownership. Like this new country and his house for the refugee, she felt the condominium wouldn't belong to her anymore. Rita gave evidence of already having put the lien on her home psychologically. Just thinking about a possible lien, as she said before, “It's taken a lot away from me from making my meals, which I used to look forward to - nothing like that does anymore.”

Related to the loneliness mentioned above was a feeling Rita had that she doesn't “fit in” because the world is too fast, people don't care, and they're only interested in money. As a refugee she doesn't fit in because she is poor and doesn't know the ‘culture’ well (the rules for living in the condominium). Learning the language in a new country was also compared to learning the rules of condo living. This feeling of not fitting in may also reflect a much earlier experience for Rita. Because she was raised speaking German in Canada until she went to school, it's possible she didn't feel like she fit in with other students who presumably came to school already fluent in English.

Rita compared the idea of leaving the Ukraine because she couldn't practise her religion there to “being chased out of your home [condominium] like a refugee” because she couldn't afford to pay for the repairs, and she doesn't want to burden family by moving in with them. I suggested two options. First: as a refugee Rita could find a place with other refugees, other people in same situation. Second: She might find someone who

could advise her on her financial options through her pastor, tying together the fact that she is a practising Lutheran and the refugee metaphor - we had discussed where refugees could go for help.

Rita validated this second idea through her own associations around travel (which link indirectly to The Refugee metaphor). A few years ago, when her son was preparing to travel in South America, Rita said to him, "Always try, you know, if you run into any trouble, always look for a church. I think there people will always sort of lead you to something." This clearly illustrates the problem-solving function of this metaphor and gave Rita a sense of hope and direction.

### **Process Analysis**

"The first thing I thought of why I left the Ukraine was because I was too lonely too heart-broken. That's really why I came to Richmond. I realised the best place to go for help would be church. You see where my mind is now - I'm going back and forth between this [the metaphor] and the real [condo] situation. That was all right. You get little flashbacks of what is really happening [with the condo] - what's happening to me today. When I said something [about the refugee], that's what I'm really feeling right now."

### **My Process**

I empathised with Rita's feelings around the metaphor and how they connected to her feelings regarding her condo experience. I explored the metaphor in much greater detail during the Inquiry Interview because I wanted her to elaborate on the emotional

connection between herself and the refugee. I felt that proved to be very insightful regarding Rita's sense of herself beyond the immediate experience of the condo.

### **METAPHOR 3: HUSBAND'S DEATH**

Rita lived in a small two-bedroom home in Vancouver in 1978. That was the year her husband passed away. She vividly remembers her feelings of loss, pain and devastation, as well as feelings she could not describe. "My husband was in for cancer tests, when he had a heart attack. They had a tube down his throat. He complained about it, but they never checked it. I asked the doctor if the heart attack had anything to do with that tube. He said, "Yes it did." It was put down too close to his heart. I hit him [the doctor] in the chest, and I said, "Do you think this is a movie or something!" because I thought those things just happened in movies, not real life."

"I was there when he died. We were alone. I was sitting on the bed. We were talking and laughing about something my grandson had said. He stroked my hair and said, "You know I've always loved you." Then he took a deep breath and rolled over. I ran round the other side. I said, "What are you trying to do not looking at me when you tell me you love me!" Then I realised he was gone."

"It took a long time to get over the shock. I didn't really know what to do. My sons suggested things, and I just did what they told me to do. My son - from his shock - his kidney quit working. I helped out with babysitting [his children]. I had to learn to drive when I was 55, so I could help my daughter-in-law and [her] husband. That picked me up a bit because someone needed me - I was here for a reason."

"I remember coming home from driving my son to the hospital, and I would just be wet because I wouldn't wipe [the tears from] my eyes. I would have a cup of tea and write letters to my husband, telling him what I did today and about our son, about the problems he's got. It was easier to face it because I felt I'd told him [my husband] about it. I'd destroy the letter the next day, but it helped me to think I was letting him know. And it helped seeing it on paper instead of keeping it in here (indicating her heart). I learned to fix things. One thing that happened through losing my husband was I became more independent. That may help with this experience [the leaky condo experience]."

Rita compared having a lien against her home to losing it because, even though she would still live in it, she would know it was not hers. She also compared losing her home to losing her husband in some ways. She said it was like having "a hole in your heart...Couples married a long time - the sharing. After he died, I'd go to weddings and funerals, cruises. I'd come home. I'd always feel so empty even if it was the most joyous thing I'd attended. The emptiness - because you weren't able to share the joy, to talk about it." This is a cruel irony - being full of joy yet feeling empty because she had no one to share it with, but in spite of that Rita said, "I'm a survivor and I have to look after myself. We never had much money, but we always got along. We were never in debt. We loved life. When minor things did happen, I could always get him to fix things...I still feel that I'm blessed too because things could be a lot worse. I could be ill."

### **Content Analysis**

Rita felt this metaphor fit her condo experience. She felt the feelings were quite similar, although not as intense in the case of her leaky condo problem. Still, the

metaphor suggested the depth of her shock at receiving the \$30,000 assessment for condo repairs, which seemed to have left her with a feeling of 'unreality.' Along with the physical and psychological problems she attributed to her condo ordeal, she felt she had to go outside to "just clear my head a bit." This feeling of unreality is also suggested by her shock at her husband's death, when she said to the doctor, "Do you think this is a movie or something!" Finally, Rita referred to war movies in The War metaphor, which again could imply that her condo experience is 'unreal' in a sense (not like a real war but like a war movie).

Rita suggested that the crowbars used in dealing with the condominium repairs were like the letters she wrote to her husband to help her deal with her feelings around losing him. Perhaps because they both helped restore something – the building and her sense of well-being, respectively. I suggested she could write down for herself her feelings and ideas about keeping or selling her condominium as she had written to her husband after his death. She said she would write it down and think about it for a couple of days, and "If I'm not happy with that thought, I'll move the other way."

Rita elaborated on the story of her husband's death during the Inquiry Interview. There was a doctor in Seattle who was in charge of the cancer testing. He gave instructions to the doctor in Vancouver by phone. I suggested looking at the Vancouver doctor as the developer (directly responsible for the condo problem) and the Seattle doctor as the government (indirectly responsible), and I asked Rita who she felt was more responsible for her condo problem. She said, "The builder was following building codes, so I would say the government was still at fault." However, she felt it was hard to say who was more to blame because maybe they did the best they could. "The only way I can

really feel in my heart was that also this was something that was meant to be for some reason.” Here she was probably referring more to her husband’s death, but both suggest moral quandaries that she must simply accept as they are.

I went on to suggest that there were bitter ironies in both her husband’s death and her condo experience. Her husband went in for cancer tests and had a heart attack. Rita bought her condominium thinking it would be a secure place to live and it has been a disaster. She was surprised and said, “That makes a lot of sense.” With regard to her husband’s death, Rita did have some consolation in that he had had a chance to tell her he loved her. I asked her if there was any consolation regarding her condo experience. She recalled that “After the first assessment, friends from church had said, “Don’t worry too much. We’re always here to help you.”” Rita stated she has missed being able to share her concerns with her husband during her condo ordeal, but the metaphor helped her to realise she could share them with friends from church.

Rita went on, “He [Rita’s Husband] was in the army for four years [during World War II]. It seemed I was left then, even before all this, and here I am, after he died, left again... This is part of living. These things [including the condo problem] can happen.” While acknowledging both the loss of her husband and possible loss of her home, Rita seems to imply that she will eventually view her condo experience in a somewhat similar way to her husband’s death, accepting both with equanimity.

The connections were not explored between this metaphor and the sense of independence Rita acquired after her husband’s death, but she has come a long way from not knowing how to balance a cheque book. After her husband’s death, she learned how to drive at 55 years of age so she could baby sit her grandchildren and drive her son to the



hospital during his family's crisis. That made her feel useful and needed. She learned to fix things around the house and volunteers helping take care of people in wheelchairs. "These people - some of them have no family so I go in and help feed them and keep them company." It is interesting that these people recall Rita as the lonely refugee in the second metaphor. Rita is helping herself through helping the people in wheelchairs. She has found in her volunteer work a way of taking her mind off her problems for a while, and again it makes her feel useful and gives her life more purpose and direction. She also applied the sense of self-efficacy she felt in becoming independent to her current experience. "I'm going to find some way to come out of it [the condo problem], like I *did* recover from the death of my husband."

### **Process Analysis**

Rita said of developing this metaphor, "It hurt." She also said it was applicable to her experience. "If I did it here, I could do it here...Losing the condo won't hurt as much as losing my husband did. I know what I've gone through, and I can go through it again if I have to." She appeared very emotionally connected to the story of her Husband's Death while developing this metaphor, much more so than to the condo experience.

### **My Process**

This was also a difficult metaphor for me to work on with Rita because of the sensitive nature of its content, and I found myself empathising with her sadness at the loss of her husband. I felt I had to be particularly careful with my language and the

phrasing of my questions both to encourage Rita's trust in sharing this emotional story with me and not to unduly upset her.

In this case, it was the metaphor, which was clearly more painful than the condo experience. I found that the metaphor work did allow some distance from the emotions for myself, and I could see that it allowed her some reprieve from the memories surrounding her husband's death. But here it was the condo experience that provided some distance and relief from strong feelings. Rita's tone lightened when we went from the metaphor back to the experience, and her face visibly relaxed.

## **CROSS-METAPHOR ANALYSIS**

### **Content Analysis**

Rita went through significant changes in perspective on herself and on her leaky condo problem using the metaphors, e.g. she appeared to gain a greater sense of self-efficacy and to view the condo problem as a war she can fight. She also experienced significant changes in her attitude toward and feelings about her condo experience, e.g. she is more optimistic and doesn't feel guilty anymore. She had mentioned that she felt at times that it was her fault she had bought a leaky condo. Finally, she has realised how such problems might be avoided in the future and has taken steps toward solving and/or coping with her problem.

*Perspectives on Experience*

TIME: Rita placed The Refugee metaphor in the present because as she says, "I still feel like one." She also placed The War metaphor in the present because "The war is still going on" (the condo problem). She feels that she has dealt with her Husband's Death so she felt that metaphor was in the past. Still, Rita referred to her husband and his death often during the interviews. She was keenly aware of his absence during this condo experience ( he usually dealt with such problems), and she appeared to relive the events around his death vividly when she developed that metaphor. For these reasons, I would suggest that all the metaphors are to some degree in the present and unresolved, and that in being so, they reflect the condo experience which is still in the present and also has not been resolved.

ALIENATION/ISOLATION: This theme came up in two of Rita's metaphors, The Refugee and the Husband's Death. It connected to Rita's condo experience and also to Rita's earlier loneliness when her husband went to war for four years during WWII. (There is an indirect connection to The War metaphor here). Rita reacted strongly to The Refugee. She said, "I *am* that refugee...I don't feel like I belong...I feel alone in this complex, this country." I believe she is taking a broad perspective on her feelings here. She mentioned not feeling she fit into a world where things are done quickly and poorly, where people (like her condo developer) are out to make a quick buck, and where people don't care about other people or even their own reputation. "I don't belong in this world that works that way." This feeling that she doesn't belong may also be a remnant of early childhood feelings of alienation. As I mentioned before, Rita didn't speak English until

she went to school. It may have been difficult initially to fit in, perhaps especially so because she had a German background at a time when Germany was unpopular.

Rita's lack of financial and social support accentuated her sense of loneliness or alienation. She knows other condo owners have investments and spouses they can rely on. This connected to her awareness that her husband was no longer there to help her through difficulties like the condo problem. In her Husband's Death metaphor, Rita talks about feeling "empty" after he died because she had no one to share pleasant (and unpleasant) experiences with, which clearly suggests a feeling of loneliness.

"META-METAPHOR": The metaphors Rita chose, The War, The Refugee and the Husband's Death, suggest a possible 'meta-story' that resonates with a variety of themes from her life. The husband and wife live in the Ukraine (from The Refugee metaphor). The Ukraine, soon to become communist, is the enemy like Germany. When World War II comes, both the husband (in reality) and the wife (in the metaphor) go off to fight in Italy. The husband is killed. (Rita spoke of 'losing' her husband twice – once to war). As a result, the wife becomes a refugee and comes to Canada. Then she is "chased out" of the home she saved up to buy (see The Refugee Metaphor), suggesting she is not wanted.

This conceptualisation of the metaphors highlights a negative perspective. "I am that refugee...I don't know where I can be at home anymore." This suggests the deep sense of alienation and *persona non grata*, which the leaky condo crisis has triggered in Rita. But there is a positive side, reflected in her statement - "The refugee has a lot of hope of getting accepted and everything gets going with his life."

**SURVIVOR:** The optimistic view of loneliness and alienation is perhaps independence. Rita highlighted her greater sense of usefulness and self-efficacy through the Husband's Death metaphor discussion. She learned to drive and fix things, helped out her son's family and wheelchair bound people, and felt, "I was here for a reason." She expressed this again in The Refugee metaphor, "I will have to find work and start looking after myself."

There was a healthy sense of indignity at the lack of help from the government regarding her condo problem, especially after she had given up her husband to war for four years [see The War]. This suggests a heightened sense of self-esteem. A generally more positive self-concept came out of the metaphor work. Rita realised she was capable of doing something to fight her way out of her situation through The War metaphor, and she said she felt more confident going into action. "I'm a survivor," she says in the Husband's Death metaphor.

**SHOCK/UNREALITY:** The \$30,000 assessment on her condo was the first shock, causing Rita to go outside - "just to clear my head a bit," as she says. This feeling of shock was highlighted by all three metaphors, allowing Rita to connect with this emotion fully from various perspectives. The War suggested these feelings at seeing her bombed house after coming back from fighting in Italy. (By default The War as a movie connects to the theme of unreality.) The feeling of shock was also present in The Refugee metaphor where the refugee worked hard to buy a house only to be told by the government he had to leave it. It was no longer his. Finally, in the Husband's Death metaphor, Rita was shocked when her husband died unexpectedly of a heart attack while

in hospital for cancer tests. "Do you think this is a movie or something!" Again, there was a sense of unreality to this situation.

**SPIRITUAL ACCEPTANCE:** Referring to her condo problem in The War metaphor Rita says, "Why did this have to happen to me?" She answers this using the metaphor – Some were saved from the bombing, but "God can't look after everyone." In the Husband's Death metaphor she says, "The only way I can really feel in my heart was that this was something that was meant to be for some reason." It is unclear in the context whether Rita is talking about the metaphor or her condo experience, but it's probably valid for both. "I always feel I'll be taken care of," said Rita in The War, and she felt she would be one of the ones "protected by prayer." Perhaps this is because the Refugee came to Canada to worship his God freely and would be rewarded by Him for doing this.

**ETHICS:** Through The War metaphor Rita realised, "The enemy was really the government," and she felt better knowing there was someone to hold responsible amid all the confusion and finger-pointing. This helped alleviate her own sense of guilt – "It wasn't my fault." The Husband's Death metaphor was useful in structuring the ethical situation of the condo by way of contrast. There was the Seattle doctor (whom I suggested was like the government – less responsible) giving instructions by phone to the Vancouver doctor (like the developer – more responsible). In the metaphor Rita felt it difficult to blame anyone because they did the best they could and her husband's death "was meant to be." However, unlike my suggestion, she reached the conclusion that the government was more responsible – "The builder [the developer] was following the building codes [put in place by government], so I would say the government was still at fault." She was clearly relieved to have resolved the issue of blame.

*Attitudes toward Experience*

FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL – Moving from The War to her condo experience, Rita said, “Now I realise I can fight back.” She appeared to find some optimism, courage and a sense of self-efficacy in the idea of writing letters to protest her situation, an idea that came out of the Husband’s Death metaphor - “It makes me feel good that I’m still capable of doing [something].” In the Husband’s Death metaphor, she also says “I’m going to find some way to come out of it [the condo experience], like I *did* recover from the death of my husband.” She expressed further optimism and hope in The Refugee metaphor, “Someone will take me in and help me.”

SELF: Rita’s metaphors tracked increasingly negative attitudes and feelings about herself at the same time as they tracked an increasing sense of self-efficacy. She expressed self-pity and a fatalistic attitude in The War – “Why did this have to happen to me...And wars will always happen”; however, she did feel like fighting back and identified things she could do to fight back regarding her condo situation. Her anger was more expressed in The Refugee, but she also felt more self-pitying, hopeless, lost and confused, “I don’t fit into this society anymore.” She was angry with the parties involved in her condo problem and at modern society in general where such unfair things could happen. Yet she said, “The metaphor tells me to do what I can do - go for help...or try for making the best of the situation...” In the last metaphor, Husband’s Death, Rita is at rock bottom. She is emotionally devastated and empty from the loss of her husband, left to fend for herself and feeling hopeless. Still, she learns to help herself - she acquires skills in fixing things around the house and learns to drive. She helps her family through their

problems and does some volunteer work to put some purpose into her life. In short, she learns to be independent. As a result, she feels capable of dealing with her condo problem because she dealt with her husband's death, which she felt was much worse. These could be 'transferable skills' that might help her through her condo problem.

LOSS/SEARCHING: The theme of searching, whether it be for a home or a sense of security, was common to all Rita's metaphors and her condo experience. In The War metaphor she equated people's "running for shelter" with her searching for a new home (because she may have to leave her condo). For refugees, of course, home and the idea of home as a place of security are very important. In that metaphor, Rita says of the refugee and herself, "I don't know where I can be at home anymore... You don't know if it's the end [of the condo problems]... I'm always searching for a sense of security."

In the Husband's Death metaphor Rita mentioned losing her husband twice, once to war and once to a heart attack. After that, selling her Vancouver house was a keen loss, and moving to Richmond was the search for a new place to live, just as the refugee from the Ukraine moved to Richmond searching for a new life. Rita also expressed the psychological loss of home [see The Refugee]. She extended this sense of loss to the world she grew up in - where things moved more slowly, and people cared about each other, took responsibility for poor work, and were not only interested in money.

A strong sense of yearning, melancholy and nostalgia ran through all the work I did with Rita. She yearns for the secure past she had with her husband. She has the melancholy of someone whose world of positive values is lost. And she has the nostalgia of the refugee who longs for the old country, feeling he doesn't fit into his new world with its new problems.



*Implications for Action*

INJUSTICE: The idea of writing letter as a valid way of fighting for some justice was reinforced by The War metaphor. Rita had thought of doing this before, but the metaphor motivated her to actually take action. "...I'm into my letter writing. I'm at least doing something." This idea came about because in the Husband's Death metaphor Rita had found it helpful to write letters to her husband to help her through the grieving process and to alleviate her worry over problems that came after his death. This also connected to the dream she had in the week between our interviews in which she received letters from her husband and was comforted by this dream.

SURVIVAL: Rita says in the Husband's Death metaphor, "I'm a survivor and I have to look after myself - get help...do what I can do and carry on." Referring to The Refugee metaphor, I suggested finding other refugees to move in with as a survival option. Rita linked survival with God. In The War metaphor she says some civilians were "protected by prayer," which suggests this as an aid to survival. Knowing she is a practising Lutheran, I suggested she might find someone through her church to help her explore her financial options regarding her condominium. Rita validated this idea herself through the story of her son preparing to travel to South America. She told him, "...if you run into trouble, always look for a church. I think there people will always sort of lead you to something." She now plans to ask her pastor if he know someone who can help her with her finances.

PREVENTION: The Refugee metaphor suggested Rita could get information and help from various refugee support agencies and organisations. The same might have been

done with regard to her condo to alleviate or circumvent the problems she faced. As the refugee she would perhaps need language help to understand her immigrant status regarding ownership of property in Canada before buying her house. This can be associated with getting financial advice regarding her condo and learning the language of finance. In The War Metaphor the repair foreman's telling Rita the building would be condemned in Germany and her overhearing condo owners from another complex talking with him about their problems were like 'rumours of war' or warnings. Rita emphasised that "two countries have to agree on things so fighting doesn't start." She said the parties involved in the condo crisis should have worked together as soon as the problem surfaced. Finally, in the Husband's Death metaphor, Rita's husband complained about the tube down his throat, a warning signal that there could be problems with it.

### **Process Analysis**

Rita said to me regarding the process, "You had just left and I phoned my niece, a nurse, to ask her to help me understand more what you've left me. She said, "Rita, you looked drained." I guess I really was drained, but I didn't know it at the time. At the time I was fine. It was an outlet for some of the feelings."

Rita said the following was more about our relationship than the metaphor work. "I feel much better within myself because I've been able to tell you things that I haven't always talked about." Rita also suggested the metaphors could serve as mnemonic devices, which may be helpful in recalling relevant information. "I think this has all helped me a lot because it's brought thoughts back to me and all these things that I really feel. It also took me back. It sort of felt – there was something you'd almost forgotten."

She said of the process, "I just felt that I probably wasn't giving you good answers. That's why I didn't quite understand. I just thought, *Well, why would they want to know all these metaphors?* Now I think I can see it. Some of these things [metaphors] make up to the things I feel now. They are sort of almost the same thing." Rita consistently connected the feelings from the metaphor to her condo experience. However, this statement suggests caution in interpreting this metaphor work as a complete success.

### **My Process**

We had an extended Intervention Interview. There was a lot of unrelated discussion, but I felt Rita needed to talk about those other things. I steered the conversation back to the thesis concerns where it seemed appropriate. I was also drained at the end of the interview. I checked with Rita a couple of times because I was concerned with how she was holding up. She didn't mind continuing, so we did.

Rita often checked with me to see if what she said made sense or not. I felt the control being offered to me. She often watched carefully for my reactions to what she was saying, so I found myself trying to wear a non-committal expression, until she had finished. Sometimes I had the impression that she was wanting me to lead her, and a couple of times she asked me for help when she could not think of an answer to one of my questions. I told her it was fine if she did not have an answer.

She genuinely enjoyed the process of creating the metaphors, but still more so the interaction and opportunity to tell her story. She seemed genuinely surprised and delighted by what came out of the metaphor intervention.

**CASE 3: DONALD**

“The condo was always just a short-term [thing]. I didn’t see it as my home.

Home is not an apartment or a condo. They’re just places I live. I guess they’re my home and I try to make them look nice, but I don’t get emotionally invested in them. Home I see as somewhere down the road where I’ve got an actual house and a backyard. I always grew up with a backyard. You always had a garden to go into – grow vegetables, flowers, whatever. Some space, room, something I can do something with, like I’d like a study, a music room and a TV room. That would be something I would be emotionally invested in much more than a condo. I haven’t had ‘a home’ since I left my home as a teenager.”

**THE EXPERIENCE**

Donald is a 37-year-old Canadian of mixed ancestry. His mother was British and his father African. He was raised in the U.K. by his mother and a British stepfather, before coming to Canada with them at the age of 13. Donald is currently living with his common-law wife in Vancouver, has no children and works with youth. The condominium he bought in 1996 was in a large complex located in Port Moody, B.C.

Problems were first discovered the year after Donald bought his condominium, and they had still not been fixed when he vacated it in March of 2000. He said the mood around the condominium complex became progressively worse. At first Donald “was at ease because New Home Warranty [NHW] would cover the costs.” He had a sense of security and hope because before NHW went bankrupt, he thought he’d be able to come up with the extra money for repairs. But when NHW went bankrupt he was

“flabbergasted [and] deeply pissed [angry]. My whole financial plan for the next 20 years has just been thrown out of whack.”

“It came down to money,” he said. “Making the decision to go bankrupt gave me a sense of relief. I knew pretty well instantly that I was going to have to go bankrupt. That was the only feasible solution.” Ironically, he also felt lucky. “I’m not as bad off as some people because I put nothing down. I put the bare minimum down. And I’d only been there for three years so I’d hardly sunk any equity into it. So it didn’t pan out as that much of a financial blow to me.”

Donald also felt a sense of detachment from the condo and the situation he was in. “The whole time I was there I was thinking, *This is an investment. I’m not gonna settle here for the rest of my life*. I was gonna probably sell it in five or 10 years and hopefully have it build up some equity.” However, he did feel conned by the government and the developers, and a certain amount of shame in going bankrupt.

Towards the end of his ordeal Donald adopted an ironic attitude towards himself in his situation, and he felt he acted recklessly and passive-aggressively to exact some revenge. He lived rent-free in his condo for several months before declaring bankruptcy. Donald had become more responsible, keeping a budget on computer after buying his condo, and he was paying off his student loan, but then came the condo problem. “Okay, I’ll be the bad credit guy again [because] I’ve been robbed.”

As the main players in his story, Donald included himself, his partner, The New Home Warranty, the provincial and federal governments, the Canadian Home Builders’ Association of B.C., the B.C. Construction Association and the developer. The story began for him when the minutes of a strata council meeting were slipped under the door

of his condominium. Those minutes announced that there would be precautionary tests for leaks because problems were suspected. Engineers came and drilled holes in the building to test for water damage. Donald found this intimidating and frightening because he felt the situation was getting more intense and serious - "Oh my God, is this going to be a leaky condo?" No area of the complex showed signs of damage as far as he knew.

But the report came back again through the minutes of the meeting that there was damage. Another engineer check was done. They determined that major repairs were needed. Then, early in 1999, New Home Warranty went bankrupt. Donald thought, "*It's not a big deal*. I'm sure the government's going to bail them out. They can't just go bankrupt. This is a legal warranty. There's thousands of people. They can't just...leave everybody hanging. Seriously, that's what I believed."

Donald stopped paying his mortgage in June of 1999. "There was [a] mysterious caller...from The National Housekeeping Service [NHS] or something. It sounded pretty shady. I guess it's someone the bank sends over to make sure there's someone living there. They were concerned that I had just left. They didn't want the place empty. This guy was like some kind of private investigator. My partner answered the door, and [the NHS man] said something...[my partner] got a little upset. People started to be a little terse when you're doing this kind of thing. Everybody's on edge."

The bank would call and ask when Donald would be paying his mortgage. He told them he had some financial problems and didn't know when he could pay. They told him they would have to foreclose. "And I said, 'Okay.'" So I dragged it out. I didn't do anything to say I'm going to go bankrupt, so they could say, "Well get the heck out then." The bank finally foreclosed on his mortgage.

Donald declared bankruptcy. He recalls that a few months later there were three messages on his answering machine. A man had come by his condominium. One year after Donald had stopped making mortgage payments, he was given an eviction notice by a courier who arrived one day at noon. The courier had come twice before, again delivering various legal documents from the lawyers for the bank. "I was being passive-aggressive about the whole thing. I was waiting there until they tell me, "Unless you get out on this date, the sheriff's gonna come by and move all your stuff." I wanted to stay there as long as I could and not pay rent." Finally Donald was given 10 days notice to vacate the premises. "It was at the end of school. I had two term papers and a work report due, so the end was just a mad flurry of activity." He said he would go on long bicycle rides to cope with the stress.

Donald was philosophical about his experience. "I learned to be more cynical. I lost some trust in the government. With the construction association, I guess it led me to think that people are maybe a little more greedy than I thought they would be before. On a more positive level, [I learned] to not be so material because material things can disappear - be taken away. It's more existential."

He related his problem to an exercise used by psychiatrist and existentialist Irving Yalom. "You write out...10 different roles you have in life. Put them in order of importance. Then you take them away starting with the least important. You visualise yourself as not having that role anymore. Then you're left with one thing, and you take that away. What's left? That's the essence of just you - just 'being.' So you lose the condo...Is that really you? I kept trying to keep that in mind."

Donald felt detached from the condominium on a spiritual and existential level. "If you look at things from an existential point of view - your condo and bankruptcy, it's all kind of meaningless, so that's what I try to do. Try not to be too material... What are you left with when they [material things] get taken away?" Donald concluded by saying, "I learned that I can deal with a lot of stress and still function pretty well."

### **METAPHOR 1: THE TITANIC**

This story takes place "around the turn of the last century [on the ocean] in a sinking ship. It's a cloudy dark day." Donald feels afraid, "nervous because of the hole [in the ship, and] helpless [because he is] dependent on these other forces [e.g. nature]." Donald, his partner, other passengers, the captain and crew are on the ship.

"The ship wasn't built properly, so the iceberg, which shouldn't have caused damage, did. The ship rocks. People become nervous. The captain reassures everybody, "Hey, it's okay. We've got our people down there working on it. We're going to patch it up, and everybody's going to be fine. Nothing to worry about." So the people feel better, more secure. But then the captain and crew take off in a lifeboat..."

"People are banding together and trying to come up with solutions, having meetings, brainstorming. People [are] bailing out with the [tin] buckets, trying to stop the ship sinking, but it's to no avail. The ship is going down. People are also bailing out themselves - There are only a few lifeboats [and life preservers]. Some people escape on lifeboats. Other people are left on the ship. They will drown eventually."



Donald felt he was one of the survivors of this conflict between man and nature (the ocean and the iceberg). He felt the main theme was betrayal – “Be careful who you trust,” i.e. the captain and crew had left the passengers to their own resources and fled.

### **Content Analysis**

This metaphor was clearly appropriate to Donald’s situation in terms of “the feelings it summons up [e.g. feeling conned, detached, ashamed, angry, and nervous].” The association between The Titanic metaphor and his condominium experience was obvious. They were both the result of nature (the iceberg and rain, respectively) and human workmanship (the builders of the ship and the condominium complex). The destructive force of water was a clear theme, and the implication is that both events were disasters. Hence, this metaphor suggested Donald’s attitude toward his experience – it was a matter of life or death and of forces beyond his control.

The feelings of nervousness and helplessness were common to both the metaphor and the experience. Donald was initially nervous/worried during the time he was uncertain about his condo’s condition and later during the ordeal of his foreclosure and bankruptcy. There was dependency on the forces of nature (the sea/iceberg and rain, respectively), on the builders of the ship and the condominium, and on help in the aftermath (lifeboats/life preservers and the insurance company/government). This metaphor also suggests a feeling of vulnerability, considering how dependent Donald was on “other forces.” The Independent Judge suggested this shows that the metaphor elicited feelings that were not previously articulated. The reassurance of the captain could be associated to having the New Home Warranty and the government’s promise of help -

“We’re going to patch it up [repair the ship/the condominium and compensate you].”

Donald trusted things would work out somehow.

Then came the betrayal of that trust. “The ship is going down [and] the captain and crew take off.” Some people are going to be ‘sunk’ financially, with no help from New Home Warranty or the government. Although the latter set up a no-interest loan program, that is akin to saying, ‘We’ll save you, but very slowly and at your own expense’. It was not discussed, but the captain and crew deceived the passengers by saying, “Nothing to worry about” - a theme which is highlighted in *The Third Man* metaphor (see below). The captain and crew didn’t stay with the ship – the government and the developers didn’t take responsibility for the poorly constructed condos.

“Bailing out [water] with the buckets” is ironically comparable to putting money into repairs. Here the metaphor takes a decidedly pessimistic turn – “It’s to no avail.” This reflects Donald’s pessimism around his foreclosure and bankruptcy. Some people will survive financially and stay to repair their condos (use the lifeboats) and others will cling to life preservers (go bankrupt and/or walk away with perhaps a little money in their pockets but no home).

Donald sees himself as one of those who clung to a life preserver – a survivor. In spite of being a survivor, the metaphor clearly highlighted and allowed him to explore a variety of more negative attitudes and feelings around his condo experience. It also suggested others that were not explored, like vulnerability (see above) and perhaps ambivalent feelings about surviving his experience by going bankrupt (the possible survivor guilt of some Titanic passengers).

Help came afterwards for the survivors of the Titanic in the form of another ship that rescued them and for some leaky condo owners in the form of insurance and/or no-interest loans. "Other people are left on the ship. They will drown eventually." Donald said, "It's a depressing metaphor. It makes me feel like a victim." These people left on the ship could be those who 'sink' money (sometimes a lot of money) into the condo repairs and then go bankrupt, suggesting the implications of deciding to 'stay the course' for condo owners. This validates for Donald his decision to 'jump ship' – to declare bankrupt and abandon his condo - which in this context is a hopeful step. This highlights the ability of metaphors to reframe a problem in more positive terms and to understand better the implications of various actions.

### **Process Analysis**

"It [the metaphor] helped me somewhat to explore the feelings that I was going through and the different experiences. The way that you could construe [the experience] differently...[but] I don't think it made me think about it any differently." He later noted that the metaphor gave him "a little more insight into the feelings I went through. I was able to explore the feelings, but I don't think about the experience in a qualitatively different way." Donald felt he would not make any changes to The Titanic metaphor that might change the way he could have dealt with his condo experience. In retrospect, he said he would deal with both situations the same way.

He appeared more adept at extending the metaphors once they suggested themselves to him. He noted he was skipping back and forth between the experience and the metaphor during the metaphor development process. Finally, Donald seemed to have

a difficult time inventing metaphors. He sometimes described or defined elements of his experience and seemed to believe those elements were metaphors.

### **My Process**

I felt the struggle to elicit metaphors from Donald because he seemed to either have a difficult time coming up with them or did not have a clear idea of what they were. We stopped to look at the distinction between a metaphor for a dramatic element (e.g. the setting) and a pure description or definition of that element.

I was very involved in directing him through the process, which I felt took away from his freedom to express and develop ideas he had. I think the time constraints also affected his ability and mine to engage deeply in the imaginative process of metaphor creation because we were both aware he had a limited amount of time for the interviews. This was a major difference from the first two co-researchers.

### **METAPHOR 2: THE RUGBY GAME**

The action takes place on a rugby field in Australia in the present day. The mood is intimidating and depressing. It is a dark cloudy day with periodic rain, and the field is muddy. The props for this drama are the rugby ball, teeth lying on the field, bloodied uniforms and the fists of the rugby players. The cast includes Donald (a team member) and his teammates, the opposition team, the referee, and the team owners and managers.

“It’s a very rough game. For some reason the referee allows for more brutality than is usually acceptable. There are lots of casualties – people being carried out on stretchers. A few survive with minor injuries. The other team wins because my team

didn't work together. Perhaps there was money involved, and the people organising the game told the referee anything goes [as far as behaviour is concerned]."

The game is "more or less rigged. There's somebody gaining money somehow by letting it go on this way. The players are getting cheated because they're being used in this game. It's just greed on the part of the team owners. The players were disappointed. They don't trust anybody anymore afterwards. They don't trust the team [or] organisers because the team didn't pull together and because they were set up by the owners." There is a general theme of "disappointment - When the going gets tough...you can only count on yourself in the face of trouble or disaster."

### **Content Analysis**

"It does fit [my experience] well. It's one way of looking at it. This fits my experience in...the times when I was feeling more beaten down by it. As I was going through it there would be periods where I'd be just feeling kind of crappy about it. And this [metaphor] fits the experience at those points. Other times I'd be more philosophical and removed from it or even treat it lightly at other times which is this other metaphor [Metaphor 3: The Third Man]." The Rugby Game metaphor highlighted negative feelings for exploration and processing – especially notable is how Donald extends the metaphor with the phrase "beaten down by [the condo experience]."

"Australia is a little far away, as is Port Moody. Not as far as Australia, but it's not Vancouver. It's somewhere else." Donald mentioned that he had always lived in Vancouver before he moved to Port Moody. "I moved far away to get involved in this thing [the leaky condo problem]." 'Being philosophical and removed' is one of Donald's

recognised coping strategies. The implication here is that psychological and perhaps geographical distance helped him cope. The metaphor suggested this additional means of coping with his condo experience. Perhaps, if he moved away from Vancouver to get in trouble, he could move back to Vancouver to get out of trouble.

Donald agreed that this metaphor reflected and highlighted some of the more negative feelings - the "down times" - that he had not talked about when initially discussing his condo experience. It allowed us to explore his feelings of intimidation, fear (and perhaps dread at seeing the drill holes in the condominium walls) by way of the metaphor's images - the fists, the teeth lying on the field, and the bloodied uniforms. "I was actually visualising [the game] in slow motion as if it was a movie, like *Raging Bull* or something." His condo experience was also 'dangerous play' between Donald and the developer, government and others. The rules were no longer enforced, i.e. the building codes, so "the gloves are off" (see The Third Man metaphor analysis below and in reference to *Raging Bull* above).

Donald went on to conceptualise the interrelationships of cast members in terms of the metaphor, helping him to make sense of how responsible each was for his situation. The team owners would be the owners of the building (the developer). Donald's fellow team members would be the other people living in his condo. The opposition team would be the building inspector, the architects, the provincial government and the developers. The government was also referee in so far as setting up the rules (the building codes) *or lack thereof* that allowed the game to turn violent.

"The managers [are] caught in the middle. I can't realistically see the managers allowing their team to just get bludgeoned in this metaphor. The middle people would be

perhaps New Home Warranty [NHW] because they had good intentions. They intended to cover people's losses and then they just got overwhelmed. They just didn't have enough money. They thought, *We're just going to play a good game*. They didn't realise it was going to turn really violent." Donald acknowledged that this insight into New Home Warranty's role came as a result of the metaphor work. He used the metaphor to support the view that NHW was "caught in the middle."

Differences between the metaphor and the experience also helped Donald to make sense of and find more meaning in his experience. "People [his team members] were sort left hung out to dry...in this metaphor I see the owners knew all along what they were doing, but in the original [experience]...the government didn't expect this to happen, neither did the developers. I don't think they intended these buildings to fall apart...but they [the developers] did cut corners. They *were* acting unethically."

It is interesting to note how Donald's choice of words here – "People were sort of left hung out to dry" – is thematically linked to his leaky condo experience. This suggests some unconscious processing of the experience in terms of the metaphor, where players were left to financially injure each other with impunity. The implication here is that both Donald and his team (the other leaky condo owners) and the opposition (the government and other institutions involved) hurt each other. In response to a game without rules (the leaky condo crisis), Donald lived rent-free in his condo and intentionally took liberties with his credit cards before his planned bankruptcy, and the developer and construction associations, in turn, did nothing financially to help the condo owners. In the context of this metaphor, even the government's interest-free loans could be viewed as 'financial

blows' to the condo owners, and the developers cutting corners suggests unethical manoeuvring, in keeping with the idea of 'a game without rules'.

Donald also linked the metaphor to his experience in terms of personal resources/problem solving and got a surprising new perspective on himself within his experience. Again he uses a spontaneous metaphor – “money sunk into their condos” – which suggests some unconscious processing of his experience as it links to the water theme. “Some players are big enough and strong enough that they can hold their own on the field. [They are] dextrous - They can dodge other players coming at them, and they're fast on their feet, [but] everybody gets injured. I see myself as one of the people who got away with minor injuries, although there *were* injuries. Some people in the condo thing had too much money sunk into their condos to go bankrupt... They have to stay in the game. I guess, maybe I left the game. I'm not part of the game... Yeah right, in the context of this metaphor I feel guilty because I left the rest of my team members on the field - *I'm outta here!*” kind of thing. I left the game because I just saw there's just no way of winning this. This is not a good thing. There's no way of coming out on top here.” The metaphor validated Donald's course of action through its reframing of his experience and highlighted the feeling of guilt Donald conceded was present though not a dominant emotion. Fear, anger, and depression were probably the main feelings.

I suggested to Donald that he wanted to survive the game, that it *was* only a game, and that he didn't want his teeth knocked out, using the metaphor to validate his behaviour. He agreed and could see how these attitudes and goals linked to his earlier existential ideas – that the condo is *not* Donald and not to be too materialistic because



things can be taken away. He wanted to stay in one piece, even if his condo wasn't in one piece. This clarified his perspective as it linked to the themes of his experience.

Further to this existential attitude or perspective Donald said, "I put it all in financial terms to cope. How can I reduce my financial losses? So I just did all the figures, and I figured bankruptcy was the most logical thing to do. I think, *Well it's just money - Nobody's dying*. It just comes down to money. Although money issues always cause me stress on a certain level, it's easy to get philosophical about it for me. I rationalise it and say, "Hey, it's just money."

His rationalisation gave Donald some distance from the problem and a more objective view of 'the big picture.' It clarified his priorities and brought a humorous perspective to the bankruptcy. He's not dying. "I didn't lose a limb or something. My life hasn't been terribly set back. It's just, *Okay, I lost some money - gotta work a little harder - make some more money* (laughter)." The comment about not losing a limb is perhaps a reflection of my comment (previous paragraph) that he wants to stay in one piece and elaborates on the metaphor's meaning.

Donald elaborated on the personal resources the metaphor and his experience had in common. Strength was "having the financial resources, [I suggested 'a strong financial position' vis-à-vis the metaphor] and also on an emotional level, the coping skills to be able to work through all the stress that you're under - the fact that you're being financially hit up. Everybody's put under extra financial pressure. I think it would just come down to general skills for coping with stress: exercising, having some kind of spiritual outlet, [and] being able to rationalise what your situation is." From the experience, "being financially hit up" and "under extra financial pressure" compare

thematically with the metaphor's violence, giving indirect expression to the emotions of both the metaphor and his condo experience - fear, stress, depression and perhaps anger. Beyond this the metaphor brought a new yet familiar language to his experience.

Referring generally to his condo experience Donald said, "This is more of a complete experience. [The metaphor] is only part of it." Cynicism is one of the parts that linked the experience with the metaphor. Donald saw other people through the metaphor as greedy, selfish and undependable. Even team-mates were suspect. "It's almost like this is the first stage [the metaphor] and later I'll reach that stage [the experience]." He referred here to the progression from being more to less materialistic, an important theme of his condo experience. Again using water imagery, I commented that 'the glass is half full' in his experience because he remembers to be less materialistic and more existential in outlook, and half empty in the metaphor because he is cynical and vengeful e.g. in taking liberties with his credit cards. Donald's comment about the stages is also interesting because it suggests that metaphors may be useful in tracking changes of attitude and perhaps other changes in self as well. The implication here is that metaphors may reflect earlier stages of development that need to be acknowledged and/or processed further in counselling.

Donald said he felt "disappointed that the owners [developers] have let this happen." I noted that disappointment was like 'an undercurrent' and suggested there might be deeper negative feelings as well. "Betrayed, yeah, that comes into it, [and] huge disappointment. I guess there's [also] anger in there towards the people that betrayed you [the owners and the referee - the developers and the government]. Just disappointed with

the managers [New Home Warranty].” This again highlights how extending metaphors work can aid in exploring feelings and bring further meaning to an experience.

I finally asked Donald if the metaphor suggested any new ways of dealing with problems like the leaky condo in the future. He said, “This suggests staying out of the game altogether, which is something I don’t want to do. I want to eventually buy property again, [but] I have to make other people wary of getting involved. Go to the press...and telling them the story...that these people [the developers and government] are greedy and selfish, and people are suffering. I *have* thought of that before, [but] not in the same way. I thought of doing something to discredit the developers. I had ideas for web pages and get everybody who wants to chip in a buck...take out a full page ad in the Vancouver Sun with the name of every developer that built a leaky condo.”

It is doubtful whether or not the metaphor suggested this new tactic – going to the press with the story - unless Donald had in mind exposing the scandal of the rigged rugby game. Here the metaphor contrasted with Donald’s view of buying property in the future, and this contrast perhaps strengthened his resolution to eventually buy again.

### **Process Analysis**

Donald said of the process, “It was kind of fun actually. I actually enjoyed it. It’s good to be able to look at it from another perspective. I like to talk about it, the condo thing. So it’s like a venting. It’s processing. It’s thinking about the condo experience in different ways. And actually, because it’s not the actual condo experience, it’s perhaps easier to think about it because the condo experience is kind of depressing. The feelings are depressing. This [the metaphor work] is more distant - dissociating a bit from the

actual feelings and the actual thing.” Perhaps this dissociating allows for unconscious processing of the experience through the metaphor.

Donald did, however, find it difficult to develop the metaphor without referring to his experience for inspiration. “I was trying to be metaphorical the whole time.” He felt that, in developing the metaphor without referring to the experience, the metaphor “could be something completely unrelated [to the experience].” He said he consciously “kept getting back to the themes [of his experience], except just now I didn’t. When we were developing the plot [of the metaphor] more, just now in here, I wasn’t thinking [about] the condo. I guess I go back and forth - *Okay well let’s forget about the condo. Let’s look at this now. What’s gonna make this a consistent plot that’s going to hang together?*”

“Sometimes I do treat [the experience] very lightly. I tend to rationalise and intellectualise and disconnect from the emotional aspects of it, and this [the metaphor work] is a way to explore the emotional impact.” But he did not think the metaphor affected his view of his experience. “I’ve thought about it *so much*. I’ve looked at it through every lens you can imagine. I don’t know if I could change it anymore.” However he did say, “In the future I guess I wouldn’t buy a condo. I wouldn’t get involved in ‘the game’ (another way that metaphor fits). I guess it validates my previous thoughts on the thing - reinforces my current thinking, which is like *be bloody careful...even buying an insurance policy.*”

### **My Process**

In retrospect it was interesting how I spontaneously used a water image and metaphor – ‘undercurrent of disappointment’ and ‘the glass half full’ - in reflecting his

experience back to him. This was another way of expressing deeper empathy and/or achieving rapport with Donald. The idea of undercurrent came up because I suspected there were more strongly negative feelings associated with the metaphor that might apply to his experience as well, and the glass cliché illustrated the pessimistic negative view of the metaphor and the optimistic positive view of the experience.

### **METAPHOR 3: THE THIRD MAN**

This third metaphor is based loosely on a movie, which is set in Vienna during World War II. *The Third Man* has an atmosphere of “lies and deceit [and] sleazy shadowy characters. There is a crime syndicate, Harry Lime (“the affable rogue”) and some nice people.”

The plot involves cash and diamonds. “The swindle happened first. The double cross was that Harry Lime...made a deal with the mob because Harry Lime’s a crook, [but] the mob swindled Harry Lime. Then Harry comes back and swindles the mob.” A snitch or an informer, arriving at midnight, feeds information to Harry about his being double-crossed by the crime syndicate (the mob). Harry takes a cynical attitude toward the whole thing. He says, “[It’s a] dog eat dog world. Nice guys finish last.”

### **Content Analysis**

The central plot elements of *The Third Man* metaphor are a swindle and a double-cross. These neatly structured Donald’s perception of his condo experience and facilitated exploring the ethical issues raised. Firstly, there is the swindle. “You buy the condo in good faith, then you get shafted by ‘the powers that be’ [the developer, government, and

others directly involved]. The bottom line is you're...hung out to dry. [You end up bankrupt and homeless in Donald's case]. Lies and deceit - although I don't know if they were consciously aware of their lies and deceit in the real thing [the condo experience], you know they're selling you 'this fine product' that's just a lemon."

The implication here is that the developers by selling poorly constructed condominiums, and the government and others, by not helping when they promised to help, did not hold themselves accountable for their deceit and lies, regardless of their intentions. There are also interesting implications in Donald's use of the metaphorical position of 'hanging' here and in The Rugby Game metaphor and process analysis (see above), where he respectively said, "'People were sort of left hung out to dry'" and he worried about "the plot [of his metaphor] hanging together." The literal pun on the 'leaky' condo owners is obvious, but there is also the metaphorical pun on the idea of having no money left [being dry or without 'liquidity']. The latter was perhaps unconscious but is no less valid. Finally, the lemon which Donald associates with his condominium, links in here thematically as a strong sensory cliché, perhaps reflecting unconsciously his bitter emotions around the "lies and deceit" and the 'sweetness' of the deal he thought he had in buying his condo.

Secondly, there is the double-cross. If "the crime syndicate is the developers in cahoots with the government," then Donald is "the affable rogue [because] I feel like I took the situation and turned it around a bit...I said, "There's no way out of this for me. [If I]...stick with this condo and borrow the money and put it all into this thing...I don't even know if they're going to fix it properly, and I'd never get my money back trying to sell the condo. So therefore I'll go bankrupt and just do it in a big way. When you go

bankrupt, everything goes. I had income tax, personal loans, plus the way I lived there – [I] stopped paying the mortgage to see how long I could stay there before they kicked me out. I kind of treated it like a joke. It took a long time [for them to kick me out]. I was agreeable the whole time. I was never rude to anybody, [but] I probably wasn't acting in good faith. There was credit cards involved too. They all had very low balances, but they didn't have by the time I went bankrupt. I just milked everything. "I'm getting treated really shitty here," so "Okay, I'm gonna milk it...If it comes down to money...I'm gonna come out on top.'" Here the metaphor illustrates nicely Donald's understanding of himself and his actions in the context of his experience in the image of "the affable rogue" - never rude but as he said before "passive-aggressive" and vengeful.

Donald extended the metaphor to include others involved, expanding the network of meaning within his experience and further exploring its ethical aspects. "There's nice people in the condo. What I did doesn't really affect them in any way. The people that lose money because of what I did are Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CHMC]. They're gonna foot the bill for the condo because they guaranteed my loan. So they lose. They're caught in the crossfire. It's not my fault. I didn't build a leaky condo. (I'm thinking I'm partly guilty here), but CMHC is more able to swallow up the cost than I am. And I guess CMHC is funded by the taxpayers so in the end the taxpayers...are the ones that foot the bill. I guess they are 'the nice people' that get caught in the crossfire...I don't feel good about it. [I feel] a little bit guilty." However, if presented with the same situation again, he said, "I would probably do exactly the same thing I did. If somebody rips me off then you know the gloves are off. Anything goes." Here "The gloves are off" could be connected to the "fists" of The Rugby Player metaphor. The theme of survival

suggested itself, as it did in the first two metaphors, and validated Donald's decision to declare bankruptcy. The Third Man led directly to the insight regarding CMHC's position in the context of events and highlighted Donald's feelings of guilt around the bankruptcy.

Other themes of the metaphor – “[It’s a] dog eat dog world, [and] nice guys finish last.” – illustrated Donald's perspective on his condo experience. “Compared to themes of [the] experience, being too material [in the metaphor] is opposite. This is a sort of an enlightened part here [the experience theme], but this [the metaphor theme] is not very [enlightened]. I wasn’t nice through this thing [his condo experience]. If I was gonna be nice, I would’ve lost my shirt...So I was basically an asshole I think, but I didn’t lose my shirt.” The idea of self-development occurs again here (see The Rugby Game metaphor analysis), and again it’s a change in attitude – ‘enlightenment’ - that the metaphor tracks. It was probably unconscious, but Donald's characterising himself as an asshole relates to the statement above that he was “getting treated really shitty.” This suggests that as Harry Lime, he would be as corrupt as the mob (the government and developer) even facilitate his being treated like shit by being an asshole - going bankrupt, which helps and harms him. This is noteworthy because Harry Lime was chased through the sewers of Vienna in The Third Man movie, although this scene wasn’t included in the metaphor work.

“I’ve been legally shafted. You can’t sue the developers because they’ve got no money because each building has a holding company...it’s like trying to get blood from a stone. So there’s no where to go. They are legally protected. So I figured, *What can I legally do to maximise recouping my losses?* So even though it was sleazy, I didn’t do anything illegal...[but the metaphor] brings home the kind of sleaziness of it. I mean it wasn’t pleasant. [Their actions] and my actions too - The whole thing.” The metaphor,



with its sleazy shadowy characters, brings up some very unpleasant associations for Donald regarding how he dealt with his condo problem.

“And actually, even though it was so intense, when I got that 10-day notice, in a way I was relieved because it meant that I didn’t have to continue this thing...I don’t like living not paying any rent and kind of just basically squatting, waiting for...the legal notice that you’re gonna get evicted from your house and creditors...but I felt kind of locked in because I was not paying any rent [and] saving all this money, potentially saving \$600 a month. How do you walk away from that? So this way I was forced out of it...I was living this thing, but I wanted to get it over with.”

Donald’s paradoxical attitude toward his actions and perceived situation is nicely encapsulated the metaphor ‘locked in’. This captures the pun of being locked into his condominium, the metaphor of being locked in a difficult financial position and the ethical dilemma he felt he was in (perhaps ‘locked’ on the horns of a dilemma). Squatting and being relieved also tie in logically to the scatological references above. Squatting might represent Donald’s guilt feelings around living rent-free in his condo, and ‘being relieved’ is finally declaring bankruptcy and ‘getting out of the sewer’. From a Freudian perspective, these scatological associations suggest unacknowledged feelings of disgust both with himself and the others involved in his condo experience.

Other connections were made between the metaphor and Donald’s condo experience. The diamond and cash of the metaphor link literally and metaphorically to the money at stake in the experience. There is “worry that you’re gonna lose yours. It’s going to cost you.” This last sentence is quite evocative. It suggests there may be other things to lose apart from money. Donald also connected the drill that was used to

discover the condo problem (bad news) to the “snitch” (the courier) who brought “dangerous scary information with him” regarding Donald’s position with the bank and its lawyers. He said, “It was totally intense when he [the courier] first arrived.”

“[Later] I was used to these couriers coming and giving me these legal packages...I had two of them already...By the time I got the really dangerous one [with his eviction notice], I was like, “Yeah, yeah, whatever, I’ll take this.” And I’m reading it and I’m like, “Huh!” (Laughter). Now that’s game over. I thought the game was going to go on for longer. My heart started pounding, and I lighted this cigarette, and I basically almost chain-smoked for the whole 10-day period. I had to write two term papers. I had a six-page report due for work. I had to find a place. I had to pack all my stuff.” Here “the game” perhaps makes reference to The Rugby Game metaphor. The intensity and danger of both would seem to suggest this. However, Donald also saw some humour in this crisis moment, although it is unclear if the metaphor facilitated this.

Donald was doubtful at one point whether this metaphor affected how he felt about his experience. However, what he said above and my analysis of it in terms of the metaphor speak to a heightened awareness of some feelings (e.g. guilt) and suggest others for perhaps the first time (e.g. ambivalence). The metaphor also clearly gave him a different perspective on himself, his behaviour and the ethical issues of his experience.

Finally, Donald felt this metaphor was an illustration of a coping technique he uses – making light of a difficult situation. “Now whenever I’m thinking of this [experience], I’m gonna picture Orson Welles [Harry Lime] cackling, “The Swiss - they built the cuckoo clock. In 2000 years they’ve had no war, and the most productive thing they’ve done is build a cuckoo clock.” - because you like this guy Orson Welles, even

though he's a bad guy.'"" However, Donald did not feel that he, Donald, was a bad guy.

There may be an unconscious reference here to Canadians who, like the Swiss are generally perceived as peace-loving, but build leaky condos – cuckoo clocks.

### **Process Analysis**

Donald appeared very involved in the process of developing this metaphor. He was at times surprised by and uncomfortable with the exploration of complex ethical issues facilitated by the metaphor work. He appeared to be ambivalent about his behaviour at times and his attitude toward the government, the developer and others involved in his experience. The Third Man metaphor encapsulated this in the figure of Harry Lime, “the affable rogue” – a reflection of Donald in his dilemma. The differences between Donald’s experience and the metaphor also reflected his ambivalent attitude toward the government, the developer and others involved - perhaps they were well-intentioned *unlike* the crime syndicate of the metaphor.

The pun on the Harry Lime – being at once sweet and bitter – and the apparent oxymoron of “the affable rogue” also reflected Donald’s conflicting feelings regarding himself and his actions. He went bankrupt by taking liberties with his credit cards and stopped paying rent on his condominium, but this was only to recoup some of his inevitable financial losses as a result of the condo problem. He later noted, “The process was a good experience. I did not like doing what I did - there was some guilt involved - and it felt good to discuss the ethical issues in this context - gave me more insight again.”

## **My Process**

I felt this was a difficult metaphor to work on because it raised difficult ethical issues for Donald. At times, I think we were both uncomfortable with the its implication that his actions around his bankruptcy were questionable. Although Donald said this metaphor presented a somewhat humorous view of his experience, I felt it was a sardonic and bitter humour. I also felt at times that the metaphor seemed to take on a life of its own in terms of what it implied about the parties involved in Donald's condo experience. It suggested so strongly that the government, developer and Donald acted unethically that it almost interpreted itself in that regard.

## **CROSS-METAPHOR ANALYSIS**

### **Content Analysis**

Donald viewed his experience from a variety of perspectives that brought meaning to his experience and insights into himself, his actions and his dilemma regarding his bankruptcy. The Third Man was especially useful in structuring and clarifying the dilemma he faced with his bankruptcy. The metaphors also reflected Donald's feelings. The Rugby Game, especially, highlighted intensely some of the more negative feelings (like anger) on the 'down days' that he experienced during his ordeal.

### *Perspectives on Experience*

ENLIGHTENMENT: Donald identified differences in perspective between his experience and the metaphors with regard to values and priorities. The metaphors

illustrated regressive or less enlightened perspectives. As Harry Lime in *The Third Man*, Donald saw himself as valuing material possessions and money, while he felt in his condo experience, “from an existentialist point of view – your condo and bankruptcy – it’s all kind of meaningless.” As a player in *The Rugby Game*, Donald was involved in the violence, but he realised it wasn’t worth getting injured financially, so he left the game. Looking at this metaphor vis-à-vis his experience Donald said, “It’s just money – nobody’s dying.” These metaphors then validated his more positive existential perspective on material goods and bankruptcy regarding his condo experience through their negative contrast with that experience.

Again in *The Rugby Game* Donald took a cynical view of the other people involved, believing everyone was untrustworthy and/or greedy, including his own teammates. He says of this, “It’s almost like this is the first stage [the metaphor] and later I’ll reach that stage [the experience].” Again Donald referred to the progression toward being less materialistic and, in this case, perhaps viewing people in general with more acceptance of their flaws and realising they may have good intentions [see Responsibility below regarding this metaphor].

SELF: Donald gained insight into himself and validated his actions through the metaphor work. As a Titanic survivor he saw himself as having little choice but to ‘jump ship’ and leave his condo behind. This is further validated by *The Rugby Game* where he left the game when it turned violent. *The Third Man* highlighted Donald’s ambivalent view of his own behaviour. Donald as Harry Lime in Vienna “is a crook,” one of the “shadowy characters” with a dark side, who acted unethically as did the mob (the developer and government), but he was also ‘a stranger in a strange land’ and an “affable

rogue” doing bad things under duress. This connects to his experience where, after acting responsibly in financial matters for a time, he says, “Okay, I’ll be the bad credit guy again [because] I’ve been robbed.”

**RESPONSIBILITY:** This is one of the key concepts in existentialist theory and relates to Donald’s perspective on his experience. The metaphors structured the degrees of responsibility of various characters involved in his condo ordeal and illustrated the concept of responsibility developmentally. The Titanic created a somewhat ‘black and white’ picture of things. The ship builder, captain and crew were at fault, and the passengers did what they could to survive as a result. In The Rugby Game the allocation of responsibility was more subtle. The government carried greater responsibility because they affected the game rules (the building codes) and did not help when the game turned violent (when money was involved). Donald also conceded that the opposition and team owners probably didn’t intend for the game to become violent (for the condos to leak).

Donald also had an insight into the role of New Home Warranty that was carried through to The Third Man metaphor. He saw them in The Rugby Game as “the middle people...overwhelmed ...They thought, *We’re just going to play a good game.*” In The Third Man they were unfortunately “caught in the crossfire.” In the latter metaphor Donald again reallocates responsibility, shifting more onto himself. He was himself a criminal – Harry Lime - like the mob (the government and developer) because of some of his actions, e.g. living rent-free in his condo before declaring bankruptcy.

**TIME:** Two of Donald’s metaphors took place in the past, The Titanic and The Third Man, while The Rugby Game was in the present. If metaphors can track stages in processing an experience, Donald’s metaphors suggest the condo experience is basically

resolved for him because they represent earlier stages of processing (see Enlightenment and Responsibility above). Although he must deal with his bankruptcy for several years still, he appears to have put the condo ordeal behind him and at least partially resolved the ethical issues around his actions through the metaphor work.

UNREALITY: Two of Donald's metaphors involved movies, *The Third Man* and *The Titanic*. (Although the latter was taken as the real event, Donald said he was also thinking of the movie.) He also made reference to the movie *Raging Bull* in *The Rugby Game*, and in one part of this metaphor, he mentioned seeing the action in slow motion - a filming technique. These metaphors suggest a further distancing of perspective on the condo experience because they are 'unreal' in themselves and, in retrospect, more reflective. I would go further and suggest that Donald, apart from distancing himself from the negative emotions and shock of his experience through an existential perspective, felt an unreal sense of slow motion around his foreclosure and bankruptcy as he "dragged it out." This sense of slow motion is sometimes one of the effects of shock.

WATER: The damaging effect of water was the source of Donald's condo problem. Water imagery and metaphor came up directly in *The Titanic* metaphor where it was a destructive force that meant the difference between life and death. It perhaps implied an undercurrent of fear for survival in Donald at the prospect of losing his condo. In *The Rugby Game* players (leaky condo owners) were "left hung out to dry" by the team managers and opposition (government, the developers and others). Because there was the threat to survival here also, Donald might have said they were left hung out to *die*. In the same metaphor, he said some people already had "a lot of money sunk into

their condos” – perhaps theirs would be a financial death. Here the implication is that the condos are like water that money sinks in.

### *Attitudes toward Experience*

SHADES OF VIOLENCE: There was a general trend in the metaphors involving shades of themes. All the metaphors had shades of violence, with people drowning in *The Titanic*, people being brutalised in *The Rugby Game*, and people being deceived in *The Third Man*. In the latter, Donald is also forced into a moral dilemma (psychological brutality). It was not discussed during the interviews, but *The Third Man* movie also involved the shooting death of the main character, Harry Lime (Donald). These metaphors perhaps imply the unconscious impact of his condo experience on Donald.

SHADES OF ATMOSPHERE/FEELINGS: There were also shades of feeling and atmosphere among the metaphors. “This one [*The Titanic*] is really depressing because people are dying, drowning...It’s a dark cloudy day.” Again it would reflect the more serious thoughts I had about the condo experience.” Indeed, *The Titanic* suggests the condo problem felt like a matter of life or death. In *The Rugby Game* metaphor it is also a dark cloudy day, but Donald felt it was not as dark as in *The Titanic* metaphor because “at least people aren’t dying.” The feelings included stress, disappointment, betrayal and anger. Finally, *The Third Man* metaphor highlighted a humorous attitude Donald had toward his experience at times. He felt *The Third Man* metaphor was lighter “because it’s just money...It kind of made light of the whole experience, the condo thing. [It was an] almost comedic at times scenario or plot. It made it [the experience] seem less intense and dark.” Notable here is the pun on light, which could be taken literally, although *The*



Third Man also contained some very dark themes – deceit and corruption. In spite of the humorous attitude Donald mentions above, there were some feelings of guilt, tension, anger, fear and worry connecting this metaphor to his condo experience. The connection between these attitudinal themes and some perspectival themes above is noteworthy.

Again here there is a general developmental trend, from metaphor one to metaphor three, toward a more positive attitude as there was toward more positive perspectives in the Enlightenment and Responsibility themes above. The Independent Judge suggested this trend shows his condo issues may be getting resolved for Donald.

**DANGER-VULNERABILITY:** Danger was a general theme with a variety of sub-themes in Donald's experience and metaphors. In The Titanic the vulnerability was a life and death issue. It was implied in Donald's dependence on the ship, on weather, on the captain and crew and fellow passengers. In The Rugby Game there was an atmosphere of violence that suggested physical vulnerability, e.g. broken teeth on the field, and the potential of getting badly hurt. Finally in The Third Man, there was vulnerability to moral corruption and the courier's "dangerous scary information."

**DANGER-GUILT:** Although Donald said he did not have 'survivor guilt' for 'jumping ship' in The Titanic metaphor, in The Rugby Game he did feel some guilt in abandoning the rest of the team. He too was one of the team-mates who didn't work together. This was a surprising insight for him, and I believe the guilt was also present on an unconscious level as we worked on The Titanic metaphor. Finally, through The Third Man metaphor, Donald acknowledged feeling guilty that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation were "caught in crossfire" and that taxpayers would ultimately be the ones paying for his bankruptcy.

DANGER-TRUST: In The Titanic the passengers aboard the ship trusted the captain and crew only to be deceived and abandoned. In The Rugby Game the players thought they would play a good game but, because money was involved, the rules of the game were ignored and it turned violent. Finally, in The Third man metaphor there was deceit and corruption, with all the main characters acting unethically, betraying each other – “a swindle and a double-cross.” Donald mentioned how his condo experience has made him distrustful of others and the metaphors clearly illustrate that.

### *Implications for Action*

DETACHMENT – Donald took an existential ‘easy come, easy go’ attitude toward his condo experience in order to put it into perspective and handle it with some equanimity. The humour of The Third Man also helped to achieve some distance from the negative feelings of the experience. In the Rugby Game Donald felt the metaphor work was “dissociating from the actual feelings and the actual thing,” implying the metaphor acted as a buffer from the impact of the experience. In addition to psychologically distancing himself from it, Donald also moved back to Vancouver, distancing himself physically. It is perhaps noteworthy that all his metaphors were set in foreign locations, particularly considering he immigrated to Canada from a foreign country. His condo experience may have triggered earlier feelings of being an outsider.

SURVIVAL: In terms of his personal survival, The Third Man metaphor validated Donald’s shady dealings – taking liberties with his credit cards and living rent free in order to recoup lost equity on his condo. “I’m gonna milk it...If it comes down to money...I’m gonna come out on top.” The Titanic implied that people could sink money

into their condos, but it was a lost cause. This again validated Donald's bailing himself out as above. Finally, The Rugby Game was pessimistic on the question of buying a home in the future. "I guess I wouldn't buy a condo. I wouldn't get involved in the game." The possibility of getting seriously hurt financially was present in the atmosphere of the game and in the math Donald did on the feasibility of keeping his condo. It is possible this metaphor triggered the idea of going to the press with his story, so that other people would not be endangered in the way he was. However, in the end Donald felt he would buy again - but probably a house not a condo - so he continues to hope despite the setback of his condo ordeal.

### **Process Analysis**

Donald said he drew on his leaky condo experience as inspiration for his metaphors. He found himself going back and forth between them and the experience. Feelings he had had, but were not conscious in the moment, came up in the metaphors. He felt the metaphor work helped him to be more introspective and reflective, to tap into subconscious levels of awareness, and to process the experience more fully and deeply.

"The only thing I had trouble with was trying to develop an alternate story separate from the condo experience when the metaphor is based on the original experience you're always going back because that's where it came from. Then it would develop more and, okay, now you've got something to work with, then you could kind of build it more. But when you've just got the one piece - it was hard for me to know where to go without drawing on the experience." Donald's comments here suggest a valid methodological concern. Perhaps the metaphors should be developed with immediate

reference to the experience, instead of being developed apart from the experience and then compared to it in retrospect.

He continued by saying, "I enjoyed it. It's kind of fun...It's more processing of the whole thing because people don't like to talk about it at work. They like to a little bit – and your friends – but people don't want to hear other people's sob stories. To talk to someone about it, and in such a colourful way too - it was interesting because I'm not just telling you the story. I'm finding other ways to look at it, other angles, a completely different way." Donald said he wouldn't change any of the metaphors.

### **My Process**

Overall, I found it a challenge to work with Donald on his metaphors because they seemed to gravitate toward ethical issues. He found it initially difficult to grasp the nature of this kind of metaphor work, and he did not readily discover connections between his experience and his metaphors. I found myself being more active in the metaphor making process because of this, suggesting connections and explaining methodological points. He became more adept at working with the metaphors once some connections had been made, making the process more fluid and centred on him.

**CASE 4: NATHAN**

“To me it [home] means everything because I live here. I eat here. I have nowhere else to go. It’s not as good as it used to be with my parents. I got to do my daily activities through my home. It could be this place or it could be a small shack somewhere. I don’t care about that. [I care about] my comfort, where I can sleep properly, peacefully, [and] without disturbance, anxiety or worry. I can wash my things and do my things...those are the basic things – shelter. It doesn’t mean much to me. I sit here and think. Thinking is the most important part of me. I think. I meditate (not in the context of spirituality). But it’s a place where I can sit down peacefully and think. I can reflect on my own life.”

**THE EXPERIENCE**

Nathan is a 60-year-old single man of Indian ancestry. His first language was Gujarati, but he later learned English in school. Although he was born in Zanzibar, he lived most of his early life in Uganda where he worked as an office clerk. He and his family were forced to leave Uganda in 1972 and came to Canada. His parents passed away after they came to Canada, but he still has five brothers and three sisters.

After working for several years as a clerk for the Canadian government, Nathan went on disability leave. He has had two major surgeries due to problems, which began before his condo ordeal but still affect his current functioning and mobility. He bought his condominium in 1994. It was his first home and is located in a quiet neighbourhood in South Vancouver. The condo leaks first surfaced in 1997 and repairs were finalised in 2000, although Nathan said there are still problems with the outside drainage system from

the eaves. This has not been resolved and full payment for repairs has been withheld because of it.

Nathan said, “[At first] I did not concern myself with this [leaky condo problem]. I was never aware of anything serious until they [the strata council] started discussing. I thought probably my condominium was not affected. I didn’t see any leaks. I thought that probably I’m spared. I didn’t think it would be all that serious and extensive...tearing down the walls.”

Nathan talked about his feelings during his condo ordeal. “It feels real real frustrating. People came in anytime they wanted, as and when they came...It’s good that I’m here all the time. If I was working it would have been a real hardship for me because I would have to leave my keys with somebody. I was terribly upset...[angry]...I was totally restless. I was never at peace...even now. It has changed completely my whole psychology – I hate everybody here now (dislike them if I used a milder term), and I just don’t want to have any kind of connection with anybody. I’m very reclusive now. Formerly you know, I was very lively, but after this – I feel depressed. I find myself struggling to keep myself in the best form.” Nathan also noted that his comfort was disrupted and that he felt abandoned and left in an uncaring manner to fend for himself during his condo ordeal. He said of sleeping in his condo “It was like sleeping in a cave.”

“It’s not a natural feeling for me...struggling. Maybe it will go away after a few years...I cannot work. This was my last savings. I will never be able to go back to work. If there was a possibility of getting euthanasia, I would have loved to have it. Then I know I would be at peace. When I wake up in the morning, I wish that I don’t have to wake and go about doing any kind of a thing. I want to sleep permanently...I think

probably I'm showing some change, because in the beginning...I'd sleep all the time. Before I went to the hospital, I went to visit my sister. And my mother was alive at that time, so they wouldn't bother me - I would sleep all the day and all night. Now I can wake up around 8:30. Still, once in a while I'm slack...I don't want to get up. It's a mixed feeling, and I can't analyse myself."

Nathan remembers the electronic rods of the test meters used to check for humidity in the walls, and the scaffolding and nets going up. He listed several props that were part of his condo experience: petitions, power test meters, crowbars, jackhammers, wheelbarrows, cranes, ladders, platforms, and sirens. He said, "Once I contacted architects to come and have a look at this place and [they] advised me. I thought it's better to check with some professionals so that I know that my rights are not being violated...and to safeguard my property because I don't have construction experience." Other people involved in his condo experience were other consultants hired by the strata council, the property manager and the reconstruction company. There were also lawyers involved because the condo owners had planned to take the developer to court.

"They [the repairmen] started on other condos first...It started very slowly. I was confident there wouldn't be too much damage in this one [his condo]. They told me that [the] humidity is not all that bad in this one...then one day I got the letter. They would come and start working...That's the time that I realised that I'm caught up in this whole mess as well, and that my walls will have to come down also...they started tearing the walls... Generally there was the external stucco (the building envelope) removal from all the units, but my unit had structural defect requiring the foundation level [to be] raised to street level and strengthened. Therefore, walls had to be torn down."

The repairmen started with the walls of Nathan's bedroom. He remembers "the inconvenience of sleeping in this cold – in the living room. Cold air was seeping through the partition (the boarded walls)." One wall of his bedroom was completely removed. "I was left in uncaring manner to sleep in the living room, and I had to rearrange the furniture to make room for my bed. I thought it was inhuman treatment, and I got a lawyer at my expense to see and help me get better treatment. He talked to the representatives of the [reconstruction] company and New Home Warranty who then agreed to put me up in a cheap hotel. But as I was unsure of the expense or my comfort, I stayed on hoping that the ordeal will soon be over. They would not compensate me if I stayed at my sister's place. It took them more than a month to do the job."

Nathan noted that there was apparently no co-ordinator of activities for the reconstruction work. "They didn't go step by step...they did not go in any kind of a sequence or order. They had no plans, no schedules...[like the strata council]...they kept changing [their plans]. They would move from place to place according to their wish...It was helter-skelter."

"I wrote the foreman a letter saying I got two large mirrors...go slow on this side. I told him this thing is likely to break at the rate they [the repairmen] are pounding...The beating of the wall was so extensive." The amalgam coating of one mirror was scraped from the back. Nathan wrote a lot of letters to the strata manager "drawing their attention to the deficiencies," the poor workmanship of the repairs. He also insisted the reconstruction company give him another carpet because there was a stain on his bedroom carpet and it smelled. But they wouldn't do it. Instead, they brought in a specialist who sprayed something on the stain.



“At one time everything was going on well because they told me they would put me up in a hotel, but all of a sudden the company which was insuring this place [New Home Warranty] went belly up...They [the reconstruction company] said they wanted the money, and people did not have the money, so there were lien on this building...That almost killed – that almost finished me because I put some money, and I had to match an equal amount again. \$30,000 in two bits. For me it was a big catastrophe.”

“They had this extraordinary general meetings sometimes, and I told them there were so many people who were dissatisfied...Suddenly after everything was done they [the repairmen] just pulled out, and I thought they [would] be coming to fix things...me and other people were left hanging. I had the intention of going to the court if everything else failed because I had reminded them so many times.”

“I try to control my own mind you know. My sister has stepped in, and she managed to get additional loan from the bank. I think at some nominal interest-rate...after Barrett Commission...so my mind was at peace. I could control my mind because for me, I don’t know how long I’ll live. I was mentally preparing myself for the worst. If I’ve got to go and sleep under the bridge, then I will have to do that. The only thing I need is a facility to go to the washroom because I go to the washroom frequently because of ulcerative colitis problem. I don’t like to use the public facilities and that was really agonising. And I can never eat outside. I have to come here and eat myself whatever I bring home [or] whatever my family comes and gives me...I cannot think about it [the condo experience].” Nathan noted later that for him “family closeness and interdependence provides moral support to overcome crisis situation.”

“I would have liked to finish my life. That is the bottom line. Even though I was here, I had to keep so many doctors’ appointments over such a long time. I was sort of a hardship to my family because they had to come here...get me some food...look after me, and I couldn’t go out anywhere on my own. I’ve been independent ever since I left school,” but during his condo repairs Nathan felt like a burden to his family. He also felt some guilt that he had signed his leaky condo over to his sister, after he had given her the money to buy it. He later noted that “buyer beware” was an important theme in his condo experience, and “exercise great care and prudence in making investment decision. Be cautious of great sales pitch. Avoid herd instinct...Look before you leap. Do not walk on thin ice...As I was ill, I gave all my savings to my sister to buy the condo and manage it on my behalf to save the cost of probate and legal expenses after my death. In a way, I appointed her as my beneficiary *inter vivos* [during Nathan’s lifetime].”

“I had some nasty experiences before also, and the world comes crashing on you when it’s no fault of yours at all. I don’t know if I’m a religious person or not, but certain convictions just keep you going - Something better will turn up tomorrow, [and] it cannot be as bad as I thought. Even though I was a total cynic...pessimistic, I still feel things probably change.”

Nathan said now he probably feels some hope he didn’t have before the condo experience. “I also think of the end of my life, which is death. Sooner or later I’ll have to go away. These worries will be left behind...The sooner I die, the better it is. I didn’t feel that before, but lately I feel that my productive life is over once and for all. [That’s because of] “my illness, plus this one [the condo problem] and the other interactions in

the society...I have just got to endure whatever comes through. That is the only strength I have is the will to endure. I don't have any ambitions or anything."

### **METAPHOR 1: UPSTART POLITICIANS**

The setting for this metaphor was the offices of corporations, universities and government buildings around the time of the Cold War. There was a mood of uncertainty. "The politicians are bringing people in with expertise in various areas to give directions and advice to the politicians." Some of the consultation work is done on telephones, through circulars, notices, and the minutes of meetings. There are agendas, photocopiers, and typewriters. The politicians have to deal with by-laws and policies and procedures.

"The politicians are trying to build up the confidence of the people. They make stories and theories about what's not working, but it's the propaganda [of the Cold War]. Everyone has his own agenda or theory, but it may not be true." Nathan felt the theme of this metaphor was "don't trust anyone. Use your own judgement. Try to see through the veil. Truth is everlasting, but illusions mislead. Cautious thinking [is necessary]."

### **Content Analysis**

This metaphor fit Nathan's experience particularly in how he viewed his strata council and his attitude and feelings toward it. The strata council was the upstart politicians because it was composed of rookies or beginners. 'Upstart' also has the connotations of precociousness and impudence, and I think Nathan was suggesting these qualities as well. He mentioned that the council chairman looked like he was fresh from school and acted unilaterally in making some decisions. The council didn't "have any

kind of a plan or any kind of a direction,” yet they went ahead with decisions without exercising mature judgement - “cautious thinking.” Here the metaphor illustrated Nathan’s view of and attitude towards the strata council.

He also used the metaphor to conceptualise the development and efficacy of the strata council members. “First of all they [the upstart politicians] will be freedom fighters, and they will be having different objectives. Then they get into the power, and they cannot adjust to that kind of a reality. Their thinking is different. It takes time.” Nathan felt this was similar to the strata council members who suddenly had power, and didn’t know how to exercise it effectively. “Most of them have not had experience of owning a condo or being on the committee... They are all bungling their way around. Hopefully, they think... they will land somewhere... where they can put their teeth in on, where they can grip the actual problem. They are playing with all sorts of things. They brought in lots of people who came and talked about things [and] advised what should be done.”

Although in both the metaphor and his condo experience consultants were used, Nathan felt that the strata council basically ignored his complaints and suggestions. Relating this to the metaphor's Cold War context, it could be inferred that citizen concerns regarding the arms race were also ignored. This perhaps made Nathan feel unwanted, devalued and hurt - feelings that did not come up in the condo experience, but were suggested by it and the metaphor. The metaphor could also imply harm to people’s lives when those in power do not use their power wisely. This probably had particular meaning for Nathan who was struggling with health issues he felt were exacerbated by his condo problem.

Several other feelings suggested themselves in the metaphor and were also not brought up in discussing the condo experience. The mood of uncertainty, attitudes of suspicion and distrust, and a lack of confidence in the strata council make sense in terms of The Cold War and Nathan's condo experience, and he suggested as much in the theme of Upstart Politicians. "[There was] the same kind of anxiety at the back of your mind." The metaphor highlighted and validated uncertainty, which would also logically apply to his experience. Perhaps the above feelings and attitudes also suggested vulnerability vis-à-vis the condo experience – Nathan was putting himself in the hands of rookies who may or may not have good intentions in "trying to build up the trust of the people."

To deal with the anxiety and uncertainty, he wrote letters to government officials to express his concerns and get answers regarding his condo problems, just as citizens wrote letters to government officials during the cold war regarding the arms race, and his concerns were not dealt with satisfactorily. Other tactics - forming pressure groups, politicising the issues, and bringing in the media - were common to the metaphor and his condo experience. They appeared to be more helpful, and the metaphor validated them.

Nathan noted an important difference between the two. "This is very personal thing [his condo experience]. With The Cold War Era, those were real long-term crises that they lasted 50, 60, 70 years, but with this condominium, two, three, four years time-period, so you can get by it. Cold War was the extreme example. People were being subjected for 60, 70, 80 years, and that is more than one person's life span." Here the metaphor put his condo ordeal into perspective for Nathan through its somewhat optimistic contrast with The Cold War Era.

Part of the theme of Upstart Politicians - "Try to see through the veil [of illusion]" – could be associated with the netting and scaffolding that was put up around Nathan's condominium. This suggested and validated the idea that the strata council didn't see (or chose not to see) what the true problem was while the netting was up – the poor workmanship of the repairs – which Nathan clearly saw. He said later he associated trying "to see through the veil" with trying to see who was responsible for the leaky condo crisis when "everybody shoves the blame on somebody else."

Nathan felt the government was ultimately responsible. He said, "You just don't look at the symptoms, you look at the causes of the problem, and that will give you an idea." It is significant that Nathan introduced a medical metaphor here, given that ill health has been a major theme in his life. The medical metaphor introduced a perspective on problem solving and suggested a meaningful connection between his 'infirm' condo and his infirm body, linking his experience of the world to his bodily experience.

The broader implications of the Upstart Politicians were noteworthy. The politicians (the strata council) were making decisions during The Cold War (the condo experience) that could affect people's lives directly and indirectly. In the metaphor, people could have died if nuclear arms had been launched. In the condo experience people could have been (and many were) financially 'killed off'. Recall that when Nathan realised he would have to pay twice as much for repairs as he had originally thought, he said, "That almost killed – that almost finished me." The metaphor appears to connect with and validate a deep feeling of 'insecurity' for Nathan regarding shelter, a basic necessity life. Finally, there was also probably an unconscious pun on Cold War – Nathan spoke at least twice about how cold his condo was during repairs.

### **Process Analysis**

Nathan did not have anything to say about the process of developing this metaphor. It appeared to be difficult for him to come up with metaphors. Comparing his experience to the metaphor, he did say, "These two are very very similar. It's just the same thing you know." Together with his stress in reliving the condo experience, I think the process proved difficult and stressful for him.

### **My Process**

It was also difficult for me to develop this metaphor with Nathan because I was aware of the transference of stress. I was conscious of asking him to imagine a story about these Upstart Politicians without reference to his condo experience in order to test Donald's idea that imagining a story without reference to the condo experience was too difficult and might be irrelevant. It did seem Nathan had a difficult time inventing a plot out of thin air. The Independent Judge noted that "it is difficult to imagine things when you are depressed." However, I was relieved to find that asking him a simple question - What do the politicians do? - elicited up some basic plot material.

### **METAPHOR 2: DEATH ROW PRISONER**

The setting for this metaphor was a prison cell on death row in the United States. Nathan felt it was past, present and future because "this is the feeling all the time...Live day to day...Hope is wavering." The prisoner was languishing and feeling fearful, self-pitying, uncertain, nervous, unwanted, desolate, hopeless and contemptible in the eyes of

others. What stood out in this scene for Nathan were the bars on the cell. Other characters involved were the guards, a minister and society/the public. Nathan was the prisoner. [He later said the condo developer might also be the prisoner.]

Here he recalled an old movie, *Cell 2455, Death Row*, he saw in East Africa in the late 1950's. "He [the prisoner on death row] was a highway robber and he robbed banks. He was caught and convicted. [He was eventually hanged.]...It was his destiny." In Nathan's metaphor, however, the prisoner recovered some strength and, "through public support and good conduct, he was granted amnesty by the state." For Nathan this metaphor said, "Endure your destiny, your suffering. Try to overcome. [Achieve] a level of tolerance to various circumstances...[and] hope."

### **Content Analysis**

Nathan was the central focus of this metaphor. It took an indirectly existential perspective on death. The fact that Nathan said it was past, present and future suggested timelessness, and "Live day to day" suggested living in the moment (and probably with an awareness of death). Nathan suggested later noted he felt, albeit sceptically, that "some divine intervention" would help him. He also felt his ill health combined with the stress of his condo experience has made him very aware of death as an immediate issue in his life. In The Experience above he talked about it candidly and at length.

Nathan obviously did not share the criminal past of the prisoner, but he said, "It is the punishment you go through is the similar thing. But it makes it much more worse - at least that guy knows he had committed a crime...In my case [I didn't commit a crime]." The feelings associated with this metaphor connected at a basic level with Nathan's



condo experience through his depression; however, in the condo experience Nathan's feelings were directed more at other people. He was frustrated, angry and hated people. His feelings as the prisoner were more internally felt and contained. He felt unwanted, afraid, self-pitying, and hopeless. This perhaps suggests that through the metaphor Nathan was exploring and expressing his essential feelings – those behind the ones he expressed about his condo experience. These feelings may have resulted in part from his possible perception that he was not valued or acknowledged by the property manager or the repairmen because his complaints were not taken seriously or resolved to his satisfaction.

Nathan later suggested that the prisoner could be the developer. He may feel guilty even though he may have committed his crime “unintentionally. He did not know the consequences of what he [did]...He did not know how the construction was going on.” Nathan suggested perhaps the architects and/or construction engineers might be feeling guilty too. “There is some interface there - [similarities between the experience and the metaphor] that people have been suffering.” The metaphor appeared to soften Nathan's view of the developer and others through empathic imagining. Placing other people in the prisoner's shoes facilitated this empathy. This method of substitution of characters within the metaphor suggests another way metaphors could be used.

The bars on the cell of the prisoner connected to the scaffolding and netting around Nathan's condo. Nathan perhaps felt imprisoned during the condo repairs. Although he exercised his freedom in complaining about how the repairs were being done, the fact that he had to pay for the repairs in the first place ‘locked him in’ financially. His ill health kept him housebound. He also said his freedom to sleep when

he wanted and to move around his condo was limited by “the pounding of the walls every now and then” by the repair work and repairmen, who he suggested could be the guards of the prison. “People came in anytime they wanted... They would all be looking at you, and they would have no respect or courtesy for anything. They just wanted to get their jobs done.” Like prison guards the repair workers “wouldn’t respect you... because you are a condemned person... They have feelings for you [in] some respects, but as far as they are concerned, it’s just their job. There is no human touch to that.” The metaphor here suggested themes – violation of privacy (human rights) and alienation (“you feel you are different from the rest of the society”) that were relevant to his condo experience. These also connected to the other metaphors Nathan chose to develop, suggesting the metaphors have uncovered core concerns in his life.

Again the themes of violation of rights and alienation suggested themselves when Nathan talked about the property manager, who could be associated with an autocratic prison warden. “All he succeeded [in doing] was setting neighbour against neighbours. He became a sort of judge, the jury, the executioner... Every month when I got the minutes of the strata council, I was anxious to see if my name was anywhere [regarding infractions of strata rules]... all the members were out there hunting for somebody or the other, [whoever broke a rule]. Policing neighbours has become a pastime or hobby with some since the beginning.” The Independent Judge suggested there is a fear of persecution implied here. This could be connected to the very real persecution Nathan faced in the Leaving Uganda metaphor (see below).

Because the strata council has closed meeting, Nathan said he had “no voice at all” in the decisions that were made. The metaphor suggested the hostile relationships

between the condo owners, which was due to the property managers influence, as there would be between prisoners and an autocratic warden. Nathan highlighted the hostility of the relationship with a powerful new metaphor - 'the predator hunting the prey'. This could be linked to the 'debased' political situation in Leaving Uganda (see below).

Of the other characters in the metaphor, the minister might be compared to the architects Nathan hired because they both supported him in times of crisis. The architects were hired to ensure Nathan's rights were not being violated and to safeguard his property. The minister ensured the prisoner's soul was safeguarded for heaven before he was executed. There was some confusion over this interpretation. Nathan said later that he was thinking of government 'ministers' and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in his condo experience. "We were signing petition through the MLAs and [would forward them] to ministers." This still suggested a parallel in the metaphor where the MLAs might have had influence regarding the fate of the prisoner. Both readings of 'ministers' could be valid, but for Nathan they were political, not religious.

As I said before Nathan referred to the movie *Cell 2455, Death Row* in his Death Row Prisoner metaphor. The prisoner in that movie was eventually hanged, but Nathan's optimistic perspective on himself changed his fate in his metaphor. Nathan imagined himself as the prisoner being granted amnesty by the state through public support and good conduct. The public support for the prisoner connected directly to the media sympathy for the condo owners. There was also the financial help Nathan received from his sister via The Barrett Commission and the government's no-interest loans for leaky condo owners.

The good conduct of the prisoner might have been, ironically, Nathan's attempts to ensure the repairs were done properly – attempts that were seemingly disparaged by the property manager and the reconstruction company. Nathan said, "They just ignored us [condo owners]." Nathan included rousing public support and paying the money for the repairs as other examples of his good conduct. All this also ties in with the metaphor's theme of "Try to overcome...[and] hope." Nathan said that the good conduct also implied "you got to be conscious of everything all the time." In this way you stay out of jail, and if you are in jail, you get out. "Don't get into the trouble. Sometimes they [crimes] are just accidental...It's just like driving a car. You may not actually see the hazard coming, but you got to be constantly aware." Nathan seemed to associate 'an accidental crime' with buying a leaky condo, suggesting again "buyer beware." This recalled the guilt he felt in signing his condo over to his sister – perhaps another accidental crime - and the driving metaphor linked to the 'road rage' he mentioned in Leaving Uganda (see below). Both road rage and buyer beware fall into an implicit category of cultural adjustments.

### **Process Analysis**

Again with this metaphor Nathan did not have any comments initially. However, he did say he was trying to connect the metaphor to his experience, "but that was something – you had to go real deep to correlate the whole situation." He did say, "Last time I couldn't produce any of those things – [connections he produced during the Inquiry Interview]." This suggested he felt satisfied that he had produced some connections after having time to think about the metaphor vis-à-vis his condo experience.

## **My Process**

I felt the bleakness and precariousness of the circumstances in this metaphor. I sensed Nathan was digging deep into himself to bring up and express some very negative feelings in the moment. I was also aware of how connected this metaphor was to his condo experience as he developed it because I had little flashes - like snapshots - of his experience, and they fit in at various stages of the metaphor while he was developing it.

## **METAPHOR 3: LEAVING UGANDA**

The setting for this metaphor was the capital city, Kampala. The centres of activity were the parliament buildings, radio and TV stations, prisons, sports stadiums, the airport, the post office, banks, and streets. Nathan and his family were forced to leave Uganda in 1972. He talked about the anarchy and tyranny in the country at that time, and his feelings of fear, tension, hopelessness, anger, and humiliation. Shops were closing, busloads of people were departing, and people were being rounded up for no reason. But Nathan also said, "Partly it was a relief. We were getting away from a perilous situation. Partly you're hoping that someday you come back...sadness, and there is also happiness that you will probably start a new life somewhere else in a more secure surroundings. It was really a very traumatic experience... You're not allowed to take any money out, but that money was worthless outside anyway. Because you had 10 shillings in your pocket, they would accuse you of stealing."

"They took away all of our properties because they said we had stolen from the black Ugandans, the sweat of Ugandans. [We] employed them as labourers, but we were the superior class [they said]. So the whole country - it was crazy. [They said], "We are

the indigenous people. We own this country. We are the people who are the poorest because the white people exploited us. We [only] get breadcrumbs...so all the white people have to go out [and] all the people from India," [but the army was supposed to] maintain law and order and not take the law into their own hands... You could be detained in jail without charges. [There were] mass arrests and mass killings." Nathan remembers the tanks rolling through the streets, soldiers with guns, and the sticks they used to beat people. He said some of the black politicians agreed with President Idi Amin and his actions and some disagreed, but Amin had total control.

There had been an announcement on the radio that the white people had three months to leave. Later, the president added all non-indigenous people to the list - Nathan had just two weeks to get out. "I was not safe on the road or anything. The army was really creating havoc... They [non-black Africans] were told to leave the country, but people could not leave the country because the government [took their citizenship papers]. I was a citizen, but they said that I stole my citizenship, [that] I obtained my citizenship under false pretences or by bribery or whatever."

The authorities tore up his citizenship papers, and Nathan said, "They took away my passport. They told me that I was born in Zanzibar. But then I thought there would be some relief because they will let me contest my citizenship. You're not sure what will happen... We were at the edge of our nerves. I could not leave the country if I don't have travel papers, so I had to get a travel document from somewhere. I went to the immigration department... but this government made things really difficult. When we went and formed the line, everybody was rushing - just like food being brought to the starving people - everybody was going to grab whatever they can... some of them would

sleep overnight. Some people, when they went there,...were beaten up by the army. The army dispersed them [for] no reason. Some of them were hurt very badly so nobody would go stand in the line.” Nathan mentioned later that all the Asian citizens including himself were fingerprinted.

“I told the Canadian Embassy visa processors, “Look here, I can’t leave the country because I don’t have my documents. Birth certificates have been torn up. The passports have been torn up.” He [the president] deliberately wanted to create as much chaos as possible...but in the meanwhile I applied for my Canadian visa.” Nathan had also applied to several other embassies for visas, but finally he said, “My visa for Canada was granted.”

“After getting the travel document I had to get income tax clearance. You have to bribe your way through. Then they would put a stamp on the back of your travel document - get you the exit visa. I had a colleague, a black man - he had some influence there. I gave him a 100 shillings and he took my document to his friend and he put the stamp on it. I was lucky that I could manage to get it.”

“When I got my passport, they [the Canadian Embassy] told me you are leaving tomorrow. I said, “I just got the documents...I got to settle my affairs. At least I need one day to hand over my documents to my office and to hand over my house” because I was housed by my employers. I wanted to do things in the proper way, not just run away. That would be total desertion. So they extended me by a day.”

Nathan packed one small suitcase with clothing, a transistor radio, his electric shaver, and a new pair of shoes. “The last day I spent the night in a hotel where they were picking up the passengers. I paid lots of money for that one bedroom.” The next day

Nathan got on a bus for the airport. "...then I would go to the next booth [at the airport]. There were curtains around it, and they would say, "You are leaving the country?...How much money do you have?" That would send a shiver in my heart, in my spine. I said, "I got a 100 shillings..." They said, "Okay this 100 shillings you are leaving here with me. I'll give you a receipt." [He took] a scrap piece of paper – put down "100 shillings"...scribble his signature...I just said, "Thank you." Otherwise, I would have to go through strip search. I could only get permission to take \$200 US. I had to abandon all other things, [which included bank accounts and investments]." Nathan landed in Montreal in the middle of winter. After two days his new shoes were ruined.

I asked him what he had learned from this experience. He said, "Nothing in life is permanent. You cannot take life for granted. I got to be adaptable for different things in life, hardships. [You have to] work really hard to develop your skills. It's a constant process. In life things are changing all the time, progress. Your way of living, your communications are changing, your interactions with others is changing."

"There [in Uganda] people are very poor, but they were very accessible, humane, open, respectful. Here [in Canada] it is totally different. Road rage - you never heard about the road rage. People being insulted. [On the other hand] the [Canadian] government is organised, and you're treated the same as everybody else. There is no organised bias. In Africa they wouldn't treat you rude, use you. You might get into fights. People would come and hit you and kill you [but] not for any reason...They will steal your money to buy food and basic need for their family. Here [in Canada] somebody could go crazy, and he'll try to run you down just because you happen to be there. There [in Uganda] they wouldn't do that. This is what I have learnt here."



### Content Analysis

This metaphor connected with Nathan's condo experience the most comprehensively, probably because as he said, both Leaving Uganda and his condo experience were traumas (and they both involved multiple losses). Mixed in with his anger at the condo ordeal was probably frustration with his ill health and its consequence – losing his ability to work. The metaphor mirrored the combination of these factors. “We had to leave the country [Uganda], but at least there was an escape there [unlike the condo experience]. I had my savings [and] career there [in Uganda], and I had to abandon it within a week or so. Even my money has not been paid back to me yet. All our property is taken away.”

The condo repair costs also took away Nathan's savings and the equity in his home, and his ill health took away his career. The radio announcement in Uganda informing non-indigenous people to leave is akin to the announcement that New Home Warranty was bankrupt and Nathan would have to pay double an already exorbitant amount of money for his condo repairs. Both were major shocks. The metaphor here concisely illustrated the meaning and impact of the condo experience on him. In a sense he felt both countries have robbed him of his money, his job, his social life (“I'm very reclusive now.”) and his dignity and rights as a citizen. In addition to this, Nathan linked his survival to getting out of Uganda through the metaphor of starvation – “everybody was rushing [to get in line for a visa] - just like food being brought to the starving people.” In a similar way, he linked his survival to his condo crisis – “If I've got to go

and sleep under the bridge, then I will have to do that." In both his condo experience and the metaphor, necessities of life were threatened.

Nathan did, however, note an important difference between the metaphor and his condo experience. "I had one advantage when I came to this country. I was comparatively young, and I had the energy. I could upgrade my qualifications...I could still be gainfully employed, but now I'm helpless. I can't do any work." The Independent Judge felt that the metaphor may have clarified this feelings of helplessness for Nathan.

My experience of Nathan suggested that he is a man who appreciates order and reason in his lifestyle and interactions. The anarchy in Uganda at the time he left must have been especially hard on him. "The army was really creating havoc... You're not sure what will happen... We were at the edge of our nerves." This anarchy was reflected in his perspective on his condo ordeal. He commented twice about the lack of reasoning, planning and consistency on the part of the strata council and the repairmen, e.g. "It was real real frustrating. People came in [to his condo] anytime they wanted." The metaphor highlighted this strong feeling of frustration, part of which was due to the political finger-pointing in Uganda, which was also similar to that in Canada during Nathan's condo experience. But he said in Canada it was not "as debased as East Africa [Uganda]." The condo experience here contrasted positively with the metaphor, suggesting a slightly more positive view of the politics around Nathan's condo situation. At least Nathan's life was not immediately threatened by his condo problem.

As I said before, Nathan's complaints during the condo experience were ignored by the strata council, the property manager and the repairmen. He said, "I told them there were so many people who were dissatisfied...I had the intention of going to court if

everything else failed because I had reminded them so many times [about the deficiencies in the repair work].” For example, he insisted the reconstruction company replace a damaged carpet, but they wouldn’t do it. This loss of power and influence over his life is reflected in his loss of power and loss of rights as a citizen of Uganda. In both cases Nathan probably viewed ‘the powers that be’ as acting capriciously and maliciously. The authorities in Uganda took his passport and tore up his citizenship. Nathan probably felt his letters of complaint to the property manager and others met a similar fate.

He went on to say the Ugandan soldiers were like the repairmen in that both were undisciplined, unethical and made a bad situation worse. “Most of them [the repairmen] they hanged around...The moment they find that the supervisor was coming they would pretend they are beating the wall. They are the soldiers. They want to rob people. They [just] want the money [for the condo repairs]. [The soldiers] would stop you and examine your bags. If they see money they will take it because there is no law, no order.” This implied that the repairmen acted unethically and haphazardly in Nathan’s opinion, expecting to be paid for substandard work.

In addition to this there was the matter of privacy. “The soldiers [in Uganda] were watching you all the time just like Gestapo... You would avoid eye contact just like the way it was in Germany. I did not avoid [eye contact with the repairmen] – it was better here. We were under constant fear [in Uganda] of being picked up by anybody and beaten for no reason. They would just kill you.” However, Nathan still felt the feelings in the metaphor were very similar to his condo experience. Perhaps there was some residual fear of personal harm from his Uganda experience in his fear that the repairmen would damage his home during repairs, which they did (see The Experience above). This would

connect to his comparing the condo crisis to an unhealthy body (see Upstart Politicians above). Finally, Nathan also talked about the “pounding on the walls”, the “curious looks” and the “feeling of being watched”, which must have been very stressful and frustrating. These also relate to the matter of privacy.

Nathan suggested the consultants in his experience were like the black man at his office in Leaving Uganda, who helped expedite his leaving the country. Both were supportive. He also noted a difference - in Uganda he acted alone, but in Canada he acted as part of a group. Nathan stayed alone in an Ugandan hotel the night before he left the country. He was almost put up in a hotel in Canada during the condo repair work. Some fellow condo owners were put up in hotels. He said he was actually living illegally in his condo during repairs, but he did not want to leave because his health problems had him housebound. The metaphor perhaps suggested it would have been better for him to move into a hotel during repairs to avoid exacerbating his health problems, just as he left Uganda to avoid being imprisoned or killed.

Nathan said his condo experience and this metaphor were both crises that he endured. “At first sight you did not know what to do. As the time progressed, you started seeing something that we could do. In this case [the condo problem] all of a sudden I was thinking, *My home is finished* [ruined]...but as the situation progressed, we found it...there was something we could do. We could get the loan from the banks. Things started developing.” In Uganda too Nathan had things to do in preparation for leaving the country and, like the Leaving Uganda metaphor, there was uncertainty regarding his condo problem. But he also felt “happiness that you will probably start a new life somewhere else in a more secure surroundings.”

Nathan went on: "You cannot say there is a better place because your own home is your own home. That is the best place because you've been living there for generation and generation. You don't have to adapt or be uncertain or be helpless and live on the handouts of other people. Environment changes, and now all of a sudden you've got these computers and Internet - all that - but somehow or other you've got to be prepared. Somehow you got to keep the ball rolling. It is a matter that just occurs...sometimes you don't even notice it. [It's an] unconscious thing. Living styles change."

The broader picture Nathan painted here highlighted his fortitude, perseverance and adaptability, and again these qualities might be (and were) transferred to his condo experience. He validated this somewhat by saying, "I'm just a survivor. I managed to come out of this despite all this hardships and all that, and [I'm a survivor of] the life experience itself - my whole life - because I've never enjoyed the fruit of my own labour all these years - my entire life. I never had any vacation." Nathan ended his discussion of his life experiences on a bitter note, yet he could take some solace in the fact that he survived them, even with his ill health, and that things constantly change, perhaps for the better. It was not discussed, but the fact that he said "you've got to be prepared" for changes suggested another area that might have been explored with regard to problem-solving - how could he have prepared?

Canada granting him refugee status appeared to have been a mixed blessing for Nathan in a similar way to the government's granting of no-interest loans to some leaky condo owners. He still had to pay for repairs that were not his fault. Again, he was hopeful about coming to Canada and starting a new life in a secure country, but he has had a difficult time adjusting to Canadian culture, e.g. road rage and rude people.

Although they were not discussed, a couple of points in the Leaving Uganda metaphor also related to the Death Row Prisoner metaphor. The accusations of stealing Ugandan currency related to the prisoner being accused and convicted of highway robbery. Nathan said the developer probably did not intend for the construction work to be faulty (and thereby to effectively steal from condo buyers), just as Nathan did not intend to 'steal' by leaving Uganda with some local currency. Another point of contact between the two metaphors was that Asians were fingerprinted in Uganda, as if they were criminals. These interconnections suggested a broader network of meaning and might help to clarify patterns and meanings in Nathan's life.

### **Process Analysis**

Nathan said he was actively comparing his condo experience to the experience of leaving Uganda while he was developing this metaphor. "All the memories are coming to me in my mind," but curiously he said the feelings associated with those memories were not coming back. This suggested he had dealt with the feelings, was distancing himself from them or denying them. I believe he was not denying them because he seemed very emotionally engaged in his discussion of Leaving Uganda and to his condo experience.

### **My Process**

I felt that developing this metaphor with Nathan was difficult because again I found myself experiencing the transference of feelings. He certainly appeared to be re-experiencing the emotions around this metaphor, so I found it strange when he said the feelings were not coming back. There was tension and animation in his voice, he spoke

very quickly and sounded angry (and rightfully so I think) about what he had to go through in Uganda. Perhaps he was distancing himself from the emotions by investing them in his more recent condo experience. The Independent Judge felt that he was depressed and perhaps has deeply repressed his feelings.

I was also aware during the development of this metaphor how connected it was to his condo experience at the perspectival and feeling level. At the same time I thought, perhaps because Nathan has not had much opportunity to process his Uganda experience, it would be a priority over the condo experience and metaphor work in a counselling.

## **CROSS-METAPHOR ANALYSIS**

### **Content Analysis**

While the metaphors did not appear to significantly change Nathan's perspective on his condo experience, they did raise some relevant themes that applied to his world view and his view of himself and provided a forum for discussion. The metaphors appeared very useful in suggesting and reflecting feelings and attitudes he held and still holds about his condo experience. They made the feelings palpable from different angles. Nathan took several courses of action to cope with and solve his condo problem; however, I believe emotional support was under-utilised. Yet support was highlighted in our discussions of his experience and the metaphors as an important means of coping.

*Perspectives on Experience*

PRISONER: Nathan's perspective on his condo experience suggested he was a prisoner on several levels, and as such he lacked power and rights. He was 'locked in' financially because he had bought the condo and could not just sell it or walk away when the problems surfaced - who would willingly buy a leaky condo? His ill health also seemed to lock him into his condo during repairs, and his repeated attempts to have the repairs done properly were given negligible regard. This latter point speaks to his lack of power. He probably felt limited in his actions when repairmen could come and go as they pleased and 'watch' him, violating his privacy.

Nathan was literally in prison in Death Row Prisoner, with probably nominal rights and little power. (He also suggested the condo developer may be the prisoner if he 'accidentally committed a crime,' i.e. unintentionally allowed a substandard condominium complex to be built.) Nathan was probably also powerless in The Upstart Politicians - it could be suggested that his ability to influence the world powers was non-existent. Here perhaps he was a prisoner of fear and anxiety. These feelings could also connect to the feelings of the prisoner in Death Row Prisoner, where the cell bars might represent the netting and scaffolding on his condo. He was certainly anxious about how well the repairs were being done behind the netting. It is a bitter irony that he was 'set free' in Leaving Uganda, but only after he had been stripped of his power (citizenship rights, career, property and money). There he was treated like a criminal - fingerprinted and accused of obtaining his citizenship papers illegally and stealing Ugandan currency.

ALIENATION: This theme is clearly in all the metaphors and the condo experience. Nathan seemed to have no voice in matters that concerned him and perhaps



felt unwanted and devalued as a result. The property manager, strata council and repairmen ignored or minimised his concerns about the repair work. He even mentioned how the property manager alienated condo owners from each other, “setting neighbour against neighbours.” Nathan appeared to have no influence on the Upstart Politicians, yet they were making decisions that could affect his life vis-à-vis The Cold War. Perhaps there was also the implication on the part of the politicians that because Nathan was older than them (e.g. the strata council chairman) he was somehow obsolete or irrelevant. In the Death Row Prisoner, he was contemptible in the eyes of others, and as he said, “You feel you are different from the rest of the society.” Finally, he was stripped of his citizenship and clearly not wanted by Uganda because he was forced to leave the country.

He even feels unwanted and disrespected by Canada now. (This feeling is related to his illness, and his feelings of uselessness and weakness since he is unable to work.) He talked about this, citing Canadian ‘road rage’ as an example. He also mentioned “People being insulted” and suggested Canadians are inaccessible and inhumane “in so far as interpersonal relationship are impersonal.” This certainly suggested he feels alienated here.

Beyond the metaphors and his condo experience, Nathan suggested he feels alienated from life. He said of his condo experience, “I’m very reclusive now. Formerly you know, I was very lively.” At another point he said, “When I wake up in the morning, I wish that I don’t have to wake and go about doing any kind of a thing.” His ill health and consequent unemployment were important factors in this sense of alienation.

TIME: All three metaphors were set in the past, but I would suggest that, because they linked so closely with Nathan’s condo experience and his emotional life, they were

felt as lived (or relived in the case of Leaving Uganda) in the moment. The frequent use of present tense also suggests this. Only the Upstart Politicians suggested a positive time perspective by way of contrast – The Cold War lasted for several decades, but the condo experience lasted only for a few years. Because of this perhaps Nathan felt he could get over his condo ordeal more easily than people who felt the full impact of The Cold War.

RESPONSIBILITY/CHAOS: Nathan was very aware of the political perspective on his condo experience and the three metaphors, and how that was used to justify irresponsible and even harmful behaviour on the part of others. Nathan spoke of the larger group, e.g. the government, architects and engineers, involved in the condo crisis as “passing the buck.” No one seemed to know who was responsible or to claim a share of the responsibility, although Nathan felt that ultimately the government was at fault. Within the context of his condo experience there was also chaos - a lack of reasoning and consistency in their actions. He said, “They are all bungling their way around.” I suggested the chaos was also present among the Upstart Politicians in the context of Cold War politics. They did not act reasonably or systematically in maintaining peace. Finally, the circumstances under which Nathan was forced to leave Uganda were certainly chaotic. As he said the army took the law into their own hands (i.e. acted irresponsibly), and people could be arrested or beaten for no reason. The government wanted non-blacks to leave yet tore up documents they needed to leave.

LOSS: This theme ran through Nathan’s condo experience, his metaphors and other life experiences. His condo experience involved the loss of joy, peace of mind, privacy, interactions with others, large sums of money, the equity in his home, and most importantly, some of his will to enjoy life. Unfortunately, it also coincided with his loss

of good health and some of his mobility. In Upstart Politicians there was the loss of a sense of security and peace of mind. In Leaving Uganda again there were multiple losses as in Nathan's condo experience with the addition of his loss of citizenship and country. In addition to all this, I suggest there is a pervasive loss of dignity because Nathan was morally outraged at how he was treated in the various metaphors and his condo experience. He was robbed of all the things mentioned above, yet he was the one treated like a criminal (or at least a nuisance in the case of his condo experience) when he stood up for his rights.

#### *Attitudes toward Experience*

CHANGE/ADAPTABILITY: Nathan returned again and again to this theme. For his condo experience, he spelled out a worst case scenario, "If I've got to go and sleep under a bridge, then I will have to do that. The only thing I need is a facility to go to the washroom..." In Death Row Prisoner he suggested trying to achieve, "a level of tolerance to various circumstances." Finally, in Leaving Uganda he said, "Nothing in life is permanent...I got to be adaptable for different things in life, hardships." He went on to say everything in life is changing all the time - "It's a constant process." He gave examples of how he had to adapt to life in Canada, how he constantly upgraded his job skills, and how computers and the Internet have changed our lives.

DISTRUST: This feeling was present in the condo experience where Nathan was anxious and suspicious of those in power. He did not trust them (and rightly so) to do their jobs and ensure the repairs were done properly. He had the same attitude towards the Upstart Politicians. In Death Row Prisoner the feeling of anxiety was amplified

because the prisoner did not know if he would be granted clemency or not, and of course he would be anxious and fearful in facing imminent death. As I mentioned before, death is a current issue in Nathan's life because he is in ill health. Finally, in the Leaving Uganda metaphor there was also distrust and suspicion regarding the authorities and anxiety and fear for his life because he had become vilified by the government and stripped of his rights.

DEATH: Nathan noted, "Spiritually I believe that death is end of one life and beginning of next existence. Soul is immortal. It is infinite." This theme connected to the alienation from life mentioned above (see Alienation). With his ill health and the condo crisis, Nathan felt overwhelmed to the point that he wished he were dead. He said the financial aspect of it almost killed him. In the Upstart Politicians there is also political and personal insecurity at the level of survival with the possibility of nuclear destruction. This connected to his condo experience where the parties involved were in political disarray over financing, planning and implementing the repair work. No doubt this made him question his 'security' even more. Leaving Uganda also carried a clear threat to personal security, e.g. Nathan saw soldiers beating civilians and heard of mass killings. The Death Row Prisoner took up the death theme directly. Nathan was awaiting death for his 'crime' (buying a condo that leaked), which is something he said of himself in his current circumstances, again because of his ill health.

DEPRESSION: Nathan's feelings of depression were strongly connected to the themes of alienation and death. The condo experience and the metaphors all suggested very negative feelings. The condo experience left Nathan feeling abandoned, hateful, frustrated and depressed. In the Upstart Politicians there was uncertainty and anxiety and

I believe a pervasive sense of hopelessness because Nathan could do little to influence the politicians. In Death Row Prisoner there was also hopelessness, along with self-pity, desolation and the contempt of others. In Leaving Uganda there was humiliation, frustration, and fear which could result in depression. (The latter metaphor was the only one that included some positive feelings.)

Viewing these feelings in retrospect, they all seemed to relate to the condo experience. Nathan was uncertain how the repairs would go and is still anxious that there may be more. It could be inferred that he felt the contempt of the property manager and repairmen who basically ignored his concerns. Perhaps he also felt humiliated that he had been 'fooled' into buying a leaky condo (even though it was not his fault) and that strangers (the workmen) could invade his privacy, and he could do little about it. This must have been particularly difficult because he was in ill health at the time. I would suggest that the feelings Nathan expressed in his metaphors were those behind the depression and anger he expressed regarding his condo experience.

ENDURE/HOPE: This theme has a positive and a negative meaning for Nathan. Regarding his condo experience, he spoke of enduring because "Something better will turn up tomorrow," which suggested hope. He also said, "I have just got to endure whatever comes through," which suggested suffering. He ended somewhat equivocally by saying, "That is the only strength I have is the will to endure." In Death Row Prisoner he reiterated these ideas of enduring his destiny and hoping for a better future. Finally, in Leaving Uganda Nathan said, "Somehow you got to keep the ball rolling," and he felt some hope. "There is also happiness [in leaving Uganda] that you will probably start a new life somewhere else in a more secure surroundings."

*Implications for Action*

**KEEPING BUSY:** Nathan mentioned that once he started doing things, e.g. getting a loan from the bank, he felt better. Organising his documentation and paperwork on the condo problem also kept him busy, and made him feel as if he was making some kind of progress. His discussions and letter writing vis-à-vis the property manager, strata council, repairmen and government officials also kept him busy. This theme was particularly important in the Leaving Uganda metaphor, where he had to make quick and careful preparations to ensure he could get out of the country and had a place to go to.

**SUPPORT:** Nathan had the moral and financial support of his family in dealing with his condo problem, as well as the advice of the architects he hired and the consultants his strata council hired. There was also media coverage and governmental support in the form of New Home Warranty (before it went bankrupt), the Barrett Commission and no-interest loans. In the Upstart Politicians there were pressure groups, media coverage and citizens involved in letter writing campaigns. In Death Row Prisoner there was also media sympathy and governmental involvement – ministers and MLAs – that helped the prisoner get amnesty. Finally, in Leaving Uganda Nathan had the support of a black colleague who helped him get his income tax clearance.

**PREVENTION:** Nathan mentioned “You don’t look at the symptoms, you look at the causes of the problem, and that will give you an idea [of what to do].” He suggested that the “good conduct” of the condemned man in Death Row Prisoner was a preventative measure for staying out of prison in the first place. However, since the prisoner is already in jail, good conduct is a way to get out. As he said using another metaphor, “It’s just like driving a car. You may not actually see the hazard coming, but you got to be constantly

aware.” Here Nathan extended good conduct to include being watchful and wary of even accidental crimes (i.e. his buying a leaky condo or the developer’s allowing it to be built).

In terms of his condo experience, good conduct also included rousing public support and awareness of the crisis and making payments for repairs. Perhaps some of the stress and discomfort Nathan experienced while his condo was being repaired could have been prevented if he had moved into a hotel. If he acted in a confrontational and/or angry manner toward the parties involved in his condo ordeal, he might have had better results by changing his manner to one more calm and conciliatory. (Perhaps there were some cross-cultural communication problems involved. Clarifying and resolving those problems might have been another preventive measure.) Finally, Nathan also might have made some sort of public and/or legal appeal or protest regarding his problems, circumventing the obviously unresponsive parties immediately involved in his condo experience. Nathan is a man who likes to think and reflect on his life. These qualities would allow him to take preventive measures to ensure (as much as he can) that he does not experience problems like his leaky condo ordeal again.

### **Process Analysis**

After the Intervention Interview, Nathan said, “It was a good mental exercise for me...I was exhausted and I got a headache.” I reminded him that he could bow out of the study at any time he chose, but he chose to continue, knowing that the major work had been done. He also said he wanted to help me with my study. Regarding similarities between his experience and the metaphor, he said, “You’ve got to weed those things out...go deep down. Some of these [metaphors] are actually the same, but superficially

they look different...I tend to think back, and those memories are not good. Sometimes you have to relive all those memories. This is the whole thing that comes to my mind.” Referring to the Death Row Prisoner metaphor, Nathan said, “you start thinking about your crimes. You’ve got a conscience. Sometimes it bothers you. Sometimes it doesn’t bother [you]...Those are the negative experiences. You relive them...you wish you had never done that [committed a crime, or in Nathan’s case, bought his condo].”

Nathan sometimes did not distinguish between his metaphors and his condo experience when talking or taking notes. I should emphasise clarity in this regard, especially when the metaphors and the experience literally overlap to a great extent as they did with Nathan’s condo experience and his Upstart Politicians metaphor.

### **My Process**

The work I did with Nathan was very rewarding in that he has had a difficult and fascinating life, and he was very emotionally engaged in the metaphor work, which I reciprocated. However, I found it somewhat difficult at times to regain focus, and the cognitive shifting from metaphor to experience was at times confusing. This was due in part to the unfortunate timing of the Intervention and Inquiry Interview. The Intervention carried over into the Inquiry, and there was almost two weeks between interviews so the first interview was not as fresh in our minds.

I think that because metaphors might prove to be substantial in themselves (the Leaving Uganda metaphor almost ‘upstaged’ the condo experience), they may need processing and paring down before detailed comparison with the experience; otherwise, the information from the metaphor could be overwhelming and unwieldy.



## CHAPTER 5: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

### Content Analysis and Implications for Theory

All four co-researchers generated new perspectives on and attitudes/feelings toward their experiences, became more conscious of less explored or acknowledged ones, or a combination of these. The co-researchers found new perspectives on their condo experiences through the metaphors, just as filters can change the colour and/or texture of what is seen on a movie screen. These new perspectives naturally affected how the co-researchers felt about their experiences, again just as changes on the movie screen influence how the audience feels. Co-researchers also either generated new coping strategies/problem-solving techniques, became more conscious of existing ones, validated them, or again a combination of these. Because the metaphors of my co-researchers affected their meaningful understanding of their condo experiences in several ways, it was not always clear if a given metaphor had more influence on a co-researcher's perspectives, attitudes and feelings, or potential to cope with or resolve their condo experiences.

Themes from the cross-metaphor analyses of individual cases are referred to briefly in the following analysis as additional support for the implications for theory, and they are written in CAPITAL letters.

#### *Perspectives on Experience*

Allbritton (1995) asserted that metaphors have heuristic value because they fill in gaps in domain knowledge using another domain. In this way they can help to form a

more complete picture of experience in terms of thoughts, feelings and actions. This was particularly evident in the domain of feelings with my four co-researchers. Their metaphors elicited feelings that were not unconscious and/or not acknowledged during discussions of their condo experiences, but those feelings later filled in those emotional gaps in their experiences.

A pattern of ALIENATION regarding feelings and relationships came through Sherry's metaphor work. Her status as an immigrant, her disillusionment with Canada, and her relationships in *The Boyfriend in Africa* and her condo experience involved a sense of having to cope on the inside with influences on from the outside, suggesting a degree of dissociation from experiences and relationships. This is further supported by the fact that all her metaphors focussed on herself and her ability to cope in different contexts. Others, even her immediate family, were given minor roles, and there was no sense of a vital connection to them in the experience or the metaphors. Similarly, the Independent Judge noted that Donald, whose partner is mentioned as a character in his condo experience, plays no substantial part in any of his metaphors. This suggests Donald, too, was focusing on himself during his condo ordeal, and perhaps distancing or alienating himself from others in the process. ALIENATION also figured prominently in Nathan's metaphor work as an implicit theme. Like Sherry, he also felt disconnected from Canada and disconnected himself from the other people involved in his condo experience. This feeling may be due to the fact that both of them are immigrants. However, in contrast to Sherry, Nathan was forced to become an 'alien' in Leaving Uganda when he was stripped of his citizenship and fled to Canada, and he even

suggested he felt alienated from life in general in Death Row Prisoner and his condo experience.

Donald's psychological and moral vulnerability and the dark side of his SELF became more evident as he worried about losing his home, the rightness of declaring bankruptcy, and the ethics of his actions in that regard. He saw perhaps more clearly how he could be vindictive and unethical in his behaviour and what triggered that. In contrast to this, Rita's metaphors clarified the ETHICS of her condo situation with a more positive perspective. She concluded that the government was most responsible for what had happened to her, and she stopped blaming herself. Her Husband's Death metaphor raised her indignation at how she had been treated throughout her condo ordeal, and she perhaps realised through The War metaphor that she had the power to fight back against her circumstances and is doing so.

Metaphors link past and present thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Ulak & Cummings, 1997). This can help to form new perspectives on experience and integrate meanings within existing schemata. Sherry found her perspective on 'life as war' influenced how she thought, felt and dealt with her condo experience. The perspectival themes of ESCAPE and BESIEGED testified to this war perspective and how it coloured her view. Rita linked her feelings of loss around her condo experience to the past loss of her husband, country and the imagined loss of home due to war. Nathan linked the multiple losses of his condo experience to the multiple losses in the Leaving Uganda metaphor and feelings around The Cold War Era in Upstart Politicians. Donald connected his experience to previously acquired knowledge of movies, sports and existentialism and feelings associated with those topics.

It appeared that a common reaction to the metaphor work emerged among the four co-researchers. It was only expressed directly by Nathan, but the co-researchers were all probably shocked at discovering they owned leaky condos and/or at the projected cost of the repairs because shock was illustrated in several of the co-researchers' metaphors.

SHOCK was a major theme for Rita due to her \$30,000 assessment. There was a pattern of shocks in her metaphors – returning to find her home had been bombed in The War, being The Refugee suddenly kicked out of her house, and witnessing her Husband's Death which was unexpected and sudden. Sherry also got the shock of getting kicked in the teeth in The Land of Milk and Honey and being trapped by in his apartment by The Boyfriend in Africa. Donald found himself sinking on The 'unsinkable' Titanic and playing a Rugby Game that suddenly had no rules and turned violent. Nathan was informed he had two weeks to get out of the country in Leaving Uganda. These shocks would naturally have consequences.

As a result of the shock, I suggest there was a sense of UNREALITY, which I believe was implicit for all the co-researchers because they disconnected from their condo experiences emotionally and/or intellectually. The metaphor work itself helped to facilitate this, but the co-researchers choice of metaphors also suggested disconnection from real experience. They all used what might be called 'bibliotherapeutic' metaphors, specifically metaphors drawn from literature and/or film. However, Nathan's metaphor work did not suggest the theme of unreality as clearly as the other co-researchers' metaphor work. Perhaps this was because he expressed his shock directly during our discussions, reliving the feelings of his condo experience and metaphors more fully.

New perspectives created by metaphors can lead to insights and the discovery of new knowledge (Cirillo & Crider, 1995). For example, Sherry's metaphors helped her to realise that she had to focus on herself in order to cope with problems, and that if she did this, she was also in a better position to help others cope. Rita saw through The War metaphor that she could fight back against the unfortunate financial state of affairs she was in with regard to her condo. Donald realised how New Home Warranty were the "innocent bystanders" in his condo experience, and Nathan realised that in Death Row Prisoner his condo developer might be the condemned man, who may have accidentally committed a crime, i.e. allowed the faulty condominium complex to be built.

The new perspectives can also create vivid and concise representations of experience (Migliore, 1993). An example of this is Sherry's metaphor of coming to The Land of Milk and Honey (Canada) only to be kicked in the teeth (sold a leaky condo and given no help with it). In The War, Rita's condo was a bombed blackened building, physically devastated in a way that perhaps reflected her emotional devastation and depression. In The Rugby Game, Donald's playing field was littered with broken teeth and bloodied uniforms, reflecting his perspective on his relationship with those involved in his condo experience. Nathan's Leaving Uganda vis-à-vis his condo experience was a vivid mirroring of the multiple losses he has experienced in Canada in the last few years, especially the loss of his job, his financial and emotional security, and even some loss of hope for the future.

Teeth emerged as a common symbol for three co-researchers. They appeared to represent the presence or absence of power as in the cliché of having or not having teeth. Nathan's view of his strata council was that of bunglers hoping they would end up in a

place where they could sink their teeth into the condo problem. He used the symbol of teeth specifically to represent a means of dealing with a problem vis-a-vis his strata council having the teeth to grip the condo problem. The council was searching for a way to be powerful and effective. A lack of teeth as a lack of power appeared explicitly in Sherry's *The Land of Milk and Honey* and implicitly in Donald's *The Rugby Game*. Not having teeth or being threatened with the loss of teeth could be linked specifically to the powerlessness that comes with not having a voice in matters that affected their lives.

Self-identity and role-relationship patterns (e.g. Angus & Rennie, 1988, 1989) were particularly well-illustrated in Sherry's metaphors under the theme of BESIEGED. She confirmed that she views problematic relationships and experiences as battles and wars, partly due to growing up in a war zone. Nathan's view of himself as a PRISONER and a social outcast was similar. Furthermore, Rita's views of SELF and LOSS were explored through her metaphors. They contained a consistent view of herself as a lonely isolated victim; however, her abilities to learn, to be independent, and to survive, which were illustrated in the metaphors, suggested a more positive self-identity. Nathan also viewed himself as someone who has experienced LOSS and perhaps as a victim; however, in viewing himself as adaptable, persevering and willing to change (see CHANGE/ ADAPTABILITY) he cast himself in a more positive light. Donald's adversarial and/or detached relationships with those involved in his condo experience were illustrated by his metaphors. Like Sherry, his main focus in all his metaphors was on his survival first, and he too was involved in a violent confrontation (*The Rugby Game*), but also in unethical and mutually suspicious dealings with the mob (*The Third Man*). The Independent Judge noted that he never mentioned how his partner fit in to the

metaphors or his condo experience – “She is mysteriously out of the picture.” Indeed, two of the four co-researchers are in relationships, and the metaphor work fully involved them as individuals, but it lacked an emphasis on their support networks, highlighting instead the roles of their main adversaries, i.e. the government, strata councils and developers.

The co-researchers’ roles in relation to the other parties involved in their condo experiences were clarified through detailed parallels or points of similarity in their metaphors. Particularly with Donald, his view of SELF in relation to others in his condo experience changed with each metaphor as he took more responsibility for his part in the proceedings. Nathan’s view of himself as a PRISONER in Death Row Prisoner was evident in the other metaphors as well as his condo experience. He probably felt an implicit lack of basic citizen rights in his condo experience, as he had in leaving Uganda, because his concerns were not addressed, and there appeared to be no legal redress for the condo problems. He probably also felt imprisoned by his ill health because it limited his mobility and by worry over his condo repairs because he felt forced to stay home during repairs, perhaps to keep an eye on things. His citizen rights were explicitly taken away in Leaving Uganda when his citizenship and passport were torn up, and he was forced to leave money and property behind. It was also suggested that he was a criminal who obtained his citizenship illegally, tried to ‘steal’ Ugandan currency when leaving the country, and needed to be fingerprinted. Recall that he regularly worried his name would be in the strata council minutes for some infraction of the strata rules, and he probably felt he was treated like a criminal by the strata council for complaining about the repair work. Finally, in Upstart Politicians his safety and sense of control over his own destiny

were limited by the whims of the politicians (the strata council and property manager) and their decisions regarding nuclear arms and war (the condo repair work).

The metaphor work appeared to access unconscious material and stimulate unconscious images (Rasmussen & Angus, 1996). WATER images emerged in two of Sherry's metaphors, in her and Donald's discussions of their experiences, and was central to Donald's The Titanic. He also used scatological imagery in portraying his situation in The Third Man metaphor, which suggested an unconscious attitude of self-disgust with how he handled his condo problem.

The metaphor work captured how Donald's ideas and attitudes about his condo experience and himself had changed. He gradually took more RESPONSIBILITY for his behaviour regarding his condo experience with each metaphor we worked on. At the same time the metaphors reflected and validated a gradual ENLIGHTENMENT in perspective on his experience. An example of this validation was his imagining himself as a character motivated by material gain in The Third Man. Donald's existential perspective on material things contrasted positively with the Harry Lime's materialist perspective in that metaphor. Finally, there was also a gradual change in his cynical view of other people reflected in the metaphors. This suggests that metaphors can capture changes in ideas, feelings and/or behaviour (Amundson, 1997; Siegelman, 1990).

The metaphors seemed to indicate when change had not occurred, and the TIME setting of the metaphors also seemed to reflect how resolved their condo experiences were for the four co-researchers. Rita's metaphors were set in the past yet she felt the situations they portrayed were current for her in the context of her condo experience. This suggested that she had not resolved her condo problem, which is indeed the case. She



must still deal with her latest assessment for repairs and is still feeling stressed and worried. All Nathan's metaphors were set in the past as well, but they seemed to be relived in the moment during our discussions because he often used present tense verbs. However, because of his emotional expressiveness and active fighting against his situation, I think Nathan has begun to resolve his feelings about his condo experience. He compared it somewhat favourably to the situation in Upstart Politicians – his condo experience only lasted a few years whereas the Cold War Era of the metaphor lasted for several decades.

In contrast Sherry viewed all her metaphors as forms of escape and as resolved in themselves, suggesting her condo experience was resolved, which she said it was for the most part. Uniquely, one of her metaphors was also set in a desirable future, which seemed to reflect her strong optimism that she could put the condo ordeal behind her and move on. Two of Donald's metaphors were also set in the past and reflected earlier and less desirable perspectives and attitudes toward his experience, which also suggested that he had resolved his condo problem to a great extent, although his bankruptcy will still be a reminder of it for some years.

All the metaphors integrated thoughts, feelings and actions from the condo experiences with other domains of co-researchers' knowledge to some degree. The co-researchers' metaphors used past experiences (i.e. memories) and cultural knowledge (i.e. a fairy tale, movies, history, religion and sports) to connect to their condo experiences, integrating different domains of knowledge.

The metaphors also showed evidence of integrating systems of concepts at various levels of experience (e.g. Kirkmayer, 1993). Sherry's sense of confinement stands out as

a clear example of this. She had felt limited in what she could do to remedy her condo situation. She was under siege in the imagined situation of her Sleeping Beauty metaphor and, while she was participating in the study, she was aware of feeling constrained by the methodology of my study. Thus she felt confined at the levels of past, present and imaginary (metaphorical) experience.

The theme of ALIENATION also connected with Sherry at the levels of personal public and metaphorical experience. She felt removed from the goings on during her condo repairs. There was an alienation of affection toward her boyfriend in one metaphor. Finally, as an immigrant to Canada, she is perhaps more sensitive to issues around citizen rights. She clearly felt alienated from and disillusioned with Canada because it allows things like the leaky condo crisis to occur. Not protecting citizens' rights during such disasters was like saying to the victims, "You are not citizens of this country."

ALIENATION was also relevant for Rita on several levels of experience. She felt alienated from her fellow condo owners who had the social and financial support she lacked, and alienated from people in general after the crushing experience of losing her husband. She also felt alienated from modern life where disasters like the leaky condo crisis could go on unchecked. Perhaps, as I suggested earlier, this alienation stems from childhood – she was raised German in Canada during the first half of the last century, when Germany was not popular with the rest of the world. In the META-METAPHOR I suggested Rita's feelings of alienation indicated a sense of *persona non grata*. I would also suggest this is applicable to Sherry for the reasons given above.

This alienation was probably partially due to the fact that the parties involved did not accept responsibility for the condo crisis. This is reflected in Nathan's theme of

RESPONSIBILITY/CHAOS. He focused on the political conflicts in all his metaphors and his condo experience, all of which involved him personally. Because of this I believe his sense of alienation was more a felt experience than a perspective. He appeared to be more actively involved than other co-researchers in trying to resolve problems throughout his condo experience.

### *Attitudes toward Experience*

The metaphors seemed to track a change in attitude from pessimism to optimism in Donald's metaphors through SHADES OF ATMOSPHERE and FEELINGS that began dark and became progressively lighter (with some humour in *The Third Man*). A change in attitude toward herself and her situation was also notable in Rita's metaphor work. Ironically, as the negative feelings that connected each metaphor to her condo experience became more intense, she also realised more and more what she could do to get herself out of her condo situation or at least to deal with it more effectively. Her focus on herself became that of a confident SURVIVOR more than a powerless victim.

Metaphors can concretise feelings, like feelings of confidence or powerlessness, making them more vivid and evocative through their multi-sensory impact (McMullen, 1985). Sherry actually said, "All these metaphors seemed to concretise a war image [with feelings of oppression]." Again, Sherry said coming to Canada and ending up with a leaky condo was like coming to The Land of Milk and Honey and getting kicked in the teeth. This is certainly a vivid and evocative image employing visual, gustatory and tactile elements. Rita said the government was 'shooting condo owners' like herself for complaining about their situation, using visual and tactile elements. Her themes of LOSS

and SEARCHING were concretised in the metaphors as images of loss of country, home, husband, sense of ownership, and even loss of a way of life she knew in her youth. She compared looking for a new home to “running for shelter” in *The War* and more broadly “searching for a sense of security.” Donald’s use of the cliché of the lemon to referring to his faulty condo also employed visual and gustatory elements. In particular the bitter sweetness of the lemon evokes the optimism he had when he bought his first home and the disillusionment when he declared bankruptcy. This also tied to a self-image in *The Third Man* Metaphor, where Donald was the affable rogue Harry Lime, a bitter sweet character. Donald’s use of the lemon cliché appeared to refute Ingram’s claim (1994) that clichés represent structural rather than thematic elements of experience, as did Sherry’s use of water clichés, e.g the payments came in waves (were financially destructive), which linked to the theme of WATER as a destructive force.

All co-researchers used the kind of bibliotherapy envisioned by Myers (1998) to enhance their emotional understanding of their condo experiences, but theirs was done spontaneously and without books. Instead, they used films as metaphors to explore and discover a variety of connections between those metaphors and their condo experiences. The Independent Judge noted that the MetaForm used dramatic elements (which could also apply to movies). This may have influenced the co-researchers in their choice of metaphors. In addition to movie references, Sherry also used the *Sleeping Beauty* fairytale and a biblical reference (*The Land of Milk and Honey* – the promised land), and Donald referred to detective novels in discussing possible metaphors [see Appendix E].

Something not dealt with directly in the literature on metaphor was how they could highlight feelings and/or attitudes that were unacknowledged and/or unconscious

for the co-researchers during the condo experience discussions. These feelings tended to suggest themselves through apparent themes and images in the metaphors. Sherry's anger and disillusionment at having her TRUST betrayed through VIOLATION of her person and property comes out in her relationships with the Boyfriend in Africa, her condo developer, the condo repairmen (the besiegers in *Sleeping Beauty*) and Canada or the Canadian Government. In Donald's metaphors, his sense of VULNERABILITY and GUILT came through the violent imagery and violent and morally questionable behaviour of *The Rugby Game* and *The Third Man*, although his justifiable lack of TRUST alleviated his guilt to some degree. Rita's metaphors also suggested a sense of being vulnerable in the world because people can die and homes can be destroyed so easily and unexpectedly. Nathan's condo experience and metaphors suggested a sense of ALIENATION. The images of the Death Row Prisoner and *Leaving Uganda* clearly illustrated this. Alienation also applied to his relationships with his fellow condo owners and the other parties involved in the condo crisis up to and including the Ugandan and Canadian governments and Canadian society. As he said in *Death Row prisoner*, "You feel you are different from the rest of the society." This echoed through *Leaving Uganda*, where he was stripped of his citizenship and made a *persona non grata*, and *Upstart Politicians*, where he was not even really included as a character – he was more of a non-entity. With both Nathan and Rita there was this sense of *persona non grata* that perhaps stemmed from depression, racial prejudice, society's negative view of older adults, a lack of interpersonal and financial power, a sense of confusion and disillusionment with today's moral and political behaviour.

Their metaphors helped to externalise their feelings and problems for the co-researchers (Stanley-Muchow, 1985), allowing them some objective distance from their condo experiences. Sherry felt she got an objective view on her experience, although she noted that the metaphors did not necessarily make her more objective. Both Sherry and Donald used WATER metaphors to suggest its destructive force, perhaps externalising a deep fear as to what would happen to them regarding the security of their homes and themselves. Rita felt the metaphors were a way of handing the difficult emotions of her condo experience (Cox & Theilgaard, 1987, cited in Sinai, 1997). I would suggest that for Nathan the Leaving Uganda metaphor in particular helped to externalise his feelings. It was ironic because he said he was not aware of reliving the feelings of that metaphor only the thoughts. Yet I could see clear signs that he was expressing the feelings by his excited tone of voice and emphatic body language. Donald felt that because the metaphor was not the condo experience it was easier to go into the feelings of the condo experience through the metaphor. The metaphors allowed him some distance from his ideas and feelings by externalising them and at the same time engaging him in those thoughts and feelings directly and indirectly through their metaphors. For example, the feeling of DANGER and the theme SHADES OF VIOLENCE were illustrated by the broken teeth and bloodied uniforms of The Rugby Game, the drowning of The Titanic victims, and involvement with the mob in The Third Man. This type of emotional engagement was also suggested in the literature (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

To use a business metaphor, emotional engagement in the metaphor work may be facilitated because the metaphors themselves had an emotional investment for the co-researchers. This investment may have helped to spread the emotional risk of particular

intense feelings from their condo experiences to the metaphorical 'experiences.' For example, Rita felt it was safe to FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL in her condo experience because she had fought in The War and recovered from her Husband's Death. I believe her indignation at being a veteran's widow left to fend for herself in her golden years helped to fuel her anger at her condo problems. The SHADES OF VIOLENCE, both psychological and physical, in Donald's metaphors also seemed to portion out the very negative feelings associated with his condo experience.

### *Implications for Action*

The metaphors certainly motivated my co-researchers to explore their condo experiences and piqued their curiosity (Rule, 1983). Sherry expressed curiosity, particularly with regard to where her Sleeping Beauty metaphor would lead. Rita was also curious to see how the metaphors could apply to her experience, until she saw how, particularly on an emotional level, they expressed similarities, and she appeared surprised at how deeply she identified with The Refugee in that metaphor. This motivation led to direct action in the case of Rita, who has written letters and received replies to her concerns and attributes this to the metaphor work.

The co-researchers' metaphors aided in problem-solving through comparing the dynamics of the metaphor with those of the experience (McMullen, 1985). A good example was Rita's resolving of responsibility in her condo experience. She said The War allowed her to see that the government was ultimately responsible for the whole leaky condo fiasco, and this alleviated her sense of personal guilt. A related example was how Donald's view of New Home Warranty changed as he used The Rugby Game and

The Third Man metaphors to proportion responsibility among the parties involved in his condo experience, including himself. He felt New Home Warranty bore no blame. At the same time, he realised he shared the blame, albeit a small part - he handled his bankruptcy unethically, yet he did so because SURVIVAL was his main goal.

The metaphors showed evidence of representing associations of meanings that structured self-world and self-object relationships in ways that suggested internal and external coping strategies (Ingram, 1994) - ways of dealing with feelings, and actions that might be taken. Internal coping strategies were illustrated by Rita's SPIRITUAL ACCEPTANCE of her condo experience. Her view of herself as a survivor and her belief that she was "protected by prayer" also gave her the confidence to take action. Sherry also viewed herself as a survivor, but the focus was on her SELF. She needed to survive before she could help others. Rita, on the other hand, was empowered through her relationship with her God. This helped her to make sense of her experience and view it with some equanimity and acceptance. Donald's existential perspective on his experience reduced the negative intensity of his 'inner relationship' with material things, i.e. his condo and money, because he realised these were not essential to and did not define his 'being.' This also allowed him some DETACHMENT from other negative feelings regarding his financial losses, as he himself said. Sherry also recognised detachment as a means of psychological SURVIVAL. Both she and Donald also used humour as a means of achieving distance and relief from negative emotions. In addition to this, Sherry recognised WAR within herself as a battle to control feelings that were triggered by the external war with her condo developer and the government. This was illustrated by her "super cool kind of [rage]" in The Boyfriend in Africa and her 'wait, watch then act'



coping strategy regarding her condo experience. (This also relates to Rita's The War where she characterised her indecision around selling her condo as a war within herself.)

More external coping strategies and/or problem solving techniques were also either discovered, made more conscious, and/or validated by the metaphors. Sherry felt she became more conscious of coping skills she already possessed, e.g. her negotiating skills and sense of personal POWER through public protest. Rita applied her letter writing from her Husband's Death metaphor to her condo experience and wrote to government complaining about her situation. This action was also motivated by her sense of INJUSTICE. She had made sacrifices for Canada through World War Two, she was a pensioner on a fixed income, and she was not at fault in buying a condo that had been inspected but then leaked. The Refugee metaphor suggested she could seek financial advice through her church, and Rita validated this strategy herself. The idea of telling his story to the media came up in The Rugby Game discussions with Donald; however, it was unclear if the metaphor suggested this strategy.

The metaphor work influenced decisions regarding the co-researchers' condo experiences. The metaphors reinforced Sherry's and Donald's decision not to buy another condo. In the cases of Rita and Nathan, the metaphors suggested how some of the problems might have been circumvented through PREVENTION. Rita's The War suggested to her that there were warning signals of problems with her condo and that communications were not effective in the planning of repairs, which led to that process becoming longer and more painful than it need have been. Nathan's Death Row Prisoner suggested good conduct would have kept the prisoner out of jail and alive. This could apply equally to the parties involved in his condo experience – the government, the

developer, etc. might not have got as much flak for their behaviour (or lack thereof) if they acted responsibly when the condo crisis came to light.

It is interesting to note that Sherry's metaphors in themselves suggested the basic three-step PROBLEM MANAGEMENT model for counselling, with one metaphor representing each of the current scenario, the preferred scenario and the means to achieve the preferred scenario. This suggested the positive effects metaphors could have on people's thoughts, feelings and actions regarding their problematic experiences. Perhaps metaphors might be used to indirectly envision these steps for people who have difficulty discussing or envisioning their scenarios or strategies for achieving their goals.

Related to the above was an overall impression I had while working with my co-researchers was that we were doing a kind of narrative therapy. There was the externalising of the problem (Epstein & White, 1990) – the co-researchers distanced themselves from their stories through the metaphorical narratives. There was also the search for problem solutions from past experiences – from what had perhaps been 'edited out' of the co-researchers' lives. However, in the case of metaphor work, useful problem solutions need not be limited to those drawn from real or non-fictional experiences; therefore, metaphors can broaden the scope of possible narratives to draw on in dealing with a problematic experience. They could also provide a method for broadening the range of perspectives and attitudes or feelings that might prove useful.

### **Process Analysis and Implications for Practice**

All four co-researchers spoke of cognitively moving back and forth between the metaphor and the experience. Rita talked of "little flashbacks" to the experience. Donald

said he “drew on” his experience “for inspiration” in developing his metaphors. Sherry and Nathan also said they consciously began associating from the metaphors to their experiences in developing the metaphors. All four also drew associations between metaphors although this was done most by Sherry. As a result, all the co-researchers were able to generate a variety of connections between their experiences and metaphors, which led to the integration meaning within their condo experiences. Sherry, Donald and Rita were particularly adept at this kind of associative thinking. Nathan had a difficult time with it, perhaps because English was his second language and/or because he appeared more depressed than the other co-researchers. As the Independent Judge suggested, it would be hard to think creatively if you are depressed. Perhaps it would also be difficult if you are in ill health as Nathan is.

The metaphor-making appeared to be, paradoxically, a controlled dissociative process as it involves imagination, and in doing so, it could be somewhat removed from the processing of real immediate experience. As the metaphors were and were not the co-researchers’ experiences, so the process appeared to be and not to be conscious. Metaphor-making seemed to require the ability to cognitively shift from reality to fantasy - the four co-researchers noted themselves doing this. Assuming this requirement, both client and counsellor must be capable of and willing to engage in such a process for it to have any kind of positive effect. Particularly with Nathan, I found myself taking the initiative in suggesting associations between his metaphors and his condo experience and checking them with him. In addition to this, particularly again with Nathan and also with Rita, I asked more open-ended questions to elicit associations, e.g. What/who would the developer be in the metaphor?

My co-researchers all experienced some discomfort with the process of relating their condo experiences and developing/examining certain metaphors, particularly those metaphors that were taken from the co-researchers' personal experiences, i.e. Sherry's The Boyfriend in Africa, Rita's Husband's Death and Nathan's Leaving Uganda. This discomfort seemed primarily due to the reliving of negative feelings related to those personal experiences. Some of the implications of the metaphors were also uncomfortable. A good example of this was Donald's The Third Man where he identified himself with the main character who was a criminal.

It should be noted that the metaphors co-researchers chose to develop sometimes appeared to be more relevant and/or immediately important to process than the experiences they were working on. In this case, it might be better to turn the table on the metaphor and the experience, using the experience as a reflection of the metaphor. Rita actually expressed relief in looking back at her condo experience after engaging in the discussion of her Husband's Death, which was based on another real and more painful experience than her condo problem.

All co-researchers seemed to derive satisfaction out of inventing appropriate metaphors for their experiences. I would liken it to the satisfaction some people derive from finding a label or name for their problems or illnesses or from finding the right word to communicate their meaning more precisely. Co-researchers all expressed interest in the process, were very engaged in it, and found it enlightening in some ways. Only Sherry said she might have changed one of her metaphors, The Boyfriend in Africa, due to its association with abuse. She said her choosing it was more due more to her knowledge that I had worked with abused people than to the metaphor itself, which was still

appropriate. The fact that the co-researchers did not want to change their metaphors, even though they were almost all negative at first glance, speaks to the co-researchers' ability to choose fitting and effective ones on a consistent basis. None of the metaphors were suggested by me although, as I have said before, I occasionally took the lead role in developing them.

### *The MetaForm*

I used a large 11"x17" version of the MetaForm which allowed the flexibility of taking brief or more detailed notes. However, I would suggest that the MetaForm could be used simply as a guide to metaphor development and exploration - nothing needs to be written down. It could also be used as a homework assignment for clients to review the metaphor content from a given counselling session or as an exercise to do before a session. I do not suggest writing detailed notes on the MetaForm during sessions as this could divide the attention of the counsellor, the client or both. Sherry commented on this. Developing one metaphor for an experience in a given session is probably a reasonable goal, assuming the life experience in question has been discussed in detail in a previous session(s). In addition to this, developing the metaphor with the experience in mind appears to be natural and useful in terms of making the metaphor more relevant and, therefore, should be encouraged – all the co-researchers and I were aware of cognitively shifting back and forth between the metaphor and the experience. This occurred during the metaphor creation process and prior to my prompting them to do so.

## **My Process**

I soon discovered it was very important to clarify what co-researchers were discussing – their experiences or metaphors – during the process of metaphor making. At times there was some confusion that was only cleared up during the Intervention Interview or the member checks of their drafted cases. I also felt it was more important to be cognitively attuned to them during the process. Empathic attuning seemed more important afterwards when appreciating the emotional impact and implications of the metaphors vis-à-vis the co-researchers' condo experiences. I also found that the metaphors themselves sometimes contained more difficult emotions (e.g. Rita's Husband's Death) than those of the condo experiences and, therefore, they took priority over the experience and needed some processing before connecting them to the emotions of the condo experiences.

I became more aware of how I was using language vis-à-vis metaphor through out the thesis process. I found myself changing and selecting metaphorical language during the interviews and in writing the thesis, particularly those figures of speech that are embedded in conceptual metaphors. Although I became more attuned to conceptual metaphors in spoken language, it was a curious experience for me to be learning to write with an awareness of conceptual metaphors. It was like learning a completely new a micro-skill of writing.

## **Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

This study was limited, first of all, by the fact that it was exploratory. Its conceptualisation of meaningful experience in terms of perspectives, attitudes and

problems-solving was also a limitation. In addition to this, the focus on the experiences of the participants was limited by viewing them through the framework of the elements of a drama. This framework perhaps also limited the repertoire of metaphors participants could bring to the table in terms of discussing their experiences.

The process perhaps needs more time and/or fewer metaphors. It is a very structured intervention, which could take the focus off counselling and put it on the exercise of metaphor creation. Future studies might limit the metaphor work to one or two metaphors and go into more detail regarding their impact on the co-researchers' self-image and world-view. They might also try a less structured approach to metaphor creation and elaboration. One of the co-researchers, Sherry, said of the process, "It's something like mental masturbation. A little bit of a game. It was fun. Games often teach you things, but I don't know that any of this was unconscious. Everything teaches, but I don't know what this particularly taught." She clearly values things that can teach her something. Although the metaphor work was not intended as a teaching exercise, she does raise the serious question of the relevance of the study.

The selection of metaphors is crucial to the relevance of this kind of work. At face value, it would probably work best for creative and intuitive people. Random selection certainly could lead to irrelevant and/or absurd metaphors being used. Sherry also said the interviewer and what s/he says to the interviewee could affect what metaphor(s) will suggest themselves and/or be selected for development in the moment. Perhaps even the use of the drama metaphor in conceptualising the condo experience for this study influenced the metaphor choices of my co-researchers as mentioned above (see the Cross-Case Analysis).

The interviewer probably needs to believe in the value of metaphors for the work to be useful and also to be creative and intuitive, like the interviewee. It would be useful to have a study use a variety of counsellors for future studies to see how their results might be different or similar. It might also be useful to have a different person interview the co-researchers regarding the effects of the metaphors and the metaphor work from the person who administers the MetaForm. Co-researchers could be influenced in their evaluation by the person who administers the MetaForm, e.g. Rita tried to give me the feedback on the MetaForm that she felt I wanted to hear. However, I believe my results show that all the metaphors chosen by the participants were relevant to their condominium experiences.

In spite of this, time could be wasted on unenlightening and/or insignificant associations between the experience and a given metaphor. People might choose metaphors that are difficult to work with in terms of conceptualising them as a drama. The structured approach to the metaphor work could be hindering for some people. The contrived nature of the procedure could inhibit co-researchers from fully expressing their experiences.

"I think it is very hard to dissociate yourself from the [condo experience] when you're beginning with the metaphor that you drew from the condo [experience]... You kind of want to draw on the condo experience for inspiration because that's where the original metaphor came from." Donald's comments here suggest a valid alternative methodological strategy in metaphor work.

The logic of the methodology was somewhat flawed in that implications for action were elicited, but the study design called for participants whose experience is in



the past. Therefore, any implications would only be discovered in hindsight. However, the metaphors did suggest alternative courses of action, and one of the participants, Rita, had still not resolved her leaky condo problem.

Two of the study participants, Sherry and Donald, were counsellors of some sort. The assumption here is that they would be more familiar with using language, including metaphor, in the context of counselling. Although there was a good cross-cultural representation among the participants, it would be interesting and perhaps useful to try the MetaForm with an even greater diversity of co-researchers.

Further research might look at gender and/or age differences in co-researchers. The Independent Judge noted that the women appeared to focus more on the feelings involved in their condo experiences and metaphors while the men focussed on the situations. I felt similarly that the women were more prepared to discuss emotional issues while the men appeared more concerns with political and/or ethical issues.

Finally, future studies might look at encouraging co-researchers to use literature, film and or biographical material as their metaphors to encourage a sense of connection with their own past lives and/or with the lives of others who might be role models. It might be interesting to explore the effect of relating the themes of co-researchers' lives to the great themes of literature and film. This can certainly play an important part for anyone in the development of a meaningful understanding of his/her life.

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## APPENDIX C: QUESTIONS TO GUIDE REFLECTIONS

### **A METAPHOR FOR DISASTER: A Multiple case study of the leaky condo crisis**

**Instructions:** At some point within the next week, please reflect for 15 minutes on the metaphors and metaphor creation process from our first meeting. Also reflect on your experience of owning and living in a water-damaged condominium.

Please take written notes about your reflections to review at our next meeting. The following questions were created to help you to reflect. Answering them may help you clarify and deepen your understanding of your experience and how you feel about it. If you wish, you may give me your notes at our next meeting. Don't put your name on your notes.

#### **QUESTIONS TO GUIDE REFLECTIONS:**

How do you understand the metaphor?  
How well does it fit your experience?

What does it say regarding how you felt about the experience?  
What does it tell you about how you understood it?  
What does it say about how you dealt with your experience?

How has the metaphor changed how you view the experience?  
How has it changed your feelings about the experience?  
What alternate courses of action does the metaphor present?  
How you will deal with the experience/remember it from now on?

Regarding the Metaphor Creation Process for each Metaphor:  
How did you feel about the process of developing the metaphor?  
What was going through your mind as we worked on it?

What changes would you make to the metaphor now?  
What would it take to make those changes?  
Do other metaphors suggest themselves to you now?

## APPENDIX E: CO-RESEARCHERS' POSSIBLE METAPHORS

### Sherry's Metaphor Pool

**Setting:** condo = prison or a besieged building; location of condo = in the shadow of the street of dreams (a rich neighbourhood); living there = slipstreaming or going to an aquarium where you can see whale but you can't touch it

**Mood:** holiday atmosphere = before damage was discovered; communal feeling = arms coming together around the central court powerlessness; after problem discovered = left holding the baby, father's sexual abuse of co-researcher, or being held at gun point in a car; anger = nothing to lose, you might not like what comes out of me, or witnessing two boys beating up a homeless man

**Cast:** city engineers = fiends; some neighbours = loose cannons; sherry = dodger and weaver; 1<sup>st</sup> strata council = a bunch of monkeys; developer = abusive father or classic Machiavellian bad guy

**Plot:** everyday now = celebration now because can move in a new room bring things up from storage; extraordinary meetings = wrestling with disrespectful posturing, defensive positions, yelling and shouting, a war in individual bunkers, or a game not on same team

**Theme:** canada = land of milk and honey that kicks me in the teeth; condo experience = survival of a drought

### Rita's Metaphor Pool

**Setting:** building with rotting wood = wartime movie bombed building or black wood, junk lumber

**Mood:** lost = doesn't fit in or accept the world the way it works now

**Props:** none

**Cast:** rita = refugee; developer = hitler

**Plot:** \$30,000 assessment = a death, like dying

**Theme:** loss of home = loss of husband in some ways



**Donald's Metaphor Pool**

**Setting:** condominium complex = rotting apples

**Mood:** having to pay for damage that was not his fault = victim of robbery or victim of con game (sting, house of cards), getting dirty squatting

**Props:** none

**Cast:** donald = sinking ship survivor, victim of a robbery or member of a team that got treated unethically by the rest of the team; partner = drowning victim; BC government = victim of circumstance (brought down by the inadequacies of their own system) or irresponsible teenager; the BC Construction Association = "Brazil" (the movie); The New Home Warranty people = buffoons, clowns or victims getting so much abuse from everybody

**Plot:** people bailing our water = putting money into repairs; courier bringing eviction notice at midnight = "cloak and dagger" detective novel

**Theme:** the experience = journey of suffering

**Nathan's Metaphor Pool**

**Setting:** building = concentration camp

**Mood:** none

**Props:** prods = nails or electric plugs

**Cast:** manager = rookie or upstart politician; nathan = survivor, follower, bird in a cage or prisoner in jail on death row; strata council = rookies or leaders

**Plot:** condo experience = leaving uganda

**Theme:** none

## APPENDIX F: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE METAPHORS

METAPHORS	PLACE	TIME	WORLD VIEW	VIEW OF SELF	MAJOR THEME(S)	MAIN EFFECT
<i><b>SHERRY</b></i>						
The Land of Milk and Honey	Imaginary Biblical Land	Unreal Future	Very Opt	N/A	Escape/Wish Fulfillment	POV: motivating vision
The Boyfriend in Africa	Africa	Real Past Felt as relevant to the present	Fairly Opt	Very Pos	Betrayal/ Survival	pro-solve and current att. re problems in life
Sleeping Beauty	Imaginary Place	Unreal 'ancient' Past	Very Opt	Very Pos	Self-Empowerment	pro-solve: more aware of coping skills
<i><b>RITA</b></i>						
The War Movie	Italy/ Europe	Real Past felt as relevant to the present	Quite Pess	Quite Neg	Disempowerment Victimisation	Att: motivation to change current situation
The Refugee	Ukraine/ Canada	Realistic Past felt as relevant to the present	Very Pess	Very Neg	Disempowerment Victimisation	Att: awareness of unacknowledged feelings
Husband's Death	Canada	Real Past felt as relevant to the present?	Fairly Opt	Fairly Pos	Loss/Grief/ Loneliness	Pro-Solve: more positive view of self and coping skills
<i><b>DONALD</b></i>						
The Titanic	Atlantic Ocean	Real Past	Quite Pess	Fairly Pos	Survival	POV: unacknowledged ideas and feelings suggested
The Rugby Game	Australia	Real Past	Quite Pess	Pos/Neg	Survival/ Disempowerment	Att: feelings previously unacknowledged
The Third Man	Austria	Unreal Past felt as relevant to the present?	Very Pess	Quite Neg	Ethical Responsibility	POV: ethics of behaviour and view of self and feelings
<i><b>NATHAN</b></i>						
Upstart Politicians	Canada?	Real Past	Very Pess	N/A	Disempowerment	POV and Att: clarified view of self and others in experience
Death Row Prisoner	USA	Real Past felt as relevant to the present?	Pess/Opt	Neg/Pos	Death	Att and POV: recognition of feelings
Leaving Uganda	Africa	Real Past felt as relevant to the present?	Very Pess	Very Neg	Losses/ Disempowerment	Att and POV: recognition of how past affects present

N/A = Not Applicable

P = Past

POV = Perspective

Opt = Optimistic

N = Present

Att = Attitude

Pess = Pessimistic

F = Future

Pro-Solve = Problem-Solving/Coping

? = Unsure of Results