

MEANINGFUL WORK AND CHILDHOOD STRESS

by

Carol Anne Naylor

B.Comm., Dalhousie University, 1985

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 1999

© Carol A. Naylor, 1999

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Education-Counselling Psychology.

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date April 30/99

ABSTRACT

A multiple case study method was used to investigate the relationship between adult experiences of meaningful work and childhood experiences of existential stress. Three male participants were selected on the basis that they were engaged in personally meaningful work. In-depth interviews were used to collect stories from their childhood and current work life. Childhood and work narratives were transcribed from tape-recorded interviews. Each account was reviewed and validated by the case study participants.

The accounts were analyzed by comparing the childhood and work narrative plots and the participant's role within these plots. An analysis of the narratives revealed a pattern of experience that was common to all three cases. Overall, participants were found to play similar roles in their childhood and work narratives. In childhood, participants did not feel equipped to fulfill the role in which they were cast. As a result, participants were repeatedly cast in dramas in which the overriding stress of their childhood was played out. In work, however, participants were able to fulfill their roles and were engaged in activities that were instrumental in producing desired outcomes. Those activities cited as meaningful were directly and symbolically related to the resolution of the central stress from their childhood.

Several implications emerge from this study. First, the study supports the findings of previous researchers who describe a relationship between childhood stress and meaningful work. Second, it describes a very complex relationship that includes such factors as an individual's sense of agency, enactments of family dramas, re-targeting sources of resolution, and engagement in significant activities. Third, it lends support for

the practicability and usefulness of narrative approaches to career counselling. Finally, it supports the idea that meaningful work does not belong only to extraordinary or gifted people.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Chapter I	Introduction	1
Chapter II	Literature Review	6
Chapter III	Research Design and Methodology	16
Chapter IV	Results: D's Narrative	27
Chapter V	Results: M's Narrative	56
Chapter VI	Results: J's Narrative	85
Chapter VII	Data Analysis	112
Chapter VIII	Discussion	139
References	151
Appendix A	Recruitment Notice	153
Appendix B	Screening Interview Questions	154
Appendix C	Informed Consent Form.	155
Appendix D	Interview Questions.	157
Appendix E	Participant Review Questions	159

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Woe to him who [sees] no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose and therefore no point in carrying on. He [is] soon lost” (Frankl, 1992, p.85). Victor Frankl and his fellow prisoners lived and died by this maxim in the confines of a Nazi concentration camp in the 1940s. While many conditions of human existence have changed in fifty years, the lessons learned through the pain and suffering of the past should not be forgotten. A meaningless existence may be less likely now to cause the death of our bodies but it still threatens to sicken our spirit. Existentialists such as Victor Frankl and Jean-Paul Sartre have written extensively on the topic of meaningful living and speak about a unique “vocation,” “calling” or “fundamental project” which demands fulfillment in each one of us. It is by answering this call and implementing our own unique life’s work that each of us has an opportunity to discover and experience the meaning of our existence.

One of the most promising channels through which individuals attempt to construct meaning in today’s world is through their career (Cochran, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Savickas, 1993). “A career is a composition of meaning that has been lived, is being lived and will be lived” (Cochran, 1990, p.1). Frankl contends that “we can discover this meaning in life in three different ways... The first by creating a work or doing a deed” (Frankl, 1992, p.115). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has studied individuals who have transformed their lives into a unified optimal experience through the construction of meaningful work. He concludes that “if a person sets out to achieve a

difficult enough goal, from which all other goals logically follow, and if he or she invests all energy in developing skills to reach that goal, then actions and feelings will be in harmony and the separate parts of life will fit together... in such a way it is possible to give meaning to one's entire life" (p.215). These writers and many others in the field of psychology and specifically of career development have recognized the significance of "meaning in life" in the study of career. As a result many career theorists and practitioners in this decade have begun placing a greater emphasis on a person's unique history of what is required to experience meaningfulness in their work.

Rationale of the Study

Philosophers, psychologists and career development theorists have explicitly and implicitly lent their support for further research on this topic. Frankl (1992) was only the first of many who wrote of the psychic pain experienced by those who find themselves in a life without meaning: "I turn to the detrimental influence of that feeling of which so many patients complain today, namely the feeling of the total and ultimate meaninglessness of their lives... they are haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves; they are caught in that situation which I have called the existential vacuum" (p.111). Frankl (1992) hypothesized that this widespread phenomenon was due in part to a loss of traditions that guide lives in fulfilling ways. Where once we knew that our destiny was to farm, hunt, or raise children, the industrial revolution brought choices that we never before had the freedom to make. With that freedom, however, came an increased potential for us to experience meaninglessness. Frankl (1992) also perceives that a crucial part of meaningful living is a commitment to an "other," be it a cause or another person. As we approach the next millennium, the

condition of lifetime employment (and thus commitment to a single organization or profession) is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. As our freedom to choose a life's work continues to expand at an ever increasing rate and our opportunities for sustained commitment continue to decline, the potential for experiences of meaninglessness in work may be at its highest point in decades.

More recently, in his 1993 article "Career Counselling in the Postmodern Era, Mark Savickas discusses society's movement away from positivism and objectivistic science and the implications this has had and should continue to have on the field of career counselling as we approach the turn of the millennium. Most notably, the focus of career intervention is moving away from the traditional "objective fit" model to a far more subjective and personal approach of "meaning making": "Career counselling in a postmodern era will rely more on autobiography and meaning making than on interest inventories and guidance techniques" (Savickas, 1993, p.212). Savickas calls on career counsellors to work within the narrative paradigm by using interventions which address the individual's subjective career - that is his/her "life story." "Like hermeneutical scholars who interpret the meaning of a literary passage from the corpus of the work," Savickas explains, "career counsellors may interpret a client's interest, abilities and work values as an expression of a career pattern or central life theme" (Savickas, 1993, p.213). A call for greater emphasis on these types of interventions is also a call for greater research on the process of studying the phenomenon of meaningful work in the lives of everyday people.

People, who regard their work as personally meaningful have always been a source of fascination to me. Both as a child and as an adult I have been deeply envious of

those whose work engages them in goals which have great significance in their lives, is done not for the acquisition of external incentives but for its own sake, and provides them with profound experiences of fulfillment and inner harmony. In the past it appeared to me that this phenomenon was available only to those who were supremely gifted in a particular field. I reasoned that people like myself, whose abilities could not be considered remarkable, would be forever required to view work as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. In more recent years however, I have had the opportunity to speak with many people who describe their work as personally meaningful. Time and time again I have found that the drive behind their search for meaningful work has not been some remarkable gift or talent but instead they have been driven by a personally significant cause. This thesis, itself a personally meaningful quest, seeks to understand more completely the phenomenon of meaningful work in people's lives and to explore the potential for all those who long for a meaningful existence to experience it through their life's work.

The Meaning of Meaningful Work

Meaningful work is an ambiguous and elusive concept to investigate. Despite this difficulty, many writers have made attempts to define the human experience of meaningfulness within the general theme of life and within the specific context of work. Generally speaking, Frankl (1992) defines meaningfulness as a state of *self-transcendence* or a sense that one is fulfilling something beyond him or herself. He describes it as a commitment, or a movement towards someone or something other than oneself, and the resulting sense of involvement, fulfillment and of doing something worthwhile. Frankl

(1992) insists that “everyone has his or her own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment” (p.113).

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), there are three components necessary to define meaningfulness in life and in a life’s work. The first is a *unified purpose*. People engaged in meaningful work are involving their energies in a goal or purpose that can give significance to their lives. The second is *resolution*. People perceive that their efforts are devoted to a unified purpose and that their energies are not diffused or wasted. The third is *harmony*. People experience an inner state whereby their feelings, thoughts, and actions are congruent with one another; there is an absence of doubt, regret, and guilt.

Klinger (1977) equates meaning with our sense of purpose or having aims. Work that is done for the purpose of obtaining an emotionally compelling reward is said to be meaningful because this work becomes satisfying in its own right. According to Klinger (1977), meaninglessness in work is said to occur when jobs cease to be satisfying in themselves and begin to be valued according to their usefulness for attaining incentives outside of themselves.

The definition of meaningful work for use in this study concerns people whose work or occupation a) engages them in a purposeful goal which has significance in their lives, b) is satisfying in its own right, and c) is accompanied with a sense of fulfillment and inner harmony and, d) results in a sense that one is involved and committed to someone or something beyond themselves.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of philosophers and researchers have studied the experience of meaningful work in people's lives and although their areas and methods of investigation have varied, there exists a central theme throughout the literature. Writers agree that the seeds for an adult's experience of meaningful work are planted in childhood (Erikson, 1969; Cochran, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979; Ochberg, 1987; Sartre, 1963). According to these researchers, one experiences, in childhood, significant and engulfing problems of existence (*existential stresses*) which give birth to life-long yearnings for resolution and completion. The means by which an individual attempts to resolve these yearnings takes on the form of a *life plot* (Cochran, 1990), *life theme* (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979), or *fundamental project* (Sartre, 1963). According to these writers, if a person's work enables them to live a more positive, coherent, and productive plot, theme, or project, that work will be rendered meaningful.

Jean-Paul Sartre was one of the first to study the lives of those whose work was personally meaningful. Through an intensive process of *existential psychoanalysis*, Sartre studied the lives of such people as Charles Baudelaire, Charles Genet, and Gustav Flaubert. His purpose for doing so was to "illustrate a sustained analysis of a single individual in an effort to elucidate the intricate interconnections of childhood, family and society in the development of that person's fundamental project" (Charme, 1984, p.127). In researching the lives of these famous people, Sartre claims to have uncovered the source of meaning that was the undergrid in their existence (*their fundamental project*)

and the experiences in their childhood which gave birth to these unique sources of meaning. In his study of Baudelaire, for example, Sartre (1950) draws attention to the death of Baudelaire's father when he was just four years old. A year later, his mother remarried and he was sent off to school. Baudelaire suffered what Sartre called "a profound sense of having fallen from grace," and from that moment was without a justification for his existence. This *original crisis* marks the beginning of a life-long quest for Baudelaire to recover the sense of justified existence he had lost. It was through Baudelaire's work as a writer that he was able to work towards solving his *original crisis*.

Another early study of meaningful work was carried out by Erik Erikson (1969) in the extensive *psychohistories* which he wrote of such people as Martin Luther and Mahatma Ghandi. Like Sartre, Erikson traces the roots of these men's vocation to a traumatic period in their childhood. These traumatic periods are described by Erikson as a *liturgical drama*, and are equivalent to Sartre's *original crisis*: "Such traumatic moments are indicative of an aspect of childhood or youth which comes to represent an account that can never be settled and remains an existential debt all the rest of a life time" (Charme, 1985, p.112). Erikson stresses that the *liturgical drama* is not in the form of a single, datable event but is rather "a condensation and projection of a pervasive childhood conflict on one dramatized scene" (Charme, 1984, p.112).

A more recent study of meaningful work in "less extraordinary" people's lives was done by Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979). According to these researchers, "it often seems to be the case that one's occupational career choice corresponds with the chosen method for solving a central existential problem" (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979, p.50). Csikszentmihalyi originally suggested this hypothesis following a

longitudinal study of artists in which he observed how they used their art to resolve, in symbolic form, some central existential concerns which were causing intrapsychic stress (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976). In a later study, Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie went further to hypothesize that the means by which any individual attempts to solve a central existential problem develops into a *life theme*, which “consists of a problem or set of problems which a person wishes to solve above everything else and the means the person finds to achieve solution” (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979, p.48). Work which creates a more productive *life theme* is said to give a person’s life coherence, form, and meaning.

Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie conducted research which investigated why some individuals transform childhood stress into meaningful work while others do not. They conducted case histories of thirty white males who were separated into two groups based on their occupation. Fifteen were highly successful white-collar professionals such as professors and physicians, all connected with university teaching. The other fifteen were blue-collar workers; plumbers, steelworkers etc. By holding the socioeconomic class of origin constant, the researchers were interested in seeing if patterned and systematic differences would emerge in life themes between the two groups. Results from the study showed that both similarities and differences did occur. While both reported similar sources of existential stress in childhood, they differed significantly in their formulation of the nature of the problems. Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie found that the white-collar professionals tended to attribute the cause of the personal stress to a universal problem while the blue-collar workers tended not to attribute any causes to their problem. White-collar workers in this study were found to have organized their occupation around solving the universal problem. Blue-collar workers, on the other hand, were unable to formulate a

solution and hence their occupation was not linked to their childhood problems of existence.

A more recent study of meaningful work with “ordinary” people was completed by Wayne Wong (1994) in his thesis The Pattern of Life Mission Development. In this study, Wong examines how a mission in life evolves over the course of a person’s life. In-depth life history interviews were carried out with three people who described themselves as having a meaningful career or a mission in life. Through his study, Wong describes a six-stage dialectical model that illustrates the evolution of a life mission for his participants. In each case Wong demonstrates a clear connection between the individual’s meaningful work experiences and an enduring childhood struggle.

The first stage of Wong’s model involves the *emergence of a life issue*. The life issue is a pervasive experience that influences a person’s thoughts, feelings and values about the world and originates from a dilemma or problem such as a sense of lack, loss, or a contradiction. The second stage involves a person’s *early struggles with and endurance of a life issue*. In this stage the individual begins to take actions (both successful and unsuccessful) which contribute cumulatively towards the struggle. In this stage, the individual realizes through his/her activities that freedom from their life issue may be possible. The third stage involves a person *experiencing or engaging in a significant activity*. In this stage a person commits to an activity which they hope will free themselves from their life issue. The fourth stage involves *the struggle to extend and live a significant experience*. In this stage, the individual realizes that the significant activity is not completely effective in the struggle to overcome the life issue and begins to explore other activities. The fifth stage involves *a struggle to clarify a life mission*. In

this stage the individual reformulates their life issue to act or work on behalf of other human beings as they move away from egocentric needs to the broader needs of humanity. The sixth stage involves the *emergence of a new critical awareness* and leads to the *revising of a life mission*. In this stage, the individual realizes that expression of a life mission has limitless potential. The person's life mission becomes seamless with humanity and they experience a sense of flow in life where work, a sense of self, and humanity form a whole.

In 1987 Richard Ochberg at the University of Michigan carried out a study of men's careers. He interviewed a number of "upwardly mobile" men for five to ten hours and asked them to narrate their own life stories. Through this process he collected a score of vignettes from all areas of their lives including childhood and current work life. Through an analysis of these vignettes, themes and patterns emerged. According to the researcher, these themes and patterns pointed to a clear symbolic connection between these men's chosen careers and the longings and frustrations of their childhood (Ochberg, 1987). All of the subjects in this study were upwardly mobile men working in corporations. Through their career narratives, these men revealed an obsession with moving ever onward and upward and this relentless pursuit could, time and time again, be traced to formative experiences in their childhood. Although the formative experiences differed among the subjects, the meaning they attached to these experiences was found to be similar.

In his book The Stories We Live By (1993), McAdams offers an alternative explanation regarding the evolution of meaningfulness throughout the course of a life. McAdam's research is based on *personality theory* and in particular around the construct

of human identity. According to McAdams, a person experiences meaning in life by consciously and unconsciously composing a heroic narrative within a personal life story or myth. The heroes of the stories are constructed from the “remembered past, perceived present, and anticipated future” (p.3). McAdams proposes that by comprehending the specific nature of one’s unique story or myth, a person is presented with the opportunity to actualize a meaningful life.

Using the psychosocial stages outlined by Eric Erikson, McAdams traces the development of a life story from infancy to old age. Variations in bonding during infancy, emotional imagery, and stories learned from others are examples of early childhood experiences that have a profound effect on the self-defining story that is one day composed. McAdams suggests that the main character of one’s myth is fashioned and refined during one’s adolescence and early adulthood. Discontent and malaise experienced by the hero in this stage of life is said to signal a quest for meaning. In middle adulthood individuals continue to search for meaning by generating a new life story through their work, family and community involvement. If this new story brings the opposing parts of life together into an integrated and harmonious whole then the individual’s life will be experienced as meaningful. McAdams suggests that in middle adulthood individuals also attempt to link their personal myths “to collective stories and myths of society as a whole and to the enterprise of promoting and improving human life and welfare from one generation to the next” (p.14). In the final years, McAdams suggests that the process of developing a personal myth is suspended while the individual reviews the personal myth created over the course of a lifetime. At this stage an

individual is seeking “ego integrity” and achieves this when they judge their personal myths to be good, in spite of shortcomings and limitations.

One of the most recent studies on the evolution of meaningful work had been undertaken by Cochran in his book The Sense of Vocation (1990). Cochran conducted an intensive investigation of more than twenty written autobiographies of persons who clearly had a vocation or mission in life. Subjects included such well-known people as Emily Carr, Lee Iacocca, and Henry James. By examining the narrative cases of these model careers, he was able to construct a common plot or story line that revealed the pattern of life for those with a sense of vocation. Cochran observes that “in vocation, the great questions of career come alive and can be pursued through exemplary cases. What makes work so meaningful? How does meaning arise?” (Cochran, 1990, p.10).

Similar to the findings of Sartre, Erikson, Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, and Ochberg, Cochran concludes that the seeds for meaningful work are planted within a life-defining problem of existence encountered in childhood. Cochran (1990) refers to this stage of a person’s life as *incompletion*, the time when a life-defining desire comes into being. Cochran suggests that children experience a wide range of *primitive dramas* in which they experience a gap between what is and what ought to be. These dramas are said to arise from a variety of sources including culture, society, family, and even inherited temperaments: “In a multitude of experiences, a child has built up some kind of picture of the world and his or her place in it; within this context, a life-defining problem of existence is encountered” (Cochran, 1990, p.54). As these dramas are repeated, one’s experience becomes a metaphor for another, and through time this experience is generalized broadly to unify an enduring and meaningful structure of desire.

Upon examining the autobiography of Henry James, Cochran observed that James was a very passive child who was greatly overshadowed by his brother, William, and was often in the role of onlooker or observer of his brother's accomplishments, sense of confidence, and ease. By contrast, Henry became increasingly shy, introverted, imaginative, and often found himself "living through others." As Cochran (1990) states, "he longed to be other, not in particular but in general" (p.61). Cochran suggests that in his work as a novelist, Henry's childhood existential problem was solved: "while he yearned to be other, to have firsthand experience and to have important things happen to him, through his imaginative sensitivity [he] could live many lives, virtually without limit" (p.61). Simply put, his work as a novelist was meaningful because it allowed him to experience the being of someone other than himself; an experience he had craved since childhood.

Further research by Cochran and his associates looked at the two other issues found to be related to the questions of meaningful work. First was the issue of developing agency in shaping one's career and second was the issue of how childhood family dramas are enacted in work. In their book A Sense of Agency, Cochran and Laub (1994) use a case study approach to explore the lives of those who had transformed from *patients* to *agents*. Through a narrative analysis of the participant's life stories, Cochran and Laub describe a process by which an individual progressively deconstructs an old plot of living (in which they are in the role of passive victims) and constructs a new plot of living (in which they are in the role of active creators of their own destinies). In each case it was found that individuals had transformed experiences of past pain and trauma into sources of meaning in their work. In another study, Cochran and MacGregor (1988) examine the

question of how individuals enact childhood dramas from their family of origin with people from their current work. Cochran and MacGregor found evidence of a variety of ways in which an individual's familial past provided opportunities for meaningful experiences at work; relationships at work have enabled people to resolve old family issues and recover losses that they yearned for in family. In this study the authors conclude that "there seems to be a deeper level of life dramatization that links family and career, and that offers a basis for helping people to make more complex personal adjustments that might foster career developments" (p. 148).

Existential Stress

Previous researchers on this topic have all described childhood stresses experienced by their participants which are existential in nature. According to Rollo May and Irvin Yalom (1989) existentialism is concerned with the anxiety experienced by an individual as a result of their confrontation with the givens of existence, including death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness. For the purposes of this study, existential stress is more generally defined as an enduring stress which plays a central role on the participant's existence and which is a significant source of pain and anxiety in their lives.

Research Question

The majority of research on this topic to date has focused on two primary issues. First, it investigates the degree to which a relationship does or does not exist between childhood stress and meaningful work (e.g. Sartre, Erikson, and Ochberg); secondly it explores the process by which the experience of meaningful work evolves across a life span (e.g. Cochran, Wong, and McAdams). Although previous researchers on the topic agree on the existence of a relationship, they differ in the extent to which they have

specified the variations of how an individual's experiences of meaningful work is related to their experiences of childhood stress. In addition, the majority of case studies from previous researchers have used exemplary or famous cases of people whose work was fraught with meaning. While this sampling strategy was clearly useful for illuminating patterns in the lives of the extraordinary, more research is needed to explore this phenomenon in the lives of "everyday" people. Although the studies of Csikszentmihalyi, Beattie and Ochberg concern subjects who could be called "ordinary," there is no thorough attempt to determine the degree to which the subjects found their work to be meaningful. Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie, for example, seem to assume that "very successful, white collar" is equal to meaningful work while "moderately successful blue collar" is equal to work that was not meaningful.

My research explores the childhood and work experiences of ordinary people who describe their work as personally meaningful. Like the studies of previous researchers my project questions the existence of a relationship between childhood stress and meaningful work, and thus has required me to consider the possibility that such a relationship does or does not exist. In cases where a relationship was found, the analysis includes rich descriptions to clearly demonstrate the nature of the relationship. These interpretations fully open up the question of an existing relationship to the examination of others. A second question addressed in this study was as follows: What is the nature of the relationship, if any, between existential stresses experienced in childhood and experiences of meaningful work in adulthood? This question of how they were related was answered by describing the patterns and variations in the transformations of childhood stress into adult experiences of meaningful work.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Gaining an understanding of childhood existential stresses and experiences of meaningful work in a person's life called for a research methodology involving detailed, narrative descriptions and an opportunity to explore the meaning of historical life events. Consequently I used a qualitative research design, similar to the design of previous studies carried out on this topic. The in-depth nature of qualitative research methods was needed to understand how an individual experiences meaningful work and how they experienced stress in their childhood.

Similar to previous research on the topic, I used a multiple case study method to investigate this research issue. According to Yin (1994), "the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p.3). Past research on the issue has used multiple case studies in which theoretical propositions have demonstrated to be replicated across individuals. I also used multiple cases (three) and contrasted and compared the patterns of experience found among the participants as well as to previous case studies on this topic.

Data Gathering Procedures

Sampling

I chose subjects through the my own network of personal and professional contacts, and this procedure coincided with the method of selection used by most

researchers on this topic including Sartre, Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie and Ochberg. I used a letter of information to recruit participants. (see Appendix A).

I selected three participants (males, ranging in age from 35 to 55 years of age) following a screening interview which lasted for approximately 45 minutes. (See Appendix B for screening interview questions). The purpose of the screening interview was to assess the candidate's appropriateness for the study and to introduce them to the research topic and the overall methodology of the study. I chose appropriate candidates using the following criteria: 1) they stated that their work was a great source of enjoyment and satisfaction, 2) they felt a personal commitment to their work, 3) their work had great significance in their lives, and 4) they were willing and capable of talking about their work and childhood experiences in great detail.

All three candidates stated very clearly that their work was satisfying in its own right and that it played a central role in their lives. The first candidate was an executive recruiter. During the screening interview he repeatedly stated that "he loved his work" and that he was "consumed by it." He admitted to working an average of fifteen hours per day, sometimes to the detriment of other obligations in his life. The second candidate was the director of an arts organization. He also stated emphatically that he loved his work and talked extensively about his overwhelming sense of personal commitment to it. He talked about "growing up" in this arts organization and about his life-long love of the art form. The final candidate was a university professor of student teachers. He spoke at length about his intense satisfaction with work and how it was a job that "he could bring himself to." He also spoke about a strong sense of personal commitment that he held for his students and how much he cherished his relationship with them.

I took a number of steps to protect the rights of the participants in this study. An informed consent document was signed by participants, which stated the purpose of the study and the intended use of the data, and assured the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant's contributions. (See Appendix C). I also covered these issues in a dialogue with the potential participants during the screening interview.

Data Collection

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), in-depth interviews are the preferred method of data collection when seeking to understand how individuals conceive their world and how they explain or make sense of the important events of their lives. I used in-depth interviewing as the method of data collection in this study to gain an understanding of how participants experienced existential stresses in their childhood and how they experienced meaningful work in their present day lives. Given the historical context of the evolution of meaningful work, an in-depth interview enabled me to ascertain the subject's pre-reflective recollection of past and present events.

I used narrative inquiry within the in-depth interview to engage participants in a dialogue. A general assumption of the narrative method is that *story telling* is the primary way in which individuals construct and express meaning from their experiences. Mishler (1986), an expert in narrative inquiry, asserts that because personal narratives are the most internally consistent method of interpreting an individual's past and present experiences, narrative inquiry is one of the most appropriate methods for researching human experience.

Given the nature of the research question, I asked participants to share relevant anecdotes, stories, experiences, and incidents from their childhood and from their current

work life. (See interview questions in Appendix D). The first interview ranged between 1.5 to 2 hours and focused on stories surrounding the participant's work. A second interview of similar length focused on the participant's childhood experiences. Both of these interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. By using my counselling skills of listening, acknowledging, and questioning, I developed a mutual and sincere collaboration with the participants in order to gain their full participation in storytelling, retelling, and reliving of personal experiences.

At the beginning of the first interview I took some time to orient the participants to the study. I explained that the purpose of the first interview was to find out about their work and to collect a variety of stories that would illustrate their experience of work. I told participants that they would be asked some specific questions but that the interview would likely take on more of the feel of a conversation than a structured interview, and I encouraged them to respond as openly as freely as possible. I also informed them that the planned length of the interview was 1.5 hours and that they were free to request a break at any time. I also reminded participants that the interview was going to be tape-recorded, and any questions or concerns about this were again discussed to ensure that the participant was fully comfortable with the procedure.

Questions from the first interview included: Tell me about the kind of work you are doing now? How did you end up in this kind of work? Tell me some stories which illustrate your most meaningful or enjoyable experiences at work? What kinds of activities detract from your sense of meaning or enjoyment at work? As you look to the future, what will have to change or stay the same in order for you work to continue to be a source of meaningfulness in your life?

At the beginning of the second interview, I explained that the purpose was to understand what “growing up as a child” was like for the participant, and again to collect a variety of stories from that period of their life. Again, I explained that the interview would take on the feel of a conversation and I encouraged them to respond as openly and freely as possible. I informed participants that they were free to request a break at any time.

In this second interview, I asked participants to narrate their childhood by dividing it into chapters, naming them, and sharing stories which would illustrate their primary experiences within each chapter of their childhood. Questions from the second interview included: Who were the people in your family growing up? What kind of relationship did you have with your mother, father, and siblings? How would you be described by your family & friends as a child? What title would you give to the first chapter of your childhood. Tell me some specific stories from that time of your life that would show why you chose that title for chapter 1. Did you read as a child? and if so, are there any books or characters which stood out for you during your childhood?

In all three cases participants were very open and willing to talk about both their work and childhood experiences. I used the interview questions as a guide to ensure that all areas of investigation were covered; however, the majority of my responses were in the form of paraphrasing, probing, and other active listening skills. The participants remained in control of their story telling and I encouraged them to elaborate freely. I guided the participants by asking them to ground their experiences in stories and examples as much as possible. In all three cases, the participants expressed their satisfaction and enjoyment with the process.

Researcher's Role

I played a collaborative role throughout the interviewing process and empowered participants to become fully involved working partners. The interview took on a semi-structured format which allowed me to be flexible and to adapt my responses and probes to the unique stories and communicative styles of each participant. Throughout the interview, I used my counselling skills of listening, questioning, probing, and reflecting to ensure that the interviewee maintained control over the telling of his or her story. While participants were experts on their own lived experiences, I was the expert at empowering participants to express these experiences.

John Osborne (1990) refers to research subjects as participants or co-researchers. These terms emphasize the cooperative and voluntary nature of the research: "An atmosphere of respectful concern for participants, a shared interest in illuminating the phenomenon, and good rapport are essential for the dialogal relationship between researcher and co-researchers" (Osborne, 1990, p.82). To this end, I informed participants fully about the nature of the research from the onset, and I worked to develop a relationship of empathic understanding and trust so that genuine experience could be conveyed.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of data for this study occurred in four phases: 1) reviewing the interviews, 2) constructing narrative descriptions, 3) participant's reviewing of narrative descriptions, and 4) matching patterns and differences between childhood and work narratives.

1) Through the process of reviewing the tapes and transcribing the interviews, I became fully immersed in the content and flow of the interviews. I took notes during these reviews which allowed me to dwell extensively on the meaning of each interview. The purpose of the preliminary review was to identify the predominant childhood stress and the predominant experience of meaningfulness in their work. Once identified, I completed a secondary review to identify the most salient dramas within the childhood and work narratives. I consulted the original tapes to confirm the significance of a particular drama from the participant's point of view. For example, in one case, a preliminary review of the transcripts revealed that the predominant childhood stress was the fear of his family dissolving due to his father's alcoholism. A secondary review of the transcript and the taped interviews pointed to two very salient dramas which surrounded this fear. One was a story in which the mother confided her fears around the father's alcoholism when the participant was very young, and the other was a story in which the father disappeared for an extended period and the participant experienced a very frightening time in his life. Both of these stories were marked for inclusion in the childhood narrative summary.

2) Through a systematic examination of the interviews and the review notes, I constructed a narrative summary. First, I put the events from the taped interviews in chronological order so that events were connected with those that came before and those that came after. Second, I collapsed multiple recollections of single events so that the core meaning of the event was expressed concisely. For example, in one case, the participant referred numerous times to a meaningful work experience of teaching poetry to a grade seven student. Some of his recollections included "side notes" about what this

student went on to do in her adult years. These recollections were condensed by including only his direct experience with child in grade seven, and by eliminating his references to her future activities. Any of her future activities which the participant noted as significant or personally meaningful were told as separate stories in themselves at a later point in the summary. Thirdly, I grouped recollections with similar themes together. For example, one participant noted a number of major achievements at work which he found to be personally meaningful. Although these stories were told at a number of different points in the interview, I grouped them together in a section devoted to describing the sources of meaningfulness in that participant's work. In another case the participant told a variety of stories throughout the interview which illustrated the quality of relationship that he had with his mother. I grouped these stories together in the summary to give a comprehensive description of the mother-child relationship. Finally, in writing the narrative summary, I chose to insert actual dialogue from the transcripts which most accurately portrayed the participant's experience. For example, in one case the participant talked about a "non-existent" relationship with his mother and how difficult this was for him as a child. Rather than summarizing this experience in my words, I inserted a story from the transcript which richly described this experience in the participant's words. In this story the participant spoke of a deep realization of his mother's absence and how he "felt like somebody had let a cloth go and just kind of crumpled onto the floor."

I tested the accuracy of these narrative summaries by comparing them to the original transcripts to ensure that meanings and statements about the significance of participant's experiences were not distorted. Whenever possible, the narrative vignettes

used the participant's words and included numerous transcribed sections from the original interviews. My words were used only to summarize the participant's meaning of the experiences and to orient the experiences in time.

3) A final interview (of approximately one-hour) allowed participants to review and verify my written summaries from the first two interviews. The participants were given a copy of the summaries and an appointment was made for the following week to discuss their feedback. I asked participants to give their critical feedback by considering a number of questions as they read through the summary. (See Appendix E). These questions included: When reading the written summaries of your childhood and work do you feel they are accurate? What if anything has been omitted or distorted? What part or parts should be expanded or decreased in emphasis?. What should be added or subtracted from these accounts? Do the written accounts accurately portray what you intended to communicate? Is there anything else of significance that should be included in this account? Any changes suggested by the participant were then made and a final version was again presented to them for verification.

The participants reactions to the interview summaries were very positive and all felt that their overall experiences of work and childhood were captured accurately and comprehensively. Some minor inaccuracies were noted and the summaries were adjusted accordingly. In one case, the participant noted that there was an inaccuracy surrounding the location of a particular event. In another case, the participant noted that the summary did not completely capture his experience of racism as a Japanese Canadian. While he was "exempt" from much of the racism that was projected towards the Chinese, he wanted to add that he still felt very different from his peers and felt very strongly that his

family was different from other families in the community. The summary was adjusted to include this factor of his experience and the revised version was again shared with the participant. He felt that the revised version was an accurate representation of his experience.

4) In the final stage, I analyzed the childhood and work narratives through a process of pattern matching. First, I summarized the overall narrative of childhood including an analysis of the predominating existential stresses. Second, I summarized the overall narrative of work including an analysis of the most predominant experiences of meaningfulness at work. Third, I analyzed each narrative to draw out patterns in the overall plots and the participant's role within those plots. I compared the similarities and differences in these patterns through an analysis of the individual vignettes and dramas from childhood and work that best illustrated the predominant experiences of stress in childhood and meaning in work. Finally, I used an analysis of these similarities and differences to make statements regarding the nature of the relationship, if any, between the participant's childhood existential stresses and experiences of meaningful work.

For example, in the case of participant D, the predominating childhood existential stress was found to be centered around his fears of not being able to help his alcoholic father prevent the failure of the family business and the destruction of the family that would inevitably result from this. As an executive recruiter, the predominating meaningful work experience was centered around his ability to search out the person who was "destined" to cure the client's business pain and occasions when he had a first-hand experience of his client's gratitude for his ability to do this. In this case, similarities in the participant's role were found between childhood and work narratives. In both, the

participant played the role of a confidante. As a child, both parents confided in him about the father's perilous situation with regard to the family business. At work his clients confide in him by telling their story of their own business pain and their need to search for the ideal candidate who can cure that pain. While D's role was similar in both narratives, there was a difference between the two plots. In childhood, once confided in, D could only imaginatively help his father and his family ward off a potential disaster. He lacked the inner resources to be able to make any significant difference in the situation. In work, however, D is able to act out in a helpful way. He describes his inner resources as superior to those of his peers and refers to his ability to consistently make a difference for his clients by successfully searching out the ideal candidate.

I completed the analysis procedure for each participant until all patterns of similarities and differences in their childhood and work narratives were described. I completed a final analysis by examining any general patterns that were detected across the narratives of all three participants. I used the results from this analysis to make concluding statements about the nature of any relationship which was found to exist between childhood stress and meaningful work in this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

D: CHILDHOOD NARRATIVE

Introduction

D was the first-born child in what would become a family of three children. D is the oldest, followed a year later by his sister, M, and finally two years later by his youngest brother, T. D was born in South Eastern B.C. and moved to a small but growing community in Northern B.C. when he was three years old. This is where he resided for the next eight years of his childhood. At the age of eleven, D moved with his family to Vancouver.

D described his mother as a “wonderful mom” who was “very smart.” D felt very connected to his mother and admired her intelligence and her sense of adventure. Both D’s mother and father travelled regularly to various parts of the world and D recalls feeling excited and intrigued as he listened to their stories about the places they had visited. For the early part of D’s childhood, his mother played a more traditional role of homemaker. Although she began to help out with the family business in later years, D always sensed that her first preference was to be with her children:

D: “A typical kind of Mom for bits and pieces of my childhood in that she stayed home and made sandwiches and always wanted to stay home. She has a big job at ABC inc. right now but when I was growing up, my Dad had his own business and she would help out in that from time to time but I think if she had her druthers that she wanted to spend time with us so I didn’t have a sense that she had a burning career...It [D’s home town] was a great idyllic place to grow and my Mom got involved in all of that. She made very good friends and was active in the neighbourhood and so she really made it

her home but at the same time she and my dad would travel so she saw all parts of the world and I think I had a real sense of adventure from her and from my dad...I have nothing but such strong memories of my mom as a kid, always there and very smart you know, thinking back now, at the time, I really connected to my mom."

D described his father as "a tremendous guy with magnificent strengths and magnificent shortcomings." Among his strengths was a very dynamic and generous personality which often revealed itself in the operation of his privately owned travel agency in their multicultural community. With strong Italian and Scottish roots, he was very comfortable in this type of multicultural environment and he developed close, extended relationships with his customers. In fact, it was through the family business that D experienced a very strong connection to his community:

D: "He helped people if they had to go home. (like back to Italy for a funeral), People would call him first. He would lend people money to get back. He was overly generous...He was a storyteller and a raconteur. He was the center of attention too. We always had people over to the house. I felt connected to the whole town because everybody had to travel somewhere so they all had to know my dad and my neighbour was the main doctor and the main pharmacist and the main lawyer and the main car dealer were all on our same street. So they were in a town where the middle class really ran the place and they were connected in that front so we were connected to the community."

D's father's "magnificent shortcoming" was alcoholism. D's father was an active alcoholic for all of D's childhood, and the effects were felt both in the family and in the family business. As a child, D remembers being affected by the uncertainty that resulted from his father's absence and his inconsistency:

D: "My dad was an alcoholic and he probably was quite young but he didn't do anything about it until he was in his early or

mid forties. My Dad was very complex, and I don't know why he drank. I'm not exactly sure, but it really was something that was an illness of pretty strong proportions and that made it tough for us to grow up because he was a maintenance drinker. He didn't know that he was but he wasn't doing things that were consistent. He didn't manage his own business well and from a family financial standpoint it was always a bit shaky and not really knowing why; and unfortunately I had to hear a lot of that and wished that I hadn't, and it put my Mom in a difficult situation because you know, that's when she started to get involved in the business."

D described his sister as "fiercely independent and emotional, with red hair and freckles." As children they clashed in part because they were so close in age and partly due to their very different personalities. While D had typical characteristics of the responsible, oldest child, his sister often required significantly more attention from their parents:

D: "I had good marks through school but school was harder for her and she was just entertaining. She was the center of attention and extremely social and had lots of friends and always got caught for everything she did, whether it was smoking or driving. She was just someone who didn't ask for permission."

D described his youngest brother T as the "classic youngest born"... "happy go lucky and easy going." With the three year difference, D felt he "didn't know him very well;" however, all three children had a keen interest in team sports, and D says this is the one interest which they all shared.

Unlike his siblings, D spent a tremendous amount of time reading and some of his earliest memories are of reading. Although D had many friends and an active social life, he was also quite comfortable being solitary and spent this time absorbing any kind of

reading material he could acquire. D also differed from his siblings in how he expressed his needs and emotions:

I: "What would your reputation be in the family? How would you be described?"

D: "That's a good question because I put on the responsibility of being; put on kind of a cloak of being responsible; don't cause your parents grief, because they have lots of issues to deal with. You know, so keep a lower profile."

I: "So the responsible one in some respects?"

D: "Yeah, in some respects and I did very well in school and did very well in sports so I was very low maintenance for them. Extremely low maintenance."

I: "So very self-sufficient it sounds like."

D: "Yeah at an early age... I would be seen as a bit more introspective and reserved."

I: "Sort of keeping the emotions a bit hidden?"

D: "Yeah, alot more."

Within his own family, D always felt special and unique and suspects that part of that feeling can be traced to him being the first baby born in British Columbia in 1961. D expressed that he continued to feel the effects of his special birth throughout his childhood:

D: "I really felt unique and part of it was I was born on New Year's day. I was the New Years baby in B.C. and always had a sense that I was special and unique and that my parents got a lot of psychic income from that."

Beyond D's feelings of being personally special and unique, he also had a sense that his family, and particularly his father, carried these qualities as well. Although he

wasn't able to see his father realize his full potential until he was an adult, D always sensed that his father was a remarkable man with a special gift and a man who deserved the help and support of his family as he struggled to use that gift.

D: "I think I always had a sense of uniqueness and a calling, a call to purpose or service; some uniqueness. If I'm screwing around then I am avoiding a call and that we are unique in our family."

I: "So your family stands out."

D: "Yes. In the northern community and Vancouver. We are special. My Dad had a sense of that even more than my Mom. Despite his faults, he had a sense of something larger. My Dad had a sense of greatness."

I: "What did you sense your Dad's calling to be?"

D: "He had a great purpose and he actualized it when he was in AA. His purpose was to help. He would have been a great priest if priests could have married. He could have been a resource for people. He could have helped people. He wasn't a bad listener himself...After AA he became addicted to helping. He would go to detox centers and people will still come up to me and say; I knew your Dad and he was a saint...and I knew he was a saint..."

I: "So other people saw later what you had glimpses of in your childhood."

D: "Yeah, which made me say. We need to support this guy. We need to help him."

I: "There's something worth helping here."

D: "There's something worth helping here because he has a gift."

Chapter 1 (Ages 5 - 11) "Centennial Optimism"

D centered the first chapter of his childhood around his life in his home town in Northern British Columbia. D remembered his years there as idyllic and full of exciting,

optimistic, and positive experiences. D began by contextualizing his memories of early childhood around world and current events as in the following recollection:

D: "You know, it's 1967, I'm six years old and Canada is 100 years old and things are happening. It's a great time and this is a very positive time for Canadians and personally a very positive time for me and my parents I would think. If there was an event that links all of it, it would be Canada's centennial. I remember visiting the centennial event. They had a train that came across Canada and it was big, huge, tremendously uplifting and positive and I remember all of that. At six years old very strongly, that this is a very pivotal time."

I: "So even as a six year old, you felt that optimism and excitement?"

D: "Huge Yeah, it was a uniqueness being a Canadian versus something else because there were all these new Canadians here but this is what I was [a Canadian]."

As a young child D had a keen interest in school, sports, and reading. D described school as "a place where you could learn and a great place to be." On more than one occasion D won awards for perfect attendance and recalls going to school on a few occasions "near death" on his own initiative. His grades were very good as well.

Sports played a major role in D's early childhood both as a player and as an observer of professional team sports"

D: "Yeah, it was eight months of winter so you played hockey and Dad made a rink in the back yard, and we played hockey every day as kids; everyday. A very Canadian experience and it was road hockey and ice hockey and we talked about hockey and watched hockey and you had hockey cards and I remember all that."

I: "Where did you fall in the selection process on your teams?"

D: "I was a keeper in terms of he's a good player. It was something I was really good at."

I: "So you were picked and kept."

D: "Yeah, hugely passionate about it. It was more than a game."

I: "And how would your team-mates see that?"

D: "I wouldn't stop. I would just go all the time and wouldn't quit."

D also recalls becoming keenly interested in professional sports at this stage in his childhood. He remembers aligning himself with famous teams and players such as Bobby Orr both in reality and in his imagination:

D: "Bobby Orr was someone that you know, I think there are people that I really think of as almost revolutionaries. This was watching someone who was so, so much different and better than everyone else it would be like watching Michael Angelo or Divinci... And watching Bobby Orr was utterly transfixing because he was just such a graceful and powerful and creative person as a hockey player that I just, it was a revolution. Something is happening here. I know he is different and I can recognise that...So I aligned myself with that and I had friends and relatives that were huge sports fans so that's what we did. We huddled around the television and watched hockey."

D: "I thought about playing with Bobby Orr and fantasized about being on his team and doing that. If I needed to occupy my mind like if I was waiting for a bus I put up scenarios of what the score was and how much time was left and what was going to happen so some kid came up and won the game."

I: "And would you be the little kid that won the game?"

D: "Oh Yeah, big time. I wasn't a kid. I was a peer of those guys."

I: "So you're the one who is responsible for the win. Are you with them?"

D: "Yeah, I'm part of all that. Those are my friends."

D recalled very fond family experiences from this chapter of his childhood:

D: "Well we came to Vancouver for the first time when I was seven. It was a huge experience to come down here for four days. It was incredible because it was a big city and people were flocking here and we had a big room in the Georgia Hotel which was one of the best hotels in the city at the time and it looked over the court house and demonstrators had put a bunch of soap suds in the fountain and there were suds everywhere. So you had this image of wow. This is wacky. I hadn't even seen a fountain before and then there's this huge fountain with soap coming out of it; and there were hippies and they just weren't in my home town."

"...and my Dad and I took a trip that same year to go see a play off game in Calgary and it was the BC Lions play the Calgary Stampeders and it was a big thing for a kid to go here with my Dad and stay in a hotel and the football players were there and my Dad knew one of them so that was great. It gave me alot to talk about at show and tell. I was rich with anecdotes and that was a great experience."

In summary, this chapter of D's childhood was filled with novel and exciting or, in his words, "positive and optimistic" experiences. He was successful in school and in sports and his keen interest in the outside world was being fed through a steady intake of books and other reading materials. He was also beginning to experience part of that real world first-hand. At the same time, D felt secure in his family and within his small northern community in which his family was intricately connected:

D: "It was idyllic. Everything was in alignment and good things were happening because of that alignment."

But as chapter one came to a close, D's life began to change from the idyllic surroundings that he had grown to expect. Once again, D used current events to contextualize this time in his childhood.

D: "The great comfort was that you could always go home. You know my home town is always the same; your neighbours are the same and that's why good times don't always last because things started to change. Centennial ended and then it's the late sixties and I remember where I was when Martin Luther King was shot and when Bobby Kennedy was shot. We were on a family trip in the Okanogan and my Mom being very upset and my Dad the same with Martin Luther King. And those were pivotal times I measure my childhood. I remember the war measures act in 1970. The sixties are over; optimism's over and we're getting ready to move to Vancouver and in conjunction with this is bad things happening in the world."

Chapter 2 (Age 11 - 21) The Dark Years

The second chapter of D's childhood began with his move from his small northern community to the city of Vancouver. D recalled the lead up to the move as a very frightening and unsettling time in his childhood:

D: "Well it was tough. It was a horrific separation for me just leaving some really close friends behind. It was an idyllic background and I had really good friends and I remember my parents coming and saying that we were going to move to Vancouver and it was like, "what"? You know, it scared the hell out of me. You didn't know your neighbours. There were hippies down there. My impressions were that this was a whole other world."

After the actual move however, D quickly fit in to his new surroundings. Through his involvement in school and team sports, D was able to easily establish himself:

D: "I remember the day we came to Vancouver... I was kind of overwhelmed by all that. Again, I had a great experience in school and we were further ahead from an educational standpoint and I was reading at a pretty advanced stage so I

was probably close to being moved up a grade. But school was really easy and really; I just socialized like that and then sports was great. I moved into some other sports that I was really good at like soccer and baseball and soccer I was player of the year in Vancouver in 1974. So really quick. A quick adjustment and made tremendous friends through school and the neighbourhood and then through sports so boom, now I've got 100 people that are friends and it was just so easy."

D remembered making friends in a number of different social groups; "the greasers, the library people." D said, for some reason, he had "diplomatic immunity" to move in and around these various groups: "I was an ambassador and I had visas and passports to all these worlds."

While D's school life was good and getting better, his father's alcoholism and the financial stability of the family business was getting worse. Being the oldest son, D always felt a special connection to his father and had a great admiration for him:

D: "Well, he was the emotion and did things that I couldn't do and didn't see in my Mom, who was responsible. He was fun in some ways and yet he was also dissa...not disappointing; you know, I connected to him because I was his oldest son and he connected to me when no one else in the family wanted to connect with him. So I kept a link when things were really tough for him."

Unfortunately part of that special connection meant being a confidant for his father when the family business was in trouble:

D: "I mean he was horrifically addicted to alcohol or something and he had no control. On another level he was a charming, engaging, complex guy. It was tough because you could see all sides of it and you knew he cared about us."

I: "and even as a child you could see the good and the bad?"

D: "for me especially because he talked to me about adult things and I didn't know what those were; about business and bad business and I didn't have any concept."

I: "would you pretend to understand?"

D: "Yeah, I'd just listen. I was very empathic and developed those skills. People will tell me anything. It happens in this business; spill the beans on everything. There are secrets that just come out. Sometimes I don't want to know but I have the ability to draw out."

After the age of eleven, D became more fully aware of his father's alcoholism and what it might mean for the future of his family and the family business. On one occasion D recalled his mother taking all of the children out to talk about her concerns about their father:

D: "His alcoholism was getting very bad and I remember my mom taking us all out as a family to say look; your Dad's got a problem and I don't know what to do; and telling us all that."

I: "So you remember that."

D: "oh Yeah, distinctly."

I: "Do you remember how you responded?"

D: "oh Yeah, quite strongly...He's okay, we can make this work. That's what I was going to do was to make this work you know."

I: "Do you have any sense about how you were going to do that?"

D: "No, No I didn't know how to do it but knew that it will be okay. He will be okay."

Overall D remembered his father's inconsistency and emotional unavailability during this time. On one very memorable occasion D's father left home for an extended period and this was an exceptionally unsettling time for D and his family:

D: "He actually went away for a month almost, on a real bad bender. He went to Brazil for a month and it was kind of weird."

I: "So that month is very clear in your memory."

D: "Yeah, it was just before Christmas and it was bad you know."

I: "How did you cope during that?"

D: "Read lots. Played lots of sports."

I: "What kind of relationship did you have with your Mom during that?"

D: "Not much you know. Just keep a low profile because she is doing everything to get him back. It was just a very awkward time."

I: "So it sounds like you were not actively trying to get your Dad back."

D: "No, I couldn't do that. There were things I couldn't do but what I could do is make sure that we're not fighting or keeping things quiet so that when they are home and have to talk. I think I was frustrated with my brother and sister especially my sister because she was emotional and needed lots of attention and I was so mad at her for doing that because then they would be upset and I always thought that we were the ones that were causing this a little bit."

I: "Did you have any sense about how long his absence would last. Was it a frightening time?"

D: "No, he did travel alot and then come back with fascinating stories but this was different. This was when I was thirteen and I just wasn't sure what was going to happen on this one."

Although D's father did return, D remained in a constant state of worry and vigilance throughout his teenage years. He worried that his father's alcoholism could

bring all of this good life to an abrupt end. Although D felt some responsibility to help his father, he was at a loss as to how:

D: "It was fragile to keep it all together at times. The pressures of our family is going to dissolve as a unit because of my Dad's drinking. So you just cherished that time even more when it didn't happen. I think I was hyperaware that this good times we should enjoy because it could end. That we might have to move away or something could happen."

I: "So that was a constant worry for you"

D: "Yeah. It started when we moved down here and after I had that conversation with my mom that okay, this could all go real quickly."

I: "And although there was nothing you could really do about it..."

D: "the worry was still there. So that kept; I didn't really have an irresponsible high school years. I know other people who did. I think I was always aware more than others that something bad could happen."

I: "How far did you take that in your mind. Did you visualize what would happen if he wasn't okay?"

D: "I couldn't. It was just too much to think about. A very interesting point. I just didn't know what that might be."

I: "But you knew it was bad and scary."

D: "Bad and scary, dark, black, bad."

I: "And how 'always there' was it. Was it sitting on your shoulder?"

D: "I think it was always there. I mean if it was sitting on the shoulder then it wasn't there, it was just on my back. But then it got up on my shoulder again. So it never got off the shoulder."

Although this kind of worry was a constant companion for D during his teenage years, he did have regular opportunities to escape somewhat and to recapture some of the more idyllic and secure experiences from his earlier childhood. Every summer until his mid twenties D left Vancouver to stay with his cousins in Northern British Columbia. He recalls these summers with great fondness and times of almost unlimited freedom and exploration and the result was what D described as having almost two types of childhoods:

D: "It was fun, like summer camp I guess. It was my aunt and uncle and they had four kids and we were all very close and we did things together and my aunt really did everything; took us places, to the lake, endless swimming; just total freedom. It was the safest place because there were all these relatives around. There was some kind of an order of watchfulness. My aunts were there and my grandparents were there and I was really close to them on my Mom's side so this was my Mom's world and it was very consistent and safe."

During one of these summers, D remembers reading Catcher in the Rye and being profoundly moved by the story of Holden Caulfield. D identified with Holden's desire to "help the falling."

I: "Were there any particular characters from any of those books that stand out?"

D: "I thought about Holden Caulfield alot in Catcher in the Rye."

I: "I don't know about Holden Caulfield...Can you tell me about him?"

D: "He is a very lonely young boy, a real troubled kid...The concept of the Catcher in the Rye was that he tried to explain that what he wanted to do in life was to be that person who caught "in the rye fields." The rye fields were on a cliff and he had this image of these kids playing on this high elevated plain and they were playing in the rye and having a good time. And

he would be at the bottom of the cliff and if any of these kids fell over he would catch them. So he wanted to be a catcher in the rye and I guess I could relate to that because I always wanted to catch people too. So it was a vivid image. It was one of those moments in my development as a reader that was critical. To put this concept and understand it and emotionalize it.”

While many parts of D’s family life back in Vancouver continued to be dark, his school life with his friends and teachers were a consistent source of enjoyment and inspiration. D had “great friends and great teachers” and remembers one teacher in particular that he connected with very strongly. This teacher brought with him an approach to learning and a philosophy of life that D had never before encountered but one which he identified with whole-heartedly:

D: “He was in his early 20’s and this was his first teaching job. He was an east Vancouver kid who came over to West Vancouver with a bunch of rich kids. Sons and daughters of capitalists and he was like the class enemy in some ways because he was a liberal, left-of-center minded person in some ways. And his first class he showed us slides of when he went to Europe to all the great art museums and they were his pictures and he was there and it just made it so tangible to understand history through art...He was a great guy and he pushed you to learn more and to experiment with different types of reading. He brought his aunt in who was a holocaust survivor so everything that was happening to me before was current you know, confederation and famous people dying and he was a history person who fundamentally shifted my interest from current events to history...He was also a big believer in human rights and equal dignity and a sense of fairness. He had that profoundly and I saw that and I saw alot of unfairness in my school.”

I: “What kind of unfairness?”

D: “Class issues. A group of people who controlled things. The decision makers around us and there were people who were haves and people who were have-nots. I started to see

those have-nots when I was younger...you saw bullies making fun of people who dressed funny. Racism existed. It was tough for immigrants to adjust and I could see that and it bothered me...but this teacher showed me that through history that the have-nots rose up like when we studied the Russian Revolution.”

In summary, the “dark years” of D’s childhood were fuelled by an ever-present black cloud of uncertainty and fear about the future. D admired his father greatly and longed to be able to help this gifted man in his struggles. But as a child D was in an impossible situation; similar perhaps to one who is given responsibility without authority: to be given knowledge of a problem, to believe that you have the responsibility to solve that problem, yet still lacking the necessary resources or control to resolve it. Worse yet for D, the result of not being able to solve the problem meant a future that was too bad and black even to be imagined. But D did survive those years and he did so by fully involving himself in the activities he loved. Whether it was summers with his cousins, spending time with friends, becoming lost in the world of reading, or experiencing great successes in sports and school, D shone in spite of the darkness.

D: WORK NARRATIVE

D works as a recruiter for a national executive recruiting company. The following is D's description of what an executive recruiting company does:

D: "Executive recruiting, for people that don't know, is a professional service that works on behalf of organizations in recruiting usually senior talent to that organization and that could be in the for-profit world, public companies, private companies, family-run businesses, associations, co-ops, all variety of enterprise...The goal is to find the right group of people [senior talent] and to provide a choice or a competition for a client [an organization] who normally couldn't do it themselves."

As a recruiter, D has two primary responsibilities within his organization. First, he plays a leading role in the search process or in finding the right group of senior talent to fill an organization's needs. Secondly, D is responsible for bringing in new business, which involves marketing his organization and the services they provide to organizations who may need these services in the future.

Within the search process, there are a number of activities in which D is typically engaged:

D: "... myself and probably one other person would be involved. We would go out to [the organization] and we would sit down and meet with the people involved in making the choice. In that first stage we are trying to identify what they are looking for and then we plot a strategy to try and find the right person...We need to know as much as we can to represent that company when we go to the marketplace...Why did this search come about? So you know we're almost looking at the organization's business pain; what is it that is not working or what is it that they want to fix?...Most of their agendas are urgent, e.g. there is a vacancy and we need someone yesterday and that's all they are looking for is a

solution...And we understand that and feel that but we can't go out and do a good search if we don't get through all the other information."

Once D has a thorough understanding of the organization and their unique "business pain," the focus then turns to searching out the best available talent. The first step is research. D will either access the library of information maintained by D's executive recruiting company or more than likely D will access his own vast, network of personal and professional contacts. Once D tracks down suitable candidates, they may or may not be looking to change jobs. If not, D would then market the organization to them and discuss why it might be in their best interest to consider a change. The final stages of the search process involves setting up interviews between the organization and the candidates and working with both to evaluate the process on a continuous basis until a final decision has been made and the position filled.

In D's second role as a marketer, he takes an active and leading role in soliciting new or additional executive recruiting business from organizations. The following is one example of D in this role:

D: "So we know that someone is going to retire. The NHL five years ago had a president who was going to retire. It was well known. It was in the press and we set up a campaign we called the 'hockey team in Vancouver' and I spoke with their person who sat on the board of governors in the NHL and said... this individual is going to retire...what do we have to do to get that search?"

D did not start out in his career with this kind of work in mind. In fact he was unaware that such a position existed prior to beginning his job. After his return from living in Japan, D was actively looking for work but did not have any specific career in mind. D heard through a friend that an executive search company was looking for a

researcher and because he enjoyed research in university he decided to investigate further. He understood that they needed somebody to provide background material as they searched out people but that was all he really knew. Eventually D was interviewed by the organization. Both D and the organization were interested in each other but D was told that the decision would be delayed for 3 months:

D: "and I thought, this is too long for me...I need a little bit more information and they said the position was going to be based in Toronto for six months to a year...so I said, [to myself] I'm going to buy a ticket on my own, fly out there and just see what these guys are like...so I flew out on my own and met all the researchers and found out what they did and thought this is interesting."

When D returned from Toronto he was hired by the organization.

D's job plays a very prominent role in his life and while he greatly enjoys his work, he also expressed some concerns about being "consumed" by it. It is not uncommon for D to be directly or indirectly involved in activities which relate to his job for fifteen hours per day:

D: "I have to be very careful because I can get too far in... that's the problem, that's the good and the bad is that I'm consumed by it which is great because I'm going to go home and on the way home I'm going to see something that will remind me about a search that I'm going to be working on...Everything has an impact on what I do."

I: "So it doesn't shut off?"

D: "Ever."

I: "Ever?"

D: "Ever."

I: Ever, ever?"

D: "Only when I play baseball. It shuts off maybe once or twice...It all goes into a database, and it's not that I'm trying to do it. Like the security person for the building is going to come in here in fifteen minutes and I'm going to think okay, if that person's got a name tag on I'm going to think about that organization and it's just going to be there and then I'm going to get a search from someone for a director of security and I'm going to think, oh, in our building we use ABC Security."

I: "Could you guess how many hours a day you work?"

D: "Probably fifteen or so."

I: "Fifteen?"

D: "Sleep for seven, so two hours..."

I: "So two hours for eating and spending time with your wife."

D: "Yeah, I don't want to brag but on average its fifteen."

In order to maintain quick access to the best available senior talent, D is vigilant about staying current in the stories of people and particularly people with track records of leadership and success. His goal is to keep his "personal database," as he calls it, as complete and up to date as possible:

D: "I read probably three hours a day so I'm constantly up to speed on the world of people. I start off with the *Sun* and the *Province* in the morning and I read all sections and then I read the *Globe and Mail* and the *Financial Post* and I read the *Wall Street Journal* and sometimes the *New York Times*. I go right to stories of success, of triumph, and of leadership. And then there are the trade publications. I read those religiously. I'm trying to learn as much as I can so I read all the time."

D: "I do remember all of them [500 - 600 searches]. I almost remember every contact but the database is getting a bit full right now. This database up in my head is a bit overfilled, but I remember everyone that I went to high school with and elementary school with and I remember everyone I met in Japan and I remember everyone I interviewed."

D is recognized by his co-workers for his vast network of personal and professional contacts and his breadth of knowledge about the world of successful people.

As a result, D feels unique within his team of co-workers:

I: "What role do you play within the office? What reputation do you have?"

D: "I'm the human Rolodex."

I: "If I were to bring in four or five of them and said who is D and what part does he play in the office, do you have any idea what they might say?"

D: "He's the guy that knows everybody."

I: "He's the most connected?"

D: "The most connected. Some of them won't know. They'll think it's easy. I've spoke about this with people...How does he do this? They don't see everything that I do. Like the gathering of information because I'm doing it constantly that it almost seems effortless and seamless but you have to do it to be good at it."

I: "Do you think you have perhaps a better understanding of what it takes to do really well at this job than say some of your co-workers would?"

D: "Yes, yes I could be an agent for all of them but they couldn't be an agent for me."

I: "What do you mean by an agent?"

D: "Well if they wanted to be really successful in their career, I could work on their behalf to allow them to do that."

I: "I see, but you wouldn't go to them to be your agent."

D: "No, no."

D acknowledges that he is very good at his work and has natural abilities and talents which contribute to his success:

I: "So what is it that you are able to do that makes that [ability to find best senior talent] work, time and time again?"

D: "A couple of things. I am intuitive. I don't know how or why but I'm an empath. I have a highly developed skill in picking quality. I know when I'm sourcing a person about other people; I know which ones are keepers and which ones are throwaways and I read probably three hours a day, so I am constantly up to speed on the world of people."

As a result D has developed a healthy confidence about his skills as an executive recruiter and this confidence can play a very important role when D is sourcing some of the most successful senior talent in the country:

I: "Is it ever intimidating to be around all of these successful triumphant people all the time? Do you ever have to prepare yourself mentally for that or is that something you feel really comfortable with?"

D: "Now I feel comfortable with it. When I first started I think there was an age issue and when you are in your twenties and you are talking to people who are older than your parents it's really intimidating. Now it's just a little bit intimidating but in fact I'm so confident about an ability to establish a relationship and a link with a person that I'd head hunt the Prime Minister if I had the opportunity."

I: "Really?"

D: "And I wouldn't be denied if I couldn't. I would find some way to get to that person because I'm on a mission."

I: "So the intimidation factor is minimal."

D: "Yeah. There's no one that I'm afraid to pick up the phone and call."

D enjoys his work immensely. In particular D enjoys the pure research of trying to find the best candidate. By “pure” he means using his own ingenuity and his own database of information and contacts to quickly track down those candidates who will be best able to “cure” a particular organization’s “business pain.” When D finds the perfect fit he experiences something of a high from his work:

I: “What do you like most about your job?”

D: “Well the pure research is still something I enjoy very much. The opportunity to identify people and really match talent with opportunity. So identify someone who really is successful out there whether they are applying for a job or not and matching it with what the challenges are in an organization. I really get off on that. I really like learning about someone that is really good. So the research is really important. Like if I call you for advice on who is the best that you had seen in a particular field, I would trust your judgement so much that it would just shortcut.”

I: “So it gets you to the best very quickly.”

D: “Real quickly, real quickly and that is the part that is just like heroin for me if I was a junkie. Getting the best person. In fact after that the process doesn’t interest me as much... I mean the closing of it and the finishing is fraught with lots of set backs and restarts. But the original part of it still really turns me on...And once I find them then they need to be sold or marketed. They may not be looking and it might be positioning with them to say, you don’t know about this company, they are very good and knowing a little bit about your career you should be looking at this.”

I: “So that’s the most enjoyable part for you.”

D: “Yeah, when you know you’ve got someone and you know it’s going to work and its destiny. There’s a time in a search where you speak to someone on the phone and then when you follow it up with a face to face meeting where you say, this is gonna work. This person’s going to make a positive impact in that company. He or she is ready to leave where they are and based on what our clients are looking for, challenges and

opportunities, this is destiny. This person is going to be magic. He or she is going to go there and they are going to save jobs and they are going to practice equal dignity with their employees and it is going to be perfect.”

The following are some personally meaningful recollections from D’s work life:

1) Search for person to run small family owned business in Manitoba:

D: “I’d worked on behalf of a woman who was referred to us by a family business association...We met and she told me about their circumstances and I learned a little bit more and then for some reason we just, “open kimono,” “Full Monty,” let’s tell each other about each other alot and we did. She told me all about her family history, the business, and I told her about my family history and the business of my organization and we established immediately a level of trust. But what we had to go out and do was close to impossible. I mean I was recruiting a person to go to a small northern location in Manitoba to work for, not this woman, but for kind of the caretaker she had for this business. Her father had died and she stepped in to run the business ten years ago. There were alot of emotional angles and I had grown up in a family business, so really emotionally attached to the search, and uh, and but very difficult. A tough location, tough challenges in the job and found someone. Went through the process of what we do and I’d remembered two years earlier that I thought this person wasn’t right for the search I was working on at the time but that I would recruit him at some other time. I just stored that away and said I don’t know why or how I’m remembering this but I am so found this guy and called him and told him about the opportunity and he was about a six out of ten. He was very good at what he was doing but his interest level was six out of ten. Flew to Thunder Bay, met with him and made him a ten out of ten. Went through the whole process with this woman and her caretaker fellow who had been the general manager and was trying to retire. I met with this person and it was unbelievable chemistry and love at first sight, so much so that now that person has become the president of the company. The fellow that was the caretaker retired. This woman has referred me a bunch of other work, has written testimonials... and we’ve become really close friends...So that’s been great because it’s not a big high impact, high promotion opportunity but solved some really important, an important need. This

company may not have survived if they hadn't got the right person...and on so many different levels, it was the right thing to do. And they were so committed on family values and this guy had those family values that I remembered. What even makes it more unique is that he had grown up in this small town so it was a return, so he was home and he was best friends with this caretakers son but they had separated over the years like when he was five or six so he knew the family and it was like destiny all over this and to pull all this together was a little bit of luck. A whole bunch of luck but I was also emotionally bonding with it and it's worked out tremendously well."

I: "Yeah, and when you started it almost seemed impossible."

D: "It did...if someone said, you're going to find this type of person with all of these requirements she was looking for and I'd never had a search like that where everything she was looking for, he had. He came from a small town, he worked in a family business, worked in government, had high values, and she did. It was great."

I: "So where does the, I know earlier you referred to it as 'if there was heroin'...can you pinpoint a moment in that when you felt the drug go in the vein?"

D: "Yeah well probably, three months afterwards...you know, closing it was the best thing. You know he's going to start but you're still apprehensive. There's just alot of risk. But three months after it she said 'I can't thank you enough' I mean she paid us our exorbitant fees or professional fee and but it was so heartfelt and I had been up there enough that I could emotionalize and understand. I had been to her little small town and I met him and I knew it was there, she just reconfirmed it..."

2) Search for a president to run an art gallery in a large Canadian city.

D: "Well I did a search for an Art Gallery for a president and they had had an unfortunate situation. The fellow that they had recruited on their own a few years ago had lasted a year-and-a-half and then they didn't renew the contract, and they were frustrated. The organization was in pain. The person who was there hadn't worked out. I met him and he was a wonderful

guy but they just didn't get the fit right and they came in with a very clear mandate to finish the search in about nine weeks... We found that people who worked there primarily, from the volunteers to the board of directors, liked doing what they did. That's why they were there, they liked art. And I didn't as much but I was curious about it and I wanted to work in this area, and you know it's high profile and it's associated with neat people so I liked it. And so I identified what they were looking for, went across Canada to find a search for these people and did it real quick and that's tough, but I met a candidate. So then I started to talk to people out there in the marketplace. It was one of those things where you know you are talking to a good person and they are telling you about a good person and then you talk to seven people and they are all mentioning the same two or three people. So basically it just reconfirmed the references. These people are suited for this; it's gotta happen. How are we gonna make it happen? So I met this guy who was running the art gallery in another city in a hotel outside of that city. It was five o'clock at night and I had to catch a flight at 6:30. I missed my flight, and he picked me up at the airport. He was really busy. You know two-and-a-half-hours later the time felt like it was twenty-five minutes. By the end of it you just know; this is going to work. This is the finalist candidate. I don't know how or why, but this is going to work and then you have to go back to the selection committee and they want lots of processes and examples and proof that you looked everywhere but it worked and I related to lots of different people on the board in different ways. Interestingly enough I met another candidate...and she could do it too. Her style was going to be a little bit different but both of them could do it. The great thing about it was that these were two people that had said no to them three years ago, you know said 'blow smoke' to the people who had done it before but said to me, 'okay I'll look at it. I trust you, this is the right thing to do.'"

I: "That must feel quite good."

D: "Yeah it is. To know that the organization themselves weren't able to. Yeah it felt really good. It was hugely gratifying and we did the search and lots of negotiation at the end...At the end of the search they had a big board meeting with thirty leading people in the city around the table. They asked me to go to the meeting. I described the process and then they just clapped and it was great. It was wonderful and

they said you know, we couldn't have done the search without you. You've brought us someone who is gonna change the direction here and we think the world of you. And that was great. I just floated, you know."

Another source of "high" in D's job is associated with being a member of a very successful team:

I: "Is there anything about your work that you feel you haven't talked about that I didn't ask about that makes it meaningful?"

D: "Well the person that started [D's company] twenty-five years ago. He's relatively an awkward person...but a classic entrepreneur. He is tremendously talented, unbelievable touch...And he surrounded himself with wonderful people. So a range of experience and all these unique people come together and create this concept that's just been so fabulously successful. It's just astounding in what they've accomplished...Being a part of that is very powerful and it's here now [in D's home office]...the dynamics are pretty strong...like when you're playing team sports and when it kicked and you're really with a powerful team. There's not a better feeling in the world and for me that concept is really relevant because I played sports and still do so I know what that can be. There are people here who don't even realize what that's like. But it's just "flow." I've just been reading this book on "Flow." It's fantastic and it's here."

In contrast, there are some experiences at work which detract from D's sense of enjoyment and meaningfulness. In some searches D does not feel an emotional connection such as when an organization is simply asking D to find a "warm body" to meet their needs:

D: "Some people think it is a transaction and they don't care. They just want to get on with it cause it's the next thing...let's just get on with it. And to me, because it's people and emotions are attached to that, they should care more. Maybe they do but they compartmentalize and move on and I hold more of a sense of pride in it than they do."

I: "So it's more difficult then for you to be passionate about the search if you don't feel emotionally committed to the person [client]."

D: "No, no, and in fact now that I'm getting older I am separating from those people. I'll turn down business. I won't work with people that are like that."

D feels he is at somewhat of a crossroads in his career. Due to his tenure and success in his organization, D may be promoted to the top level. While D has been looking forward to this opportunity for advancement for some time, he now has some ambivalent feelings towards it:

D: "This is a real pivotal year because we do have a food chain and when I started on a level on it and that was good and then we added two layers in between and I've gone up both those levels and then the top level is partner and you know, I'm not one yet. And this is something we talked about last year and there's a couple of people who say it is *fait de complit*, it's going to happen and then a couple of other people are you know, we're not sure, so I really don't know."

I: "Is it very important to you?"

D: "I don't know. I go through stages where sometimes I think it's really important and others where what's the difference. I'm compensated the same way. Sometimes they close the door and talk about things; about the business and I'm not there and that does bother me because I'm team oriented and I want to be a part of it but as I get older, that's shifting. And if I was, okay now that I've grasped this...what does it mean? I don't know what it really means."

D describes the last two to three years in his job as somewhat flat and feels the need for change. Generally he feels the need to be surrounded by new colleagues and clients and to be learning new things. However, as D looks to the future he is unsure.

what kind of specific changes will occur and whether or not he should actively impose them:

D: "In some of the eastern philosophies or maybe I'm just in that stage of my life but I think that because it's so good and I like it and I'm interested in it, that maybe it wouldn't be such a bad thing if it was gone. I don't want to attach to it too much. That whole kind of 'happiness is the absence of desire.' And I seem to be desiring this but I'm really mindful that I'm not getting too deep into this. I'm kind of purposely trying to sit back and if there was another adventure; something else I could do out there; it may be good for me."

In summary, D's career as an executive recruiter has been and still is a tremendous source of enjoyment and fulfillment in his life. It consumes the majority of his daily thoughts and activities and D is mindful that at times it threatens to consume him entirely. Although there are some searches and activities at work that D does not enjoy, there are still many moments when D experiences a sense of euphoria from his work. The conditions which must exist for this to occur are clear. First, he must have a personal interest in the organization and an admiration and respect for their interpersonal business values. Second, D must feel some kind of emotional attachment to that organization's struggle to find a suitable candidate. D's personally meaningful experiences at work are attached to these searches and to the moments when these organizations express their heartfelt gratitude for D's ability to cure their business pain and when they acknowledge that "they couldn't have done it without him."

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

M: CHILDHOOD NARRATIVE

Introduction

M is the youngest of two children in his family, which includes his father, mother, and older sister "C" of two years. M's parents are both second generation Japanese and were born and raised in Canada while both M and his sister were born and raised in Vancouver. M's father worked in a cold storage plant and M's mother was a homemaker. Numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins also lived in Vancouver, and the majority of the family's social interactions were within this extended family group.

M describes his father as authoritative, non-emotional, and difficult to get to know. As a young child, M took his father's word very seriously and did not question his authority. "No" definitely meant "no" and M can still remember the tone and articulation of his father's responses:

I: "How would you describe your father?"

M: "Your typical Dad: 'Can I go out?'"

Father: "NO"

M: "Why not?"

Father "CAUSE I SAID SO."

M: "Guess we're not going out."

Most notably, M remembers being closely watched by his father and strictly disciplined for any kind of misbehaviour. The discipline could range from spankings to being grounded for several months depending on the severity of the transgression. M was

a very expressive and spontaneous child and so unfortunately being caught and disciplined was a frequent occurrence for M in his early childhood.

While M describes his father as authoritative, he also describes both he and his mother as very respectful and somewhat fearful of authority themselves. M suspects that this is due in part to his parents' internment in the B.C. camps for Japanese Canadians during the Second World War at about the age of ten or eleven. Neither of M's parents have spoken in any detail about their experiences but M suspects that this had a significant impact on their lives and on their views of the world.

M describes his mother as a worrier and at times M said this made him feel suffocated. Whether M was going to the park or driving in a car, his mother would frequently bid him farewell with warnings about potential accidents and injuries. In addition M remembers his mother being very negative at times about his behaviour. Comments such as, "you're a drip...you're stupid" were not uncommon for M to hear from his mother.

M also describes his mother as being very committed to peacemaking within the family. As a result, M's mother often played the role of conduit between family members in that she would be the link in communications among them. As M states, "if she wasn't there, communication didn't happen." M recalls both of his parents being very generous and showing their love for him and his sister through "money, gifts, and physical things."

M describes his sister as "nice," "a little more on the square side," and somewhat of an over-achiever. Whether it was in piano or in school, M's sister seemed to have the necessary discipline in order to succeed and excel in these areas. M recalls a significant amount of conflict between he and his sister growing up and feels that his parents played a role in maintaining this conflict. M says they did this by openly comparing M to his

sister. M recalls that this frustrated him a great deal, and as a child he felt as though he almost “hated” his sister at times:

M: “I think there was a lot of competition between us and I think my parents used to play that up. Cause we both started piano at the same time. I wasn’t disciplined enough to practice because I was too young. My parents would say ‘look at your sister. She can do this on the piano, what are you doing?’ So always thought that almost everything I did wasn’t good enough for my parents compared to my sister because she did almost everything they wanted her to do or her interests always suited their interests.”

M’s interests on the other hand, seldom suited his parents. Identified very early as the “black sheep,” M’s mischievous and expressive nature clashed with his parents’ traditional values of how a child should behave. As a young child, M was known as the trouble maker, “the one breaking everyone else’s toys and getting other children in trouble.” In later years, the trouble would advance to be more of the teenage and adult variety and put a significant strain on M and his family.

The Cute Years (Ages 4 - 7)

The first chapter of M’s childhood is the most peaceful and content of all. With images of curling up on his mother’s lap while she ran her fingers through his hair or falling asleep in his father’s arms and then being carried to bed, M felt adored by both of his parents and remembers this time of his childhood fondly. He had a reputation within the family of being cute, shy, and interested in everything:

M: “I remember from four to five where I was really cute and small and they called me MM...It just felt to me at the time that I was everybody’s favourite. I’d sleep over at my cousin’s house and my aunts and uncles would spend alot of time with me like my aunt would bake alot. I guess I was so fascinated with everything that I would be there licking the bowls and trying to help.”

M describes himself as a “super sensitive” child at this age. He had strong internal emotional reactions to new or strange events but was too shy to show them outwardly:

“I remember going to school and my mom leaving and I was really freaked out and being afraid to talk to people...I also started piano at that time too around four and...we had this piano teacher I couldn’t relate to and she would wear these really weird clothes and was quite heavy and that was the first real heavy person I had come in contact with and it was kind of like going to friends of the family and you are just really freaked out and my sister would be at the piano just crying and crying away because the teacher would be chewing her out and then I’m just sitting there...and I would never cry.”

Playing by Myself Years (ages 7-10)

Around the age of seven, M remembers a new element of his personality beginning to emerge - that of the “trouble maker.” By this age, cute little “MM” had lost some of his shy demeanour and was beginning to take risks with his curiosity. In fact, M was also developing a reputation as a ringleader who often enjoyed getting other children in trouble:

M: “This one time this kid got sick in class and there was this open area. The teacher leaves and like he’s gone and so we start running around and I’m like the ring leader getting everybody to run around and there is this big pile of puke so I start trying to challenge everyone to jump over it. So I’m jumping over this puke like back and forth and all I remember is this arm just grabbing me and pulling me and it was my teacher who came back and he was like...he knew my parents. And I was so freaked out because he was Japanese.”

M: “And another time the teacher leaves the room so I jump up on my desk and say ‘come on everybody we’ll dance around’ so everyone starts dancing around. Somebody goes flying off and splits their head open so I get in trouble for that. So it’s all these little things that I get people in trouble for.”

While M frequently engaged in this kind of spontaneous and mischievous behaviour, afterwards he would be very frightened about his father finding out. M remembers being totally afraid of authority and in particular his father and likened this feeling of dread to “the end of the world.” It was so disturbing that it was not uncommon for M to have obsessive thoughts about the possibility of his father finding out about his misdeeds and the punishment and that he would inevitably receive:

D: “This one time I got this bike. We lived on 15th Street, and I was allowed to drive my bike on the street but I wasn’t allowed to go past 10th Street. So this one time I thought no one is going to know. So I’m riding my bike and as I’m going across I hear a honk and its my Aunt, my dad’s sister, and I’m like ‘oh no, I’ve been caught.’ And it was eating me up inside. And a week later my Aunt came over and so I leave the dinner table...and I’m in the living room and I’m obsessed about getting in shit about this. And then I hear my Aunt say I saw M riding his bike on 10th Street. So I hear my dad saying ‘WHAT? M, GET IN HERE.’ And he says ‘is it true that you were riding your bike on the other side of 10th Street?’ (Oh that’s another thing, my dad used to spank me in front of people).”

I: “Did he this time?”

M: “No, but he caught me in front of everybody and I ended up getting grounded for months. So my dad totally freaked out and got ballistic.”

I: “So what does that look like...your dad being freaked out and going ballistic...is he yelling?”

M: “Well ... when we were small even in the four to seven cute days, we would try to run because we were getting spankings. Pretty hard ones too. We didn’t even try to run from my Dad. I used to get grounded alot.”

In fact being grounded got to be a way of life during this stage of M’s childhood so much so that he identifies this whole period as the “playing by myself

years.” The following is a recollection which explains what this experience was like for M:

M: “I used to play by myself alot at this time. Hours on end and had the greatest time. After I got bored with my toys I would take them all apart and make them into other things. I had a huge imagination and was always building things: cardboard, pens, and tape and made huge elaborate things. I got grounded alot and spent alot of time by myself.”

M: “Like in grade four I had a project due and he [M’s Father] knew about it. I lied and then the teacher called to say that I hadn’t finished it. So then I got grounded for six months but then after 3 months he said it was okay.”

I: “So what did ‘being grounded,’ mean?”

M: “Weekends--stay in room; after school stay in room and I could only come out to go to the bathroom and for meals. In grade two I got grounded and he made me do the times table every day until I knew them all...up to twelve times twelve.”

Perhaps worse than the punishment itself was the actual moment of being confronted by his father. M can easily recall his father’s words and tone of voice when he was being called for one of those confrontations as in the following recollection:

M: “Another thing is that we would spend alot of time with cousins and I would get into trouble quite a bit. Like you are playing and someone would get hurt and they would say, ‘I’m going to go tell your dad,’ and that would like just freak me out...I would do anything to stop them...and then I would hear my dad say, ‘WHAT? M, GET UP HERE’...so I would walk out in front of my aunts and uncles and they would all be watching and sometimes I would get spankings.”

I: “In front of them?”

M: “Yeah...and just his voice, ‘WHAT? WHAT? M GET UP HERE.’”

Stand by Me (Age 10 - 14)

This chapter of M's childhood is centered around his time spent with friends. At this age, M began to associate with more types of people while maintaining a central clique that he hung out with most of the time. Despite the prevalent groundings and spankings from his earlier years, the trouble-maker is still playing center stage but now his trouble is becoming a bit more sophisticated than the "puke jumping Olympics" of the past. In addition, M is no longer the sole ring leader, and instead the impetus for getting in trouble is shared equally among M and his friends:

M: "I used to hang around with friends and we'd get in alot of trouble doing practical jokes at other people's expense. Constantly making prank calls to people or getting pizza delivered to people across the street."

I: "Would you be the ring leader?"

M: "Well me and my friends. And we also started gambling in grade six and seven."

I: "What kind of stuff?"

M: "Well, we would play poker and we would end up owing each other eighty or ninety dollars. It was pretty big for grade six and seven."

I: "Would you follow through?"

M: "Oh Yeah. You'd be worried if you owed money and couldn't pay people back. So a lot of hanging around with buddies a lot. Staying out til its time to go home."

Another change during this chapter of M's childhood was that he began to lose some of his fear of authority. For example, he recalls "lipping off to teachers" with such comments as "Shut-up; What do you know? You're stupid." Although teachers were now less apt to notify M's father of his troubling behaviour, M still lived in fear of the consequences if he ever were to find out:

M: "I was getting better at hiding stuff but I was really freaked out about skipping out of school like my friends would always want to skip out of school and I hadn't started skipping out at this point because I think I was afraid of my dad finding out...I knew what he would do."

M also developed more sophisticated ways of getting what he wanted from people, particularly from his friends:

M: "I think I was quite smart then on how to manipulate people...I ended up getting all my friends cutting the lawn for me...I would do stuff like, we have one of those push mowers and I used to say things to them like, 'oh, I bet you couldn't cut this lawn in ten minutes...oh, there's no way. I've tried so many times'...like different tactics like that and my parents used to say, 'you shouldn't do that' but they would end up mowing the lawn."

M: "I used to get all this stuff and I would sell it to other kids and we used to have a summer condo near Bellingham and we would get all the new candies in bulk and I would take it to school and sell it."

M's awareness that he was Japanese and how this differed from his peers went mostly unnoticed in the cute years. At this age however, M became exposed to words and acts of racism although M was seldom on the receiving end. Being one of only a few Japanese students in the school, M's witnessing of racism was typically towards the Chinese students. As a result, M was granted some level of immunity from this kind of racism and discrimination:

M: "[I] also started facing alot more racist situations you know, you hear Chinaman and Chink and I started becoming very racist toward Asian and Chinese people because my friends would always go, 'oh Yeah, that stupid chink'...and 'oh, that's okay because you're not Chinese.' This is when I started noticing that I was different. My friends would say things like 'oh he's cool. He's not like the other ones' and I

don't think it even effected me. I just thought it was the coolest thing."

Overall, this was a period in which M was identifying more and more with his friends, and less and less with his parents. M would frequently compare his family with those of his friends and usually concluded that his family was lacking in some way:

M: "I have these two friends who we'd sleep over at each others house almost every moment that we could...like every weekend night...and I think that is when I started comparing my family with everybody else. 'Oh I wish my parents were taller, better off, why didn't my parents have more kids,' so I'm starting to compare my parents and my life with other people."

I: "So your family was always falling short in your eyes."

M: "Yeah."

I: "Did you blame it on any certain things?"

M: "I think there were alot of different things. I always thought my parents were... not that I was disappointed that my dad was a blue-collar worker, but why wasn't he something else like why couldn't he have a better job that paid more. I didn't understand why I couldn't get what I wanted."

Definitely the Trouble Years (Age 14 - 18)

Up to this point, M did the best he could to monitor his behaviour, at least enough to avoid the stern punishments from his father. But at the age of fourteen, M "gave up" even doing that and began to do as he pleased with the full knowledge that his father disapproved. The turning point came when he felt that even his best efforts could not exempt him from his father's disapproval:

M: "I think I was doing pretty well at school or trying my hardest cause I wanted to try and do really well and it was in the middle, after the first term in grade nine where things go bad. Where I come home with a report card that I was pretty proud of. I think I had quite a few Bs and some C+s and a

couple of Cs and my Dad freaked. You know, but I did try really hard and then so from that point I just said 'well screw ya; screw it' you know. Obviously when I try hard, it's not good enough you know so from that point on I just, well I always excelled in music because I loved music and the creative stuff and all the academic stuff just got worse to the point in grade eleven and twelve where I would only go to about one third of my classes."

I: "And did you know, like was it conscious all the way through this that the reason I'm doing this is because I can't please my Dad...it doesn't matter what I do?"

M: "Yeah, I'll never make him happy. I achieve this he'll only want more so."

I: "So just screw it."

Once M made this psychological break from trying to please his father, he also broke away from the threat and fear of his disapproval and punishment. No longer was M in the passive role of receiving punishment from his father. He was now fighting back without regard for his parents' reactions:

M: "I think at this point my family was probably pretty worried about me; I was like, I don't know if it was in grade eleven or twelve but I got in huge fights with my Dad and one was over this motorcycle and I ended up getting in this kind of altercation with my dad where I actually pushed him and um I think I kind of started getting physically."

M: "I was skipping out alot and started getting into, around grade eleven or twelve, into alot of acid. So I'd like drop acid on a Friday and show up at home on Monday and be like totally not there and totally cranky and agitated."

M: "Oh they'd be worried and I'd be like eighteen and you know and say, 'what is it any business of yours?' I was like you know, I was really kind of abusive like I would say, 'shut up,' you know and slam the door."

Although the progression was somewhat gradual, by grade eleven and twelve M was getting into trouble of the adult variety. Part of the progression was helped along by the many different groups of friends to which M became a member:

M: "So in grade ten I started smoking pot because this one friend of mine was into Jazz and we kind of connected and we would skip out all the time and I started hanging out with other people and this is the point where I started getting accepted into all the little groups. Like the Italian people, the roughians - always getting in trouble. The artsy music and theatre people."

One of the benefits of being a member of all these different groups was that M was able to maintain his double persona. The "innocent, cute M" and the "rough, trouble making M."

M: "Well, I noticed I played alot of dual roles. I remember this one time I dropped three or four hits of acid over the weekend. So it's Monday morning and I'm riding my bike around and this teacher pulls into the parking lot and I'm still kind of tripping and we have this conversation and they see me as somebody who adds alot to the school because I excelled so well in music and was in choir and so, cause I remember at that time being pulled into the principals office and them saying, 'look you know you've got to start going to class' and they would never say or you'll get kicked out because I was such an asset to their music program you know so I always led this dual role."

I: "So when you were playing these dual roles, it sounds like you didn't mind or that you weren't trying to downplay it."

M: "No, it worked out perfectly."

In his senior high school years M was becoming more and more involved in riskier kinds of trouble. From the early days of dancing on the desks and playing prank tricks on neighbours, M had now graduated to the kind of trouble that included theft and violence.

M: "Now in this age I seem to be getting fascinated with getting in trouble and we started by ripping off car stereos on the weekends. We used to get in fights every weekend. There would be eight or ten of us...we would go down to the beach and pick fights with people. My role in that whole thing was (and I think I was still considered the cute little guy), and I used to work out quite a bit and I was fascinated with this whole military kind of thing. It was almost like a kind of cult thing right because we used to get these leather belts with big buckles on the end and you would file down the snaps so they are easy to take off and on the back there would be these screws and you would sharpen them so when we got in these fights and so I think that went on for a year-and-a-half and I think all my other friends are going 'hey man you're losing it, you've gotta stop hanging around with those people,' and we used to do stuff like mug pizza people, where we'd go to someone's house, order pizza, hide in the back door. Pizza guy would come and we would like beat the guy up, take the money and that went on for a year-and-a-half."

From fourteen to eighteen M's involvement in illegal activities was escalating and M was continuing to lose his fear or concern with getting caught or with the reactions of those in authority. But on a fateful night at the age of eighteen, the authorities did catch up with M and what followed is what M describes as the turning point in his life:

M: "Well, it ended up with one night a friend of mine and me, I think we had my dad's car, and this guy goes, 'hey, this drug dealer has a pound of marijuana,' and we go 'wow, lets go get it.' So there's my dad's car and like three in the morning and basically this was a big turning point for me in my life. So me and my friend end up getting caught and my friend ends up getting attacked by the dog. They have the guns on us and everything and they arrest us and throw us in jail. You know you always kind of think, oh yeah, if we get caught, don't worry, we're not going to rat on you, and like we're cool and nothing is going to happen to us and you know, you get caught by the cops and its like drug related and the cops go 'okay, what were you doing?' and its like 'waaaa,' [you end up telling the cops everything] you know, and so did it and what ended

up happening (and this would be the end of that fourteen to eighteen), um, I ended up spending the weekend in jail, the city jail, and I remember going in there and by this time it's five or six in the morning and you've been treated like shit. You end up in the general cell and you're thinking you know what happens in prisons and you don't want to get beat up or assaulted so I was lying there and kind of crying and there was this guy sleeping on the top and he says, 'hey, what are you in here for?' and I go, 'oh, it was just a simple misdemeanour charge, B&E' and I go, 'what are you in here for?' and he goes, 'oh, I escaped from Okalla for murder' and I started crying and I felt like I was crying the whole weekend and a couple of guys tried to pick me up and it was the worst. I think and this goes back to me always being worried that this was it so I kind of tried to accept that that I'm going to be here for twenty years, cause we were involved in this drug thing and I started doing push-ups and sit ups and totally conforming and like well, this is the way it's going to be."

On Monday morning, M's father arrived to take him home and M escaped spending the next twenty years in jail. But although M escaped being locked behind bars literally, he ended up living the next five years of his life as a prisoner of another kind:

M: "And then I go back to school on Monday thinking that the only thing is this B&E charge and then I find out the drug dealers know who I am and they want to kill me and these are pretty rough type people that I am hanging around with at this point and I am so scared and I would sleep with a baseball bat and a huge knife and I think I am mostly afraid for my family because my parents, my mom is like, 'you see those drug dealers on TV. They are just going to come here with a shotgun and shoot us all.' And then my aunt and uncle got involved in the whole thing...so I went through this whole year where it seemed like I didn't sleep at all cause every time a car would go by I would run to the window because my parents were freaking me out that they were going to come and kill us all...and I think they were pretty serious that they wanted to kill me."

Dealing With Everything (18-23)

The stress of fearing for his life and the lives of his family took its toll on M. At the age of twenty-one he suffered a nervous breakdown followed by a period of severe depression during which he became suicidal. As a result of this, M was placed in a psychiatric ward of the hospital for a short time and continued to see a psychiatrist for the next two-and-a-half years which was a though a painful time for M and his family. M describes this experience as a turning point for everyone. With the help of his psychiatrist, M became aware of how he reached this point. In particular, he learned a great deal about his emotions and his pattern of "not dealing with them."

M: "Cause I couldn't understand, I couldn't comprehend like when I went to acting school dealing with the emotions. That was why they figured I was having troubles. With all these emotions that were coming up that I experienced, I hadn't really dealt with them before so they were new to me. I didn't know what to do with them and the way that the psychiatrist explained it was, even the way that I dealt with my problems and issues, would all just randomly go into this box and I didn't know how to express them or deal with them."

M also became more aware of how his parents' heritage played a role in his and their abilities to deal with an open expression of emotion:

M: "We [M and his psychiatrist] came to the conclusion that my parents' heritage, had a bigger role and I had to find a better understanding of that and that whole dynamic. I mean just understanding that was a big step...and I'm starting to figure it all out. My parents and where they came from and even now when I look at the tragic things that have happened to me or what we think of as tragic or hard and now knowing about the internment and what they went through and regardless of how old they were six or seven or eight or nine. I imagine if they were younger it could even effect them more so even though we don't really talk about it, I kind of understand and now. I feel bad and it kind of shows me how they act ... I have problems dealing with authority and that comes from my

parents being over-accepting of authority and having to do everything by it like I don't think my dad speeds to this day and I think that too, how they raised us, I think too that I was a very expressive child, very sensitive, and I just didn't get anything from them and I think that's related to them shutting everything off."

In addition to his work with the psychiatrist, M also began Tai Kwon Do at this time. M felt that this also contributed greatly to his healing because it taught him discipline and furthered his personal development. Once M was on the road to healing, there really wasn't any turning back. He changed the way he felt about himself, his past, and his future. Although some questions remain unanswered, M was now able to ask them openly and with a healthy curiosity that would never have been possible in his childhood:

M: "So I went to the psychiatrist for about two-and-a-half years and after that I just felt great. I felt so on top of things and so in control and you are constantly worried about, will you become suicidal again? Am I going to go into these huge bouts of depression again? And ten years later, no. And I certainly have realized the subtleties in life more and everything before was would just have to be so dramatic before it would influence me which is weird considering that I am a very sensitive person and even when I was a kid I was a very sensitive person so I still don't know why I was up in life for these quite dramatic things to excite me when if I'm sensitive, why don't the little things excite me?"

In summary, M's childhood was influenced most by the inevitable conflict which resulted from an expressive, curious, spontaneous child who grew up in a conservative, traditional, Japanese-Canadian family. From a very young age, M sensed that he was very different from others in his family and he also sensed that his family was different from others in the community due to the fact that they were Japanese. Whether at age five or fifteen, M's stories could be simply titled "M causes trouble" or "M gets in

trouble.” What does change significantly over time, however, is M’s emotional response to “being in trouble.” In the early years, we see a very frightened child who is obsessed with getting caught and punished by his father. In the teen years, the shift is made to one of almost complete indifference and disregard for any kind of authority. This emotional disconnection continued as M’s primary coping strategy until his early twenties, when its effectiveness finally wore out. The end result was a healing process in which M discovered a whole new range of emotions and reconnected with those which were long forgotten. Unlike the past, however, he was now able to express his full range of emotions openly and freely without the fear of punishment or humiliation that he had come to know as a child.

M: WORK NARRATIVE

M is the Executive Director of an arts company (ACT) consisting of thirty performers and eight full time staff. Officially, M reports to a board of directors consisting of eight volunteer members from the business community. In consultation with the board, M is responsible for directing both the business and artistic sides of the organization. As a result M is involved in a wide range of activities - from preparing yearly budgets and strategic business plans to hiring production staff and directing live shows.

Before M became Executive Director, he had a full-time career as a film and theatre actor. M says that he was always artistically minded and began by playing the piano when he was four. He continued in high school by involving himself in the school music and drama programs. In his senior year, it was the combination of his interest in music and drama which eventually led him towards a career in the arts:

M: "I got the acting bug in grade twelve. I did Grease and got one of the lead parts and that's when a friend came to me and said, 'oh, you've got to come and see this theatre.' I kind of put it off for about a year and then I finally went and to me it was just so magical because my background in music when I was playing the trumpet was more jazz oriented so improv, and I really wasn't a good trumpet player so ACT's theatre became my next huge passion and I kind of grew up there."

M began acting with the ACT organization at the age of sixteen and took on a number of different roles within the organization in subsequent years. In his mid-twenties, M organized a corporate entertainment group within ACT. In this role, M worked as an equal partner with some of his fellow actors. Their goal was to meet with people in the

business community and “pitch” the idea of using theatre as a learning and development tool and to hire ACT’s actors to provide the service. After a few years, M took on the leadership role for this initiative. In later years M sat on a number of different committees within the ACT organization and also held the position of co-artistic director.

M’s decision to become a professional actor was not completely welcomed by his family in the early stages. M remembers longing for acceptance from his family about his acting career. In the beginning stages, when he was most in need of their support, however, his successes went mostly unnoticed. It wasn’t until others acknowledged his talent that his family got behind him. M admits that this experience left him feeling quite resentful:

M: “Coming from my parents who were very traditional and conservative and really wanted me to go to university and when I went into acting it was very funny because I go, ‘Yeah I think I want to go into acting’ and they are like really unemotional, really unemotional and they sit me down and say, ‘we just want to let you know’ (and every one is sitting down and no one is looking at each other) and they go, ‘you know, we really love you and everything and if you want to go into theatre that’s fine but if you are gay you can tell us.’ They thought I was gay, so it was hilarious and I just started laughing.”

M: “It was a huge thing for me to be accepted by my family. I was the only one in the family to go into the arts. I have twenty-five cousins, all close in age. I was known as the crazy one. The one that was always getting into trouble and doing stupid things. I was getting hugely resentful of them because they never came to any of my shows but then later on (when I started to appear in TV commercials and became more publicly known) when I went to family functions they would all come up and talk to me (about my acting). Now that I am Executive Director I tell them I’m not performing and they aren’t as interested as they were when I was acting. They always used to ask, ‘when will we see you in Hollywood?’ and still today after four years they still ask that.”

In 1994, M applied for and was given the position of Executive Director. Although a very exciting and positive time for M, he was also well aware that the ACT organization was in a very difficult financial position and there were many uncertainties about its future. Despite the bleak outlook, everyone including the actors and the board members supported M's promotion and expressed their confidence in his ability to get the ACT organization out of a very serious situation:

M: "ACT was doing a huge head hunt because they knew they wanted to go with an Executive Director model and they found somebody in the U.S., so they started negotiating with this guy. Meanwhile the company is on the verge of bankruptcy. They racked up this huge deficit. We were leaving our original home. Morale was at its all time low and then I had to do a lot of soul searching because I was really interested in becoming Executive Director but I knew they had found this other person so I thought oh what the heck and I put a proposal in."

Although M wrote the proposal overnight, he put much thought into the process before doing so. M wanted to make sure that he was making the right decision for the right reasons. He had heard stories of actors who "couldn't make it in acting, and then moving on to management and becoming bitter." M was at the peak of his career as an actor and the decision to change direction was a profoundly emotional one.

M: "So I was looking at my resume and I just started bawling. Like this huge release. It must have been like two hours. I was looking at my resume and for the first time my resume looked full and it looked huge and when you go to these auditions you feel like you are constantly being scrutinized and you are sitting there with your picture and your resume and you are looking at other people's to see what they have done and you look at yours and it looks so small compared to other people and I realized that I had accomplished alot. The most common question I get is 'don't you miss performing?' I came to the realization before I started this job that, um, I'll always love performing but I don't have to do it all the time."

I: "So when you were sitting there crying, what do you think the tears were for?"

M: "I think it was kind of acknowledging what I had accomplished."

I: "So it wasn't like oh my god look at what I'm leaving but rather how did I not know I had done this much?"

M: "Yeah, it was almost like a goodbye. I think it was resolving a chapter of my life. Very similar to someone leaving home and getting accepted for a scholarship to Harvard. So sad to leave but going on to this huge opportunity."

M recalls his first few years as Executive Director as being very difficult and sites a number of reasons for this. First, due to his history with the organization, M had developed a reputation or an image that didn't completely coincide with people's typical perceptions of an executive director:

M: "I started with ACT when I was sixteen so basically I grew up with the company so being put in the position as Executive Director, I think my focus in the first year was trying to make everybody happy."

M: "I think because when I was acting with ACT I was, because I started so young, I was kind of like the cute little kind of mascot. Like the little brother and then all of a sudden being put in this position where people have to trust that I am leading the organization responsibly so it was a huge transition."

Second, M felt that in his early days as a leader, he wasn't completely open and up front with his staff in his efforts to collaborate and co-operate with them. Although he wanted to work *with* them, he was stuck in the mind-set that they worked *for* him:

M: "I haven't always been like that here as a leader because I realized that I was creatively manipulative. I thought I was going through a process of collaboration and co-operation, for example, even in a brainstorming session with staff I would

know what I would want them to achieve. So I would be like, 'Okay this is the situation, let's brainstorm some ideas. What's a plan we can come up with?' but I would, you know, play the whole thing by eventually driving it to what I knew it was going to be in the first place. All the time I thought everybody that worked here was an extension of me. Like they might as well have been my assistants because it was about I think my mentality was...I am ACT and they each represent a finger on my hand."

I: "And that has very much shifted now?"

M: "In a huge way. You know they each have a part in leading this organization and I am the common hub. I try not to step between people."

Thirdly, M recalls that in his early days as an Executive Director, he felt very alone in his efforts to turn the company around. M would work long hours, longer than any other staff member and felt that he must continue doing this to "keep everyone happy" and to keep ACT alive and well. But as time went on M realized that this was an impossible feat and began to make a fundamental shift in his thinking:

M: "A lot of it too was being the cheerleader and I think there was a huge effect on me because I had been here so long through the highs and lows of the company and then I was put in a position where really there's not a huge support network. You've got the board of directors but they are volunteer representatives from the corporate community and when all is said and done they are basically volunteers for the organization. The first few years were like so stressful for me."

M: "And just feeling like really spiteful of everybody. I mean really resentful. And it's really hypocritical thinking because you are saying to the staff, 'look, you know, the organization can afford this much. Don't work any overtime because we're not going to pay you for it,' and then so everyone goes home and you are still here and I think it all really built up to a point where I felt that I can't do it for everybody. I have to do it for myself first. And that was a huge realization for me and then

everything fell into place. I performed better. I produced better. I think I communicated with people better and I made it quite clear to people that I have to do it for myself and the organization will benefit from my passion for me to learn and to become better at what I do.”

Despite M’s efforts to limit his personal commitment to work, ACT is still not a nine-to-five operation, and on average M works approximately fifty hours per week. No two days look the same for M but there are some primary responsibilities that he is involved in on a continuous basis. In particular, M refers to the process of creating strategic partnerships and the importance these partnerships play in his business. M is often in the role of asking people in the business community for sponsorship, quoting prices for their service, or soliciting people to act as volunteer board members. M relies on his network of “partners” to fill these needs.

Another large part of M’s job involves dealing with human resources issues with the actors and with his staff. As the leader of the organization, M organizes staff meetings, fills in for personnel when they are away on holiday, and acts as a consultant and information source for staff. In addition, M is also called upon to use his leadership skills when an employee is having difficulties with their job performance. The following is a story which M cites as “memorable” and describes him in this role:

M: “One of the persons who worked here has a bit of an anger management issue and she needs to improve in that area. She had worked here before and I had to fire her over that issue and this was the hardest thing I ever had to do in my job. But later on I rehired her. Part of my feeling was that she was misunderstood so alot of that was communicating that to her and alot of people were even afraid to bring that up with her. They chose to turn a blind eye. And it was very hard because the first few times it was like butting heads it was like ‘no I’m not,’ and of course the issue that I was trying to deal with would come up and she would get very angry. One of the big things I always

say to people is we don't pay you enough to get angry. So a lot of that was supplying her with different opportunities to deal with that. 'If you want to take a course I would be more than happy to pay for that. If there is anything I can do you know, my door is always open to that.' She didn't take advantage of any of those but it constantly came up in the performance evaluations and it had a huge effect on the company. And then the big turning point was me and how I changed my leadership style. How I started sharing what I was going through with people and how at times I felt scared and at times this was a challenge for me. Showing more of the human side of myself. And then really kind of sharing my enthusiasm for ongoing learning. A professor from UBC lent me a book called Don't Sweat the Small Stuff so I made every one in the office read it in a certain amount of time and that was the first point when I really noticed her to be open to learning. She said, 'you know I read the book and at first I wasn't in to it but there were quite a few sucky things and a lot of stuff I wouldn't do but there were four or five chapters in there that meant a lot to me.' So to me, that was a huge step."

Another example of M in this role is the work he does with actors who are starting out in the field. M often finds himself in the role of boosting their confidence and helping them to clarify their reasons for wanting to become a professional performer:

M: "And I'm constantly doing that [influencing people to look at themselves and improve themselves] when I'm teaching and when I'm working with new actors, working up their confidence. This one guy auditioned for us and he auditioned quite a few times and he phoned me and I normally don't answer those types of calls because I have enough people that I have to try to maintain relationships with that I can only take on so many effectively. So I said you can have a half hour of my time and I met with him and I just said you know (his main goal was to become a main stage performer) and I just said to him and I was very honest with him, 'Every time I've seen you, you've made progress so I encourage you do continue doing what you are doing but I encourage you to do it because you want to become a good performer.' So then I said I encouraged him to rethink what his goal was. It shouldn't be tied to ACT and that was something that was out of his control and, um, his life and his feelings and his thoughts were too valuable to let something like ABC organization to control how he felt."

Throughout M's career with the ACT organization, he has continuously been in the role of teacher and leader. M finds that he naturally leans towards those student actors whose situation resembles M's at the beginning of his own acting career. M describes them as young actors who have a few major blocks to overcome but who also have a very strong desire to learn:

I: "Are there any teaching experiences which stand out for you?"

M: "No, not particularly, but I can remember students I was very fond of. I remember at the beginning of my career with ACT. Management would say that I was so untalented and my team members would have to defend me and stick up for me. I was working in an environment where people said I'm not worth it and I had no potential. But still trying to stick to your guns and trying to believe what your peers are telling you know, that you are very talented. It was a very hard thing to deal with. Eventually after four to five years with experience and growing as an artist, feeling very confident on stage and definitely feeling that when I left ACT that I was within the top seven people here on a consistent basis so I think because of that hurdle and challenge that I had to overcome I'll normally bond with somebody who is going through the same thing. That they have a few major blocks that they have to overcome. I think this guy that I sat down with for a half hour was one of those people that I could identify with."

Also as leader, M deals with any crises that may arise, particularly those associated with putting on a live show seven times a week. M has mixed feelings about being the leader in this role.

M: "It's interesting. It's great to have, I don't really like the word 'power' but it's great to be in a position where you are facilitating leadership. That's the way I like to look at it but it is the worst feeling knowing that you are the end of the line when something goes bad and when it goes really bad, you are the one

who is responsible. You are the one that gets the phone call in the middle of the night.”

M describes his work as personally meaningful and derives a great deal of pleasure and fulfilment from it. He experiences meaningfulness in his role as leader and with the knowledge that his staff has great confidence in his ability to lead the organization successfully:

I: “When you first started as Executive Director, what did you find most stimulating?”

M: “Well I think the planning part was certainly very stimulating and the power in a sense in being trusted by people to make decisions that effected huge numbers of people and something that they were very passionate about and I could relate to the passion. And now it’s still that orchestrating. I think I’m a very good team player and I think a lot of that comes from the sensitivity; always checking in how other people are feeling, what are their expectations. What do they want and then trying to weave them all together so people are all learning and being challenged at the same time.”

M: “I was away teaching a course, and they had a staff meeting and I asked the facilitator to have people in confidence talk about the things that make them unhappy here at ACT and there were no complaints. Everyone was pretty happy and there is nothing that they would change right now, which was pretty amazing.”

I: “And you felt responsible for that?”

M: “Yeah definitely.”

I: “What do you think your staff would say about you as a leader?”

M: “Not on a power trip, honest, good at dealing with people on the same level. I never step over them and I’m very fair. What I’m worried about is that the situation the company is in reflects on me as a leader. If the actors aren’t getting paid enough then directly that has something to do with me.”

There are many evidences of M's success as a leader of the ACT organization and M cites these as the most meaningful and enjoyable parts of his work. Perhaps the most notable is that M has led the organization from the brink of bankruptcy to its situation today in which the deficit has been eliminated and more actors are being employed than ever before in ACT's history. Other successes which stand out for M are:

1) Awards Show

M: "ACT has always fallen into middle of the comedy community and theatre community. It's too commercial and mainstream but still theatre. Every year at this Awards show, ACT would do scenes for the show. Last year I directed a team of actors and people said it was the best in years and the next day the stocks went up. This year they can't get anyone to direct it because no one wants to follow the show they did last year."

2) New Market Development

M: "Another big accomplishment for ACT was having the insightfulness and the vision to diversify and create a plan and implement it for the theatre for young audience tour... in past it was very unsuccessful. The first year we did it we did four months, hundreds of schools. To me this represents audience development for the company that will pay off five to ten years from now. Work for the artists - that is very important. Probably one of the most important things. It helps diversify the revenue that we bring in."

3) Management Development Course

Through his participation in the management development course, M came to realize that something about his style of leadership was different and unique. His classmates made him aware that his leadership approach was something to be admired and that M should be very proud of his unique ability:

M: "I didn't realize that I was a real creative leader until that course I did last year. I was with these executives and VP's from all these places. The people that freak me out. I was so scared to go there and um it wasn't till the end when we were saying good bye, and almost everyone came up to me and said "I'm so glad you were here because as a participant you added so much to the program as a whole. The way you approach and do things." And of course you don't think you do things differently or you don't think you look at something from a different perspective because it is you, but over 60-70% of the people came up and said that to me."

4) Creative leadership course (teaching)

Approximately eight months ago, M was approached by the instructor of the management development course and asked if he would be interested in co-leading the course. M was both flattered and surprised by the offer but eagerly accepted:

M: "I feel very fortunate to work with him and when he asked me if I wanted to teach his course with him called the 'creative leader,' part of me is like a little kid thinking oh my god, I can't believe he wants to teach with me."

I: "So when you are doing the creative teaching course is there one high point or is it the whole process?"

M: "No the whole process is a high point. Because now my image of that school is like a sanctuary where I can work on myself so when I started doing these courses with him, it was like my thing. But I've always done alot of teaching even when I was performing and I enjoy that. I find it very tiring. I think I enjoy it because it is something meaningful and something I believe in and it effects people. Sometimes I don't enjoy it like I have a problem when I can't get everyone to buy in. Like in the creative leader course. 10% of people thought it was crap and the other instructor said oh you just have to get used to it, but I'm not used to that."

M perceives his career differently now than he did in his early years as an actor. M admits that he was raised with the expectation that he should do something well and then be committed to that thing for the rest of his life:

M: "So now people say what are you going to do in five years and I say I know whatever I am doing I will embrace it and I will do the best I can at it and it will probably be something I am interested in but all I see right now is up to the end of my contract because I don't want to limit myself like I did with performing where I thought; 'Oh my god. I have to do this for the rest of my life.' That's a lot of pressure. What if I don't get cast when I'm fifty?"

M feels that the next logical step in his career development is to work for an organization that is not an arts organization: "I want to prove to myself and others that I can do that. I'm not going to be stereotyped as a starving artist." In order for his work to remain meaningful and fulfilling, M admits that he will have to be working with people and have a leadership role in motivating and inspiring them.

In summary, M experiences meaning through his work in a variety of ways. On a day-to-day basis, M feels fulfillment and enjoyment through his work when he is able to act as a catalyst for other's personal development and ongoing learning, particularly his staff's. As an instructor of Creative Leadership, M feels a great sense of fulfillment and meaning when he receives approval and admiration from corporate executives for his unique ability to successfully integrate spontaneity and creativity into his work as a leader. On a broader scale, M experiences meaning through the success of his own personal development and evolution as a leader within the ACT organization. Throughout his long career with ACT, M has been successful at transforming himself from the "cute little mascot" to the Creative Leader who is trusted and respected for his ability to make ACT a successful organization in

the eyes of the actors, the employees, the board of directors, and the community. M experiences a sense of fulfilment by playing a leading role in producing tangible evidence of the organization's success, whether it is a balance sheet that is no longer "in the red" or a new program that is producing larger audiences than ever before. M's sense of meaning comes not from just the event itself, but from the acknowledgement of how his own personal transformation played an integral role in making the organization's transformation a reality.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

J: CHILDHOOD NARRATIVE

Introduction

“Who were the people in your family growing up?” was not a straightforward question for J to answer. While J lived with many different people while he was growing up, he did not consider any of them to be his family. At the age of four J’s father returned to his home country, leaving J and his mother to fend for themselves. Due to the lack of social assistance programs, J’s mother went to work in one of the wartime factories. Like many other mothers in similar situations during the war, she decided to pay part of her salary to the government and to place J in its care. At the age of four-and-a-half, J entered what would become the first of half a dozen foster homes over a period of fourteen years. From this day forward, his physical survival depended on the foster parents who were paid to take him in. His emotional and psychological survival, however, would continue to rest solely in his hands, a truth that he learned to accept gradually throughout the course of his childhood.

J described the relationship with his mother as almost “non-existent” until his late teens. On average he saw his mother once a year and spent most of his early childhood without a clear understanding of who she was or the nature of their relationship:

J: “I had no idea what this was all about. All I knew was that this woman was my mother and that I saw her sometimes.”

While the frequency of time spent with his mother was negligible, he still carries very vivid memories of their meetings. Typically they would come together for very brief periods of time and their parting left him with a heavy realization of the separateness that he would continue to experience from his mother:

J: "I know the place that she lived in was on 123 1st St....and it had an outside staircase and it went up four stories...and I remember wanting to stay over Christmas Day cause I went over on Christmas morning and that was nice...and I was dreaming and crossing my fingers that I would be able to stay overnight and it kind of got into the evening and it was snowing...and I remember staying up there and I remember the smell of the floor, the linoleum we had in those days, the brown linoleum and her place was spotless...and anyway at one point I thought I made it. It was 7:00 p.m. or something like that and the evening was dark and anyway she said, 'Well if you don't go now and catch the streetcar across to Commercial Drive you will miss your Inter-urban.' And I remember going out, walking out the door and turning right down the hall, turning left and going out onto this wooden fire escape and I remember looking out over the city, and saw the lights along Main Street and Broadway and the snow falling and I felt like somebody had let a cloth go just kind of crumpled onto the top floor there of the fire escape there and just wondering what this was all about, in the snow and that...just sort of collapsing."

While he felt a strong desire to be connected to his mother, this need went largely unfilled for the duration of his childhood. The result was a painful realization that he ultimately was responsible for his emotional and psychological survival. J admits that under all of this there was always a hope that the tenuous threads of their relationship, though often broken, would in time be tied firmly together.

Although J moved through a number of different foster homes, his experiences were somewhat similar in all of them. Typically the foster families provided only the

bare essentials of food and shelter. Needs such as personal hygiene, adequate clothing, safety, and emotional support were almost completely ignored. At best, he was treated like a visitor and at worst he was made to feel inferior and ashamed by being treated coldly, harshly, and with little care or compassion. The following stories illustrate some common experiences for J in his foster homes:

J: "That was another spin-off of being in a home when you are not really a member and you are kind of just a visitor, passing through...and so little kids today are upset at mom telling them to keep brushing their teeth but in those days who's going to tell you and who is going to bother. Who is going to give you toothpaste anyway?"

J: "We just didn't look like the other kids did you know and with the teeth with all the holes you could put match sticks in between all the teeth cause they were rotting and that was another painful part where so many nights where the teeth were rotting and the toothaches were just so painful and just the whole face was pulsating on and on and on all night long and trying all these things, like cloves and everything you could think of to try and stop the pain but nobody had any responsibility to send you to the dentist."

J: "Basically no responsibilities, no expectations...and they were really weren't concerned if you missed meals because if you are only a minute late then you don't eat the meal that day...very typical...and so you are sure you will not be late for the next meal because it was a long way away and if it's dinner then breakfast is your next meal and that's it."

J: "If you did not eat it was cheaper...and they did not wash very often because the pile of laundry in the laundry room was as high as this table here and the smell down there was quite extraordinary."

J: "For several years, there were three of us, two brothers and I in the same bed and I couldn't kind of stand that...and if you can imagine the bed if it was a firm bed you could lie on the flat but of course it would be more like a hammock...and so I was making my own bed in the corner and getting some of the pieces of wood and some of my cardboard from my fort and I

took a triangle out of the room and included a bit of the window so I could open the window and get some fresh air in there...and I would have my little mat and stuff on the floor and that was great...it was very small, just big enough to lie down in but it was my space and I didn't have to wait for someone to wet the bed and the smell and the problems and all that stuff."

Although J often looked forward to leaving a foster home, there was seldom much to look forward to when he arrived at the next one. His transition was often cold and abrupt and his new foster parents usually met him with the same indifference for his care as the ones he was leaving:

J: "I still have my suitcase downstairs, my little brown suitcase, because sometimes, a couple of the times, I would come back from school, and my suitcase was on the front steps and there was a taxi-cab you see and I would not be allowed back in the house and they say, 'there is your suitcase.' And they will be taking you somewhere maybe with the piece of paper with the address and that is the way it worked. Yes, with my suitcase out there and the taxi and they took me there and dropped me off. The same thing there though. There were no rules. They didn't seem to worry in any of the places that you would be kidnapped, or who would kidnap you? You looked like a rat bag. And there would be that kind of feeling that you know, show up tomorrow there will be food on the table and the kid will be there and if he gets tired enough he will go to bed and that sort of thing."

J: "I kept bouncing back and forth with Mrs. Peters. She was a nasty piece of work. She just thought that I was a bad kid and one of the reasons she thought it was because her boy Tommy had picked on a kid my size named Robert. He pushed him around and I was there and it was really an unfair fight and Tommy started to punch Robert and so Robert just went bizarre and went wild I think... and sort of climbed Tommy's frame and Tommy was bleeding and Robert was just not going to give in and so then of course Tommy came home and had been beaten up and so then Mrs. Peters decided that she was going to beat me up cause I was there and I did not

help him and so that was part of the main thing...and so that was me set in her mind."

J did not have a nurturing relationship with any of his foster parents and was left largely to his own resources to cope with a very difficult childhood. Despite this situation, however, J did cope and he did so by turning to his friends, his creative survival skills, and his wide array of interests and abilities.

Friends

Recently J had an opportunity to ask a childhood friend, who grew up in a "straight, well-groomed" family, why he would risk going against his parents wishes to play with J, the "dirty, scruffy, rotten toothed" little boy from down the street. His friend replied, "We always knew, that if we got doing something with J, then something would always happen...there would always be something going on." His friend said it was something exciting, different and often mischievous as in the following stories from J's childhood:

J: "We heard bad things about communists and we knew about the communists and so I checked into this...and they had a stone block, concrete block house...and there is one big door and so some teacher had told us about these communists and how bad they were. So I used to go there when they were having their meeting and so we closed the door and locked it from the outside. There was a lock on it and you could push the hatch and close it and so that was our thing...and all the big banging and all the noise and so that was sort of the extent of always something happening."

J: "Like At McPherson Park which was a few train stations from us...there was a cannery there. When I was twelve or thirteen I would go across town on the streetcar and then the inter-urban would come across the intersection and when it would pass through the light there were two cars always. So I would sit on the stairs on the second car because it wouldn't cost anything...and we would jump off and so we used to take

the same train up and when they were unloading all this food...there were hundreds of crates lying around everywhere...and we would go and stand around and find one...A crate of peaches or pears or whatever they were doing and we would pinch a few and then run and we would jump back on the next car and we knew when the next car was going back and so we would jump on that and so then we would take it back to the fort and climb up into our fort and eat or whatever."

J referred to his friendships as the "saving grace" of his childhood. With his friends he "always felt he could do things; that things would change and that he was the agent to effect that change":

J: "It was the shame of being poor and being scruffy and all that and we had to find a way to gain identity to be able to find a way to be as good as these other kids and the teachers sometimes inadvertently helped...[for example] this one guy who was driven to school in a nice Paccard, which was an unbelievable car in those days, and dropped off. He looked so puffy and petulant about something all the time and he looked so dressed to the nines compared to us. And one day the teacher said, 'One day this fellow Ian is going to go to University. He is the type of person because he does so well with his marks and is so academically bright and all that.' And so then OK, I'll fix that...and so Ted and I spent a lot of time, and Don would help too, and we would go up in the fort...and we worked out what was going to be on the exam. The whole point of the exercise was that this guy, Ian, was going to be fourth. He's not going to be first because the teacher was talking about how great, how bright he was and so he came in fourth. I was third, Ted was first, Don Second."

This belief that "if he can do it, then so can I" seemed quite prevalent throughout J's childhood. Despite his feelings of shame in inferiority, J recalls that in some ways he felt brighter and more intelligent than other children:

J: "You know that academically you listen to some answers around the [class]room and you say, no wonder he is in trouble. You know that you can think of a better answer or you

can make it work. And you know Ian was the student who would go to University and all that and represent the school and all that then, OK, if he can do that then we can do that. So there is that kind of thing where there is the attitude of; I can do it. The same as the running, I can do that.”

J: “There was a certain morality from my parents. You don’t want to discount your heritage. One time I remember going up from the school...and there is a white house there and these two guys they were stealing a car...and they said, ‘Come on let’s go.’ And I said, ‘You guys must be kidding.’ And they said, ‘What do you mean?’ And I looked at the white house and I remember, I’ll never forget it. I said, ‘The only thing that would be more obvious for you guys to be driving down this street and be caught would be if you could take this house.’ And they were saying, ‘Oh boy this will be fun.’ And they made it all the way to Marine Drive before they were caught. Unbelievable, so there were those little messages [that I was in some ways, brighter than others].”

Some of J’s fondest memories of his childhood include the time spent with friends, building, playing and “camping out” in a fort, which they built in the Burnaby woods:

J: And so he [J’s friend] and I built a marvellous fort in the woods, a pentagonal fort, and so we went down to the dump and found a stove, a little stove about a foot and a half across and a foot and a half high. Pipes and all that stuff and linoleum; rolls of linoleum that someone dumped from some old floor. And we put that on the roof and put that on the floor and cardboard walls and stripped all the bark off the trees and killed them so that people could not shimmy up the tree. That was the idea.”

What began as a playhouse soon became a second home for J. As he got older, J would often retreat to his fortress in the woods to find the privacy and solitude not found in the foster homes:

J: "So I found that when I did sleep in the fort there were no repercussions for the next day and so then quite often I would come back and have a dinner and then come back and go to the fort or whatever I was doing and then have dinner and then go back and sleep in the fort overnight maybe with a toque on and a couple of Jets and all of the clothes I could get and just nobody would go chasing you. Like today they would all be running around after two hours and get the police and all that...and so if you don't come home, you don't get the sheets dirty and if you don't get the sheets dirty, you don't need to wash them. You don't need to use water so you don't need soap and it does not take up time, and it doesn't take up energy."

Unfairness & Creativity

Themes of unfairness and injustice prevailed among many of J's stories from childhood. Even at a very young age J felt a deep sense of how wrong these injustices were and was compelled to act as:

J: "I must have been six-and-a-half or seven. This kid, Tommy Smith, was older than I was...he was eight but he was a little guy. Tommy was more of a victim than I was. I could stand up a little bit better. There is a tree out front and even as a little guy I would get so upset because these two big brothers ...they took Tommy out there and they knew some girls were coming down the street. So they tied him to the tree and pulled his pants down and so he was naked and facing the street and these girls were coming...and so I went out there and I tried to pull his pants back up and I couldn't undo the knot and the brothers were pushing me down and...I managed eventually to twist him around the tree, to the other side of the tree. You see well I got a whipping for that sort of thing but there has always been a feeling about fair play and not fair play and that this whole thing was just wrong."

One of J's most consistent methods of coping with injustice was to find very creative ways to outsmart his oppressor. Time and time again, J told stories of terribly unreasonable and unfair situations in which he was consistently able to envision and

implement a very creative solution. One home in particular was run by a large man, Mr. Douglas, who would punish J for wetting the bed by whipping him with a stick. J's response to this was to find a rubber sheet and to sleep on the floor. In the morning he would wash off the rubber sheet and never actually sleep in his bed.

By the age of nine, J became consciously aware that he alone was responsible for producing the creative solutions that would save him from life's many wrongs or, in J's words, "I realized that if I fell backwards, I would hit the floor. There was no safety net. There wasn't somebody there." J refers to the following story as a turning point in his childhood when he realized that he was solely responsible for the outcomes in his life:

J: "It was a job I did have with him [Mr. Douglas] and it was picking chick-weed...and I was going to go to the movie with Ted...and so I picked all this chick-weed and in my imagination it seemed like hours and hours of work. Anyway lots. I earned a lot more money than I would need to go to the movie. A dollar and a half or something like that. Anyway the movie matinees were two o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday. Well on Saturday morning we would have our little breakfast in this house...and then Mr. Douglas, this great big guy, said, 'Do you know what's happening in New Westminster today?' We said 'no, what?' 'Well,' he said, 'they are opening a New Safeway on 12th Ave. in New Westminster'...and he said 'they are giving balloons away and free drinks and candies and all sorts of things...would you like to go?'...so sure, we followed along. We all came back sometime in the afternoon and it got to around 1:00 and I had to hike off to the theatre to meet Ted and so I asked Mr. Douglas if I could I have the money to go...about ten or 25 cents. It was not much. He said (and I will never forget it). And he was standing there in the kitchen. He said, 'you know what?'...and I said, 'no'... and he said, 'well I was just working it out; how much money you earned. And the taxi ride from here to the Safeway and back exactly equals the amount of money you earned.' And I remember not crying or not doing anything I just remember as though it is happening now, that I stood in the kitchen and looked at this great big guy and I said to myself, 'You just don't treat people like that, you don't do that!' And so I said, 'there's no

money?’ and he said, ‘no money, not till next time.’ And so I left and went up the alley I think I was crying. I sort of made it up the alley and I trotted along, a good mile, a long way; trotted to the movie theatre and there was Ted outside and I told him what happened and so together we worked out a solution. He went into the movie and sat near the front and the exit wasn’t a door. The exit in those days were curtains that didn’t quite make it to the floor; six or seven inches off the floor...and so he went in the front and slipped into a seat and crawled along the floor under the curtain and he let me in...and so we both crawled back underneath the curtain and along the aisle and the seats and came up some aisle further. And so that was one of the high water marks in my life in that foster home period...was the moment when I looked at Mr. Douglas, and I just said, ‘That’s not the way. You just don’t treat people like that,’ and ‘It’s really not fair. It’s not on.’ And I think that changed my direction.”

J: “I think that if I didn’t have the experience I wouldn’t believe it would happen at that age...that I realized it is really up to me...what’s going on in my life, is up to this guy and so I am going to go to see the movie and I am going to get in, and its going to be through the back door or through the front door but I am going to see that movie...come hell or high water.”

The following story is another example of J’s ability to think and act creatively in the face of hardship and injustice:

J: “She [Mrs. Peters] had a one car garage and so she said, ‘look, your job is to fill that garage with kindling,’ and so they had a big pile of wood in the backyard that had been dumped from the dump truck and my job was to go in there every morning and chop kindling and fill the whole garage with kindling and cutting all this wood up...and I started stacking this up nice and neatly and got this big pile cut over several days...but I thought this would take a lifetime and so I changed plans...and so I started stacking them two north and south two east and west and built up little platforms and then put the other pieces against that...and the next day I would cut a few pieces and would extend the platform up a bit and lean pieces of wood against it because I knew she would take the wood by the door or I would take kindling and put it in a little basket by the fire and she would use that...and every day as she was

looking in, the garage would be fuller and fuller and fuller and thank goodness she didn't have a car because if she had opened the door from the other side the whole thing was hollow...but it took me a few days to figure this out...it was ridiculous with hundreds of pieces of wood...it would have taken me a lifetime."

This next story about an experience in Army Cadets again shows J in this role. J recalls a school teacher who often talked about the war and how it was important to "win at any price." J admits that this maxim became part of his own mindset:

J: "I was in this little place [an Army Cadet camp] and they gave us this test. They took you out in trucks. The base is up here in Vernon and the lake is here and they took us out in the trucks way out that way and dropped us off with our red arm patches, blue, green, orange, and yellow. And then the military guys were ditched in various places...and they were in the trucks as well...and on the way back they would go back and hide in places with their little field glasses and their big clappers and so they would go clap...got red got red...and so then all the red would have to get up and go and so then you would have to walk back and then they would treat you like little prisoners. And so then I thought you would have to come all the way around the lake to get back there...and so you had to use the back streets and find some way to get back. And so I looked at this whole thing and said this is crazy. I mean we are all going down the same avenue. So I said we will just sit here for a while guys and see where the noises were coming from. And so we were sitting here waiting at the end of this big cul-de-sac and so I thought, let's go down this street and instead of going straight ahead to the lake. We went away down another street. Further away from the base than ever. We came down to the shore. There were some nice little houses there, and one of them had a boat. And so we took the boat; stole the boat in effect. Cause you had to get back anyway you wanted. We took the boat across the lake and tied it up and we went up the back and we didn't even know if there were rattlesnakes on that slope. We didn't know about that. We just knew; I just knew we had to get back without getting caught. And we got back and we got in and had our lunch and before the army guys were back by truck. Cause they were picking people up, you know, and bringing the prisoners in, and they were wondering where purple was. That little group got back and we would not

tell them how we got back. It's our secret. Cause if we went into telling you how we got back and you take us out again, you are going to cut that off. You don't want to tell the enemy."

A Bundle of Sticks

Despite his hardships growing up, J experienced a number of successes in academics and sports. Upon reflection, J feels that his wide variety of interests also played a part in helping him cope during his childhood. Although J did not have access to many books during his childhood, there is one story from Aesop's Fables entitled "A Bundle of Sticks," which illustrates how a wide range of interests and talents can strengthen an individual. This story stands out in J's memory:

J: "Well it's just the idea that it is easier to break one stick than it is to break a bundle of sticks. If you had a bundle you can't break that and so as an individual how can you be a bundle of sticks? It would be better if you are good at art; if you are good at academics; if you are good at athletics; then pretty soon you are a bundle."

I: "Was that a conscious thought for you as a child?"

J: "Yes, it was. I saw that people around me were quite good at things and somehow their abilities seemed to be connected to their appearance quite often. They were cleaner and smarter and they had the latest hair cut. Not the bowl, like we used to get a haircut with a cereal bowl. It wasn't clear to me where all this wealth and upbeat look came from, but I thought, 'well if I can't compete in that area, I know where I can compete.' The game that I understood was academics and athletics and then I inadvertently found out that I had artistic talents as well."

During J's high school years he enjoyed a number of successes in track and field, including running the fastest half mile in a provincial track meet. In addition, he submitted one of his drawings into an art contest and won first place. As J articulates,

“nothing succeeds like success,” and each of his successes reconfirmed his belief that he could do just as well or better than others. This belief, in turn, reinforced his conviction that through his own actions, he could effect change in his life and did not have to settle for the world in which he had grown up.

In summary, J’s childhood was a very difficult one. Although his mother devoted her financial support for J’s care, he could not feel her presence on a day-to-day basis. With the absence of his mother, J was left alone and afraid in a world that was not of his making. In addition to his isolation, J held a deep sense of shame about himself and, in particular, his appearance. Despite these challenges, however, J was able to survive and in many ways thrive. He did this by acting creatively in the face of injustice and by listening to an inner voice telling him that despite how others appeared in comparison to him, he was as smart and capable as anyone. It was true that “if he fell backwards he would hit the ground; there was nobody there to catch him.” At the same time, however, any steps forward were equally his responsibility and each step forward held the promise of a happier, better world. A world of his making.

J: WORK NARRATIVE

Since the age of nineteen, J pursued a career in Childhood Education. He began as an elementary and secondary school teacher and then went on to work in university settings as a teacher and supervisor of student teachers. For a total of ten years, J has worked in university departments of education, and currently his work is divided across three main areas. First, the majority of his time is spent supervising student teachers who are completing their practicums in elementary and secondary schools. Second, he teaches courses to student teachers involving the principles of teaching and the social sciences. Third, he teaches a professional development course for existing university faculty who want to improve their teaching skills.

Philosophy of Teaching

Regardless of his teaching role, J's philosophy of teaching is rooted in the idea of creativity and teaching educators how to infuse creativity into their work:

J: "I like to promote creativity and I like to promote the idea of teaching your flat lesson or the material that must be taught according to the curriculum of the government curriculum. And then thinking what kind of things can I do for these students that will send them further down this line then they are aware of...or further than anything in the book or differently from your book but connected to it. So they are really pressed to think about things like that."

Interwoven with J's philosophy of creativity is also a strong inclination to focus on the interconnections between nature and the everyday world of human creations. This first vignette shows an example of how this way of thinking about the world is revealed in J's daily observations:

J: "When I am looking at you I am thinking of all the amazing things that make you up and I am looking at your eyes and I think that if I use the idea of changing the material and multiplying the sizes phenomenally, and change the function but maintain the form. And then you come to the idea of maybe the Pantheon in Rome, built 1900 years ago and the most amazing building all those centuries ago. Just like an enormous eye looking up at the sky with a wonderful hole at the top. And anybody who designs things like a building that looks like a starfish or the TWA building that looks like a bird and things like that, may not have started out like that but what they couldn't do when they started out was take the idea of a starfish out of their minds or a bird out of their minds. Or the Nahallel in Israel. If you look at that from the air it is a perfect spider web. And so the person who designed that couldn't say to themselves, 'I did not want to think of a spider's web.' And it looks like a spider's web and so there it is. So everything is there in the mind and it is available."

J: "I would say that everything is connected to everything else. Then when we don't see the connection it doesn't mean it isn't connected it means we do not see it. I like being able to connect things and see all the connections. See all the interconnections as I can. And as I look across your shoulder there I see the leaf out there and I look at the main part of the leaf and it reminds me of the upper levels highway and then I look along and I see a road that turns off and then I see one of the mains of the leafs goes down to Lynn Valley and off to the side and to the boulevard."

J admits that some of these musings of interconnectedness began long ago in the many hours he spent by himself in his tree forts. Now, in a very unique way, J has combined these philosophies of interconnectedness and creativity into his teaching. Specifically, J looks to nature as both a source of creativity and as a way to connect the natural world to the unnatural world. In the following example, J illustrates how he integrates these philosophies of interconnectedness and creativity into his work as an educator:

J: "I will meet with the whole group here in this school for one night and do a session on creativity with a couple of slide projections showing them how to look at nature and see things in nature. And how nature has constantly offered human beings ways to do things with; from the way nature has survived so well. And so to try to get them to see more and giving them little things to think about like trying to be artistic. Because an artist sees things the way we do and yet an artist sees things the way we don't. Even though it is the same physical object. And so I try to get the students to see things differently and therefore I go on the fact that children see things differently."

I: "Can you give me an example?"

J: "Looking at the idea of seed distribution and how the propeller seeds from a maple plant change the speed the seed will fall. And it might not be faster or slower but you can use the idea of the propeller to slow things down and so design something based on that. And what can you use to design that idea. And they might use a little matchbox that they have and a paper clip and an elastic band. And they cut the two seeds and put them together in such a way, as it is just like the way a propeller works and they can drop the matchbox with the seeds in the box so the weight is the same. And so then it can go at one speed and they measure it falling. And they put the propeller on top and they drop it and the propeller will change the speed. It will fall because the blades are kind of screwing into the air as it goes down. But then I would say that if you would change the materials of that maple seed for instance and you change the materials and you change the size and you change the function but you maintain the shape. What might you make? And so when they think, they often think that gee I can make a desk decoration that might be quite beautiful. And then I ask them, 'how many times did you multiply your seed?' And they say 'thousands.' And I say, 'good, well maybe ten million times. What will you make now?' Then they come up with airports and big buildings and stuff. And so the seed part is the basis for all the business and then the wing part then is the part where the planes can come under and the buses and cars can come under. And so then they could stack them all up and have them all slightly turned around about one degree or four or five degrees. And so they would have the effects of a spiral that is frozen and so that there could be a great big building and so then everybody would have a big deck of their own or a

big wing on which they live. And so we go from the little seed falling to how far can we go. And I try to get across [to the student teachers] not to push the students too fast or too hard. So that is the intent anyway, is to get them to see more in everything.”

J believes very strongly that promoting creativity in the classroom does not happen by accident and that student teachers must work very hard to design creativity into their work with children. In his efforts to instill this philosophy into his student teachers, J ensures that he is not accidental in his approach and tries to model the same principles that he is passing on to his student teachers:

J: “If I am going to teach any given course I start out and I prepare all my materials from the beginning so that I have them all labelled for every lecture right away and run off and all in piles. And I always build in at the end of each section a party or celebration; a little celebration. You’ve got to do that with your kids in the school. When they have finished their unit and they have worked hard, celebrate that fact! I might connect it with Thanksgiving or Christmas or something like that if it happens to fit with the school to get them to think in those terms in the school years that they are coming to or like Valentines Day or Sports Day or some function. So I try to get them to work hard and yet to I try to get them to think of a celebration at the end.”

This idea of celebrating accomplishments is a philosophy that J has built into his teaching from the earliest days and he believes that this must also be part of the overall design to bring out the best in children:

J: “They [grade 7 students] knew a lot of Kipling stories, but they didn’t know ‘if you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you.’ And so then I had four verses and so I said there was going to be a prize and you can work in groups. And you can say the poem in groups of four or five or something like that, as long as you can all chant it together. And the prize will be a pizza after four weeks.

And they are memorizing other things and each week they had to memorize one verse. And then say each group would come up and would say their verse on Monday morning and then they would say, 'that's good; checked off.' And so then they would say it is getting closer and closer to pizza and then drawing in the pizza bigger and bigger and then we would go down and get the pizza."

Meaningful Work Experiences

J experiences a great deal of enjoyment and fulfillment through his work and the stories he told to illustrate this were numerous and rich in detail. J divides his career somewhat into two eras, his current work with student teachers and his time as an elementary and secondary school teacher. In his work with student teachers, J's meaningful experiences occur when he is able to establish a mentoring relationship with his students and when his students express their gratitude for his ability to inspire them through his creative and passionate approach to education.

J admits that one of his primary goals is to set student teachers off at the beginning of their teaching career with the philosophies and principles that he feels are necessary to become outstanding childhood educators. The following excerpts show how J goes about this:

J: "I try to, because these student teachers will be working with children, I try to give them that same sort of excitement and passion for learning and enjoying it all and help them open up and help them try things and help them to find out who they are. And so they can take themselves and not a pseudo somebody else to the class. And not try to be the fake version of the teacher or of me but have an attitude to an open-mindedness and curiosity. And if they don't have a positive attitude to the open minds and the curiosity then I think it is very hard for them to promote those sorts of traits in children. It's really hard to be flatfooted and give somebody else the arch."

J: "So I have parties at the house. I'll have one in the next ten days. I will have my students here and I will give them some hints about walking into the classroom and about teaching etc. And I want to prevent them from walking into propellers that I have walked into in the past. And issues and concerns and things. And then we will go up to the house and have pizza and pop and stuff like that. And that is before we start. And I don't actually have any students until January but I want to set up a relationship and get things going."

Overall, he is trying to pass on a philosophy of teaching that brings out the best and the most creative work in children and brings it out in such a way that the child feels responsible and accountable for their own achievements:

J: "I had a Principles of Teaching class where I went over a lot of the stuff. I wrote a little book called; Where Did You Get That Idea? But it was based on a book called A Hundred Pages For The Future. And he was the fellow who said there are three ways to improve the world. And they were to do with education. Every adult should try to help every kid or allow every kid to solve problems. Not to get in the way of solving the problems. Even to tying his shoelaces. If you don't have to dash out the door, let the child figure out the way. Safe problem solving is an opportunity, so let them do that and so I use that and I use that kind of philosophy in the back of my mind with the student teachers. And encourage them to find their own different ways, their own special ways. Because if you create something, maybe you create a child, you have a powerful emotional attachment to the child and you have a passion for the child and with the child. And so you create something in your teaching and you create ideas and you create opportunities and that is one of the things you can create. Maybe it's not a thing that you can label but I will create an environment where my student teachers can create things."

The following is an example of a meaningful experience with a student teacher.

In this vignette, J's sense of meaning came from the knowledge that he was instrumental

in encouraging the student teacher to be more creative in his approach to education and in witnessing the positive and powerful effects of this creativity on both the student teacher and the children:

J: "Like this fellow in this school for instance. The other day I went into the classroom and he had been encouraged to create his own style, his own way. And so the children had written about Halloween and he had them all sitting on the floor in a circle and the lights out and the curtains drawn and they were reading their poems in pairs with one kid holding the flashlight. And the flashlight was moving around the room and they were reading in the dark. Absolutely silent and wonderfully sort of free and happy and appropriate and all of that. And so that is the kind of thing and that same thing would work fine with everybody sitting in their desks with the lights on but there was a different element of passion and power that comes to doing something with a little more creativity."

Through the years, many of J's student teachers have shown a great admiration and appreciation for the guidance he has given them. J admits that situations in which he has had an opportunity to personally experience their gratitude have been a significant source of meaning and enjoyment in his work.

J: "In one of my last years of teaching I had one of the most creative students that I ever saw, Susan Smith. She and the class put a little thing together because we had seen a movie, Mr. Chips. And I left the school because I was going over to Europe and they said 'Goodbye to Our Mr. Chips.' And so I have the little plaque which is really nice and all these years later which is really interesting because I hadn't seen this particular movie but subsequently did and then I was more moved by it."

J: "In one of the social science classes they had gotten together and they had given me a big card and they signed it and they said, 'To Our Robin Williams,' because you are our answer to the Dead Poet's Society." And I had never seen the movie and

so then I went to see the movie and I'll always cherish that class and their sentiments."

J: "One of the reasons I got to know that one group, the Robin Williams group, so well is because one of the girls had to have a heart by-pass. And so the thing is she was going to lose her course and therefore lose the term and not be able to go on her practicum. And so I was not ecstatic to be video-taped, but I thought this girl is going to be in the hospital for a long time and so anyway they did videos of me doing all these lectures, lecture after lecture, week after week. But they were quite understanding I think of that at the time and they had all done some teaching. This group of women in that class started to let the others know that 'if you think it's a bit tricky to have somebody come in and watch you and write a little page on you; you better try to do what that guy is doing right now. Two-and-a-half hour sessions a week and to be video taped.' It was a lot of fun. Now that nice kid will undoubtedly be affected by that. She sent me a nice letter and all that but when she gets in a similar situation, when she gets older, and she gets her class, I think she will be a little bit more compassionate. And that is one of the things I try to demonstrate is compassion and caring for these people because they are working hard and nobody wants to come and do a bad job. Everybody wants to try and do their best job and so how can we help them do that job, not 'how can we get in the way?'"

J also receives feedback each term in the form of written evaluations submitted by his students, and these evaluations have also become a private source of satisfaction and pride in his work:

J: "Every series of evaluations, there are four or five people who say 'you have changed my life'; which is good, and I hope it is for the better. And one young woman came to the house and said, 'I wonder if you would do something for me?' 'Anything,' I said, 'you're a top student.' [she said] 'I haven't been out here for very long and I really need a mentor that I can phone at any time.' And so she did. She phoned and she phones often. So I feel really lucky to be with these bright, hard working kids. I want them to know that right off the bat, one of the things I say in every first lecture is that I am glad

that they are there and that I am glad that I am there with them.”

J: “It is a job you can take yourself to and then develop yourself and see who you are and in that process you help others to see who they are and that is exciting.”

While J’s current work with student teachers is both enjoyable and meaningful, he admits that some of the most powerfully meaningful experiences occurred during his time as an elementary school teacher. In his work as a teacher of children, meaningful experiences were centered around J’s opportunities to influence and witness a student’s excellence in the beautiful and succinct expression of wonderful thoughts. Similar to his approach with student teachers, J was very deliberate in his approach to creating an environment in which his students could thrive and where examples of their best work would be most likely to occur:

J: “When I was first married the kids would come over on the weekend and I used to have my class. And anybody could come over and we would paint and draw and write poetry and listen to music. So those are quite high days and they make a terrific difference because they intensify and enrich the lives of kids because all the things would be connected. We would have pizza or something like that too. But it would all be connected you know, the eating and the smell of the food and the smell of the damp air and the children would go put their foot in the water and they would write about the meaning of cold and put their foot in the stream.”

One class that stands out in J’s memory is a class that inadvertently had higher than average IQs. J realized that the language curriculum in its current form would not be challenging enough for these students, so he set about designing a new course which he called “From Beowulf to Batman.” In this course, the children studied the writings of such writers as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Hemmingway, and Churchill. J guided the

children through a careful analysis of the various styles of writing and then asked them to write their own poetry in the same style as these great poets:

J: "We would write out one line and get them to connect all the sounds. If you know about Hopkins he was a Jesuit missionary and he was just a marvellous wordsmith. He was trying to say, how can we hang on to beauty? You know, if you see a beautiful women or a beautiful thing, how do we hang on to that? And so I wrote this line of words and he says, 'Is there any bow or broach or brace or lace or latch or catch or key to keep back beauty?' So you can interconnect all the sounds all the way along and then the children try to do that but with fewer words. But the same kind of idea of thinking of how can I marry these sounds with an idea."

One grade seven student in particular, Barbara, stands out in J's most meaningful memories from that period of his career:

J: "This was in grade seven when this girl [Barbara] was sitting in the middle of a field writing a poem. And I thought that's curious. Cause it was a gravel field and it cannot get much less interesting than that. And Barbara was sitting there and I was talking to these kids and helping them with their poetry and taking rubbings of the leaves and things and Barbara was starting to leaning over and over and soon she was horizontal on the ground. And she should have been writing poetry. And I walked up behind her and I watched her write these words. She said, 'In the rippled water I saw a whole mountain tremble.' And what she was doing while she was lying over was looking into a puddle that was as big as a sink until she saw the reflection of the mountain and she said: "In the rippled water
I saw
A whole mountain
Tremble"

And we had been studying verbs a lot. She really came to like Gibbons and Churchill. And when she read the article about Churchill's death, she wrote a marvellous poem. And we had been studying demonstrative adjectives, 'this, that, these, and those.' And so she was looking at the picture of Churchill and she said, 'those forked fingers; this solid cigar; that strong chin.' You know and it's a long poem. And her last line was,

'he is alive yet.' You know that kind of thing. And I thought that sounds like him. It's an amazing thing."

Five years later when Barbara was in grade twelve, J recalls another incredibly meaningful and moving experience with Barbara and the world of poetry:

J: "She phoned at twelve thirty in the and she said 'Mr. Johnson.' I hadn't seen her for years. And I said, 'yes Barbara, what is it?' She said, 'My father died. We studied the poem in grade seven and I would really like to see it again and like talk to you about it.' So I said, 'What is it? What would you like to study that you can't find?' And she said, 'The Intimations of Immortality.' I would love to read that again with you if we could.' So Barbara drove over and it was after one o'clock in the morning when she got there and so we sat there in that house, which had a lovely raised fireplace that you could put your feet under the hearth. And so we put Woodworth's 'Intimations of Immortality' and we read it by the firelight and talked about it for a couple of hours and it was an absolutely wonderful experience. It was priceless."

In another story from his career as an elementary school teacher, J recalls the story of a young boy, John, who stated "I just cannot write poetry." In addition there were some teachers within the school who were skeptical about the poetry that was said to have been written by J's students. They felt that perhaps the poetry was more indicative of J's writing skills than the children's. J organized an evening of poetry writing and invited parents and co-workers, including skeptics, to attend:

J: "I had the kids bring their pyjamas and this is in grade seven and their favourite thing they like to bring to bed like Winnie the Pooh and other big stuffed toys and things. And we also had to bring candles. And I brought this wonderful squeaky tape of squeaky sounds of noises at night. And so we had a discussion that night and the topic of the discussion for that evening's poetry was 'In the Dark Bedroom.' And I remember Sandra Brown said, 'When my parents are out and I have to go downstairs to the toilet and I flush the toilet and then I only use cold water to wash my hands.' 'Why is that Sandra?' 'Well

because I know that if I use hot water and I go back upstairs the pipes are going to creek all the way down.' And so we had that kind of talk about those kinds of things and those kinds of sounds. And then John wrote this poem with the candles and the discussion. And I said, 'John, take your poem and your candle and write it up on the board.' And he wrote, 'In the Dark Bedroom' and the words were these:

'Imagination,
Creation,
Fear,
In here
Commences'

And isn't that great? And he is sitting in the front row with all this stuff with the candles and the squeaky stuff and the pyjamas and it was like Barbara's writing. And I cannot forget him and it was just one word after another and one word lines. 'Imagination (absolutely), creation, fear, in here, commences.' And even the rhyme was there like a rhyming couplet idea."

Another similar story shows how J was able to use nature to challenge a child to connect nature and language in a very simple yet creative way:

J: "The kids were writing about rain one day and I remember Diane writing about it. It was a heavy rain just like we have been having recently. And so we go outside when it rains. And so this little girl was sitting there writing about this water gushing out. And so her lovely little word for it was, 'The rain drop struggled out of the pipe.' And I liked that and so I asked her, 'Can you show me how they struggled?' So she said, 'They were struggling like this.' [moving tightly back and forth] And then I asked, 'If they were coming in that door, could you show me how they would struggle?' And she said, 'Well you can't struggle through that door very well.' And so I said, 'How could you show me how to struggle through that door if you were a rain drop?' And she went out and got five or six other kids to come and show me how they would, if they were raindrops, how they would struggle through the door. And so they came through the door struggling all at the same time and pushing with their arms flaying and I clapped and said, 'First class first class!'"

Again J emphasized the importance of looking for opportunities to allow students to engage in this level of creative thought. In the following recollection, J illustrates how he was able to bring out the best in his students by seizing one of these golden opportunities:

J: "But the thing is, to get there the teacher must show a great enthusiasm for wonderful thoughts beautifully stated, and succinctly stated and correctly stated. And not miss when examples come up. And not missing getting those put in the school newsletter. Not miss sending them to the Sun. I was on a pipeline with the Sun because I did some work for one of the writers and she was stuck one day and this opened some doors for me. So she phoned me and told me that she needed a whole page of poems to go in the paper tomorrow. A whole page of poetry. And so I said, 'Great, we will do it.' And so we called all the kids into the gym and gave them a talk about a million Canadians going to war during this century and thousands of them dying and gave them as much as possible. And they did poems about peace and about war and with pictures and stuff like that. And we sent them straight over by courier to the paper. And well after that we got all sorts of poetry in the paper and she sent some money to the school too. And sometimes with little things like that, doors open. And the kids would keep getting poems in the paper and I would change to another school and I would do some of the same things and those poems would get into the paper and then the kids would say, 'Gee whiz. We are getting poetry in the paper.' And things like that and then they would start feeling stronger and better about trying things like that."

In summary, J's entire career as an educator has been enjoyable and fulfilling and while his students have changed, the sources of meaning and enjoyment in his work have remained the same. J experiences meaningfulness in his work when he is able to inspire his students to be more creative and he does this by involving them in the world of interconnections. Whether it is by teaching student teachers how to connect a simple maple seed to a grand man-made structure, or by connecting a child's simple words to the

words of the great poets, J's meaningful moments occur when he witnesses a student's realization of the excitement and power of their own creativity. An equally powerful source of meaning is when J experiences a student's heartfelt gratitude for his ability to inspire them to "see more in everything."

CHAPTER VII

DATA ANALYSIS

D: Analysis

Step 1: Overview of Childhood Narrative

D's early childhood was set in an idyllic, secure setting in a small northern town. D felt special in the eyes of his parents and sensed that his entire family, and in particular his father, held a special place within the community. D saw his father as a gifted man who was respected and admired by many and who was destined for greatness in business and in life and it was through his father that D felt a connection to other successful people in the community. D felt so secure during his early childhood that he did not entertain the idea that his idyllic existence would change. Things did change, however, and they changed quite abruptly as D left his idyllic northern community to move to the city. In conjunction with this, he began to understand that he and his family were no longer secure. At this stage D became aware of his father's alcoholism and began to experience the effects it was having on his father, his family, and the family business. In addition, D's father began to regularly confide in D about the potential failure of the family business. While D was old enough to understand what this failure could mean for he and his family, he was not old enough to understand his level of responsibility for either causing or curing his father's pain. He assumed at some level that he had some responsibility for both. What followed were the Dark Years where D lived in a constant state of fear and dread that the good life could end at any moment. D did his best to make

it easier for his parents in whatever way he could (e.g. doing well in school, keeping a low profile, etc) but he was faced with the constant realization that his efforts would not be enough to help his father or his family's situation.

Step 2: Overview of Work Narrative

As an executive recruiter, it is D's job to search out the best available talent to meet his client's needs and his ability to do so depends on a number of variables. First, D must have a thorough understanding of his client's needs and, in particular, the business pain that they hope to cure by finding and hiring the ideal candidate. Second, in order to find the ideal candidate, D must remain as connected as possible to the world of successful people and leaders. To that end, D continuously maintains and updates his own personal database of this world through very deliberate efforts. (Reading three hours per day, seeking out stories of success and triumph, mentally noting names and stories of people and contacts and focussing on work for up to fifteen hours per day). These efforts have paid off in that D has a reputation within his organization for being "the most connected" and an expert in his field. D's work has always been and continues to be a great source of fulfillment and meaning in his life. Conditions that must exist for experiences of meaningfulness in work are twofold. First, he must have a personal interest in the organization and an admiration and respect for their interpersonal business values. Second, D must feel some kind of emotional attachment to that organization's struggle to find a suitable candidate. D's personally meaningful experiences at work are attached to these searches and to the moments when a) through his own initiative and "personal database" he comes face to face with a candidate and he realizes "I have found

the right person...this is destiny... this person's going to make the difference," and b) when the search is complete, and the client expresses heartfelt gratitude for D's ability to find a solution to their business pain and acknowledge that "they couldn't have done it without him."

Step 3: Pattern analysis of roles, characters, and plots.

D played a similar role in his childhood and work narratives. In both, D played the role of a confidante to a person in pain. As a child, D's father confided in him about the perilous situation of the family business and how personally difficult this was for him. At the same time, D's mother confided in him about her fears surrounding the father's alcoholism and its potential effects on the security of the family. The following excerpts show examples of D in this role:

- 1) "I connected to him [D's Father] because I was his oldest son and he connected to me when no one else in the family wanted to connect with him. So I kept a link when things were really tough for him."
- 2) "For me especially [being the oldest son] he [D's father] talked to me about adult things and I didn't know what those were, about business and bad business and I didn't have any concept."
- 3) "His alcoholism was getting very bad and I remember my mom taking us all out as a family to say look your dad's got a problem and I don't know what to do."

As an executive recruiter, D understands that it is his clients - the managers and owners of organizations who are requesting the search - who confide in D. According to D, it is often the case that these organizations are in pain and they are looking to D to conduct a search that will find the ideal candidate who can cure that pain:

- 1) "It happens in this business; spill the beans on everything. There are secrets that just come out. Sometimes I don't want to know but I have the ability to draw out."
- 2) "I'd worked on behalf of a woman who was referred to us by a family business association. We met and she told me about their circumstances and I learned a little bit more and then for some reason we just, "*open kimono, full Monty*," let's tell each other about each other and we did. She told me all about her family history, the business, and I told her about my family history and the business of my organization and we established immediately, a level of trust."
- 3) "The fellow that they had recruited on their own a few years ago had lasted a year-and-a-half and then they didn't renew the contract, and they were frustrated. The organization was in pain. The person who was there hadn't worked out."

In addition to patterns in D's role, similarities were also found in D's relationship to other characters in his childhood and work narratives. The most notable similarity is D's relationship to a world of successful and gifted people and his strong desire to maintain his connection to this world. In childhood, D's relationship with his father illustrates his strong desire to both connect with and help those who have a special talent or gift:

- 1) "We always had people over to the house. I felt connected to the whole town because everybody had to travel somewhere so they all had to know my dad and my neighbour was the main doctor and the main pharmacist and the main lawyer and the main car dealer were all on our same street."
- 2) "In the northern community and Vancouver, we are special. My dad had a sense of that even more than my mom. Despite his faults, he had a sense of something larger. My dad had a sense of greatness."
- 3) "I knew he [D's Father] was a saint...[so I thought]

we need to support this guy. We need to help him.
There's something worth helping here because he has a gift."

Similarly at work, D feels connected to the world of gifted and successful people and consistently makes deliberate attempts to maintain this connection. D experiences a great deal of satisfaction and meaning from his connection to this world and he maintains this connection in two ways. First, D belongs to a management team that includes founders and senior members of his executive search organization:

"He [the founder of the organization] is tremendously talented and has an unbelievable touch and he knows what to do for our company and then he surrounded himself with a bunch of just wonderful people. So a range of experience and all these unique people come together and create this concept that's just been so fabulously successful. It's just astounding in what they've accomplished. Being a part of that is very powerful and it's here now. There's not a better feeling in the world and for me that concept is really relevant because I played sports and still do so I know what that can be. There are people here who don't even realize what that's like. But it's just 'flow.' I've just been reading this book on Flow. It's fantastic and it's here."

Secondly, D stays connected to the world of triumphant and gifted people through his efforts to build his personal database of successful leaders.

"I read probably three hours a day so I'm constantly up to speed on the world of people. I start off with the *Sun* and the *Province* in the morning and I read all sections and then I read the *Globe and Mail* and the *Financial Post* and I read the *Wall Street Journal* and sometimes the *New York Times*. I go right to stories of success, of triumph and of leadership."

While D's role and his relationship to others are similar in both narratives, there are significant differences between the two plots. In childhood, once confided in, D could only imaginatively help his father and was left in a constant state of yearning for his

family's "good life" to continue. D did what he could to help his parents' situation by doing well in school and remaining "low maintenance" but he lived in a constant state of fear that his efforts would not be enough to ward off a disaster. D realized there were many things that he just couldn't do to make any significant difference in his family's (and in particular his father's) situation:

D: "His alcoholism was getting very bad and I remember my mom taking us all out as a family to say look; Your dad's got a problem and I don't know what to do; and telling us all that."

I: "Do you remember how you responded?"

D: "Oh Yeah, quite strongly, "He's okay, we can make this work." That's what I was going to do was to make this work you know."

I: "Do you have any sense about how you were going to do that?"

D: "No, No I didn't know how to do it."

In his childhood recollection of his father's extended disappearance from home we also see D in the role of trying to make a difference and yet feeling helpless at the same time:

1) I: "So it sounds like you were not actively trying to get your Dad back."

D: "No, I couldn't do that. There were things I couldn't do but what I could do is make sure that we're not fighting or keeping things quiet so that when they are home and have to talk. I think I was frustrated with my brother and sister especially my sister because she was emotional and needed lots of attention and I was so mad at her for doing that because then they would be upset and I always thought that we were the ones that were causing this a bit."

2) "It was fragile to keep it all together at times. The pressures of, our family is going to dissolve as a unit because of my Dad's drinking. It was just too much to think about. [It was] bad and scary, dark, black, bad...I think it was always there."

The plot of D's work narrative, however, is very different in that D is consistently able to act in ways which make significant differences in the lives of his clients who began their stories with him in a state of pain. Contrary to childhood, in work D possesses superior skills and abilities and demonstrates a natural ability to seek out a solution for those in pain. The epilogue of D's work narrative is not one of yearning and fear but rather one of accomplishment and pride in his ability to help those who were unable to find a solution on their own. And it is precisely these experiences which are at the root of D's experiences of meaning in his work:

1) I: "So what is it that you are able to do that makes that [ability to find best senior talent] work time and time again?"

D: "A couple of things. I am intuitive. I don't know how or why but I'm an empath. I have a highly developed skill in picking quality. I know when I'm sourcing a person about other people. I know which one's are keepers and which ones are throw aways and I read probably three hours a day, so I am constantly up to speed on the world of people."

2) "But [I] solved some really important needs. This company may not have survived if they hadn't got the right person."

3) "To know that the organization themselves weren't able to. Yeah it felt really good. It was hugely gratifying and we did the search and lots of negotiation at the end. At the end of the search they had a big board meeting with thirty leading people in the city around the table. They asked me to go to the meeting. I described the process and then they just clapped and it was great. It was wonderful and they said you know, we couldn't have done the search without you. You've brought us someone who is gonna change the direction here and we think

the world of you. And that was great. I just floated, you know.”

M Analysis

Step 1: Overview of Childhood Narrative

M began his early childhood as the adored one. He was cute, shy, and curious, and everyone, including his parents, claimed M as their favorite. As M entered elementary school, however, a new aspect of his personality began to emerge - that of the "troublemaker." During these years, M began to show his spontaneous, mischievous, and expressive side with ever-increasing frequency and boldness. Unfortunately for M, this newly discovered aspect of his personality was in stark contrast to the rigid, conservative style of his parents and extended family. The result was a profound falling from grace in which M went from the being the object of his family's affection and attention to the object of their anger and disapproval. What followed were the "trouble years" in which M continued to develop and escalate in his role as the trouble maker. As a result, M lived this period of his childhood with widespread disapproval from his family and a constant fear that his father would discover his misdeeds and punish him harshly. Initially M attempted to avoid discovery by carefully concealing information from his father and by choosing his trouble wisely. As time went on, however, M made a psychological break from his father and began to do as he pleased without any regard for his disapproval or punishment. In the final stages of M's childhood, M found himself in a deep state of trouble which threatened to cause serious damage to himself and his family members.

Step 2: Overview of Work Narrative

As Executive Director of an arts organization, M is responsible for leading a group of creative, professional actors and staff to build a viable, non-profit, business venture. M began his career with ACT as an actor at the age of sixteen and was known as the “cute mascot” or “little brother” of the group. The turning point in M’s career came when he successfully made the transition from the “cute little actor” to the “trusted and respected” leader of the organization. The transition was not an easy one for a variety of reasons. When M initially took on the role of Executive Director, ACT was in a state of near bankruptcy and employee morale was at an all time low. In addition, M was an inexperienced business manager and fell into the trap of trying to please everyone while accepting an overwhelming sense of responsibility for the success or failure of the business. Over time, however, M matured and developed as a leader and began to share responsibility for rebuilding the organization with his entire staff. Through his term as Executive Director, M has successfully developed his creative and facilitative leadership skills and has taken the arts organization from a state of near bankruptcy to a viable and thriving business. In addition M has branched out by taking on a position as an instructor for a university executive program in creative leadership. In this role, M teaches executives how to infuse creativity and spontaneity into their work as leaders in their own organizations.

M experiences meaning through his work in a variety of ways. On a day-to-day basis, M feels fulfilment and enjoyment through his work when he is able to act as a catalyst for others’ personal development and ongoing learning, particularly his staff’s. As an instructor of Creative Leadership, J feels a great sense of pride in being recognized for his uniquely creative, spontaneous style by a group of successful senior executives who at one

time intimidated him. On a broader scale, J experiences meaning through the success of his own personal development and evolution as a facilitative and creative leader with the ACT organization. M experiences a sense of fulfilment by playing a leading role in producing tangible evidence of the organization's success. Whether it is a balance sheet that is no longer "in the red" or a new program that is producing larger audiences than ever before, M's sense of meaning comes not from just the success itself, but from the acknowledgement of how his own personal transformation played an integral role in making the organization's transformation a reality.

Step 3: Pattern analysis of roles, characters, and plots.

A number of similarities were found between the role that M played in childhood and in work. In both his early childhood and his early career, M described himself as a cute, "mascot" type character. In this role, M was admired but was not viewed by others as one who was ready or able to make decisions on his own. In childhood, M's attempt to leave the cute role to take on a more independent role was an unsuccessful one. It was met with profound disapproval from his father and other family members. In work however, M's transformation was successful and his development from cute mascot to creative leader of the ACT organization has provided him with a steady stream of approval and admiration. The following excerpts show examples of M's transforming roles in childhood and in work:

Childhood:

- 1) "I remember from four to five where I was really cute and small and they called me MM. It just felt to me at the time that

I was everybody's favourite. I would always be around my mom and dad, and I'd be sitting there and my mom would be running her fingers through my hair and it was the coolest thing and I would fall asleep and then when we got home my dad would carry me to my bed. But then I turned into this big troublemaker.

2) "This one time this kid got sick in class and there was this open area. The teacher leaves and like he's gone and so we start running around and I'm like the ring leader getting everybody to run around and there is this big pile of puke so I start trying to challenge everyone to jump over it. So I'm jumping over this puke like back and forth and all I remember is this arm just grabbing me and pulling me and it was my teacher who came back and he was like...he knew my parents. And I was so freaked out because he was Japanese."

3) D: "This one time I got this bike. We lived on 15th Street, and I was allowed to drive my bike on the street but I wasn't allowed to go past 10th Street. So this one time I thought no one is going to know. So I'm riding my bike and as I'm going across I hear a honk and it's my Aunt; my dad's sister and I'm like 'oh no, I've been caught.' And it was eating me up inside. And a week later my Aunt came over and so I leave the dinner table... and I'm in the living room and I'm obsessed about getting in shit about this. And then I hear my Aunt say I saw M riding his bike on 10th Street. So I hear my dad saying 'WHAT? M. GET IN HERE.' And he says is it true that you were riding your bike on the other side of 10th Street? (Oh that's another thing, my dad used to spank me in front of people)"

I: "Did he this time?"

M: "No, but he caught me in front of everybody and I ended up getting grounded for months. So my dad totally freaked out and got ballistic."

Work

1) "I think because when I was acting with ACT I was, because I started so young, I was kind of like the cute little kind of mascot. Like the little brother and then all of a sudden being put in this position where people have to trust that I am leading the organization responsibly so it was a huge transition."

2) M: "I haven't always been like that here as a leader because I realized that I was creatively manipulative. I thought I was going through a process of collaboration and co-operation, for example, even in a brainstorming session with staff I would know what I would want them to achieve. So I would be like, 'Okay this is the situation, let's brainstorm some ideas. What's a plan we can come up with?,' but I would, you know, play the whole thing by eventually driving it to what I knew it was going to be in the first place. All the time I thought everybody that worked here was an extension of me. Like they might as well have been my assistants because it was about I think my mentality was...I am ACT and they each represent a finger on my hand."

I: "And that has very much shifted now?"

M: "In a huge way. You know they each have a part in leading this organization and I am the common hub. I try not to step between people."

3.) M: "I was away teaching a course, and they had a staff meeting and I asked the facilitator to have people in confidence talk about the things that make them unhappy here at ACT and there were no complaints. Everyone was pretty happy and there is nothing that they would change right now, which was pretty amazing."

Similarities were also found between childhood and work with regards to M and his relationship to those in roles of authority. In childhood, M was ruled by his father, a very rigid and non-emotional authority figure. M was very frightened by his father and any other authority figure that ruled with that same conservative style. In childhood, M's

spontaneous and expressive nature was at the root of the disapproval he received from the authority figures in his life:

- 1) [After M caused trouble in his classroom]..."All I remember is this arm just grabbing me and pulling me and it was my teacher who came back and he was like, he knew my parents. And I was so freaked out because he was Japanese."
- 2) "I spent a lot of time with my cousins and I would get into trouble quite a bit. Like someone would get hurt and [my cousins would say] 'I'm going to go tell your dad' and that would like just freak me out. I would do anything to stop them. And then I would hear my dad say 'WHAT?' 'M, GET UP HERE.'"
- 3) "Almost everything I did wasn't good enough for my parents compared to my sister because she did almost everything they wanted her to do or her interests always suited their interests. And I was always known as the black sheep, even within my twenty-five cousins. I was known as the crazy one, the black sheep, troublemaker. Always breaking everyone else's toys, always getting everybody else in trouble."

As Executive Director, M himself is in the position of authority. M admits that in the early stages of his career he treated subordinates as extensions of himself; "they might as well have been my assistants because...I think my mentality was...I am ACT and they each represent a finger on my hand." As time went on, however, M's leadership style evolved to one which was antithetical to that of his father's. M's present leadership style is guided by a philosophy of openness and fairness and it is this kind of creative and facilitative leadership that has been at the root of many meaningful experiences in his work. The following excerpts show examples of M's style of facilitative leadership at work:

- 1) I: "What do you think your staff would say about you as a leader?"

M: "Not on a power trip, honest, good at dealing with people on the same level. I never step over them and I'm very fair."

2) "But it [a staff member's] problem with managing her anger constantly came up in the performance evaluations and it had a huge effect on the company. And then the big turning point was me and how I changed my leadership style. How I started sharing what I was going through with people and how at times I felt scared and at times this was a challenge for me - showing more of the human side of myself."

Through his work as an instructor in creative leadership, M also finds himself in a relationship with those in positions of authority. The students of his class are all senior executives and managers from a variety of organizations and typically, M was very intimidated by this group of people:

1) "I do have a problem dealing with authority like older people. I start tripping over words. Start becoming very aware of what I'm doing. I feel like I have to kind of meet their expectations. It happens a lot with titles. I can meet someone on the street and have a conversation with them but if I find out, oh my god, they are the president of IBM I would be just so different."

2) "I didn't realize that I was a real creative leader until that course I did last year when I was with these executives and vice presidents from all these places. The people that freak me out. I was so scared to go there."

In his work, however, M's experience with these people who "freak him out" is very different from his experiences in childhood. In childhood the authority figures continuously expressed their disapproval of M and his expressive, spontaneous nature. In his work, however, M receives approval and even admiration for that very same aspect of his personal style and it is this approval and admiration that is at the root of many of M's meaningful work experiences. Instead of being in a position to feel ashamed of his

creative, expressive self, M now openly and proudly guides others to become more like himself. These types of experiences are profound sources of meaning for M in his work.

1) "I didn't realize that I was a real creative leader until that course I did last year I was with these executives and VPs from all these places - the people that freak me out. I was so scared to go there and um it wasn't till the end when we were saying good bye. And almost everyone came up to me and said, 'I'm so glad you were here because as a participant you added so much to the program as a whole, the way you approach and do things.' And of course you don't think you do things differently or you don't think you look at something from a different perspective because it is you. But over 60-70% of the people came up and said that to me."

2) "It [being an instructor in the creative leadership course] feels like the next natural progression for me. Taking everything I know and passing it on. It wasn't until the last one that I did where I really felt confident enough to start telling stories. I used to be worried about every little thing I said. And being there with Peter [the professor who teaches the course] who is like the Guru and the last time when I was telling some stories. You talk about a high! It was very exciting."

J: Analysis

Step 1: Overview of childhood narrative

J's childhood was a very difficult one. At the age of four (an age too young to comprehend what was happening to him) J was abandoned by his mother and left in the care of those who were not concerned for his welfare. Placed in a number of different foster homes, J found himself at the receiving end of domination, rejection, unfairness, and cruelty. At best he was treated like a passing visitor and at worst he was treated coldly and harshly with little care or compassion for either his emotional or physical well-being. As a result, J felt a great deal of shame over his unkempt appearance and a profound isolation as he realized there was no one person in the world to care for him. J spent the early part of his childhood imaginatively yearning that this would somehow change, but at the age of eleven J began to accept the truth: "If he fell backwards, he would hit the ground." There was no one there to catch him, and he alone was responsible for the outcomes in his life. From that point forward, J began to take more and more responsibility for creating his own solutions to the seemingly insurmountable obstacles of injustice and cruelty, and in doing so he inspired his friends to do the same. While feelings of shame and isolation remained ever present J was able to use his unique gifts of ingenuity and creativity to obtain temporary relief from the oppression and cruelty that surrounded him. Known by his friends as "the one who could make things happen," J thrived in many aspects of his childhood including academics, sports, and the arts. Like the Aesop's fable suggests, J realized that it was easier to break one stick than it was to

break a bundle, and by creating a bundle of interests and accomplishments, he too would prove difficult to break.

Step 2: Overview of work narrative

For over thirty years, J has worked as an educator. In his early career he was a teacher of elementary and secondary school children, and currently he supervises and teaches student teachers who are completing their university education degrees. J's philosophy of teaching has remained consistent throughout his career. It is rooted in the idea of creativity and opening up the minds of his students so they are able to "see more in everything." To J, this means seeing many more possibilities than one had ever before imagined and he does this by teaching his students how to interconnect one simple idea to greater and more complex ideas. Throughout his career, J has creatively guided and inspired his students to realize talents within themselves that go well beyond what they thought possible.

J's entire career as an educator has been enjoyable and fulfilling, and while his students have changed, the sources of meaning in his work have remained the same. J experiences meaningfulness in his work when he is able to influence and inspire his students to be more creative. Whether it is by teaching student teachers how to connect the idea of a simple maple seed to a grand man-made structure, or by connecting a child's simple words to the words of the great poets, J's meaningful moments occur when he feels instrumental in empowering a student to realize the excitement and power of their own creativity. An equally powerful source of meaning is when J receives heartfelt

gratitude from his students for his ability to inspire them to see previously unseen possibilities.

Step 3: Pattern analysis of roles, characters, and plots.

A pattern of similarities was found between the roles played by J in his childhood and work narratives. In his early childhood, J was in the role of the abandoned, dominated, and rejected child. Thrust into a world of cruelty and injustice, J struggled to survive while the majority of his teachers and foster parents threatened to kill his spirit. In some cases it was through their indifference and in other cases they made deliberate attempts to discourage him and erode his freedom. In J's later childhood, however, his role was altered somewhat. Although still very much in the role of an oppressed, abandoned child, J began to take on the role of the creative inspirer as he assumed more and more responsibility for producing the desired outcomes in his life. Through the use of creativity and ingenuity in the face of hardship, J began to recapture some of his lost freedom and in many cases he inspired his friends to do the same:

1) "It was the shame of being poor and being scruffy and all that and we had to find a way to gain identity to be able to find a way to be as good as these other kids and the teachers sometimes inadvertently helped...[for example] this one guy who was driven to school in a nice Paccard, which was an unbelievable car in those days, and dropped off. He looked so puffy and petulant about something all the time and he looked so dressed to the nines compared to us. And one day the teacher said, 'one day this fellow Ian is going to go to University. He is the type of person because he does so well with his marks and is so academically bright and all that.' And so then OK, I'll fix that...and so Ted and I spent a lot of time, and Don would help too, and we would go up in the fort...and we worked out what was going to be on the exam. The whole point of the exercise was that this guy, Ian, was going to be

fourth. He's not going to be first because the teacher was talking about how great, how bright he was and so he came in fourth. I was third, Ted was first, Don second."

2) "And I remember not crying or not doing anything; I just remember as though it is happening now, that I stood in the kitchen and looked at this great big guy [his foster father] and I said to myself, 'You just don't treat people like that, you don't do that!' And so I said, 'there's no money?' and he said, 'no money, not till next time.' And so I left and went up the alley I think I was crying. I sort of made it up the alley and I trotted along, a good mile, a long way; trotted to the movie theatre and there was Ted outside and I told him what happened and so together we worked out a solution. He went into the movie and sat near the front and the exit wasn't a door. The exit in those days were curtains that didn't quite make it to the floor; six or seven inches off the floor...and so he went in the front and slipped into a seat and crawled along the floor under the curtain and he let me in...and so we both crawled back underneath the curtain and along the aisle and the seats and came up some aisle further. And so that was one of the high water marks in my life in that foster home period. I realized it is really up to me...what's going on in my life, is up to this guy and so I am going to go to see the movie and I am going to get in, and its going to be through the back door or through the front door but I am going to see that movie...come hell or high water."

3) "I was in this little place [an Army Cadet camp] and they gave us this test. They took you out in trucks. The base is up here in Vernon and the lake is here and they took us out in the trucks way out that way and dropped us off with our red arm patches, blue, green, orange, and yellow. And then the military guys were ditched in various places...and they were in the trucks as well...and on the way back they would go back and hide in places with their little field glasses and their big clappers and so they would go clap...got red got red...and so then all the red would have to get up and go and so then you would have to walk back and then they would treat you like little prisoners. And so then I thought you would have to come all the way around the lake to get back there...and so you had to use the back streets and find some way to get back. And so I looked at this whole thing and said this is crazy. I mean we are all going down the same avenue. So I said we will just sit here for a while guys and see where the noises were coming from.

And so we were sitting here waiting at the end of this big cul-de-sac and so I thought, let's go down this street and instead of going straight ahead to the lake. We went away down another street. Further away from the base than ever. We came down to the shore. There were some nice little houses there, and one of them had a boat. And so we took the boat; stole the boat in effect. Cause you had to get back anyway you wanted. We took the boat across the lake and tied it up and we went up the back and we didn't even know if there were rattlesnakes on that slope. We didn't know about that. We just knew; I just knew we had to get back without getting caught. And we got back and we got in and had our lunch and before the army guys were back by truck. Cause they were picking people up, you know, and bringing the prisoners in, and they were wondering where purple was. That little group got back and we would not tell them how we got back. It's our secret. Cause if we went into telling you how we got back and you take us out again, you are going to cut that off. You don't want to tell the enemy."

In his work as an educator, J is also in the role of the creative inspirer. As an educator, J creatively stimulates and inspires his students to see previously unseen possibilities. Through the years, J has developed a philosophy of teaching in which he makes very deliberate efforts to provide a creative and inspirational environment where his students can thrive and where examples of their best work have the greatest potential to occur:

1) "And I always build in at the end of each section a party or celebration; a little celebration. You've got to do that with your kids in the school. When they have finished their unit and they have worked hard, celebrate that fact! I might connect it with Thanksgiving or Christmas or something like that if it happens to fit with the school to get them to think in those terms in the school years that they are coming to or like Valentines Day or Sports Day or some function. So I try to get them to work hard and yet to I try to get them to think of a celebration at the end."

2) "Every adult should try to help every kid or allow every kid to solve problems. Not to get in the way of solving the problems. Even to tying his shoelaces. If you don't have to dash out the door, let the child figure out the way. Safe problem solving is an opportunity, so let them do that and so I use that and I use that kind of philosophy in the back of my mind with the student teachers. And encourage them to find their own different ways; their own special ways. Because if you create something, maybe you create a child, you have a powerful emotional attachment to the child and you have a passion for the child and with the child. And so you create something in your teaching and you create ideas and you create opportunities and that is one of the things you can create. Maybe it's not a thing that you can label but I will create an environment where my student teachers can create things."

A pattern of differences was found between the plots of J's childhood and work narratives. In J's childhood narrative, he used his gift of creativity and ingenuity to survive hardship and to inspire his friends to do the same. Given the reality of life within his foster homes, however, J experienced only temporary relief from an overwhelming sense of shame and rejection. For the time being his fate was sealed in a world where others were either ignoring him completely or tearing him down.

As an educator, however, others no longer limit the effects of J's creative spirit. Through his unique philosophies of creativity and interconnectedness, J provides a learning environment for his students, one that is antithetical to the world in which he was forced to live in as a child. Just as he had done for himself and his friends as a child, in his work as an educator J uses his gift of creativity to foster freedom and talent in his students. J's meaningful work experiences come at those moments when he feels instrumental in enabling a student to realize the excitement and power of their own

creativity and to produce examples of their best work that they didn't know were possible.

The following excerpts show examples of this:

1) "Like this fellow in this school for instance. The other day I went into the classroom and he had been encouraged to create his own style; his own way. And so the children had written about Halloween and he had them all sitting on the floor in a circle and the lights out and the curtains drawn and they were reading their poems in pairs with one kid holding the flashlight. And the flashlight was moving around the room and they were reading in the dark. Absolutely silent and wonderfully sort of free and happy and appropriate and all of that. And so that is the kind of thing and that same thing would work fine with everybody sitting in their desks with the lights on but there was a different element of passion and power that comes to doing something with a little more creativity."

2) "And so this little girl was sitting there writing about this water gushing out. And so her lovely little word for it was, 'The rain drop struggled out of the pipe.' And I liked that and so I asked her, 'Can you show me how they struggled?' So she said, 'They were struggling like this.' [moving tightly back and forth] And then I asked, 'If they were coming in that door, could you show me how they would struggle?' And she said, 'Well you can't struggle through that door very well.' And so I said, 'How could you show me how to struggle through that door if you were a rain drop?' And she went out and got five or six other kids to come and show me how they would, if they were raindrops, how they would struggle through the door. And so they came through the door struggling all at the same time and pushing with their arms flaying and I clapped and said, 'First class first class!'"

3) "This was in grade seven when this girl [Barbara] was sitting in the middle of a field writing a poem. And I thought that's curious. Cause it was a gravel field and it cannot get much less interesting than that. And Barbara was sitting there and I was talking to these kids and helping them with their poetry and taking rubbings of the leaves and things and Barbara was starting to leaning over and over and soon she was horizontal on the ground. And she should have been writing

poetry. And I walked up behind her and I watched her write these words. She said, 'In the rippled water I saw a whole mountain tremble.' And what she was doing while she was lying over was looking into a puddle that was as big as a sink until she saw the reflection of the mountain and she said:

"In the rippled water

I saw

A whole mountain

Tremble"

[Isn't that amazing]

Analysis of Narrative Patterns

In all three cases there is a pattern of similarity between the participant's role in childhood and in work. In D's case, for example, he plays the role of the confidante to those in pain in both childhood and work. In the case of M we see similarities in his role as the expressive, creative leader, and in the case of J we see the ingenious, creative inspirer. What differs in their childhood and work roles, however, is how equipped they feel to fulfill the role in which they have been cast. In childhood all three participants realize that despite their efforts, they will not be successful at reversing their fate, and their overriding stress in childhood is rooted in this dilemma. D realizes that he lacks the necessary skill and experience to help his father's business from failing and the potential dissolution of the family. In the case of M, his father's disapproval of his expressive, creative nature is too overwhelming for him to lead his life in a positive direction and J's dependence on those who are tearing him down for his physical survival limits his abilities to make any long-lasting changes in his life despite his ingenious creative attempts. In work, however, the opposite is true. In each case the participants show an unshakeable confidence in their ability to fulfill their role. D admits to being one of the best in his field because of his ability to cure the business pain of his clients who have chosen to confide in him. M's reference to his ability to transform the organization through his expressive, creative style of leadership reveals his confidence in his ability to fulfill his role. J's stories of encouraging the best in his student's talents and creating a learning environment absent of oppression and rejection illustrate his confidence in his ability to fulfill the role as an ingenious, creative inspirer.

In all three cases there is also a pattern of differences between the plots of the participant's childhood and work narratives. In childhood, participants yearn for an end to their suffering but their actions are ineffective in dramatically effecting a reversal of their situation. D tries to be there for his father by listening and being attentive. We also see his determination to remain low maintenance for his parents and his attempts to make his siblings do the same. But none of these actions are successful at warding off the inescapable "black, bad, scary" fear that his good life could end at any minute. M remembers his early attempts to shield his father from discovering the trouble caused through his expressive, spontaneous nature. In later childhood, M makes attempts to more actively please his father through trying harder at school, but this too is unsuccessful at avoiding his father's disapproval. Eventually we see M reach a point where he gives up all together and begins to spiral in an ever-deepening cycle of trouble and alienation from his family. J recognizes the limits of his efforts to escape the shame, isolation, and poverty of his childhood. His ingenuity and creative abilities bring some temporary relief from his hardship and suffering, but overall J's fate is sealed as long as he is dependent on his foster parents for his physical survival.

Contrary to their childhood plots, in work, all three participants are engaged in activities which are instrumental at producing desired outcomes for themselves as well as for others. More importantly, the activities which participants cited as "most meaningful" are both directly and symbolically related to resolving the central stress from their childhood. D's most meaningful work experiences are those in which he feels personally responsible for resolving the business pain for clients to which he has an emotional connection and at the moments where his clients expressly acknowledge that they

“couldn’t have done it without him.” M ascertains his sense of meaning when he is receives admiration for his style of creative leadership, particularly from those who he views as authority figures. J experiences meaningfulness when he knows he has creatively inspired a student, young or old, to experience the excitement and power of their own creativity and when he knows he has provided an environment in which his students feel proud of their accomplishments.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION

This study investigates the childhood and work experiences of three participants who identified their work as personally meaningful. The investigation was completed through in depth interviews which focused on their experiences of growing up and their experiences of work. The interviews were analyzed by comparing the plots of work and childhood narratives and the roles of the characters within those plots. Overall, participants were found to play similar roles in their childhood and work narratives. In childhood, however, participants did not feel equipped to fulfill the role in which they were cast. As a result, participants were repeatedly cast in dramas in which the overriding stress of their childhood was played out. As a result of their contrasting abilities to fulfill their childhood and work roles, a pattern of differences was found in the plots of the two narratives. In childhood, participants yearned for change but their actions were ineffective at reversing their fate. In work, however, participants were engaged in activities which were instrumental at producing desired outcomes, and those activities which were cited as “meaningful” were, in a variety of ways, related to resolving the central stress from their childhood. In all three cases, participants experienced meaning when they were doing for others what most needed to be done in their own childhood to effectively resolve the predominant sources of pain in their lives.

Limitations

The scope of the research question limits the focus of this study to one possible source of meaningfulness in people's work. It does not for example, inquire into the unique skills, talents, or achievement orientations of an individual which could also serve as contributing factors to such experiences. Conversely, the purpose of this study is firmly rooted in a body of previous research which has investigated the concrete nature of those childhood events and how they have been translated into future experiences of meaningfulness. In effect, this study seeks out an in-depth understanding on one underlying factor instead of a general understanding of many.

While an in-depth understanding of the subject calls for a case-study design, there are also some limitations inherent in this kind of methodology. Perhaps the greatest limitation concerns the small number of cases (three). This small sample size limits extent to which we can make general claims based on these results, since the participants cannot be said to be representative of all individuals who experience meaningfulness in their work. As Yin (1994) observes, however, case studies rely on analytical generalizations where the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory. In this study, the purpose is not to make general claims about an entire population but rather to determine whether the cases studied replicate the patterns and themes found by other researchers, thereby strengthening the validity of their proposed theories.

A proposed method to further strengthen the internal validity of case studies is to collect data from multiple sources. Due to the nature of narrative inquiry, data for the study were obtained solely from the participants through the single method of in-depth

interviewing. To lessen the impact of this restriction, I played a collaborative role and checked informally with participants for accuracy during the interview process. Additionally each participant reviewed my synthesis of all interviews for accuracy of representation, and any requested revisions were made. A further limitation stems from the fact that the analysis and interpretation of the results is limited solely to my perception. As a result, a number of steps were taken to ensure that the observations remained accurate and unbiased. Whenever possible, verbatim excerpts from the original interview were included to illustrate the participant's meaning of events. In addition, in exploring the nature of the relationship between childhood and work narratives, I used rich descriptions with original examples from the transcribed interview in order to open up the analysis more fully to the review of others.

Flexible and adaptive interviewing techniques employed in this study limit reliability, as it becomes difficult to achieve an exact duplication in data collection procedures between cases. To offset some of the potential threats, I followed a semi-structured interview which took each participant through a similar framework of questions and a common set of topical discussions. In addition, tape-recorded verbatim accounts of all interviews allowed for a comparison of interviewing techniques among participants.

Although this research study does not propose to be representative of a larger sample, some limitations result in the fact that all participants were male. A consideration for future research on this topic should include a focus on female participants who are engaged in meaningful work.

Theoretical Implications

Each of the researchers reviewed in this study have, in a variety of ways, examined the relationship between childhood experiences and adult work, and have concluded that a general pattern exists. Researchers such as Cochran, Csikszentmihalyi, McAdams, Ochberg, Sartre, and Wong agree that the seeds for an adult's experience of meaningful work are planted in childhood and are rooted in the resolution of a significant problem of existence. This study confirms and supports the findings of these previous researchers by revealing a clear relationship between one's meaningful work experiences and the process of resolving existential stresses experienced in childhood.

Although previous researchers on the topic agree on the existence of a relationship between childhood stress and meaningful work, they differ in the extent to which they have specified the variations of that relationship. If this type of counselling approach is to benefit those who find themselves locked into patterns of meaningless work, it is critical to gain a better understanding of the different ways in which people have transformed childhood stress into experiences of meaningful work. Narrative accounts from this study reveal a number of variations in the patterns of these transformation such as a) the participant's transformed sense of agency, b) the role of childhood family dramas in the participant's transformation, c) the participant's target of transformation, and d) the role of significant activities.

Cochran and Laub's (1994) book A Sense of Agency studies the evolution of people who have transformed themselves from patients to agents and explores the process of that transformation in detail. Through a narrative analysis of case studies, the authors

describe the process by which an individual progressively deconstructs an old plot of living and constructs a new plot of living, one in which they live out a meaningful and fulfilling career. Participants from this study reveal a similar pattern of transformation to those from Cochran and Laub's work. In childhood, each participant was cast in the role of patient, as they felt helpless in relation to their respective existential stresses. In work however, the successful transformation from patient to agent is at the root of their experiences of meaningful work as all participants actively live out a solution to their childhood stress through their work. The relationship between the childhood and work roles played by participants in this study suggests that the study of agency is very much applicable to further understanding the relationship between childhood stress and meaningful work.

Another promising observation from this study is the prominence of dramas from one's family of origin and the role these dramas played in the participant's future experiences of meaning at work. In the case of D, for example, it was the threat of losing the family unit brought on by the father's alcoholism and his yearning to be able to help the situation that was central in his childhood narrative. In the case of M, it was the contrast of the rigid, authoritative parents and the expressive, spontaneous natured child and his resulting feelings of alienation from his family that was central in his childhood narrative. In both of these cases, participants experienced meaning in work when they were able to re-stage these dramas at work and successfully reverse the stressful family dramas from their youth. For example, D experiences meaning when he is able to help those who confide their business pain in him, while M experiences meaning when he receives approval for his creative expressive style from authority figures who once

intimidated him. In Cochran and MacGregor's (1988) study Work as Enactment of Family Drama, Cochran and MacGregor found evidence of a variety of ways in which an individual's familial past created opportunities for experiences of meaning in work. Given the prominence of family dramas revealed in the narrative accounts from this study, the examination of dramas from an individual's family should be considered a serious topic of investigation in analyzing the nature of the relationship between childhood stress and meaningful work.

Another pattern revealed in this study was the way in which participants transformed their target for resolving childhood stresses. As Csikszentmihalyi (1979) points out, in seeking to solve a childhood stress in adulthood, one is faced with the dilemma that the time for solving has passed. Csikszentmihalyi suggests that in the process of growing up, an individual will generalize their childhood stress beyond its original source and will target others as a source of resolution. D's inability to cure his father's pain is solved in adulthood when he is instrumental in solving his client's pain. M's inability to claim his father's approval is solved in adulthood when he is successful at gaining approval from corporate executives. Previous researchers have not elaborated on this phenomenon however, this study suggests that it also plays a significant role in the relationship between childhood stress and experiences of meaningful work.

Another finding from this study is the role that "significant activities" play in the transformation of childhood stress into meaningful work. J's creative childhood capers and his tree fort fantasies were two activities in which he was successful in practicing a way out of his harsh existence. Also, M's high school involvement in improvisational theatre and music was instrumental in leading him to a meaningful career. In Wong's

study of the evolution of meaning across a life span, he describes the importance of these significant activities in one's development of a life mission. This study lends further support to Wong's findings and the importance of those who are creating a meaningful work to be engaged in activities which allow them to be engaged significantly meaningful enactments.

In summary, while previous researchers have clearly illustrated a pattern of relatedness between childhood stress and meaning in work, their conclusions do not fully explain the nature of this relationship. This study suggests that there is a significant amount of complexity and variation in this relationship, and topics such as personal agency, family dramas, targets of resolution, and significant activities should be more thoroughly explored in future research.

Practical Implications

This study has several practical implications. First, it supports Savickas and other career counselling theorists who call for career counsellors to work within the narrative paradigm by using interventions which address the individual's life story (e.g. autobiographies and life history interviewing). This study reveals that in addition to a client's interests, abilities, and values, counsellors need to examine the plots that have been lived in childhood and are being lived in work as well as the client's roles within those plots. This type of examination promises to provide career counsellors with a great deal of insight into their client's subjective experiences of meaning in relation to their work. To that end there is a need to ensure that career counsellors receive adequate training on these approaches in addition to the more traditional training they receive in the objective assessment of a client's interests, abilities, and values.

A further implication of this study is the need for counsellors to engage clients in discussions of “meaning” as they work with clients who are seeking fulfillment and enjoyment from their careers. Many counsellors and clients engaged in the career counselling process focus solely on discussions of how one’s personality, interests, and abilities fit into a variety of specific occupations. This study reveals that the dramatic role played by an individual at work may be more instrumental in producing experiences of meaning than the occupational title itself. For example, one could easily imagine a variety of occupations in which J could have played the role of a creative inspirer beyond that of an educator (e.g. business leader, counsellor etc).

Another implication of this study is the need for career counsellors to assess a client’s sense of agency both present and past and to understand the variety of ways in which that transformation can take place. Career counsellors must additionally understand their clients in relation to their families of origin and explore the dramatic roles of parents and siblings in the lives of their clients. Implicit in this is also the need for counsellors to educate clients on the role of agency and familial history and how it can contribute positively to the process of creating meaning in work.

A final implication of this study involves the accessibility of meaningful work. Many clients hold strong beliefs that only those who are gifted in a particular skill have access to meaningful work. They believe that the vast majority must settle for work which is at best satisfying and viewed as a means to ends which are unrelated to the work itself (e.g. acquisition of material goods, security etc.). The findings from this study suggest that meaningful work is accessible to the “ordinary” and the first step towards acquiring such work may not be through the overwhelming task of developing excellence

at a particular skill but through an honest and extensive examination of the unresolved longings and yearnings from their youth.

Research Implications

The majority of research on this topic, including this study, has targeted primarily male participants, thus limiting the generalizability of these results to women. Future research on this topic should focus on women whose work is meaningful and explore the degree to which their patterns assimilate or deviate from the patterns outlined in this and other studies on the topic.

Given the limited amount of research which focuses specifically on the nature of the relationship between childhood stress and meaning in work, case studies such as this should be replicated. To strengthen the reliability of theories on this topic, new cases should include participants from a variety of age groups and ethnic groups. In addition, future studies may benefit by implementing the process of *perspective triangulation* in analyzing and interpreting participant's interview transcripts. Implementing multiple, independent interpretations will allow future researchers to strengthen the validity of their findings.

Another approach to researching the question of a relationship between childhood stress and meaning in work should include participants who do not enjoy their work or more specifically, who find their work to be meaningless. In order to further test the practical applicability of the counselling approach suggested in this study, future studies should investigate the degree to which those who regard their work as meaningless are not engaged in roles at work which directly or symbolically resolve stresses and longings from their childhood. In addition, each of the participants in this study have very difficult

childhoods and experienced significant degrees of emotional and psychic pain. Future research on this topic should also include participants whose childhoods were happy and content.

Another possibility for future research on this topic would be to perform field studies of career counselling approaches that fall within the narrative paradigm. By investigating the counselling outcomes for clients who are engaged in counselling interventions such as life history interviews and autobiographies, the practical applicability of these approaches can be more thoroughly evaluated. In addition, the results of such field studies should be analyzed for the degree to which they support or deviate from the findings of previous research on this topic.

Personal Reflections

The idea of meaningful work and the people who have it has always been a source of fascination to me, and my conversations with the participants from this study have only strengthened that fascination. Prior to the interviews, I did not know what kind of stories to expect from the participants, but I simply hoped I could encourage them to tell their stories as openly and descriptively as possible. I was not disappointed, since each one of them freely shared their most fulfilling and most tragic memories in rich detail.

One fear which I held prior to the interviews is that the participants would be consciously trying to link their childhood and work experiences or that they would pre-analyze their reflections. I was pleased that this was not the case. Cross-references between their work and childhood stories were never made, and it was obvious that participants were sharing experiences rather than opinions about experiences. As a result,

I was able to engage in a very direct analysis of the transcripts without distracting commentary.

I was very surprised by the degree of pain that many of my participants suffered in their childhood, and was both encouraged and moved by the transformations that each of them made. I have recently read Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt which tells the story of a young boy's tragic and poverty stricken childhood in pre-war Ireland. In the opening line, McCourt says, "A happy childhood is hardly worth your bother." As I think about the idea of childhood stress and its relation to future meaning, I am left to ponder this question. Perhaps it is those childhoods in which there is stress significant enough to channel one's attention that create the greatest opportunities for future transformations of meaning. Although not answered in this study, I am intrigued by this question and whether the degree of childhood stress endured by each of the participants in this study was in itself partly responsible for their successful transformations.

Another observation from this study which surprised me was the degree to which the relationship between work and childhood was found in a participant who was close to retirement age. Prior to interviewing this participant I wondered whether the relationship might be less direct due simply to the number of years that had passed since he endured his childhood stress. To the contrary, however, this was not the case. Although one participant cannot be said to be representative of an older population, J's childhood stress is as much a source of meaning in his work now as it was twenty years ago.

As I contemplate using this approach with clients who regard themselves as trapped in meaningless and unfulfilling careers, I am encouraged by the vast array of possible "ways out" that might be stored in their childhood recollections. In the case of J,

for example, his seemingly passive act of thinking and fantasizing about nature while laying in his tree fort was actually a key component in his transformation to become a creative and inspirational educator. M's childish act of organizing his grade one classmates to jump over a pile of puke holds rich information about what is meaningful to M that would be invaluable in career counselling.

I am very encouraged by what I have learned in the process of this study. Most importantly, I have learned that people who regard their work as meaningful are not a different species or a even a superior breed of human being. In fact they are quite ordinary people who have done a very remarkable thing. They have transformed the stress of childhood into a meaningful adult enactment, and the result is a career which is a profound source of fulfillment and enjoyment in their lives.

REFERENCES

- Charne, S. (1984). *Meaning and myth in the study of lives*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Cochran, L., & Laub, J. (1994). *Becoming an agent*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Cochran, L. (1990). *The sense of vocation: A study of life and career development*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Cochran, L., & MacGregor, A. (1988). Work as enactment of family drama. *Career Development Quarterly*, 37 (2) 138-148.
- Corey, G. (1991). *Theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy*. California: Brooks/Cole.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Beattie, O. (1979). Life themes: A theoretical and empirical exploration of their origins and affects. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 19 45-63.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Erikson, E. (1969). *Gandhi's truth*. New York: Norton.
- Frankl, V.E. (1992). *Man's search for meaning: an introduction to logotherapy*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Getzels, J.W., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1979). *The creative vision*. New York: Wiley.
- Koehn, C.V. (1986). Meaninglessness, death and responsibility: Existential themes in career counselling. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 20 (3), 177-185.

- Klinger, E. (1977). *Meaning and void*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marshall C., & Rossman, G. (1995). *Designing qualitative research, 2nd ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- May, R., & Yalom, I. (1989). Existential psychotherapy. In R. Corsini & D. Wedding (Ed.), *Current psychotherapies*. (pp. 363-402). Illinois: F.E. Peacock Publishers.
- McMillan, J.H., & Schumacher, S. (1993). *Research in education, 3rd ed.* New York: Harper Collins.
- Mishler, E. (1986). *Research interviewing: context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ochberg, R. (1987). *Middle aged sons and the meaning of work*. Michigan: UMI Research Press.
- Osborne, J. (1990). Some basic existential-phenomenological research methodology for counsellors. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 24*, 79-91.
- Savickas, M.L. (1993). Career counselling in the postmodern era. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy, 7* (3), 205-215.
- Sartre, J. (1950). *Baudelaire*. Translated by Martin Turnell. New York: New Directions.
- Sartre, J. (1968). *Search for a method*. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Vintage Books.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience*. London, ON: State University of New York Press.
- Wong, W. (1994). *Pattern of Life Mission Development*. Unpublished masters thesis, University of British Columbia.
- Yin, R.K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX B

Screening Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the kind of work you do?
2. What role does your work play in your life relative to the other parts of your life?
3. How enjoyable do you find your work?
4. What do you find most enjoyable about your work?
5. How committed do you feel towards your work?
6. How fulfilling is your work? Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Consent:

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy.

I CONSENT to participate in this study and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this form for my own records.

Subject Signature

Date

Signature of a Witness

Date

Page 2 of 2

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions: Work

1. Can you tell me about the type of work you are doing now?
2. How long have you been doing this kind of work?
3. How did you get into this line of work? / How did you end up here?
4. What do you like about your work?
5. What makes your work feel special or meaningful?
6. When did your work begin to feel special or personally meaningful?
7. Can you give me some specific examples/memorable moments of when work feels very fulfilling and meaningful?
8. What kinds of experiences detract from your sense of fulfilment and meaning at work?
9. When you look at your future at work, what will have to stay the same and what will have to change in order for you work to remain meaningful?

Interview Questions: Childhood

1. Who was in your family while you were growing up?
2. What was each of the members of your family like?
3. What was your relationship like with your mom, dad, brother, sister etc?
4. What were you like as a child?
5. How were you known by your parents and siblings when growing up? (i.e. what was your reputation within the family as a child?)
6. Let's say we were going to write your autobiography and we were starting with your childhood years. I want you to take some time to think about how you might separate your childhood years (from earliest memory to mid teens) into sections like chapters in a book. If you were able to do that, how would you do that? We would want the chapter titles to be psychologically meaningful and to really sum up the essence of that period of your life. What might be the title of the first chapter?
7. Let's start with Chapter 1. What kinds of events & experiences would you include in that chapter? Can you tell me some stories about the kinds of experiences you had within that chapter? What were you doing? How were you feeling?
8. Same for Chapter 2, 3 etc.

Back-up Questions:

1. Did you experience any enduring difficulties while growing up? If yes, can you tell me about the most significant one(s)?
2. Can you tell me about someone you admired while growing up?
3. What kinds of books did you read as a child? Which ones had the most influence on you and why?
4. Do you recall any daydreams or imaginary play games as a child? Can you tell me about some of them? What was your role in these dreams/games?
5. Did you experience any significant losses during your childhood? (up to age 16)? What kinds of losses were they and what do you remember about what it was like during that time in your life?
6. Can you tell me about the most fulfilling/happiest experience in growing up?

APPENDIX E

Participant Review Questions

1. When reading the written summaries of your childhood and work, do you feel they are accurate?
2. What if anything has been omitted or distorted?
3. What part or parts should be expanded or decreased in emphasis?
4. What should be added or subtracted from these accounts?
5. Do the written accounts accurately portray what you intended to communicate?
6. Is there anything else of significance that should be included in these accounts?