

**CANVAS MIRRORS: Cultural-Identities-In-Transition  
As Reflected Through Art**

by

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## ABSTRACT

After immigrants haul bags from the luggage carousel, hail a cab and sally forth to temporary accommodation in Vancouver, they find life here is not the same as at their recently departed home. There have been many attempts to study “culture shock,” “identity-in- transition,” or other changes experienced by immigrants. In many studies the person-in-transition is interviewed or completes questionnaires. Whilst useful, these studies often mask deeper structures, dilemmas and other conflicts lying beneath words used to describe identity conflicts.

This study was designed to remedy this limitation. The problem and methodology was informed by theory derived from art therapy, cross-cultural psychology, adult education and the psychology of identity. Art therapy was central to the analysis performed on data provided by three participants. The other theories helped shape the conceptual framework.

The goal of the study was to better understand internal conflicts experienced by people in transition. It was not a study of immigrant settlement. Rather, the purpose was to explore meanings, blocked by language. The methodology was an artistic process which unmasked relevant emotion and provided a visual record of change. The purpose was achieved by chronicling the experience of two immigrant women and myself as a gay man. The stories of these people became fundamentally and profoundly related.

Paintings were produced over an eight week period. Each artist’s statement about their own creative projects was included as a second source of data. The paintings were interpreted in accord with models and procedures derived from art therapy. The results of this study stem from a thematic interpretation of the symbolic images and words incorporated by each of the participants.

All participants experienced a sense of social invisibility or “strangeness.” During the eight week period each participant appeared to (and confirmed that they) developed a more inclusive world view. They spoke of their ability to accept change, to embrace others, to attempt new projects. The concept of “home” as source of grounding was critical. However, they also spoke about “colliding” with others. Numerous minor themes were also disclosed. As well, the author showed the strengths and limitations of using artwork as “data.” In general, the decision to have people paint their lives was amply rewarded by the richness of the data derived.

This was a study of two recently arrived immigrants and one gay man. However, in the future both the conceptual approach and methodology could be applied to other forms of identity “discontinuity” or upheaval experienced by people crossing boundaries. For example, there are issues pertaining to sexuality, class, race, gender and other matters that beg for this kind of attention.

Art can inform, teach and record. Other artistic processes need to be explored, such as theatre, music, dance, sculpture, and still art forms. When people move among cultures they rarely study their experiences. Rather, they learn in nonformal and informal settings. It would be instructive to use art to study these learning processes. In the postmodern state numerous borders are collapsing. People are expected to cross them with minimal fuss and few casualties. Learning helps the border crossing process.

Adult educators are probably less wedded to words (such as in lectures) than other branches of education. Hence, using art should not pose an enormous challenge. The notion of the complete learner takes on a profound significance when art is used. At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it would be useful to determine the extent to which art brings into consciousness dimensions of the adult learner usually concealed in more traditional class settings. The use of art challenges the hegemony of talk therapy or talking heads as teachers. It embraces emotional and intuitive learning. Both, potentially, are powerful and key future areas of adult education research.

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## PREFACE

Welcome to a highly personal document involving a small group of disparate people journeying together along different paths. Paths that intersect for a brief period of time during a community painting/paint therapy program. Among this group you - yes - you looking down upon these pages - these words - will journey with us. We will experience laughter, tears, frustrations, successes, failures. These experiences may be limited to what has been described within this thesis, but, hopefully it will spark reflection upon your own experiences and tap into emotional experiences you see as being similar to those described by the study participants. This sounds ominously like, you guessed it - life.

This Master's thesis, and the study it recounts, involves cross-cultural transitions and identities navigating cultural borders. These journeys are between Australia and Canada, as well as Taiwan and Canada. I also explore my identity through reflecting back while navigating among four themes which have profoundly shaped my sense of self. While travelling back and forth across these margins of difference, you, the reader, will experience and reflect, while turning the kaleidoscopic tumbler of your identity. In order to best illustrate this process you and I will be embarking upon this journey together.

You have already found the Table of Contents, which will help when following my description. The paper is divided into ten chapters. Each of these sections stand on its own, in large part. Yet, the chapters also "speak" to one another as well. As seems to have become a habit within the world of reading books, one may feel that it is best to

read each chapter sequentially. This is not the case. With the exception of reading the first chapter before the others, the rest of this thesis can be read in any order you wish, depending upon your interests.

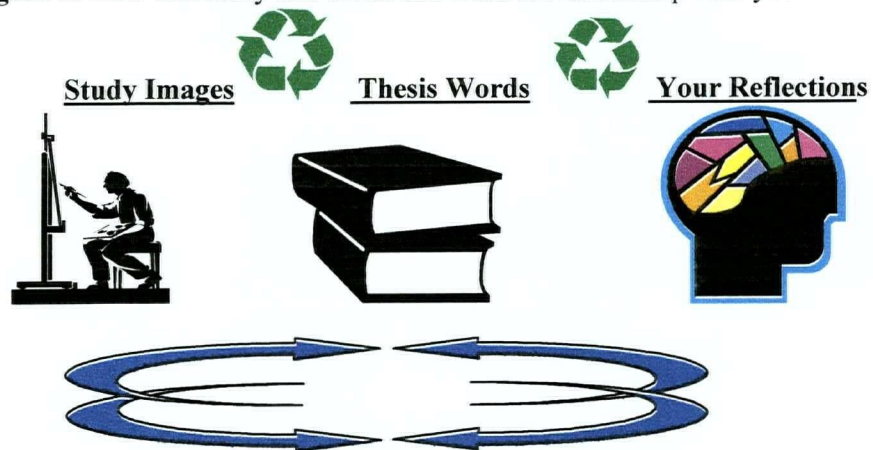
The issue this thesis explored was the internalization or meaning attributed to the experience of culture shock by two women recently arrived in Canada. The relevance of this transitional period upon the two participants was “mapped” through a trail of paintings-as-footprints they produced over time. The intention was also to bring to light experiences of the originator of this study as he experienced the newness of a same-sex relationship which began over the Internet. The two gay men (author and partner) were 4000 miles apart; painting was used to better understand how they came together and began a committed relationship.

Because of the use of creative and artistic processes, the actions of the participants within this study were a mixture of conscious and unconscious thought and feeling; both being required in order to give the image placed upon their paper depth and significance. You, the reader, rather than being a passive onlooker standing among the shadows of the pages, will become a “mirror” through which the different parts of this thesis will become reflected - your mind becoming the “paper” upon which various etchings, hopefully, will appear. You have walked into the central position within our unfolding investigation! Exciting isn't it? Perhaps a picture would help here. It would look something like Figure one.

---

**Figure 1:** How this study and thesis can work in relationship with you

---



### **Interconnectedness of Three Components**

Because of the way this thesis has been structured, all tables, figures, samples of study materials, and diagrams will be included directly into the text, eliminating the need for appendices. A reference list (Chapter 10) appears at the end of the thesis.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Through this process, my life has been brushed by many people who have helped me achieve everything I set out to fully experience. Above all, I wish to, most heartfully, thank the courage, honesty, intelligent insights, generosity, and beauty of two special and uniquely vibrant women: Jasmine and Zinnia. Their images, thoughts, and stories have been etched indelibly within my heart and memory. I, also, wish to thank the person Zinnia has recently married: Aster. I thank him for his patience while Zinnia spent many hours, over several weeks, away from him to paint and discuss her stories with Jasmine and me.

Thanks to Roger Boshier for pushing and challenging me in the beginning, and throughout, and for helping in making this study such a joy to experience and chronicle.

Thanks to my comprehensive-exam-turned-major-paper/thesis writing group consisting of Colleen Vaughan and Dale Baumgartner who, both, challenged, supported and encouraged me along the way. You, both, have huge shoulders, matched only by your hearts, as you gave much of yourselves. Thanks, also, for your patient ears and thoughtful eyes in helping me see what I became blinded to. Thank you.

I want to thank all the people who, through the many months, added their collective wisdom to my pen as I wrote. It is because of this, their words have imbued my work with insights well beyond what I am singularly capable: Rita Acton (huge hugs!), John Gooding, Cynthia Andruske, the Vancouver Echo (for their story about my study), Maija Heimo, Kadi Purru, Alejandra Medellin, Warren Lind, and Shibao Guo for his translation of some of Jasmine's words.

Thanks to my mother who, whenever I spoke to her always asked about my work before asking how I was doing - and who has always believed in my abilities.

Thanks to Ralf Hartmann, a dear friend of many, many years who challenged and pushed me all the way.

And finally, to Orchid who had to live through the mountains of shifting papers, books, and articles, in addition to the many paintings upon various walls in order to take photographs of the art. Thanks for your patience as you uncovered used palettes of paints in the kitchen sink, half used bottles of paints in the most unusual places, my ongoing baking and food preparation for the various sessions and, my often complete distraction and absorption in what I was doing - and whose love knows no bounds as we continually forge our lives together into the steel of one. Thank you for being there and holding me when I was needing to take a step back from my work. You arrived in the beginning, as I was embarking upon my work in earnest and, yet, we not only survived, but we have and continue to flourish. My love for you, in so many ways, has deepened. "This is forever."

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this to the memory of my father, “**A.B.K.**”, whose forebears arrived in Canada, from Ireland’s Potato Famine, in 1834 to settle in the Irish area of southern Ontario, after enduring the travesty of the treatment of Irish immigrants known by the words “Grosse Ile” in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

I dedicate this to my mother, “**Miss G.**”, who emigrated, with her twelve brothers and sisters, from Jamaica forty years ago and with much good fortune married my father in a time when attitudes in Canada were somewhat harsher toward intermarrying. I dedicate this to your courage, your grace, your love and to your deep, enduring friendship.

And, lastly, I dedicate this to “Orchid”, **Vin**, the love of my life who emigrated from Cape Breton to Vancouver in order to begin our lives together, forever.

*“If you knew how much this moment means to me, and how long I have waited for your touch. If you knew how happy you are making me, I have never thought I would love anyone so much. Feels like home to me. Feels like I am on the way back to where I came from. Feels like home to me.”*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **WISHING FOR A GARDEN**

#### Overarching Question

*How do “social strangers” come to understand the meaning of their “identities- in-transition” during the experience of reflection during an eight week painting workshop?*

What has prompted my study of the phenomenon described above was sparked by the transitions and socialization of my mother (and her 12 siblings) during her move from Jamaica in the early 1950's. Canada was a member of the British Commonwealth, just like the emerging nations in the Caribbean and Africa. Canada had decided to become a 'big sister' to the English- and French-speaking Caribbean, so this country, Canada, was seen as non-threatening:

....it had no colonial designs, unlike Britain, and it was not a military power seeking to dominate the region, unlike the United States, with its military bases scattered all over the region. And Canada was seemingly, a virgin country, with none of the violence we heard about in New York, Detroit, and other major U.S. centres (Foster, 1996, p.46).

There were minimal offerings of cross-cultural programs available, then, to help adjust to Canadian society and culture. It was assumed that all immigrants would become assimilated into mainstream “Canadian” (here meaning white, North and Western European, male, straight, middle class) culture. To hold up a distinctive Canadian culture remains problematic because this country is made up of scores of different immigrant populations, each with their own response to their adopted homeland. My mother, along with her brothers and sisters were sent, by her parents, to Canada to get away from social, economic, and political instability in Jamaica. What many immigrants of the time faced has been described through a volume of narratives collected by Canadian historian/ethnographer/author, David Broadfoot in his book, The Immigrant Years.

Most newcomers knew very little about Canada, and what they had been told by harassed Canadian immigration officials in the refugee camps of Europe was largely inadequate. But they dug in to learn Canadian ways, realizing it was the only way to survive the first few years and prosper in the later ones....It was all a matter of attitudes and adjustments; often the children of newcomers learned quickly and became the teachers of their elders. Loneliness was a major problem. Not only were there no friendly faces to be seen but there was the frustration of not being able to talk with others in one's own language. ....Immigrants had come to Canada with the highest hopes and long-held dreams, but found themselves in an alien land. They learned that Canadians did not much care what happened to them, and this probably was a major aspect of culture shock. By their indifference, Canadians indicated to immigrants that they were on their own (Broadfoot, 1986, p. 57-58).

By 1998, times had changed and; cross-cultural acculturation programs help immigrants "integrate"/"assimilate" into Canadian society. Without acculturation programs my maternal relatives have publicly assimilated into Canadian society. Yet in private, at home, many traditional Jamaican traditions have been sustained, in combination with our paternal Irish heritage. Growing up, I was fortunate to be imbued with a dual heritage as captured within our unique "home culture". Because my mother was such a central figure in my development, I identify more profoundly with her Jamaican ethnicity than with my father's Irish background.

Newcomers thought that Canadians did not work hard enough and cited themselves as examples of good workers. They did not think that Canadians loved their country enough, either, and said they loved it more. Canada suited them just fine, and they made the most of it (Broadfoot, 1986, p. 203).



There were many immigrants who arrived at about the same time as my mother and her family who also continue to hold similar sentiments. My mother remains one of the most strident supporters of Canada and believes there should be a single culture. She is extremely proud of the English heritage which imbues the histories of Jamaica and Canada, becoming extremely well read on how her new home country came to be, particularly around the time of World War II. She could have written this passage:

So, on Remembrance Day, every November eleventh, no matter where I am , what I am doing, I go down to the Cenotaph for the memorial service. I do it for the hundreds and hundreds of Canadian boys who died freeing [and defending Europe] and for the way they were so good to us, helping us whenever they could [there is, also, a very strong tie between Jamaica and Nova Scotia]. I stand there with the people and I think of those days, and I say thank God for the Canadians, thank God for this country, thank God for deciding that I would come to Canada (Broadfoot, 1986, p.255).

The book I have drawn these quotes from, The Immigrant Years, sums up the link between the time of my mother's arrival to the present day. The final passage is, ideally, how I feel Canada can move in the future:

I know one thing now. The hundreds of thousands of immigrants who came to Canada [specifically during the 1945 -67 time period] love this country. In fact, some of them think that those of us who are native-born do not love it enough. True, many immigrants still keep hold of a few ties to their homeland, such as the languages some speak at home, the special foods they eat and the celebration of their national days and festivals. It is their way of keeping alive the memory of other times and places: their roots. But Canada is their home. It has become all they had hoped it would when they were crossing the Atlantic, dreaming and wondering about the unknown land ahead. Deep in their

hearts, there is the sure knowledge and strong feeling that Canada has been good to them, so very good. They also know how hard they worked, the hardships they faced, the despair they knew at times; and they know they have earned the right to be Canadians. I understand a lot more about Canada now than I did when I started this [collecting stories of immigration from Europe to Canada in the 1945-67 time period]. I should. I had some very good teachers (Broadfoot, 1986, p.237).

This finding of European immigrants who have lived in Canada for a long time showing a greater life satisfaction than more recent immigrants and many native born Canadians is reflected in the cross-cultural literature as well (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988). What do these shifts from one cultural milieu to another mean for people's identities? There are proponents who would suggest acculturation programs are a form of social injustice because many programs are implemented by mainstream society and their particular world views, thereby, imbuing the education with a sense of "indoctrination" or system of oppression (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988; Yoshikawa, 1988). This can place immigrants within the margins of society. This "forcible" movement to the cultural perimeters can serve to invalidate the identities of immigrants. If this happens, what does this mean for immigrants and the broader society?

Opposing views may counter with the idea that acculturation programs help prepare immigrants for new, societal norms; it is an issue of integration, surviving, adapting, and living within new surroundings (Pedersen, 1994; Ishiyama, 1995). Do these programs intensify this loss or marginalization of identity or do they help in harmonizing their cultural identity within their new home and society? Do Canadian cultural socialization programs help or hinder in cross-cultural socialization as perceived by learners who are recent immigrants? What effects do these programs have upon immigrant cultural identities?

### Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore and chronicle the experiences “social strangers” - in this instance recent immigrants and a gay man - had of culture shock as uncovered through the creative process. Central to the narrative was that concerning one’s cultural identity as it found itself, suddenly and traumatically, in flux. It is important to note that although I rely upon recent immigrants as an important part of my study, I am not exploring any aspects of immigrant settlement. I have assumed that the process of settling in Vancouver has already occurred by the time I had met the immigrants contained in this thesis - and indeed this was the case.

The focus, with regard to newcomers to Canada, is in how they view their identities and not the process of their settling, directly. The people, here from Australia and Taiwan, have found places to live, found employment and have established, in a limited degree, their social circles. It is their identities, as they reorient themselves in the new environment, I am most interested in. This study is somewhat autobiographical with myself telling the story of how my life has changed culturally. As a type of backdrop to the relating of these experiences I established an art/art therapy group for a group of recent immigrants to Vancouver. As I was exploring the shifts to my identity, the group was exploring their own. The three sets of descriptions involved the perceptions, interpretations, meanings, and themes surrounding cultural identities in transition as they passed through a, relatively, intermediate length (8 weeks) painting workshop with a two month post workshop meeting/celebration.

### Method of Study

The exploration, which this study reflects, was carried out through a canvassing of the Lower Mainland for research participants. Each prospective participant went through an initial meeting with me to answer any questions they may have and to determine “fit” with the general purpose of the study. This initial meeting was followed by a group meeting in order for me to

describe my objectives and canvas the group for personal objectives they wanted to realize. Within this meeting, an initial “body painting” (see Chapter Four for a full description) was completed as a way to establish a base line to the study and to allow the participants to become acquainted with the painting process. Over an eight week period there were two painting workshops per week, each four hours in length. Within each of these painting sessions the time was carved up into three sections. The first period was for general discussion and to determine possible themes to be explored that particular day through the creative process. The second time span was initiated by having the group go through a visualization exercise to bring their focus directly into the room prior to the exercise of painting. Once the visualization was completed the group carried out art making for about two hours. This resulted in one or more paintings concerning the theme the group had earlier identified. The final part of each meeting was a debriefing together of what each person painted and what their picture meant for them. After each session each participant would take their paintings home to reflect upon them and record their thoughts to tape. Each was asked to think of two general areas while they reflected: 1) What thoughts were they thinking while they created, and/or what was the process that they experienced to create?, and 2) What did the painting mean to them upon reflection? Finally, two months after the workshops were finished the group came together in a form of celebration and as a way to bring forward any additional ideas they may have come up with as a result of the group’s time together. Also, at that time a second “body image” was painted as a way to delineate the end of our time together. The participants, then, reflected on any movement between the first and second body image to determine what, if any, change in perspective had occurred to their senses of self over that time period.

#### Importance/Significance For Praxis

This study explored a specific cross-cultural educational process (painting) and the attribution of meanings uncovered through art to the learners’ broader lives. Using these

revelations, as an entry point, there was a gentle “teasing apart” of these intersecting cultural-identities-in-flux.

The program incorporated many of the principles of art therapy. The more “universal” aspects of identities described within these pages may resonate for you, the reader, or others known to you, or have experienced within your own life world. Studies have been done, and books written from educators’ points of view, to the exclusion of learner reactions with regard to the appropriateness of the content or process dynamic (Acton, 1997; Bell, 1990; Cervero & Wilson, 1994). These programs often are designed with the learner holding a central position. Studies were rare which explored learners, themselves, crossing cultures (Berry, Kim, Boski, 1988; Church & Lonner, 1998; Furnham, 1989) - into their identities and their world views - to see what is happening on a cognitive and/or affective level. If an intervention was constructed to explore a person’s identity and its unique kaleidoscope of attributes, would this validate the learner, allowing them to “integrate” into a new society and culture? What is their world view as a result of this intervention? Do learners adapt or resist? What aspects of an arts-based mediation, from the learners’ point of view, had positive/negative affects upon their identities? Should the focus of a program be upon directly showing how to enter, accept and be an integral part of a new society? Should the focus be upon validating the learners’ identities and their intersections of cultures which support these identities, thereby allowing the learner to gain entrance and purchase of the new culture in their own terms? Or should the focus contain a combination of the prior two points? As a result of this program do learners keep their identities intact? Do learners move to more inclusive world views?

#### Delimitations/Limitations Of The Study

Because this was a phenomenologically descriptive study, the results may have resonance for individuals in similar situations. However, they cannot be projected to a larger,

specific or general population. The perceptions, interpretations, and meanings are most relevant to participants within this study. The focus of this journey was not to generalize. Rather, the prime concern was to maintain the highest level of authentic description and interpretation by relying on participants' voices. Because, both, interpretations and descriptions were restricted by the participants' personal histories and world views, the research process was limited by this social situatedness.

The journey I took with the study participants, using this particular research process as the mode of transportation, allowed the raising of voices often forced to the margins of discourse. The attached meanings supporting these personal experiences were, also, articulated by these people. These perceptions may resonate a reminiscent chord for some readers who may share comparable experiences and who have attributed significance to these histories. Cross-cultural experiences of readers may have resulted from moving from one country to another, moving from one region to another within one country, the result of the "coming out" process ( the public and/or self acknowledgment of one's self as being homosexual), the result of recently retiring, or the result of having become disabled, among many other "cultural" transitions. The uniqueness of each of these transitions provides different sets of circumstances because of contexts and the personalities and cultures of the person involved. To view these transitions in a similar manner can potentially serve to essentialize the transitions as one form of change. The danger being that if these shifts are viewed the same, it may be considered that the programming established to address these needs will not fit appropriately and cause more harm than instill good. As a result these educational interventions can become oppressive in their own right, despite the adult educator wishing to assist the learner.

Another key limitation to this study was the reliance upon participants being fluent in spoken English. This fluency could have come from either English as a first or second language. If English was their second language, as was the case with Jasmine, there was a need, at times, to

have words and/or phrases translated from her first language because of a difficulty to translate into English. Translations can never be exact and so those provided were an approximation of Jasmine's Taiwan equivalent. Because of this restriction in language, I believe that the nuance of language has been lost. Each language relies upon a unique set of referents stemming from its specific cultural heritage, socialization, and symbolism which often cannot be translated between or among languages. In part, the use of art and art therapy has been used to counter some of the effects of this potential loss as people from dissimilar cultures endeavour to communicate among one another.

### Terms and Definitions

The defined terms, which follow, were the key concepts I found needed to be clarified. As the study progressed additional words and definitions were included for clarification. The following, has become the final list of terms and their definitions:

Culture: **Communicable** sum of **inherited** (meaning the experience of receiving something from a predecessor, biologically or socially) ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge which constitute the **shared** bases of **social action** in order for the group of people **to survive** the environment within which it finds itself (Collier & Thomas, 1988; McLeod, 1987; Pedersen, 1997; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1996). This definition was used to broadly encompass, not only race, colour, ethnicity, but includes, also, gender, age, religion, sexuality, socio-economic class, type of disability someone may have, or any group that has a common, unique structure of communication for the purposes of social action and survival.

Identity: A combination of ideas about "being" and norms for "acting" in the world (Collier & Thomas, 1988). It can, also, be synonymous with "self-concept". Self-concept

is that construction of aspects of the self, whether determined from information received from outside one's self (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997) or the imaginings one conceives for one's own image. This perception continues over time - and others recognize this same image continually over time as well (Erikson, 1980). The understanding of one's self requires that one's entity be understood by another (Westwood & Ishiyama, 1990). This is different from a social identity defined as "that part of an individual self-concept which stems from their knowledge of their membership in a social group together with the values and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1988, p. 5).

Language: The **communicable medium** by which social information is relayed (either through symbols, **social interaction**, or behaviour) from one person to another or from one social group to another group. This medium may contain symbols, such as images or pictures, letters or words, intonations, behaviours which hold a **shared** meaning for a defined group of people and this shared meaning has been **inherited** or passed on. The meaning may be unique to one or more groups of people. Language provides cues that allow others to determine if the speaker is a member of an in-group or an out-group. Language is the system of symbols and behaviours used to inform and construct one's identity within the broader culture (Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1988; Westwood & Ishiyama, 1990). Language and culture reciprocally influence each other. For example, culture influences, or provides the lens through which communication takes place (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1996).

Metaphor: The figurative conceptualization of one thing (primarily abstract) or person **communicable** in terms of another more concrete form which, in turn, constitutes a



learning device for organizing **shared dialogue** and/or **social interaction** in cultural communication (Anderson, 1989; Lubart & Getz, 1997)

Intersecting Identities: This is the “overlapping” of two or more “cultures” (broadly defined earlier) or systems of privilege and/or oppression which organize a multi-faceted composite of one’s self. Another way of saying this is describing someone’s positionality of identity. All of us have multiple components to our identities which contain machinations which repress our abilities and potentials, i.e. gay, person who identifies themselves as being someone of colour, or poor, single, Hispanic mother, or senior, female, wealthy, someone who is paraplegic, or other component of overall intersection of identity. In some of the literature there appears to be an assumption that all people experience oppression in similar ways, because of similar sources; these similar oppressions result in similar outcomes (Tisdell, 1993). While this postulate may be true, because of the uniqueness of each person’s individuality and life circumstance, I would conjecture that each “cultural” group and individual would experience oppression in substantively different ways as well. Interlocking systems of sources of identity can magnify or mitigate one’s oppression depending upon the context being experienced at the time. Working within interlocking systems of oppression does not allow for one source of oppression to be given greater or lesser importance. As you, the reader, take this in think about your own positionality and reflect upon which influences or personal cultures have greaterst personal significance. Of added interest to me were the “intersections” of “cultural” identities. By intersections I mean how the dynamics of one’s “race”, colour, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, and class combine to raise and lower one’s position of privilege given a specific context. Intriguing are how these

overlay the traditional notions of culture to form a provisional identity which can provide contradictions and tensions through experiencing an overlapping private “self” in conjunction with the more public and social world views.

Cross Cultural: Refers to the experiencing of the process of aligning with or moving/attempting to move from one’s own value system, ideation, way of knowing, or belief system into another individual’s or group’s system. This movement does not have to be a success, but does have to involve two differing world views and some form of “language” (defined earlier) and/or mediation of understanding which allows movement from one culture to another (or more than one culture) (Pedersen, 1997; Zapf, 1991).

Acculturation/Diversity Programs: Refers to some form of offering an educational intervention (formal, informal, or non-formal) which allows learners to better understand another group’s world view so that the learners, upon completion of the intervention, can better incorporate the new world view or culture into their existing one. When this incorporation is successful, the learner can adapt themselves more easily, as required, into another group’s environment/world view. This, in turn, allows for greater coherency so that most communication is better understood by members of the new cultural milieu (Berry, Kim, Boski, 1988; Yoshikawa, 1988).

Home Culture: During cross-cultural movement the culture which was the main source of a person’s socialization. (generally speaking where the person grew up) is generally referred to as the person’s home culture. This could include any of the categories found within the broad definition of culture.

**Host Culture:** During any cross-cultural movement the culture which was not the main source of socialization. Rather, this is the culture which the person has entered at a later point in his/her life. This new world view being examined, communicated with, or directly experienced, with the idea of learning about it, is the host culture regardless of the permanence of the association.

**Table 1:** Example of cross cultural process

Home Culture	Host Culture
Working woman	Retired Pensioner
Married Man with Children	Single Gay Male with Children
Young Female Athlete	Young Female Paraplegic
Professional Man in Egypt	Unemployed Egyptian in Canada

This movement may be reversed, in some instances, should a person move back to their home culture (in some instances this is not possible). There can also be re-entry adjustments if the period of absence has been long enough or for the person who “comes out” as being gay . Once removed from the environment as in the former case, or once publicly declaring one’s self as gay or lesbian, the context is shifted so that any attempt to re-establish one’s self in the former milieu in precisely the same way is lost.

### Study Outline

The outline of this thesis has traversed the following path. There is, in the next chapter, a detailed narrative of my life history. This has been done for you to get a better understanding of some of the experiences which have shaped who I have become and how I continue to develop.

My life story has been included as a focal point from which the study participants are used as a counterpoint. The study, itself, likewise has been shaped by these experiences.

The literature review contained within chapter three discusses aspects of identity, language issues, art therapy, and cross-cultural counselling, as they pertain to the immigration experience. Also examined are looked at will be issues surrounding cultural identity formation and the concept of intersecting identities.

The fourth chapter explores the research methodology used within this study; in this instance, art therapy. A detailed description of how the study was carried out is delineated. Considerations I contemplated in constructing the study such as timeline, number of participants and the format of the workshops from which the study results emanate have all been described.

The fifth chapter explores some of my “on the ground” reflections of what occurred while organizing and setting up this study. Contained within this chapter are my reflections of my experiences connected to carrying out the academy’s ethics review process, how I found my participants, and the initial meetings with the people who informed this study.

The sixth chapter contains the stories and experiences, in the participants’ own words, as uncovered through the procedures outlined in Chapter Four and as they relate to the central focus of the study. The raw data in the form of pictures, participant interpretations, synopsis of field notes, and any extra notes the participants provided constitute this section.

The seventh chapter captures the “analytical” discussion. This evaluation begins with a discourse of some of the broad themes each participant revealed, as I saw them, through their paintings, and words. Following this there is an incorporation of the literature as described in Chapter Three and how it relates to my impressions of the themes discussed. I will not be comparing the output of the participants. Each will be discussed, separately, because each was an

experience unto themselves in how each participant interacted with another. The chapter concludes with a brief recapitulation of the themes I saw as being raised through the experiences of the participants.

The eighth chapter contains reflections with regard to the study itself. Reflecting back upon the painting process, the interactions within each session, and about how I approached the writing process. This served as a way of tying up final thoughts before moving into the final summary chapter.

The closing chapter covers three areas: implications with regard to theory, implications with regard to practice, and, finally, implications for potential areas for further study as a result of this study. As a means to engage you, the reader, with this study and the road travelled, the study outline serves as a rough map of things to come. The idea is to show you, the reader, that nothing is completely fixed or necessarily as it first seems.

You, the reader, can now relive with this study's group what was experienced and, perhaps, will find yourself thinking and pondering your own life and culture as you discover those within this study. If you, the reader, find yourself peeling back a few layers of your own cultural positionality and thinking "Ah ha!" then the trip will have been well worth it and in some small measure I will feel that I have succeeded in what I set out to do in reporting my study back to you in this way.....

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**MARY, MARY QUITE CONTRARY**

Autobiographical Introduction

What follows is one description of my life up to the present (38 years old). For the purposes of maintaining some privacy, I will be introducing you to my partner, code-named "Orchid." My "code-name" for the purposes of this study, generally, is "Sunflower". While the mere fact of placing words on paper indicates a level of interpretation, I will endeavour to keep "explicit" interpretation to a minimum. As Foucault (1980) indicates, when reading the writing of another we must not only read the words, but, also why specific vocabulary was chosen and why others remain invisible. As you, the reader, continue exploring this study you will, undoubtedly, do the same. My intent is simple; to describe my life. I have placed my review in a separate, and early, chapter of this study instead of attempting to weave it throughout the main body of my thesis text, because I believe who I am and how my voice has been shaped over the years, is important, but not central. You, the reader, need to understand, to some degree, who I perceive myself as being and where I come from. So I draw upon memory.

Most of the activity in your brain relies upon memory. That takes energy. Have you ever noticed that when you're tired and there's silence in your brain, you begin to sing? That's good health taking over. The tensions of serious thought are being released through play....They say that loss of memory is not to know who you are. Then, I suppose, it has to follow that we are what we remember. I can believe that. I mean, it's very easy for me to imagine forgetting my name....it would worry the hell out of me if I couldn't remember the smell of the house where I grew up, or the sound of my father playing the piano, or the tune

of his favourite song....People are the landscape of memory. Without the benefit of time and place, they are forced to play the scenery themselves. All the information they can give you is there in their faces and in their names. (Findley, 1990, p 4-11).

By placing my story within a distinct chapter, the narrative serves as a foundation without “becoming” the research. And you, the reader, will also be able to see how my memory shapes who I am and how I shape my memory in turn.

The way I have chosen to structure this story is by outlining major transitions within my life (albeit there are many minor ones as well). Within each transition I will describe vignettes of my life from within each period.

### Earliest Memories

I was born in 1960 in North Vancouver. At this point in Vancouver’s history North Vancouver was a small town outside the main city surrounded by forest; the town connected by the, then, relatively new Lion’s Gate Bridge. My parents were a Jamaican immigrant, of partly English descent (who left Jamaica in her early 20’s) and a Canadian (sixth generation Canadian and third generation Vancouverite) of Irish, Scottish and French descent.

My father was somewhat typical of his generation, ethnicity, class, and religious background. He was emotionally distant and a very strict disciplinarian. He had a very small repertoire of public emotionalism. At his funeral, a few years ago, a person who had, at that time, recently become his friend stated that my father was a very private, closed person. He was, even to his own family. Through most of my growing up years while living on a farm (a little later within this narrative), I saw my father most weekends, but not through the week. He lived and worked in the city some 70 miles

away; my mother and my three brothers lived in the country, while my father's life was more urban. My mother was and remains the strength within our family. When I look back at what she must have gone through raising four boys on a farm, very much on her own, was a remarkable feat. I will speak about this more in a little bit, but to get back to my earliest childhood memory.

My earliest memory of this time was when I was about 4 years old. There was a little creek that flowed through North Vancouver, Lynn Creek. All the boys in the neighbourhood would go down there and look for fish, explored through adventures only they could imagine. One day we were all crossing the creek by stepping on stones and jumping across. I watched from the sidelines and knew my turn was coming up. My brothers (I have three - my little brother, now 6'4" and 35 years old - my middle brother, now 6'2" and 40 years old - and my oldest brother, now 6'3" and 41 years old), making me the third born of four, called me to follow. My little brother, at this time, was only one year old and was not with us. As I stepped from stone to stone I realized my legs were not as long as my brothers'. Halfway across the stream my footing slipped and I fell in. To me, at the time I thought the water was over my head. In reality, it was only about a foot deep. I thought I was drowning and my brothers were not helping me. Instead, they were on the far bank of the creek laughing at me and calling me "Baby". That would, hauntingly, be a theme that would carry with me through my life - that suffocating sense of my aloneness in the world. I floundered like that for some minutes before one of my brothers' friends finally pulled me out. Although the whole incident probably lasted no more than ten or fifteen minutes, the experience was imprinted upon me. When we all returned home, our mother saw the state I was in. She rounded up my two older brothers and demanded what had happened. She asked me why I was crying. I had told her about not being helped out of the water. She became quite angry and meted out the punishment



of the time. They had, each, received the “wooden spoon” before being sent off to their room. Somehow the hurt my brothers felt from their punishment didn’t seem to hurt as much as that memory of being left out in the water and being laughed at.

The other memory of this time was that, then, large malls were very much in their infancy. A new “super” mall had been built called the Park Royal Shopping Centre. Around the same time as the experience I have just described, I remember several times getting lost in the department store. My mother, invariably, would tell me to stand in one spot while she went off to look at something. I was fascinated and explored around, looking at all the things in the store before I realized I no longer knew where I was; every thing looked less and less familiar. Then, strangers would come up to me and ask me who I was and asked “where is your mommy”. Tears streamed down my shuddering, puffy cheeks; before I knew it I had been whisked up to the “office” by someone. Soon to follow would be the eventual, and ever-familiar announcement “Would the mother of Steven Noble please come collect him in the Manager’s office” echoing through the store - and more loudly in my ears. This would be repeated several times. Once I was lost with my little brother (then almost 2 years old). He was in his stroller at the time. The scene played itself out once again: mom would tell me to stand by the stroller and look after my brother as she went shopping around the floor, I would push the stroller away as the dazzling array of merchandise caught my eye - especially the toy department - and I would wander away with my little brother a victim of circumstance. The manager’s office was on the top floor which meant navigating four floors of escalators. By now, when I got lost I seemed to know I had an escape route to the manager’s office. The thought of a four or five year old navigating a stroller on the escalators, up several floors, was a feat which has marvelled my mother ever since.

My father was a travelling salesperson with a territory throughout British Columbia. As a result he was not home a great deal. My mother remained behind to raised her four boys, while living in North Vancouver. The memories are relatively few in the first years of my life while living in British Columbia.

#### First Life Transition

In 1965, my father was promoted to Sales Manager and was relocated to Toronto. I saw this move as a new adventure and could not wait. The full effect of never seeing friends again did not hit me in the way it had with my oldest two brothers. They were in school and had a great many friends; I had a few neighbourhood boys with whom I played.

My father flew ahead to settle us in and organize his life before we followed a couple of months later. We lived in a small cul de sac neighbourhood in the very northern fringes of Toronto, at a point where farmland was across the road and the Toronto International Airport was barely ten minutes away by car. We shopped at the, then, new shopping centres of Sheridan Centre and Cloverdale Shopping Centre - and I was always getting lost and my name would resound over various department store public address systems. Old habits.

Memories are more numerous during this time. A new product was being tried and we could get as many free samples as we wanted on the way to the movies every weekend (then movies were fifty cents). The new product was a soft drink called "Wink". We would go fill up at the "Wink" truck to the point of our tummies aching before heading off to the movies.....funny...we seemed to spend so much time in the bathroom at the movie theatre....

One of the neighbours had an older son who was, at the time, eighteen years old. This son was someone who was severely mentally disabled so that his cognitive age was around eight to ten years old. He was about 6'3" and was a real softy. We were forever playing a game called "British Bull Dog" whereby everyone would form two lines holding hands. One line at either end of the yard facing each other. The object was that one person from one line had to run trying to break through the line of the other. If the person succeeded they could take back someone from the broken line back to add to their own. If they failed they had to join the unbroken line. Bruce always loved playing with us and we loved having him with us. He would "accidentally-on-purpose" fall down so that we could all "tackle" him and pile on top of him. He was always very protective of us, and we never let anyone tease him. He was one of my first great friends. We did not see him as being big or different; he was one of us.

This was also a period we discovered my middle brother had a terrible allergic reaction to pollen; one summer his head blew up (not literally! - his face puffed out to a very distended degree). He was thereafter always on drugs to ward off hay fever. My oldest brother was always being rushed to the hospital because he had fallen out of trees, or stepped on a rusty nail, or was hit in the head by a toboggan as he flew down one of the local ski hills. This last episode resulted in losing his front tooth. To this day he still wears a plate. My two older brothers were always playing soccer in the summer and road hockey in the winter.

I was different. I never played sports. I read books. I loved being able to escape and experience a freedom away from everything through reading about fantastic places and people. I, also, played with dolls with some of the girls in the neighbourhood. Most of my friends were girls. We would sing and dance and put on "performances" for one another. We read stories to each other and acted them out. Somehow I even managed to

“have” a girlfriend. This was when I was first exposed to “being different”. This would come from my brothers. I was told “you walk like a girl - everybody says so.” My asking for an “Easy-Bake oven” for Christmas one year would raise eyebrows of concern from my parents. I just thought that was what I would like because I thought cooking was fun...not that that was something “only girls should ask for”. “Boys are supposed to ask for skates, sports equipment...rugged stuff.” How was I to know - no one had given me the book of “shoulds”.

I was forever playing “host” to the neighbourhood kids by inviting them over for cheese (slices) and crackers. One day my mother came home to find me at the height of one of these front step “parties” - and did I get it after that - my turn for the wooden spoon. No more parties after the age of seven!

I don't remember a lot of my father being around during the three years we lived in Toronto, although I do remember visiting his office one day and thinking that he must be a very important man with the title on his door of “Regional Sales Manager” and people dropping by and calling him “Sir” and me trying to convince them that “no - he's not sir - he's my dad”.

These years would spin past. We would trick or treat at Halloween and get pillowcases and pillowcases full of candy. We would eat candy from Halloween to Christmas. This of course was before the time when parents worried about pins in apples, or razor blades in treats or kids being stolen from the street. We, invariably, went as ghosts or pirates each year. As my mother would say, both costumes were practical and could be recycled each year. I liked being a pirate because my mother would burn a cork

and rub the black soot all over my eye in place of a patch. I remember the warmth and the smell of that cork to this day. She would also tell us stories of times she would dress up as a little girl while growing up in Jamaica.

These years marked my entrance into the school system. In kindergarten I was described in front of the class as being a “rabbit” when I learned things. Other kids were turtles. Rabbits learned quickly I was told but they tended to make a lot of mistakes if they weren’t careful; turtles were slow and thoughtful. I remember hearing “Steven is a rabbit, he needs to learn to slow down. We need to help him.” It became a tug of war between myself and the others; I wanted to move ahead at my own pace but others would tell me that I was moving too fast. Grades One and Two awakened within, my love of “play-acting” or theatre. I loved being on the stage. I could be who I wanted to be “up there” and that was okay. People thought I was pretending, and I thought I was being “real”. Between reading about imaginary and far off worlds and being able to construct those worlds as I saw them were powerful times for me - and places that were strangely very comforting to me, particularly, in the years to come when the teasing and name-calling would intensify and become more and more cruel.

The other thing I would do is bring home my homework each day and do it. My little brother, who was then three years old watched me. To let him “play” at school with me I developed homework for him, helping him with numbers and letters and sentences and simple addition. I wouldn’t know this at the time but later I would find out that my brother’s “homework assignments” would accelerate him through the earliest years of his schooling through to high school and beyond. My “pretend school” would prove to give him a love of school that we share to this day.

### Farm Life

The early part of 1968 my parents decided to move the family to a farm, away from the city (the feeling was the city was no place to raise four boys). After many sad good-byes we packed up and moved to our farm; a place we would call home for the next twenty years. We moved to a 110 piece of land in southern Ontario. Our closest neighbour was a quarter of a mile away. We lived in the unique situation, also, of having two good sized airports on either side of us, Downwinds Airport and Burbank International. These two air strips, each about half a mile away, were the sites of a great many air shows and private airplane and glider rides for the "neighbourhood" ( a "neighbourhood" being a section of land - or 4 square miles) kids. The closest town, Shelburne (population 1200), was five miles away. Our house was a three bedroom (the upstairs) house and, on the main floor, a kitchen, dining room, family/living room, back kitchen and front and side porch. In the winters we could hear the wind whistle through the walls as the temperatures often fell to below minus 45 degrees C. The snow would pile to ten feet or more. In the rooms snow could be seen to fall and pile into some of the corners; frost was thick on the inside of the window panes. The house was "heated" by an old oil furnace which would leave a very fine residue on the contents of the house - in addition to "vintage" woodstove in the kitchen. Our farm was something called "mixed farming". We raised a herd of 100 Charolais (beef) cows, flocks of chickens, ducks and geese, goats and a pen of pigs. We had a huge vegetable garden which was my mother's pride. Our lawn was an acre of grass. Our water was our own private well on the property. If it sounds we were self-sufficient regarding food we were.

My first school while living on the farm was a large brick structure where the first five grades all gathered ( a new school was being built and we moved there the following year - for my third grade). We learned together. My deskmate ate blue crayons

and the glue that was created by blending powder and water together. We were bussed in by the yellow school buses which would take us all over the countryside picking up kids scattered for miles. A typical route for gathering children often covered 30 miles or more over gravel roads which, by the time we reached home, dropped us off covered with a fine dust.

In public school my “difference” would be relayed publicly and relentlessly to me. In fourth grade my teacher ( a somewhat “masculine” teacher who was the school’s gym teacher) was picking teams for a class baseball game. In her efforts to keep the teams even with respect to numbers of boys and girls on each side ran into a problem when it became apparent there were fewer girls on one team than on the other. She remarked to the class that we could “just put Steven in a skirt and make him a girl since he is almost one anyway”. This resulted in the class laughing while I turned red (not quite knowing why) but I “knew” I should feel ashamed because I had done something to cause this to happen. How was I to know any differently?

I was one of the kids picked on by the bullies in the school. I was being punched and kicked by the rougher kids. I was told all sorts of very ugly things that they said I was. I would go to the edge of the large playground to be by myself and hide away with one of my closest friends at the time...the current book I was reading....something to escape the tears and shame. I was always getting good grades and was heavily involved in school activities - another escape route - if I was surrounded by a lot of people I could not be picked on by the bullies. It was in this school, once again I found my love of performing on stage. We had regular assemblies where we would put on skits; I was always there doing whatever had to be done. We presented an historical play of Theseus and the Minotaur - I played the title character. I was generally found in the school’s library reading books. My favourite classes were English, and art, although I somehow

managed to excel in math class. In this school, we were introduced to the New School of open classes, student-paced learning, etc. We could move at our own pace in mathematics, reading, and writing. I completed the year's mathematics curriculum in March or April most years. There was a real competition to see who could be finished first by putting up wall charts of who was where in the curriculum.

My public school years were relatively routine - being beaten up by school bullies, acting in plays, and being teased as "sissy", "girl", "queer", and "pansy". Marks remained high. I continued to read my books and work on the farm. Where much of the "drama" occurred, during these years, was at home on the farm. The school year was punctuated by "no-school" days because of snowstorms. Some years we would get blizzards that would last as long as 3-4 days on end. Inevitably there would be power outages - which meant no heat save the woodstove. We also had a radio with batteries, which we relied heavily upon for news and entertainment (CBC or CFRB radio) during those long spells of powerlessness. When the power went out the water pipes in the house would at times freeze; spraying water when the power came back on, thawing the pipes. But blackouts were special times, because we had to live in the kitchen where the woodstove was and close off the rest of the house. We had sleeping bags, candles, the woodstove and radio dramas like "The Shadow" encouraging the development of our rich imaginations. My mother encouraged us to let go and imagine anything we wanted. Those radio shows were some of the best - as we were scared and huddled closely together listening to the crackling coming from the stove, strangely accentuating the stories from the radio.

The house had mice which would get into our food stores, particularly during the fall and winter. Our house was mined with mousetraps all over. We could hear them



scurry through the walls of the house in the winter. We knew a mouse had died by the ever-familiar pungent odour of something dying.

In the summer things were different. We would be hit with the familiar blast of heat and humidity when temperatures climbed well into the 30's C. The humidity, at times, pushed what it felt like well into the 40s C. Then it was not mice but flies and mosquitoes.

There was the ever-present threat of our cows - or the neighbours' cows - breaking through a fence and streaming on to the road or into our yard. We would dash out - often in mid meal to herd them back in through their escape route and repair the breach(es). This could happen first thing in the morning while getting ready for school, mid day and my mother had to do this on her own, or in the late evening. The farm was not a 9 to 5 job; the land controlled us. Disaster often struck at any time, without warning.

As mentioned earlier, my father worked and stayed in Toronto through the week. He would appear Friday nights and stay through until Sunday night/Monday morning. With some regularity he would not make it home weekends because of business or weather. My impression of my father, while living on the farm, was one of a very strict disciplinarian. He was not an emotional man to any degree. He did not touch us in any physical way; that was not the way he was raised. His primary focus, I believe, was to bring home the money and support us financially. My mother and her four sons lived together on the farm. It was interesting every Friday evening. I would watch for his car coming down the road toward the house. This meant we had to change the family environment from the easier, fun, laid back, and active household to something more controlled, respectful, serious, and austere. Every weekend my father made it home this

change within the family occurred; mini shocks that I dreaded and would, in part, force me to reach out to a network of friends who would distract me away from our home many weekends.

We had chores to do twice a day (from 6-7:00 a.m. and 5-6:00 p.m.). These chores involved feeding and watering various animals while checking them for any animal problems. Some years we would be almost ruined by one disease or another running through the animals. Rabies was a constant threat because of the routine peaking of its incidence within wild animals. At times this disease would not only affect the farm animals but also our wide assortment of pets and strays. One particular winter, during calving season, our new born calves were dying during the first weeks of their lives. This particular year we were losing a couple of dozen or more during the two month calving season. I can remember my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, in February, my mother and I up to our knees in manure pulling frozen, dead calves out of various pens and stacking them like cord wood for inspection by the veterinarian and their eventual burial or burning before heading back to the house for my birthday dinner and cake.

From about the age of ten, every summer I would join my older brothers out on the fields for the haying and harvesting seasons. We would help bring in our neighbour's crops. In exchange he and his family would help us bring in ours. A typical day started at 7 a.m. for chores. Following this we met at one of the barns at 9:00 a.m. for haying. We would work until 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening. Haying was constant work baling and loading the wagons, driving the hay in to unload and stack the bales in various lofts. Most summers we would bring in a total of 10,000 bales of hay. The best job was driving the tractor in the fields (which my middle brother inevitably was given because of his hayfever); the sun's rays were constant but we were outside. I was always in the loft under the steel roof of the barn. As we worked closer to the metal ceiling, the

temperature would soar. There would be no breeze. The bales would weigh 40-50 pounds each and we were expected to throw these to other people for eventual stacking within the mow.

There were usually two to three weeks between haying and harvesting which we whiled away by building forts out of old fence rails on the shores of large ponds on our neighbour's property. We also used old fence rails to build rafts and we would have "wars" on the ponds. The object was trying to sink the other's raft. We also spent a lot of nights camping out of doors. This past time was my favourite. I remember bringing glass jars to catch fire flies. Once enough were in a jar we would pretend to use it like a lantern, watching the flying, flickering of light as my older brothers and our neighbours told horror stories to scared me. I never found myself asleep very much. I was not one for playing on the rafts because I seemed to have a fear of the water. It was a few more years before I worked at overcoming this. My little brother has a very strong sense of fear of the water, though I am not quite sure how this developed.

Harvesting time was horrible. This was marked by the dust. No one was spared. The process had two steps. The first was extracting the grain from the straw. These loads of grain would be then sent, via augur, into the granaries. We needed people in the granaries to keep moving the grain back in order to keep the augur from clogging. This was the worst place to be. The dust was absolutely unbearable. Inevitably, this was also where I was sent. We had to wear air masks to keep us from blocking up from the dust. The heat was, again, very high and as the grain spewed forth from the augur, all manner of animals in various forms of being mangled tumbled. Out would come various insects, garter snakes, frogs, toads, rats, etc. There was always the ever-present mice. The other process was the straw which would be blown into the straw lofts. Not much had to be done, here, other than to periodically change the direction of the straw being blown into

the loft. The straw caused everyone to be itchy. The dust, especially for those in the granaries, would cover us so that we resembled pictures of coal miners emerging from the depths of the earth.

On the farm I was a very overweight kid. At the age of 16 I was 220 pounds. Growing up my nickname was "Chops" because of my weight and the jowls that people said I possessed. It was a name that stayed on the farm and within the family for the most part (although our closest neighbours used the name as well) all the while I lived there. It was at this age I also developed sleeping problems. I took to sleep walking. I would walk about the house and go back to bed. Once, I was told, I came down while my parents had friends over one weekend, and emptied the refrigerator of all the food, placed it on the counters and went back to bed. I had no knowledge of this the next morning. The other thing I did a few times was fall fast asleep without warning. One morning I woke up with scratches, bruises, and cuts all over my body and could not remember how all this happened. I dreamt the previous night that I was riding my bike. When I went downstairs I discovered that I was riding home the night before and had literally fallen asleep on my bike along the way and crashed into the ditch. I then, slept walked my bike home and went to sleep. A couple of years later I would fall asleep driving a car and careen into the ditch one very snowing and blowing night. When I crashed I "woke up" not realizing what had happened. The blowing snow flying into the windshield had apparently mesmerized me into a sleep.

Snow was a constant battle on the farm. After a blizzard we would have up to a six foot drift crossing our driveway (lane - in rural terms). When the snowplows went through, the "bank" at the end of our drive would be as high as ten feet. This would require hours of plowing the snow out of the lane/driveway so that we could get our cars out. While attending public school, after a blizzard the night before, we would while

away the time waiting for the school bus to pick us up by pushing huge “boulders” of snow off the banks into the road in vain attempts of blocking our ability in getting to school. We never succeeded.

When my father was home weekends, and we had experienced a blizzard on the Sunday, we were usually awakened at 5:00 am to wrap ourselves in our coats and sit on the tailgate of my parents’ stationwagon or truck as dead weight or be asked to push the car/truck out of the drive/lane to get dad out and on to work. We would then go back inside the house, change out of our pyjamas, warm up, and head off to the barn to do our chores.

One early morning we came down for breakfast to find my mother out in the middle of a raging blizzard in her nightclothes and a large winter jacket. She was out by the power pole and circuit breaker, that diverted electricity to our house and blocked power surges, reaching up with a hockey stick trying to kick the power back on to the house. Upon succeeding she, then, had to crawl back over the six foot drifts to get back to the warming kitchen. At one point she was crawling downhill to get to our front door as the wind and snow whirled around.

When I graduated to high school, I entered a world full of activity outside of the home (yet my mother would always be the anchor to my farm life). I was heavily involved in theatre and the music programs in high school. I would drop physical education, French, maths, and sciences after grade nine focusing, primarily, on the arts, and to a minor degree, business programs. Next to theatre and music, in order of my preference, would be history and Canadian literature.

A key influence, for me, from this point onward would be found within the high school theatre program (drama class and the Drama Club). It is here, we explored a new

style of theatre called docu-drama (documentary theatre), whereby we would research a social issue and present our findings, through vignettes, on stage. We would study people such as Sartre, Artaud, Brook, Grotowski and the experiments of Augusto Boal. We were the first high school in Canada (1974) to perform an original docu-drama. This was around the time of the famous Theatre Passe Muraille's Farm Show in 1973/74. For the next five years I would be in several docu-dramas portraying everything from the history of the town of Shelburne, to Canadian nationalism and the issues facing teenagers at the time. We would travel with our various productions to Toronto and the surrounding high schools. It was during these years I was slowly uncovering who I was; using theatre as a type of "foil". However, because of the omnipresent hateful attitudes and loathing descriptions of homosexuals, at the time within society, and living in a small town the last thing I wanted to do was admit anything other than heterosexuality. At the time, homosexuality was still considered a treatable mental illness by the psychological and psychiatric communities. I could not admit to myself that this "horrid mental illness" was my "problem".

For years, during high school, I was involved in the Scouting movement. This culminated in my being selected, with three of my friends, to attend the world jamboree in Oslo, Norway in 1975. Part of the process of getting us there was raising money (about \$6,000) to finance the four of us. This little village of 1200 worked for a year putting on dances, raffles, bake sales, car washes, and other events to raise the required funds. We were always in the local papers leading up to the summer in Europe. When we returned from Scandinavia (the trip included spending the summer with families in the various Nordic countries as well as the jamboree itself) the village invited us to various

group get-togethers like ladies' teas, the Rotary Club, and church get-togethers, until every group had seen the "horse and pony" show we had prepared including slide shows, displaying souvenirs, and retelling stories of our travels.

Also, with the Scouts, and later Venturers, we did a lot of canoeing, hiking, and wilderness camping. We camped in the winter, during blizzards and sub-zero temperatures. We camped in the summer. Each year the main event was a one week to ten day canoe trip in northern Ontario. We would canoe and portage (carry everything over land) every day. Our longest portage, including six round trips, was ten miles. It was on the first of these trips that I discovered an allergy to mosquito and black fly bites. We tried all our insect repellents and none would stave off the insect attack that befell me. When I returned home my mother could not believe the sight before her. The scout leader was extremely apologetic. My mother just smiled and said not to worry. She said that it was nothing that a few days of an island (Jamaican) remedy of aloe and other medicinal herbs could not salve. In our later teen years the four of us (who had gone to Norway) decided to try out the Coeur de Bois adventure route and navigated the Nottawasaga River from its source in southern Ontario to its mouth on Georgian Bay.

While on the farm our family would travel each summer to Toronto to the huge Caribana Festival and Parade held on Toronto Island. We watched the steel bands from the Caribbean, ate Jamaican patty, roti, curried goat, rice and peas, sweet potato pie and drank ginger beer. This festival was a real treat for us - especially the music, sights, sounds, smell, and colour of it all. We would catch up with some of my maternal relatives and listen to their stories of growing up in Jamaica, finding out which one of my brothers resembled which of my mother's siblings. I was told that when I was young I looked like my father, but as I grew older I looked much more like my mother. I found

the women on my mother's side of the family had the greatest characters and joy of life in comparison to many of my mother's brothers. My aunts always had wonderful stories and would let me help cook and join in their activities.

My mother ensured that we shared in her culture through telling us of her growing up in Jamaica with all her brothers and sisters (12 brothers and sisters) and the adventures they experienced. We also ate, quite regularly, much of the Jamaican and West Indian food that she was raised on. Most of my mother's siblings had also settled in Canada, but in Calgary.

In the 1970's there was a move by the Jamaican government to nationalize much of the revenue-generating property in Jamaica. This included property my maternal relatives, remaining in Jamaica, held (hotel, and farms) there. From a relatively early age I was introduced to my mother's family in a large and profound way. They would visit and stay with us for long periods of time. They were/are people of colour, but I did not see them that way. They were my mother's brothers and sisters and my aunts, uncles, nephews, and nieces. The differences we dealt with were not so much culturally or racially based, but ones of personality. We listened to a great many stories and jokes about one another around the farm kitchen table.

Central to every farm was the kitchen table. This is where news - both good and bad was relayed and discussed. Meals were shared here, friends and neighbours dropped by for coffee, tea, or something stronger. Hours and hours of board games and euchre were played here during the long winters. My parents would talk privately well into the night, after we had all gone to bed, at the kitchen table. If there was news we thought we should hear we would go to the upstairs bathroom grate which was directly above the



kitchen table below and listened intently to the news. The kitchen table was a microcosm of what the farming community was about. Central to the larger community was the church, the school, and the hockey arena.

My mother did not have a daughter and she needed someone to be her “back up” - to wait by the phone if my father should call while she was out birthing calves, or to call the vet to say that there was something wrong and could he come down right away, to cook or watch dinner while she helped with chores, met with church women or spoke with the vet (the vet was as important as the family doctor). This responsibility in large part rested with me. I visited with my aunts more than with my uncles. My uncles spoke of sports, my aunts spoke of stories, family, gossip, and things that appealed to me more. When battles broke out among my brothers, I was the peacekeeper - to a point, and would join in the fray when my own patience had been worn down.

Another organization I belonged to, during my high school years, was the Air Cadets. With the two airports (owned by Air Canada captains) we were always marching in parades, going to boot camp, participating in “war” games, flying airplanes - or being flown in them. I worked toward my glider pilot’s license. I learned how to shoot a high powered, automatic gun during many target practices, and generally learned about discipline (both the good and bad aspects of the military variety).

### Theatre School

My dream throughout high school was to get into the world I felt I belonged in - theatre. Throughout everything I did, this was my aim. I auditioned at the various theatre schools across Canada; finally getting accepted at the University of Windsor in 1979. I thought this would be the entrance into the world I could finally feel a sense of belonging. I studied movement (ballet, jazz, modern dance, and period), fencing, make-

up, costume design, voice, prop design, acting theory, and characterization. I had an acting coach who was assigned to me for my time there. It was through him I learned about the power of humour, and the work behind serious drama in classical theatre. The central learning turned around the notion of character development. We were expected to spend hours "researching" characterizations (in the 1970's, New York "Method" acting was hugely in vogue). I remember getting costumed and made up to look like an ancient man (I was preparing for a piece about George Bernard Shaw after he had died and had found himself in heaven) and walking the streets of Windsor trying to - and passing - as an elderly man. On another occasion I found myself going to seedy, rough bars to listen to the language and idioms of the clientele, while watching their actions for another role I had where I was on stage for two hours. In this role I was expected to convey a story without speaking - only through the use, or physicality, of my body. For this two hour stage appearance I also had to chain smoke cigarettes (I had smoked before this - but never a package of cigarettes in two hours!) for the duration. We worked for hours until I was able to handle my cigarette just like those I had observed within the bars I had visited. It also, unfortunately, left me addicted to cigarettes for several years (I have not smoked for almost five years). Our shining piece was the researching of a pivotal dramatic person (real or imaginary). My choice was Noel Coward- being in my mind the quintessential urbane character and one of the greatest composers of the English language. He is up there with another of my favourite English authors, Somerset Maugham. Interestingly, both were gay.

It was during these few years at Windsor that I met another male theatre student and became sexually involved with him. He was two years ahead of me in the same program. After my first sexual encounter with him (my first same sex sexual encounter in my life) my whole identity I had created for myself melted and became unglued. For the

several months that followed, my emotional life was filled with fear, anger, dread, and sadness - to name only a few emotional storms that passed through me. This would be the initial phase of my forming of and "coming out" to my gay identity. This process would continually evolve in a major way for the next, approximately, four years (it continues in more subtle ways through to the present).

The first semester I lived on campus with another theatre student, who was also gay, (we spoke about this during our first days together - but even, then, I was denying that I was or could be gay). He became involved with a ballet instructor on campus and continued this relationship for several years. After my first semester I was "driven" out of residence. One night my roommate and I arrived home, late, after several hours of rehearsals for a production, being performed a month hence. As we approached our room we saw something sticking out of our dormitory room door. As we drew nearer we found it was a knife stuck into it with a note attached. The message was telling us in no uncertain terms that gays were not welcome on the dormitory's floor any longer. This shook us, both, quite badly. Feeling our lives were being threatened we decided to leave. I called my boyfriend, who lived off campus, and told him what had happened. Later that night, under cover of darkness I packed up my clothes and other belongings and sneaked out of the dorm into an awaiting taxi and the safety of my, then, partner's apartment. My dormitory roommate followed suit a few days later to live with other theatre students off campus. When I felt safe enough to do so, I lodged a complaint with the director of residences, producing the note and knife. What followed was apparently a fairly in-depth investigation into the dormitory proctors (people who watched over the student residents, on each of the respective residence's separate floors) and the expelling of our floor's proctor from the institution.

A few months later, while walking home from university along the park that runs along the St. Clair River (which separates Detroit from Windsor) late one winter's afternoon I came across one of the harsh realities of being gay. A group of young men (students?) passed by me and asked me the time. I told them and continued on, not thinking of anything particular, except the ubiquitous lines and overall technical script of the current theatre production. A few minutes later I heard yelling and running feet coming my way from behind. It would appear to be the same group of people who had just passed by. Rather than running past they ran straight at me.

About half an hour or an hour later, I will never remember, I was laying on the ground battered, bruised and in a lot of agonizing pain. The group saw me as an easy target and yelled gay-related epithets at me as they punched and kicked and laughed (a vaguely and hauntingly similar resonance to my earliest memories). This was a "sport" I would later know as "gay-bashing". I never told a soul because of the shame I felt as I experienced this, and because I was still in the throes of dealing with my own identity of being gay. Life went on and I had to too. One of the things I learned, as a young gay man, was that I was expected to suffer in silence. This was a mark of weakness in me. Rather, it was a sense of the depth of strength from which I found I could draw. Against all odds, through all this violence and hate, I found someone I could love profoundly, no matter what. Me.

This was also a period of extreme poverty for, both, me and my partner. We had little money, barely covering rent. Our food consisted mainly of rice, beef bouillon/boiled onions and the added luxury of cheap red wine. We drank tea like water - it was ever-present. This was also my first heavy experience of living with cockroaches.

At the end of my partner's program he had applied to teach at various universities. He would eventually accept a posting at a western Canadian university. We parted as friends, knowing what we had was over. I remained behind to continue in my theatre schooling.

### Defeat and Retrenchment

Leaving theatre school and returning home to the farm. After two years I left theatre school. Largely because of a lack of financing. My parents had stopped supporting me in my theatre education, telling me that they did not approve of "that lifestyle" (theatre not - not my being gay - my homosexuality was not known to them) and they did not want me to become dependent upon them all through my adult years because of the stereotype of poor, struggling actor. I had no choice but to return home - in my eyes my world, once again, had crumbled up like a dust ball being fizzled by fire. This phase would also "drive" my gay identity processing "underground" as I could not tell my family.

For several months I worked at managing a fast food restaurant in Shelburne over the winter months. In Shelburne there was a gang of young men (led by three brothers) who would go around and cause trouble. They knew of our family - and specifically of me. One night very late, after closing, while I was balancing the cash, working on schedules, etc., there came a terrific banging on the back door and then banging on the front windows. This was followed by laughter and jeering and the words "Faggot", "Faggot", "We know you are in there"... "We just want to have some fun with you...."

What lights were on I turned off. I turned on the big vats of fat - just in case I had to throw something at them - something I had learned from one of my maternal aunts.

Our family was well liked and well known by the police (both the town police and the Ontario Provincial Police) through our connections with the church. I phoned the police and told them what the matter was. They appeared in a few minutes and took them all down to the station. Six of them and one officer - even the town thugs respected the law - then - to large degree. This gang continued to harass me and scare me, trying to get me alone somewhere on a deserted rural road and.....(the thought disturbs me and scares me to this day). Luckily, my time on the farm, after returning from university was short - about a year. I had to find some way to leave the ongoing threat of this gang. I imagined them breaking into my parents' home and I wanted none of that responsibility. So I felt like I had to leave in order to protect them.

#### Ryerson Polytechnical Institute

A year later, 1982, I would apply, be accepted, and attend Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (now a University) to attend their Hospitality Management Degree Program. This was a very intensive program, with eight courses per semester for four years, including three years of cooking and four years of business practice and design/management. Ryerson, having a pre-eminence as an art school, I knew that arts, not business, would be the real focus. The focus, indeed, was cooking, interior design, and business practice. We were told that we had to sample the offerings of at least two new restaurants a week to review menus, food, design, pricing, and staffing.

As part of the program we were to get into "study groups" of our choosing. Over a few months we gathered ourselves into both "loose" groups and smaller more "task" study groups. I was part of a group of four students (two very pragmatic, logical people, and myself and another with a more artistic, intuitive bent) who would stay glued together for four years. We lived and breathed this way through those years. We shared

our coursework, read each others' papers, shopped together, found jobs together, comforted each other and celebrated with one another. We would also have some terrific fights but we knew we would mend our ways and grow stronger. I have not seen them for a few years but we still call each other on the phone a couple of times a year despite circumstantial winds dispersing us across the United States and Canada.

Ryerson, being an arts school, was very liberal in its outlook toward people. It, therefore, came as a shock in 1983/84 when posters began appearing on campus with big black circles, with pink triangles inside of these and a thick black line through the triangle. These were the infamous "anti-gay" posters that covered the institution for several months. In a school with faculties such as interior design, theatre, dance, music, journalism, fine arts, fashion design, and culinary arts, there was, seemingly, a higher percentage of gay students evident - as reflected through the large membership of the gay society on campus. An internal investigation followed, directed by the Dean of the Institute. It was uncovered that students from the engineering and architecture faculties had initiated this protest of hate. The whole thing died down as quickly as it began; for me, it shuddered back to some of the days I faced while at Windsor.

One of the bigger assignments in the Ryerson program is the running of the "IDR" (International Dining Room). Each student had to take turns designing, preparing the menu, purchasing ingredients, cooking the menu, designing the room decor, selecting wines, drumming up clientele, pricing, etc. - and hopefully turning a profit. The person I had assigned to be my "chef" was a very homophobic male who was telling his buddies that he was dreading working for this "faggot". I, too, harboured my own dread. However, we met and discussed the menu. The interplay of our first meeting was enacted wonderfully well in a scene of the movie "Philadelphia" where Tom Hanks' character

first approaches his, eventual, lawyer in the firm's office. The attorney tries to keep his distance from Tom without trying to show that that is what he was doing. It was a coupling of revulsion with fear. So it was with this student.

After meeting and ironing out the menu we had to shop together for all the ingredients. We went to a favourite haunt of mine in Toronto to do this - Kensington Market. My chef had never been there before. It is a true microcosm of multiple cultures crunched together in a small space of open air market stalls. Through the day we went from store to store, stall to stall, buying and dickering on ingredients. At first, the two of us were quite stilted with one another - neither one of us wanting to be there with the other. As the day progressed and I got into the dickering and role-playing of the feisty bargainer; my colleague participated too. Through the afternoon we started talking to one another, laughing, sharing jokes, gossiping about students at school and even having lunch together. The following day the two of us worked for hours preparing food with our assigned staff - putting together two different four course menu offerings. We had a near disaster but we pulled it through to even the instructor's amazement.

My parents had promised that they would come down from the farm and dine during my evening in marking the spotlight of my program, and sharing in this very pivotal experience with me. They had also promised that an aunt and uncle would come so that they would be a foursome. This was terrific! A shining moment and my parents would be there to celebrate with me. This called for special measures. I reserved a table central to the dining room, put the best waiter we had in the class on their table. I even had extra money left over to buy two piccolo bottles of French champagne for my mom and aunt and very old Rye Whiskey for my father and uncle. I was given the time that they would be there. Everything was set. I had piped in some Harry Belafonte music.....three hours later there was no sign of my parents. That table in the middle of



the room remained empty the whole evening. That emptiness, that hole in the room, mirrored how I felt - knowing that they had let me down on such a special evening. And then I had to tell my instructor that my parents were the only no-shows. Because I had not officially "sold out" I lost marks. I never told my parents how I felt with regard to this. But this experience helped to, further, place them in "proper perspective" in that I could not count on them any longer, to the same degree.

In all other aspects of that night, my chef and I received rave reviews and had become much wiser about one another (and ourselves). Later that week, I stopped him in a hall and told him how I felt about him going into the process and how I had changed my attitude toward him and that I hoped we could be good friends going forward. He smiled and agreed. He told me that he hated the idea of working with me but that he had had a lot of fun and that I was "all right." We have remained friends since.

A friend of mine (also gay) lived in a large dormitory/rooming house complex in Toronto. He was also in the program with me. As part of our social lives together we would cook and have large monthly dinner parties for members of the "house" and selected outside guests. These dinner parties would be for groups of between 30-40 with lots of wine and a terrific assortment of people from all around the world passing through. The discussions would be always exciting, liberal, irreverent, and at times ribald and raunchy. These would be focal points which punctuated our social life for us. We were still in the same poverty stricken state but we shared in that poverty through larger numbers of people. We happened to be wealthy, beyond measure, in friendship during these times.

### Beginning Work Life

Graduated from Ryerson to begin work. Once graduated, I began working at a major downtown Toronto hotel (750 rooms) as a night auditor at the front desk. This was a period of several months where I did not see much in the way of daylight; time flew by without my quite knowing how. Normally, there were four auditors in order to facilitate everyone having days off on a rotated basis. However, two people were moved off the audit to work elsewhere in the hotel, leaving two of us to work every night. This continued for 42 consecutive nights without a day off. I phoned the employment standards department to find out our rights. In Ontario there was no "day of rest" rule as in other provinces. I was told that we were being compensated through our payment of overtime. We talked to the front desk manager and he said that there were no other people coming on the audit and if we did not like it we could leave the job. One thing I have learned to detest and rise to - is a dare.

This managerial sentiment came shortly after I had a "talk" with one of the front desk supervisors. He called me in for a private meeting. This supervisor (who was also gay) told me that they were getting complaints from guests about me being "too gay" and could I "calm it down." I did not know what that meant. What does "too gay" mean? How could I "calm it - whatever that was - down"? So not knowing what to do, I thought perhaps others were reading some meaning into me that I was not aware of, so I made a point of standing rigid at the desk, and rather than look at the guests, looked at the terminal avoiding all eye contact, withdrawing but not knowing from what.

The two of us who were left on the audit took up the manager's suggestion. A week later we both resigned, effective immediately, and walked out. I could have walked out at any point, however, my partner on the audit was from Korea, was married with a family and for me to leave him like that would not have been at all fair. He said as soon

as he found a job to replace this hotel position, then we would walk out together. We forwarded a letter to the Property Manager and told him what we thought had transpired and why our actions, we felt, were necessary. We understood the fall-out to be immediate. The front office supervisors were assigned to the audit, the Front Desk Manager was fired and the Property Manager ended up being moved. All of this was completely unnecessary if, only, people had dealt with us with some humanity, fairness, and sensitivity.

### Corporate Life

After the above experience I moved on to a multinational foreign currency trading house. In 1986 I moved on to an international business environment in the heart of Toronto's financial district. After several months as an accounting clerk (a job I loathed every day) I was invited to look after payroll and personnel concerns for the company. This took me back to university to study personnel and training and development at the University of Toronto over the next five years.

I was, increasingly, coming to terms with my sexuality at this place of work because of its attitude toward homosexuality. There were executives who were gay; the organization had accepted them as other employees. This was extended to me. For the first time, within the heterosexual world, I felt welcomed as fully human and as a gay person. This, I found, was as unnerving as coming out for the first time, in some respects.

Over the first few years employees, increasingly, would depend upon me as someone to whom they could voice personal and professional concerns. I worked very hard to maintain the highest level of confidence among everyone. This was acknowledged by an executive who, regularly, stopped by to hear, in general terms, what I knew was happening in the field of the Canadian and American office networks,

because he felt I had the “pulse” of the organization going through my office. This was accentuated by my delivering to all employees, both, my home and work telephone numbers in order for them to reach me anytime. Phone calls to my home were kept to a minimum; presumably respecting my privacy except in the most dire of circumstances.

I was still living in the apartment I had taken upon my acceptance and entry into Ryerson several years before. However, the owners had changed and the house (I had an upstairs suite of rooms) had fallen on to harder times. This also resulted in an onslaught in the form of a flurry of cockroaches - with a vengeance. I lived like this for two more years, until I could afford to move out. During this time I also became sexually active once again with men. I developed a new relationship with an acting student who I had become friends with. The year was 1984. AIDS had just become big news in North America. My boyfriend was coming down with these very strange symptoms, which scared us both. He was having tests and blood work done to find out the cause of these strange symptoms. We waited for six months before the answer came back conclusively: Mononucleosis. There was a huge sigh of relief. We continued on for another year before breaking off because his acting was taking him away from Toronto for extended periods.

At work, we had hired an extremely well-built and handsome young man to work in accounting. Anyone who went by his desk wanted to know who he was. It was soon uncovered that he was married but had been getting a divorce because he was revealing to himself that he was gay. He would go through the same emotional trauma I had gone through several years before, however, with a twist. He would exaggerate his new found freedom in his realization of his gayness, against societal dictates - becoming who he was naturally, but through wild clothes, raunchy, “campy” speech, and mannerisms - as though to convince himself and others that he was really gay. His divorce was going smoothly, but his transition from being married to a single gay male was not. He

developed violent streaks that came and went like sudden summer thunderstorms. I got caught in the eye of one those storms at work. He was being verbally abusive to one of his co-workers as I passed by. I stopped him and asked what was going on. He grabbed me and slammed my head into a bank of filing cabinets. The result was two chipped front teeth for me. I called him into my office and said he would have to seek help with his personal issues or if help was not sought he would have to leave. If he wanted help the company would provide it and I would make myself available to talk things over whenever he wanted. Over the next year he and I talked, extensively, about a lot of issues relating to "coming out" and "identity" and about bringing the splintered fragments of one's self back together again after the shattering revelation of one's "true" sexual identity.

The company I worked for was sold and merged into another multinational travel organization. I remained on in the Human Resource Department for the next four years. This new organization was very proactive and liberal, once again. I became heavily involved in employment equity concerns and was pushing for sexuality to be covered by our company's employment equity plan. In the early 1990's an Ontario Human Rights case (Michael Leschner) made the headlines when same-sex pension benefits made the news. A male couple had made a complaint against the Ontario government saying it discriminated in their provision of spousal benefits with regard to pensions, based on sexual orientation. The complaint was upheld and benefits extended. This had direct consequences upon other employers with gay employees in Ontario. Unfortunately, for our organization the Human Resources function was going through a leadership purge. The new vanguard was very conservative, rational, and homophobic. The attitude was "If gay couples want same sex benefits they will have to sue or complain first". The philosophy behind this statement was that if homosexuals actually dared to make

themselves known and complain, they would be fired. My eighteen months' work on employment equity planning and training was completely dismantled (as was about to happen when Premier Mike Harris did the same with the Employment Equity Commission) as a terrible waste of corporate resources.

One day in late June, 1993 I was summoned into my boss's office (the Executive Vice-President of Human Resources for North America) and was told my services were no longer needed. I was laid off after seven years of service. That same day, several gay men were laid off in the same office as were a few women and one straight man. We were given severance packages and "outplacement" counselling services. During this counselling we compared severance packages and discovered a pattern. The straight male, who had the shortest tenure, was given the most pay (in terms of weeks' pay per year of service), the women (all of whom were straight), were next most generously paid, and lastly, the group of gay men. Several Ontario Human Rights complaints were made; none were successful because there was "nothing in writing" - despite the actions taken by the company.

Around this time, there were a few gay men off with long term disability benefits because of full-blown AIDS. There was one other man I knew of who had just been diagnosed with AIDS and was still working. He phoned me at home, shortly after my own lay off, to determine what he should do. I told him, above all, make sure the corporation knows about his condition and he document this transfer of information. This would provide some protection in that the company is aware of his situation so to mysteriously lay him off while actively working would certainly provide a strong basis to sue for wrongful dismissal. The corporation was in deep flux, with many lay offs happening, people moving around the organization, and job descriptions exploding ever-wider. The threat was looming large for this man. On another occasion I told him to walk

into the Human Resources office with your doctor and your lawyer and lay things on the line; that he would go on long term disability when he felt it appropriate. I believe this had been done, as this person phoned in very excited tones to inform me that the company had completely backed down from dealing with him in a discriminatory manner. Pressure was put to bear on this employee by the people he reported to, but in much more subtle and persistent ways. He would eventually leave - but with full benefits (or so he thought). Because of so-called "administrative glitches" he - and another male in the United States, in the same situation, would have benefits cut off for months. It was only after many legal threats they would eventually be reinstated. This was a hardship at a time when these people's energies would be better served fending off the syndrome. This whole period was a rude awakening into how corporations can be incredibly brutal toward people; employees who had given everything to making the organization productive. This time of downsizings, restructuring, outplacement, and other euphemisms has only taught thousands of people that remaining loyal to an organization is dead. It seems to be, now, every person for themselves. It is, in part, because of these experiences that I have turned toward contract work and self employment. And it is, I, who can "fire" a client who does not live up to my expectations with regard to principles.

The group laid off on the day I was, called one another and decided we would forward letters of corporate wrongdoings and improprieties, we had experienced and observed (with proof), to the world headquarters, in Europe. At this point I had closed my apartment in Toronto and, with all the money left over from the severance, had moved everything I owned to Vancouver to begin the diploma program in Adult Education at the University of British Columbia. While I was writing term papers I was involved with corporate letters threatening legal action against me from executives in

Toronto and the world headquarters, because of the letter I had written. Unfortunately, for them, I had a large roster of witnesses who would come to my defense and were waiting for their day in court. This, I freely told them - that all their "dirty laundry" would be aired publicly in court and that I would be sure to invite the media to watch. Phone calls from Europe followed, threatening and harassing me with legal action. This response had told the group of laid off employees that their letters had put company up against a wall and the corporation was responding through these threats. It became a game of "chess". Whoever blinked lost the game. The threatening letters stopped suddenly. I was later told that virtually all of the executives based in Toronto were either recalled back to the country they had come from or were "laid off". The letters had created quite an effect in the executive suites on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean because the wrongdoings covered personnel, security and money improprieties over extended periods of time. I finally felt vindicated for an injustice a group of people had experienced at the hands of "authorities". Money was not the issue; it was the calling to account the people who were responsible. This closed a chapter on my first brush with defending who I was in the corporate sector. I had won to a certain extent.

#### Moving to Vancouver

Moving to Vancouver I was riding high on the "honeymoon" of moving into a new culture and city. This soon plummeted into fits of depression over the upcoming months. I joined the Human Resources Management Association of British Columbia's job hunting group for unemployed personnel people. Over the next twelve or so months (September 1993 to about October, 1994) I forwarded over 1300 resumes to employers who had active openings for human resources professionals, at all levels of experience and expertise. I went to a few interviews but was utterly unsuccessful. I was "living" on



the remnants of my severance package and the avails of the Unemployment Insurance Commission during this time. Food banks and welfare were very close. I did attempt to sign on to welfare, however, being a full-time student, by this time, foreclosed that option. I could - and would eventually augment my food from a local foodbank periodically, however, the devastation to my self-esteem of accepting hand outs was taking its toll. I did not complain about money to my parents, knowing how they felt about me being a burden on them during my years in theatre school.

In order to find some sense of connection with my identity, I joined a gays only outdoors club (hiking, camping, canoeing, skiing) to understand the shadings of the gay culture in Vancouver. In Toronto, my friends and my employers found "me" too "feminine" or "flamboyant" whereas, here in Vancouver, the outdoors club considered me as someone who was too "butch," or someone who was "latently homosexual". I can draw from this, an understanding that in Toronto there seems to be a conformity around "hiding" one's emotionalism, "femininity", and part of one's identity to "fit" into the corporate sphere. In Vancouver, there appeared to be a conformity around a more "feminine", up-front, noticeable homosexuality; hiding was not considered appropriate. The meanings attached to who people saw me as being, had changed causing me to struggle with these opposing views. This conflict was, in large part, because my initial "coming out" to my gay identity was done within the Toronto milieu, not within the Vancouver environment. In addition to this, I was raised on a farm, in very tough circumstances, with three brothers, and where masculinity was adhered to strenuously. Moving to Vancouver I have, since, discovered that anytime I move to where people do not know me I will continue to have to experience the "coming out" process - with a less emotionally intense colouring, as compared with the original.

One day while visiting my parents, during some of my darker days, my mother pulled me aside and asked if I was eating because my father was worried to death that I was not eating and not being able to bring myself to ask for help (which was largely true). I said that I was doing everything I could but did not want to bother them with my problems. "Mysteriously" cheques would appear periodically - and newspaper clippings from my father encouraging me to keep trying, asking us talk out our differences. I bawled like a baby reading these. A few times on the phone, with my parents, I would totally break down and have to end the conversation abruptly. They knew. When I visited them my father would "slip a few bills" to do something "special" for myself. I knew what they meant, however, necessity played a larger role and a box of laundry soap would win out over a treat for myself.

I would continue to go to the job hunting club for a total of two years before giving up in vain. I discovered a couple of, for me, "truisms" about the west coast. The first is that the anti-East[ern] Canadian bias is pervasive and strong. The irony, for me, was that I am one of the rare people born here. I was not gaining employment because of where I migrated from. The other is that the concept of human resources out here was something of a misnomer. What was meant was labour relations (union-management) relations. This field was peopled, predominantly, by men. The more true version of human resources, or employment relations (in non-unionized work places) was generally held by women. The appearance being something rather stereotypical, in that women were seen as being more nurturing as required in the non-union workplaces while men were needed in the more adversarial unionized workplaces. With my coming from a non-unionized workplace the odds of my finding employment in human resources in British Columbia were minimal. This was why I made the switch in focus to training and adult education.

I graduated from the Diploma in Adult Education program and applied for the Master's of Arts in Adult Education and was accepted. I met a female student in one of our classes who ran a training organization in Vancouver which designed training programs and interventions for clients. I was asked to join. I immediately telephoned my parents, long distance, with the terrific news. The three of us were laughing and shouting exclamations of relief mixed with pride and joyous exuberance for hours; my phone bill was proof. The next weekend I visited my parents and we all went out to dinner to celebrate. I was working for large local organizations as a consultant - for a total of three months. I was laid off once again with minimal notice. Devastation. I was so embarrassed about this that I could not bear to verbally tell my parents. I knew I would break out in tears. I wrote them a letter and mailed it as I wiped away tears of failure. I switched my focus back to my education and did my best to put the latest failure behind me.

In November 1995 my family all got together to celebrate my father's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was not told that presents were required; I was told simply it was a dinner to celebrate. My brothers, all very successful in their own right, presented exquisite and expensive presents - almost as though they were out bidding one another. Once this ritual was done my brothers departed to go into the kitchen. My parents remained behind. I turned with what must have been an incredibly tortured look on my face, red with tears I had to tell my father that I had absolutely nothing to give. Rent was due after all and food. My father came over to where I was and did one of the rarest things he had ever done - he gave me the biggest hug without words passing between us. I, then, knew everything was going to be okay - somehow.

Six weeks later, my father was to pass away suddenly a few days before Christmas because of a chronic health condition. Between 1993 and 1995 my father and I

had grown considerably closer together than all the years previously. My father had allowed himself to stop being the strict disciplinarian and become a warmer, more human, and accessible person who, with my mother became two of my closest friends. My father remained a person of few words and a very private individual - even to his family. The way we became close was the time we spent on drives during my visits and on his boat. We could both get lost together without saying anything and somehow, I never knew exactly how, we bonded closer together. Adversity does have a positive side too.

I write this almost, to the day, a year after my father's passing away. As my mother (who, in my eyes, remains the strength within our family) said that night when the whole family was around my father's deathbed in the hospital, "we must not remember your father dying this way; we must remember the wonderful lifetime of memories we shared and draw from that strength." For me, the lifetime of fond memories consisted of only the most recent past two years. I must live with the fact that I never told my father that I am gay.... his gay son. In my heart I suspect he knew.

#### Provincial Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation Issues

In the spring of 1997 I was hired to work at a four to five month summer job with a recently struck **Provincial Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation** investigating workers' compensation issues in the province of British Columbia. My role was to interview people (predominantly injured workers) unable to send in written submissions because of illiteracy, injury, disease - or amputation.

I interviewed people, often several hours per person, and listened to their gruesome, horrible and frighteningly personal and intimate stories of being injured on the job and their perceptions of what they saw as gross inadequacies and unfairness within

the system. As people sent in written statements and papers I summarized these as well. It unsettled me that I was to put into my words, the words of others, however, throughout all of this work I kept the speaker's words in the forefront.

I noticed others doing the same sort of work were wiping out the authors' words, replacing the presenters' words with the summarizer's own. I saw this as an act of extreme arrogance. The people who appeared before the Royal Commission or forwarded statements to it had, for the largest part, been "beaten up" by the system. Their homes, livelihoods and life's pleasures were described as being in the distant past - for some presenters they thought that these aspects of their past lives may have only been dreamed about. To take away their voices because someone else may have believed that their words were more articulate or held a richer meaning, I felt, would have been wrong. These people had words, they had voices; but all too often people who may have a little more education, or a little more "sophistication", or a little more of life's experiences may feel that they should take it upon themselves to speak for others.

I knew that these people have had lots of people speak "for them", have had others shout them down or have told them they were not valued. Echoes of diminished self-worth resonated within my own, transient identity. I thought it best to create verbatims for these people - in their words. There remained the problem of knowing what words to cut out, in order to create a summary; censoring is a tough thing to do when one has to do it on behalf of another. For many, they just wanted to be heard - finally. I was simply the medium for carrying their message.

I must have been adequate because shortly after starting I was asked to travel with the Commissioners as they zig-zagged across the province listening to the stories of the people. My role was to record the words of presenters who spoke before the

Commission - without interpretation. What began emerging was that many of these people perceived being abused by the system, and the process was shaping their identities to such a degree. For whatever reason the system was not helping them regain their livelihoods; these people - these injured workers - had learned to see the colours of their identities in one omnipotent hue - that of learning to tint themselves "as victim". The system was the teacher and shaper of values and beliefs. The injured workers learned their lesson all too well, as represented by the identities they revealed to themselves and others.

From the example of the injured workers I bent their experiences back on to my own life experiences to determine that I had, for various reasons and in many ways, learned to be a victim as well. Somehow I could never hope to measure up to others. Over the summer of working with the Royal Commission realized that I had learned a lesson these embittered people had inadvertently learned as well. Marginalized people were, and are, harshly, judged in their personhood by others who have, at times, no concept of their lifeworld - and yet, because of power, politics, and managing public perceptions, beliefs, and morality had been able to label other humans as something "less" than themselves. I grew increasingly fascinated by how these people's lives twisted and turned - how some would succeed despite the system - and all too often others succumbed to the treatment and labels.

Over four months we visited over forty towns and villages, staying from one to three days at a time. Throughout the whole experience I couldn't help but notice, at times, how dissimilar and removed the worlds of the Commissioners were from those of the people they were listening to. I was also struck by their collective abilities to reach out and listen in order to understand. But for their efforts there seemed to remain an

amorphous void they couldn't quite navigate because of this dissimilarity. This space of emptiness I, too, worked at crossing in order to understand their perspectives while broadening my own.

My work involved, on average, listening to one story for between one and four hours asking probing questions; carrying on a conversation as though we were friends but having never met. While these social strangers honoured me with their trust and openness I, too, felt a sense of legitimacy. Strangely, as I felt I was helping to validate people who had been severely injured, and their lives, the people I was speaking with were doing that with me and mine.

#### Meeting Orchid on the Internet

For some particular reason I had put a personal advertisement, anonymously, on the Internet with a Canadian bulletin board for the gay community. For over a year I would get various replies. Sometimes I would reply; sometimes I would just delete what I received. Over several months I exchanged email with people all over Canada; others seeking relationships. What I found most startling was that well over half of the many responses were from men in heterosexual marriages; men prepared to divorce their spouses to enter into a homosexual relationship with me; something I just could not believe in, in my head, or carry in my heart.

After about a year of reading endless replies interested predominantly in something sexual first and foremost, I was losing faith in this process and was getting to the point of giving up when in the early summer of 1997 I received a reply from someone 3500 miles away. For the next couple of months we exchanged mail, email, real time chat on the computer, and phone calls. Every day and night we talked for hours and hours, writing letters and postcards back and forth to one another. Having only

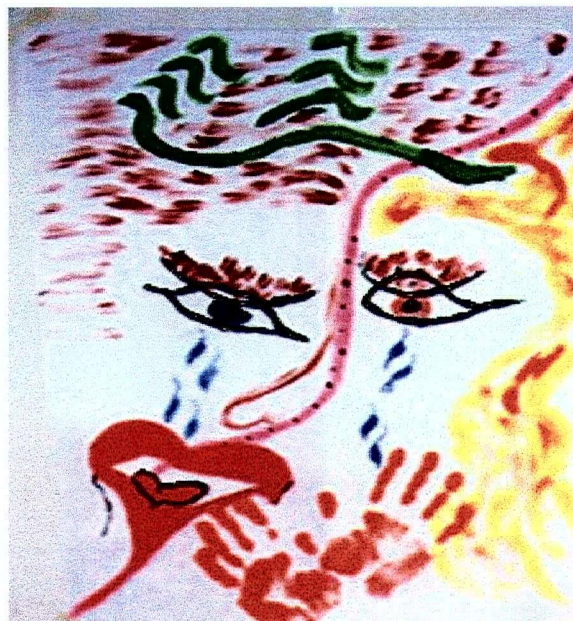
exchanged photographs, and hours of conversation and correspondence, we were bonding with the person, internally, and not the physicality or sexuality of the other. The “noise” of beauty was removed and we could explore each other from the inside out. Appearances played a minimal role for us; we were learning a lot of intimacies about one another in a very short and intense period. We were working with substance; I suppose what could be termed a postmodern romance.

What we were doing reminded me of the movie, 84 Charing Cross Road, where two people develop a relationship and fell in love through the writing of letters, one never having met the other - nor the luxury of photographs as we had. The thoughts, emotions, and stories these two people shared - their lives on paper - resonated for Orchid and me.

Two months later I found myself waiting at the airport waiting for Orchid to arrive in the city and my life - having never personally met him before. I knew both of us were incredibly nervous and tense, having no time to grow physically comfortable with the other - that would have to take place as we continued to grow from being two individuals into one relationship.

There was so much that remained for each of us to learn about the other. As would become evident, Orchid loved going dancing, the whole culture of bars and nightclubs and having a very active social life. This was in contrast to my preferring to staying at home, reading, taking long walks in the early evening, hiking outdoors, and more intimate socializing with very few, close friends. We were very different in some fundamental ways and remarkably similar in others. For both of us, home - a time and space just for us to be completely, normally ourselves unmasked - was important. Education remains a very important motivator for both of us.





**Figure 2:** Painting by Sunflower entitled, Couple

### Couple

I attended a one day art therapy seminar at a local college just prior to my field work beginning. During this workshop the class was asked to think about a personal issue to work through. The result was the painting entitled, Couple.

Here, I was reflecting back on the issue of blending my life with Orchid's. Orchid, who was also going through a "culture shock" of his own, having arrived only several weeks' before. As much as my identity of who I was, was shifting - Orchid was going through a more profound adjustment. And as I was painting, this was drawn into the process of adjusting as reflected within "the face".

The painting drew attention to the eyes, or awareness, and of the mouth. The hair, brown was to depict me and the long golden hair was the Orchid who arrived (now is hair is very short). The green markings cross the "boundary" between us created the

balance between the senses of loss and gain we were striving for, as well as experiencing. Perhaps on some deeper level, my sense of grieving was more intense because of the intense grey (this colour being a symbol of grief) eye. Orchid's sense of mourning was, somehow, more grounded because of the brown (representing earthiness)/grey of his eye. I suspect there was a lot of thought that went into Orchid's move across the country.

The orange hands, believed to represent feminine energy, reached out and embraced the red, vitality of the masculine lips. It was a unique blending of the feminine and masculine. The colour orange, as feminine energy, gives freedom to thought and feeling while opening up to love and happiness - the gain we achieved while compensating for any sense of loss we may have, continue to, or will experience.

Becoming a couple involved some substantial letting go in order to grow together. This did not mean that one of us needed the other to make themselves feel complete; it was because they wanted another person in their lives to share things with. My feeling was that if a person could not stand completely alone, feeling happy and healthy about themselves, then I did not feel that that same person would be able to flourish - not just survive - within a happy, healthy relationship (I feel this sentiment holds true for heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or transsexual relationships).

The painting showed the tears - both of letting go and of joy and happiness. The deep redness of the mouth illustrated the masculine sensual energy and the orange hands of femininity that bound the two of us together.

At one point, we had both spoken about the Danish experience of allowing state sanctioned same sex marriages and the success rate of that. This law, the first of its kind in the world, was passed in 1989. Of the 791 same sex couples who registered their

marriages with the state since that year only nine couples have filed for divorce (Jennings, 1994, p. 242). Because the focus with our relationship was to grow together we try very hard to talk things out without judging and in a quiet measured manner. I cannot think of an actual "fight" that we have had. From our first day together, Orchid has said "this was forever". And I know he meant it. That reassured me that he would not bail out when the times got tough.

A professor asked me once what does love and devotion mean to you? Well, that is when the person closest in my life is close by and I am "falling." I cannot see where I will land...I just know that even through my blindness, my partner will be there to catch me - no matter what. And vice versa for him. It is not a taking for granted, but a quiet, unconditional confidence, trust, and love. Within a few weeks Orchid had a job doing what he had done in an earlier time; hairdressing. As he developed his clientele he was/is going to school to develop skills in desktop publishing, computer graphics and animation.

When Orchid first arrived here he was still, in his mind, back in eastern Canada, wanting a large social life, loads of friends wanting to create his life from there, here. Also, he was bringing up his extensive social network, here, back to life (he had lived for a few years here previously).

As tough as it was for him it was tough also on me. I wanted to say all sorts of things but I kept silent and close by because I knew Orchid had to sort things out for himself through this transition of space, people, and context for being. As he was adjusting and clarifying, so was I. It was difficult on both of us for very different reasons.



**Figure 3:** Painting by Sunflower entitled, Journey Home

### Journey Home

This painting was one I finished a few months before my Master's fieldwork was beginning. This piece of work was part of a special reading course offered by the University of British Columbia's Theatre Department. The course explored the concept of home through "performance". Performance meant theatre, readings - and in this particular session - painting.

A group of graduate students from Mexico, Finland, Estonia, Canada and Venezuela, listened to music and painted their concept of "home" as of that moment. The result, for me, was the painting, entitled Journey Home. What struck me with this painting was the exclusive use of primary colours - an indication that the emotions were quite intense. The thickness of the lines and brush strokes were very heavy showing a further grounding in the moment. As I was painting I saw home as something, in that moment, containing two people. A couple working toward building something that didn't exist before - a home for two - for us - Sunflower and Orchid. Sunflower in the yellow which seemed to depict my energy; the red that of Orchid's. The self-contained drawing of me shows an energy of inward thought and detachment - a habit or stance I have lived with most of my life, as a sort of self-protection from environments around me.

The red of Orchid was open, and not self-contained, showing a very strong other - focus. The deep red illustrates Orchid's strength, life and masculine energy. This colour was also a grounding and energizing colour.

The blue which surrounded us and linked the two of us together symbolized the devotion, peace, and tranquillity we found as we created and built our home - the journey we continued to take together. The colour of blue also tended to show a slower pace of movement because of the coolness of colour. Interestingly, the framing of our creation of a unified, harmonious home was framed by a deep green - which was the unification of body, mind, and spirit to encourage a balance within our lifeworld.

The brown which seemed to be more present around Orchid was a further elaboration of an earthy, groundedness. Although, there was brown shown around me there seemed to be a scatteredness about it. The scattered orange which I surrounded was a symbolism of feminine energy. This energy, appeared by Orchid as well - but like the brown by Orchid was a more unified and grounded energy.

The overall painting showed movement, activity and life that was fulfilling as evidenced by the full coverage of the page. Interestingly, this painting was done about a month after Orchid arrived here to begin living together and showed our beginning of our home-building process. This was a pictorial backdrop of where I was just prior to beginning this study's field elements. The journey home had just begun.

The first few months were difficult because Orchid arrived to live with me in my apartment; my space. I knew for this to work we had to move from what was my space to something we could truly build together, so we moved two months after his arrival into our present home. We found a space which reflected who we were, and who we wanted to be; a couple - a family. There were a lot of people interested in this apartment and we

had to leave our name, among many, hoping we would be selected. Because we were two men and the other interested people were heterosexual couples, we felt we should just keep looking. The next evening we received a phone call stating the apartment was ours. We couldn't believe our luck. The manager said we had to move fast or he would give it to someone else. Through some negotiation with the current building management we broke our lease - without penalty - and prepared for our move. A few weeks after our move it became obvious why we had been given the apartment. The new building manager and his same sex partner arrived at our door one day; the mystery was instantly solved. Then the guilt set in, with the notion, that perhaps, we had been selected because of who we were not because we would, necessarily, make good tenants. I thought about the day I was laid off with a number of other gay men and thought - well - perhaps in some small way the wrong, then, had been redressed here.

Over the proceeding several months I have watched Orchid "re-invent" himself, as though he knew who he was would have to change - or he wanted to change. This brought back thoughts of Zinnia wanting to change those things about herself she was not comfortable with any longer. School became a focus as did his work. Our primary focus remained one another.

I, too, knew I was changing. Prior to this I was hugely introspective, independent, and focused on my self and improving my self-concept. With Orchid I became very focused and aware of another within my life. The longer we spent together our sights moved increasingly to not only the present, but also toward our future. With both our backgrounds rooted in rural/small town histories we yearned for a house in the country again - living a rustic, simpler life. And so that has become a focus for us.

Orchid fascinates and thrills me. Although he likes to remind me that he does not have a university education as I do (and I see couples around me who seem to need to match their educational levels with one another) I find myself learning about aspects of life long forgotten - or not considered - how to live committedly within a community in a natural, down to earth way.

Near the beginning of living together, Orchid called one day to say that he would be late coming home from work. When he eventually arrived home he told me he had met a woman - a foreign exchange student from the "university" on the bus. This student, from Japan, was lost and trying to find a school downtown. Orchid, without skipping a beat, got off the bus with her, walked her to the school - blocks out of his way - gave her directions of how to find the bus stop again, and gave her enough change for the return bus fare - so that she would not find herself stranded downtown in an unfamiliar city.

At times, while we walked down the street, he would disappear to tell people their headlights were on, helped people struggling with packages and children get to their cars. He would engage in conversations with people unknown to him on the bus, neighbours, and on the street. He was habitually going on the Internet for his clients to find information they were seeking for. Whenever we passed a panhandler on the street he would either give money or explain to the person why he could not or did not have any money to give. This was a person intimately in touch with his environment in a concrete - in the moment - kind of manner.

Everyday we continue to shape one another and who we are separately - and as a couple. Yet, what we learned has been, generally, stifled once we slide our masks over ourselves with our coats and shoes heading off outside as two "individuals". When we are at home we become very much one. When we go grocery or clothing shopping we

see the suspiciously sly side-glances - as the person may know or fear if they acknowledge us - they are somehow approving of something that society still sees as private, not belonging in the public domain. Society continues to relegate homosexuality to the private, "unseen" realm. Yet, the all-pervasive public inscriptions of heterosexuality (the socially sanctioned opposite sex couplings without any "modifications". Any sexual "aberrations," from the norm, found within heterosexuality also are hidden as social taboos) is celebrated as the "norm", the "natural", and "neutral" - whether some of us want to or would prefer living our own sense of "the everyday", "ordinary", and "usual" seems to have become forgotten, discounted, or harshly judged.

But, for now, Orchid and I prefer our space in the home we have created, knowing we are happiest there. But as much as we create this space for ourselves (home becomes all-important for this space of unmasking) and are able to lock "others" out; we can, effectively, seal ourselves in. A similar sentiment can be illustrated around the issue of how some people wish to deal with immigration. Some prefer to lock the "other" out, but they block themselves in. Both these instances fuel the creation of hatred of the "other" who, in turn, internalize that animosity of themselves and create poor senses of identity. And my sense is that nobody wins; we all lose.



### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **GLEANED FROM THE GARDEN CATALOGUES**

##### Introduction

As more people move across their national borders, in order to participate within the global labour market, motivated by steadily decreasing levels of labour restrictions an increased intercultural attention has the potential of developing. The perceived differences - both large and small - among people will create the potential for ever-increasing interpersonal tension and conflict. The borders to which I refer could be geographically national/regional boundaries or those involving separations of different forms of socialization, cognition, or affectation. The tension and conflict I allude to can often result in a sense of "victors" versus "the vanquished". In other words, those who have the power within their particular cultural milieu are able to influence cultural identities so that these culturally encapsulated self-concepts can change and fluctuate over time. When this happens some members of one group within a particular culture may find themselves moved from within what they thought was the in-group to what later becomes the out-group or vice versa. It is not only the person, themselves, who has changed, but the meaning social authorities, within a culture, have ascribed to a specific group within that particular culture as well (Louw-Potgieter & Giles, 1988).

To alleviate some of the transitional or cultural stress, a variety of programs have come into being. There have been many studies to "objectively" measure items such as success in acculturation/assimilation, stress, coping mechanisms, and the types of programming prescribed to meet specific needs (Atkinson, Wampold, Lowe, & Ahn, 1998; Ishiyama, 1995; Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997; Sue, 1996; Kwan & Sadowsky, 1997; Churchman & Mitrani, 1997; Habke & Sept, 1997). However, through all of these studies there appears to be a dearth of exploration from the participants' view. As

will be shown in the literature review, which follows, these identities are central, and as a result their world views contain deep personal meanings. What do these meanings look like? How do they feel? Do they change? How do they change? This area of study seems to remain untapped territory for qualitative (phenomenological) study and exploration.

So that you, the reader, can better understand the structure of this thesis has been organized in the following manner. This context of the current discussion of this literature review will be framed by way of a brief character sketch of who I am, currently. A detailed character sketch can be found in the previous chapter. The thematic outline, which immediately follows, was done so that you can better understand from which voice(s) I am speaking, with which particular “tensions” my discourse contains, and my perceived proximity to cultural issues.

Following the short autobiography within this chapter, the analysis will examine, briefly, five aspects involved within transcultural movement of identities, brief discussions on postmodernism, art therapy, Gestalt therapy, feminism (the participants recruited were women), birth order (because I feel that “fit” within a family constellation affects how one interacts within the larger world), Queer theory (because I happen to be gay), some of Jack Mezirow’s work, and culture shock. Specific to this study, other dynamics explored will be culture, language, identity, intersecting identities, and the crossing of cultural borders. Following the separate discussions centring upon each of these features, in turn, the summary will draw together key ideas through foreshadowing questions which will illuminate the overarching question this study is based upon.

#### Personal Thematic and “Tension” Outline

My voice serves as a link throughout this review and, later, the field study. However, you need to understand from where my voice is emanating. On the surface I am a

white male; what follows will not be my claim to some "victimhood". Rather, it serves to inform honestly, simply, and, hopefully, clearly.

Four themes in my life give rise to a certain voicelessness, and diminished personal agency. My parents are an interethnic couple; my mother a person of Jamaican birth, my father a white Canadian of Irish descent. From the very beginning of my life I have always known two very distinct, yet, compatible families - and have known, through the maternal side of my family, various types of harassment, and have been directly chastised for being a person of "mixed" colour, "race", or blood. This was particularly acute in my earlier years through to my late teens; a period when children criticize difference overtly and strive to conform to peer pressures.

During my late teens I left home for my first experience within the university milieu - and my realization (not choice) that I was, and am, gay. That was twenty years ago. "Coming out" (the process of, both, publicly, and to one's self, admitting one's homosexuality), then, was particularly difficult because gays had few rights and had just been de-listed, in 1974, from the American Psychiatric Association's (Vacc, Wittmer, DeVaney, 1988) list of psychiatric disorders.

Moving back to British Columbia, my home province, after twenty eight years of absence, I was struck with the reality that I would have to "come out" all over again to new people I met. Also, moving back to Vancouver I discovered my third theme; the power of strong, regional discrimination directed toward one part of the country by another region. Having lived in a number of places across Canada I have found Vancouver's "anti-East" (Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal) sentiment particularly strong. I have also found myself subject to this repressive force during my first three years of living within this province, in my failure to obtain employment despite my having applied for 1300 active job openings.

The fourth and final theme that was particularly strong during my youth, and is less overtly evident now, was growing up on a farm in Ontario. Throughout my high school years was an annual exchange program involving my high school's theatre department with one from Toronto. We were put down as being simple "country bumpkins,". The message being that we really did not know anything about "real" life. Raising cows, pigs, sheep, and watching the "grain grow" was boring and did not hold any meaning in the world. Our opinions, therefore, were considered naïve and simple - and so were often discounted. Our theatre group experienced this "big city" arrogance for many years. To this day I am very sensitive when I am travelling to small towns and rural areas knowing the inhabitants have a very rich life which is often invisible to those who have only known city lifestyles. There are aspects of the city I like. However, I miss the simplicity and very strong sense of community the rural life very often relies upon in order to get through each year. It is a "tension" I contain within my sense of who I am. Yet, I consider myself very lucky to have known two very distinctive ways of being in the world.

I have been challenged on being "qualified" to write about cross-cultural experiences and their meanings because of the perception of my being a white male. I, strangely, remained silent finding no voice with which to speak. The questioner, in her challenge and implicit assumptions about me, had suppressed my ability to articulate my perspective. Yet, this experience illustrated, once again, that people look at the surface to judge what is hidden within another. It is often easier, but my experience has shown me that it is, generally, very inaccurate.

"Black! How can you say you're Black? You're not Black! You're barely darker than me!" "My mouth dropped, but I said nothing. The words made me burn with anger. They rang in my ears for weeks to come. I wanted to wrench out [their] hair and yell: 'Yes I am! Yes I am Black!' I wanted to scream that Blacks had been

defined for centuries on the basis of their racial origin - something not necessarily emphasized by skin colour. I never did speak about it. But by challenging my racial identity, they helped drive me to a more insistent self-image”(Hill, 1994, p.45).

How often, in our daily roles and as educators, do we intentionally or unintentionally deny people the ability and/or “right” to speak? I am reminded of a class I recently took, where a female student declared that White men need to learn to shut up to allow others to speak. I am not sure how shutting down others increases a sense of power and freedom for all. What we need to be doing is encouraging others to find their voices, and give them space to speak - to join in with the other voices and increase the space for all discourse. But what does this mean for the relationship between the cultural identity of immigrants and the larger society? Should “we” demand that the larger society shut up? Of course not. But as Broadfoot (1986) found out the best way to explore what Canada is about is to listen to those who have arrived as immigrants. We need to dialogue, not shut down.

The following sections will examine aspects surrounding this, and other related questions to support the over-arching question, *How do “social strangers” come to understand the meaning of their “identities- in-transition” during the experience of reflection during an eight week painting workshop?*

Of particular importance will be how many attributes of self work together to construct one’s identity. These dynamics can combine to oppress and/or empower one’s self as they find themselves between or among cultural boundaries.

## Culture

Culture is the **communicable** sum of **inherited** (meaning the experience of receiving something from a predecessor, biologically or socially) ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge which constitute the **shared** bases of **social action** in order for the group of people **to survive** the environment within which it finds itself (McLeod, 1987; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1996; Pedersen, 1997; Collier & Thomas, 1988). This definition was used to broadly encompass, not only race, colour, ethnicity, but to include, gender, age, religion, sexuality, socio-economic class, type of disability someone may have, or any group that has a common, unique structure of communication for the purposes of social action and survival.

A further definition of culture, provided by Fitzgerald (1993), is that “communicable knowledge,” by way of processes such as identity, helps people to survive within a specific context and, must be passed on from one generation to the next. The change within culture is usually slow, being cumulative and conservative (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988). There is an interrelationship between culture and society. The two can and do exist separately. People become different when treated differently, not because they are different (Taft, 1977).

Much of one's culture is made up of how the individuals within a group, collectively “construct” the world around them. This is referred to as a worldview (Sue & Sue, 1990). These perceptions are seen as someone's conceptual framework or belief on how the world works. Four sets of values are outlined which are said to cover most cultures through some combination of these world views and dimensions (Sue & Sue, 1990). These four values can be seen in the form of questions:

- a) What is the time orientation of human life? Past? Present? Future?; b) What is the process of the human activity called living? The process of being? The process of becoming through our inner self? Working for rewards?; c) How are human relationships defined? Linear- leaders/followers? Referent group consultation? Individual autonomy?; d) What is the relationship of humans to nature/environment? Nature over humans? Nature in harmony with humans? Humans over nature? (Sue & Sue, 1990, p.139).

Coupled with the above two key ideas are also put forward. These include where the locus of control is seen to exist within peoples' lives (internal or external), and where the locus of responsibility resides for peoples' actions (internal or external) (Sue & Sue, 1990).

All these aspects of peoples' lives, in some combination, are thought to be brought together to form "core" values for different cultures or different ways of seeing the world (worldview). The cross-cultural counselling literature illustrates these dynamics by drawing upon those found within the Western cultures. Western cultural values are believed to be those which construct these societal identities as being future focused, needing to working hard for rewards, "rugged" individualism, and being able to control the environment (Sue & Sue, 1990; Vacc et al, 1988). These people perceive internal control of their lives, therefore, see themselves as being ultimately responsible for their individual actions (Sue & Sue, 1990; Vacc et al, 1988).

Literature also points to four additional aspects relating to underlying cultural value dimensions. These are; power distance (the closeness individuals or groups are to the power mechanisms in society); uncertainty avoidance (the ability to work in or avoid highly ambiguous environments); individualism/collectivism (the relationship

characteristics of the individual to the group); and masculine/feminine (For example, the constructed Western male role of defending versus the constructed female role of nurturer.)(Hofstede, 1994).

A broader view of culture includes social attributes such as age, gender, the type of disability a person may have, religion, class and sexual orientation. Some of these dynamics may have a genetic component (gender very definitely, some forms of disability and sexual orientation may have) or may not (as in class or religion). What is more important, for the purposes of this study, is the non-genetic, social component of this more inclusive vision. In all categories contained within this conceptual variation of culture are the ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge (the socialization) that are inherited, or passed from one member of a group to another through language, action, or social interaction. If I remained with the narrower version of culture, the result would be a reductionistic and over-generalized view of people within cultural groups. No one ethnic or national group has a membership which is similar throughout. That would lend itself to stereotyping. Within one group are several currents of difference. For example, "there are three main groups of Blacks in Canada:

Caribbean immigrants, African immigrants, and those who have lived in North America for several generations. But even here I am over-generalizing. For even within the Caribbean community, there are inter-island rivalries" (Foster, 1996, p.21).

Just as there are variations, there are also marked differences within groups. Relying upon one set of cultural attributes for a group such as women (where there are those who are radically feminist to those who wish to retain the more societally traditional female gender role) is creating an injustice for the group as a whole. This can occur for any



of the previously mentioned groups. Some, like the different disabilities people may have are more discernible (i.e. paraplegia, blindness) while others like gay men ( within the bipolar continuums of feminine versus masculine and of heterosexual versus homosexual), or lesbians (the bipolar continuum of feminine versus masculine) may not be so apparent - depending on the “traditional” roles set out for each gender within a particular society. All of this becomes increasingly hazy when one considers the following description, with regard to “race”:

Our experience suggests that America is not what it presents itself to be. Some geneticists have said that 95 percent of “White” Americans have widely varying degrees of black heritage. According to *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy*, 75% of all African-Americans have at least one White ancestor and 15% have predominantly White blood lines....the longer a person’s family has lived in this country [United States] the higher the probable percentage of African ancestry (Haizlip, 1994, p.15).

What the above quote also points out is that the category of “race” is losing support as a scientific or genetic notion within some quarters. It is not something called “race” that sets people apart. It is the meaning associated with the colour of one’s skin (Boyd, 1997). The belief is becoming that, genetically, there is little difference between people, regardless of where they live.

Of all the genes in human beings, about 75% are identical in every person; only 25% vary from person to person. And of that variable amount, Professor Lewntin demonstrated, 85% of the difference would be present even if the two people were fairly closely related; that is an ethnic subgroup...another nine percent of the

genetic variation will result from individuals being members of separate nations or tribes within a “race”....only six percent is the result of the two people being from what we call separate “races” (Gardner, 1997, p.1).

It is not the genetic difference people respond to. It is the meaning with which one person or group imbues another. This meaning is largely constructed through the particular society its citizens live. Cultural members, within a specific society, learn the message from those who are most powerful and are able to transmit their world view to others who do not have the same control and power. Race, as a concept, does not exist, however, racism and the meaning ascribed to skin colour is. The notions of “Black”, “White”, and so on I consider ethnic groups as opposed to racial groups. This is what my challenger was responding to, as described in the earlier autobiographical sketch.

### Language

When the transmission of culture is discussed, language becomes central to the discourse. Language and culture work to shape one another. A rough analogy could be considering a woman standing before us in army fatigues in an empty white room, saying “I do” . Next, if we have the same empty room but this time the same woman wearing a clown suit saying “I do”, the way she utters these two words will, to a degree, depend on the clothes she wears and how these clothes construct meaning for that woman as the context shifts. Yet, in both cases the language used is, in part, shaped by the clothes and how people outside of the cultural norms view these superficialities. Interestingly, it is not the person but the covering which connote meaning. In a rough way this is how culture and language operate as well.

The concept of “publics” or groups of people beyond ourselves being addressed must also be considered (Giroux, 1993). These “publics” are listeners, who are the

receivers of communication. They have more than one relationship to the speaker, who in turn, through the speech act, creates agency with others. Language is used as a key method for dividing or bringing people together (Fitzgerald, 1993; Giroux, 1993).

Language becomes the medium by which information is relayed (Sue & Sue, 1990) and through which there must be a sender and receiver. Contained within this medium are symbols. These symbols, including letters and words being read, in turn, connote meaning intended by the sender and received by the public (Giroux, 1993). All communication involves the use of these symbols. These markers are culturally define and are imbued with meaning. Much of our communicative behaviour is outside our awareness because communication is a cultural phenomenon; language flows from culture (Westwood & Ishiyama, 1990). It is from these generally shared meanings that knowledge, values, beliefs, and attitudes (in short, culture) are created and perpetuated. Knowledge is not something received, but through reception is created within an individual and/or group (Fitzgerald, 1993; Giroux, 1993; Kim, 1986; Schoem, Frankel, Zuniga, & Lewis, 1993). What we are doing is sending, via language, information. Data information is the concretized form of knowledge of the world we have created for ourselves. We are always “converting” knowledge to the symbols of language and reconstituting it back into knowledge for ourselves. Knowledge is the meaning making people use to construct their individual worlds as they experience it. The knowledge we create for ourselves can, to a degree, be “translated” into symbols of language, however, because of the rigidity of language the translation is never identical to our internal knowledge creation.

Language reflects the era within which it is used. As times change so does language. Because of this, expressions work to shape cultural ethos. Bissoondath (1994) shows, graphically, how temporally fragile communication can be, in his book, Selling Illusions;

Within three generations, then, the language of my great-grandparents had all but disappeared, and along with it had gone a way of life: dependence on the land, religious belief. We felt no sense of loss, no tincture of regret, no romantic attachment to a language that no longer served the purposes of our circumstance. And those of my parents' generation who still clung to the distant past - the few women who wore only saris, the few men who went to India in search of wives came to be viewed as eccentric and foolish (p.79).

Ethnicity and language refer to commonalities which tie together members of a group. Language contributes to an overall sense of belonging for individuals within the referent group (Sue & Sue, 1990). Members of a particular ethnic group identify more closely with those who share their language as opposed to people sharing their cultural background (Gudykunst & Kim, 1988). Language of a particular group structures meaning, determines how members define things, perpetuates culture by allowing language to be the conveyor of meaning, traditions, and reference points, all of which profoundly affects world views, or perspectives (Sue & Sue, 1990).

Because of this specificity of attachment to a particular culture, various groups will use different symbols to communicate (dissimilar languages). The enclave could have embedded in their symbols, meanings similar to, or different from, the meanings constructed and accepted within those different cultures. The styles or methods of communicating reflect the overall values of a culture (Dias-Guerrero & Diaz-Loving, 1994 ; Kim 1986). Just as Kim (1986) describes ethnic differences between the styles of Japanese and American speakers (i.e. the former values group conformity, silence, formality and reserve while the latter values individuality, assertiveness, familiarity, and "small talk"), I believe differences of language and speech differs, also, for cultures more broadly defined.

The importance of cross-cultural communication competency is a key factor in successfully adjusting to a new cultural and linguistic context (Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1988; Ishiyama, 1994; Louw-Potgieter & Giles, 1988). Not being able to make the adjustment because of language dysfluency has a variety of psychological effects - including social invalidation of the self. The focus seems to remain upon ethnicity, and, to some degree, colour and "race". The broader concept of culture is not included. As Ishiyama (1994) states, an immigrant's concept of self-validation has direct affect upon culture generally;

*Self-validation is regarded as a phenomenologically composite experience [my emphasis] of the affirmation or restoration of five interrelated areas; a) security, comfort, and support; b) self-worth/self-acceptance; c) love, fulfillment, and meaning in life; d) competence and autonomy; e) identity and belonging. This delineation also approximates Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Zimbardo & Ruch, 1976, p.115).*

Meanings constructed and perpetuated within the language of a particular public are those of the predominant, or most powerful, culture within that society (Giroux, 1993). Minority cultures are not included. In order to communicate, marginalized groups must adopt the language of the majority (For example, English as the international business language establishes the Euro/North American culture as the pre-eminent business power - all other cultures must conform to the American influence.).

Language tends to exclude minority cultures regardless of the society. Not being able to communicate through the language of the predominant culture or having a communication style not of the societal norm (i.e. older people may speak more slowly, gays/lesbians may be perceived to have speaking styles of the opposite gender, some

disabilities reduce speaking ability for some people) can therefore preclude groups from the “norm” (Ficaroto, 1990; Shor, 1993). What does this exclusion mean for those negatively affected?

### Identity

This study draws from the definition of identity constructed within Chapter One in which identity is considered synonymous with self-concept. A person’s sense of self includes both how s/he uniquely experiences and imagines her/himself interacting and appearing within the world. A significant point to consider is that each person is profoundly shaped by others interacted with as well. Sartre discusses this, at length, in relation to how one’s identity includes the consciousness of a person existing within the larger world (1943). However, the notion of context remains an illusive concept because a specific environment contains elements which allow people to ascribe certain meanings which “outsiders” may not comprehend or identify with. To add to the complexity is the idea that our self identity is dependent upon how a person interprets his/her interactions within the larger world (Fitzgerald, 1974; Smith, 1996). My concept of identity is closely tied to the context of recent immigrants (in Canada between six to nine months) as they experience an opportunity to define themselves through automatic painting and reflection. Within the language of identity, metaphor takes an important place. Metaphor is the figurative conceptualization of one thing in terms of another, usually moving from an abstract to a concrete form, although the reverse can happen. This symbolism can refer to a person as a thing, objectifying them, in order to diminish the personal. This was the language often used in terms of slavery (Haizlip, 1994), or the language used to describe gays and lesbians by others (Ficarotto, 1990). It is interesting to note that this sort of objectifying through metaphoric language is usually used by the hegemonic mainstream toward marginalized groups.

Some “scientific” studies have made sense of identity through key terms of “person”, “self”, “self-concept”, “ego”, among others (Davies, 1996; Fitzgerald, 1993; Millikan, 1997). There appear to be few, if any, attempts of direct phenomenological or subjective studies carried out to date involving multicultural or cross-cultural research. This is echoed by Pedersen (1997) and Ross-Gordon (1991). The majority of current intercultural communication research remains contradictory, leaving much room for a study into the phenomenon of cultural identity in transition (Fitzgerald, 1993). This type of work is considered a novel approach to create a link between communication and identity (Fitzgerald, 1993).

Within this study a specific form of communication, cross-cultural acculturation programs, and the “meaning” of identity was explored. Fitzgerald (1993) continued by saying that there remains a “lack of agreement” (p.20) with relation to identity’s various levels and meanings. This thesis examined a specific context, using the words of the participants to construct, at least, one definitive meaning, out of a myriad of possibilities, for contextualized identity.

Self-concept, or identity, is believed to help reinforce and affirm the core values of a society (Fitzgerald, 1993). As the basic beliefs of society change, over time, communicative competencies can become challenged. Identities are not static entities; they change in response to the broad environment, as well as to specific, fleeting contexts. Because there are multiple aspects to each identity, each dimension recedes or is brought forward depending on what is considered most important in conjunction to the environment in which a person finds themselves. For example, a person who may exist in some sort of natural disaster will respond differently than if they are in a circus or at the bedside of a dying loved one. Each context calls up certain aspects of the self which the person feels is most appropriate, backgrounding those aspects not considered needed in the

context. Over time, people modify their behaviours and sense of self because of aging processes. There is a whole science, demographics, built upon this presumption. Most people in their twenties behave in similar ways. When these same individuals are in their forties they behave as their predecessors did. When people retire they, in turn, behave as those who came before (Foot, 1996).

According to Kim (1986) there is much confusion concerning identity and culture. This study, in part, proposes to explore this ambiguity. My belief is that these two concepts are not synonymous but are interconnected. When describing a person's or group's identity there are two perceptions which should be taken into account (Giroux, 1993). The first is that of the outsider looking in while the second is the person's or group's own perception of who they believe themselves to be. Models of identity formation look at different aspects of this.

There is a model of Black identity formation with stages of pre-encounter (before entering a new cultural environment), encounter (experiencing a novel cultural environment), immersion-emersion (resisting what a person is encountering), and internalization (taking on the attributes of the new, host culture as part of who a person perceives themselves to be) (Sue and Sue, 1990). This approximates the Atkinson, Morten, and Sue model (cited in Sue & Sue, 1990. P.97) for racial and cultural identity formation (Table 1). The Helms (cited in Bollin & Finkel, 1995, p. 26) model for White identity formation of conformity (being like every one else), dissonance (experiencing a stress with the differing, new culture and the more ingrained way of being through one's home culture), resistance and immersion (trying to block the novel context from affecting an immigrant's sense of self), introspection (beginning to examine ways of how to include some aspects of a new culture in with older, more established behaviour and meaning making patterns), and integrative awareness (achieving a larger, more inclusive sense of



identity which encompasses aspects of the home and host culture into an identity that is neither completely one or other of the cultures experienced by someone). The major differences between these two (Black and White) "racial" identity models are the pre-encounter stage for Blacks - or before a person of colour enters a new culture; this seems to approximate the conformity stage for White identity development. The notion of a White identity model has arisen only recently (Suzuki, Meller & Ponterotto, 1996). The first stage, and apparently a rather "radical" notion is the concept of White as a racial identity. This is the idea of breaking out of the encapsulation of one's Whiteness, or understanding that White is not the given or neutral concept previous believed for generations (Suzuki, Meller & Ponterotto, 1996). The encountering stage for Black populations is similar to "White dissonance". This is where the presupposition of their racial beliefs (Blacks being undervalued, Whites believing in their superiority) begins to be questioned. Both White and Black racial identity models have an immersion/emersion (resistance and then integration) aspect which involves withdrawing from predominant cultural values; for Whites this seems to involve critical questioning of their beliefs while for Blacks the adoption of their own cultural beliefs comes under review. The second difference between the models is that the Black identity model stops at the stage of internalization where inner conflicts between the old and the new identities are worked through.

The focus or ideal is to become more multicultural, or inclusive in one's interactions with others in the world.. The White identity model has two stages at this point; internalization and integrative awareness. The former is the critical reflective stage of working through cultural presuppositions; the second is the active seeking out of new and diverse cultural experiences in order to continue the act of becoming more culturally conversant and competent. The cultural identity model of Atkinson, Morten, and Sue has one stage for integrative awareness.

Table 2 - Racial/cultural identity development

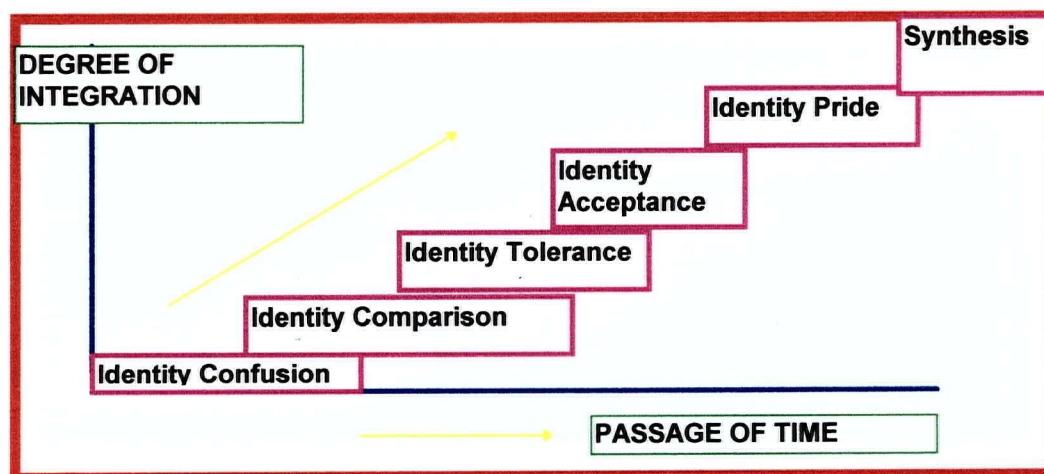
<b>Stages of Minority Development Model</b>	<b>Attitude toward self</b>	<b>Attitude toward Others of the Same Minority</b>	<b>Attitude toward Others of different minority</b>	<b>Attitude toward Dominant Group</b>
<b>Stage 1 - Conformity</b>	self depreciating	group depreciating	discriminatory	group appreciating
<b>Stage 2 - Dissonance</b>	conflict between self-depreciating and appreciating	conflict between group-depreciating and group-appreciating	conflict between dominant held views of minority hierarchy and feelings of shared experience	conflict between group-appreciating and group-depreciating
<b>Stage 3 - Resistance and immersion</b>	self-appreciating	group-appreciating	conflict between feelings of empathy for other minority experiences and feelings of culturo-centrism	group-depreciating
<b>Stage 4 - Introspection</b>	concern with basis of self-appreciation	concern with nature of unequivocal appreciation	concern with ethnocentric basis for judging others	concern with the basis of group-depreciation
<b>Stage 5 - Integrative Awareness</b>	self-appreciating	group-appreciating	group-appreciating	selective appreciation

Source: Atkinson, D.R., Morten, G., &amp; Sue, D.W., 1989)

The limitations with these models are their decontextuality, ahistoricity, linearity, and the neat compartmentalization, of something very individual, into ordered stages. These dynamics, in their combination, seem to preclude variation and minimize the differences among, and within, subgroups existing in a larger ethnic grouping.

With these limitations in mind I would like to add a third linear model of cultural development; the Cass model of homosexual identity formation (1979). The first two models rely upon the more narrowly defined concepts of "culture". The model by Cass raises how identities are developed through a mores, broadly defined. These six stages include: **identity confusion** (between the favoured, societally predominant norm of being heterosexual versus the socially perceived stigmatized identity of being homosexual); **identity comparison** (looking at the potential of "becoming" identified as homosexual - what is lost and what is gained as a result); **identity tolerance** (the seeking out of the gay culture to see if this "lifestyle" can be "lived with"); **identity acceptance** (taking from the gay culture those attributes which are felt to be relevant and validating being humanly homosexual); and **identity pride** (the "devaluing" of heterosexual norms as the only acceptable way of being versus accepting homosexual cultural values as a legitimate alternative integrating these new beliefs into their overall identity structure - the ascension of homosexuality over perceived oppressive, "normative" heterosexual behaviour so that both can be integrated into a bi-cultural or multicultural identity) (Cass, 1979).

The final stage is the **synthesis stage** where homosexuality becomes an aspect of the person's total sense of self. Homosexuality no longer is considered the whole identity of the person. There is a greater balance of being able to incorporate dimensions of homosexuality and heterosexuality into the overall self-concept of the individual (Cass, 1979).



**Figure 4:** The Cass homosexual identity development model

In discussing these three models of identity formation there has been a minimal amount of focus on intra-group differences. Not all blacks, whites, gays/lesbians, etc. behave in the same way, nor do all group members have the same identity characteristics. This seems to hold for virtually all cultural groupings. Neither have I explored the dynamic involving the intersection of two or more cultural aspects and their potential influence upon one's cultural identity. This will be briefly discussed in the next section of the literature review.

### Intersecting Identities

In the preceding discussion there was a somewhat reductionistic aspect to the pulling apart and separation of culture, identity, and language as though this were possible in reality. These are all woven together in a tight weave, which is hard to tease apart. There is, in much of the cross-cultural literature, a tendency to look at identity, culture, and language in a type of "purity," or singular form, as can be found within some literature ("all" women behave in certain ways as do "all" men, or "all" homosexuals behave in one way - which "must" be opposite to heterosexuals and so on (Belenky et al, 1997; Bissoondath, 1994; Cass, 1979; Bollin & Finkel, 1995; Ficarotto, 1990; hooks, 1984;

Louw-Potgieter & Giles, 1988; Sue & Sue, 1990; Taft, 1977; Vacc et al, 1988) in isolation of every other world view or perspective dimension. Within some current societies, there are many opportunities for a number of cultures to intermingle, resulting in much greater multi-faceted self concepts or identities. However, issues such as the following arise:

I want to call myself Canadian, but I'm not allowed. My name is Hungarian by origin so therefore I am Hungarian. It doesn't matter that on my mother's side I'm seventh generation Canadian and before that our family came from Great Britain. It doesn't matter that I can't speak Hungarian and have only a marginal understanding of the culture. It doesn't matter that I was born and raised in Canada. It doesn't even matter that I am white....My husband could have been born and raised in another country, but if he had an Anglo name then I would get my status (Szepesi, K., 1994. p. 29).

Nobody has only one aspect to their identity. People are, instead, a composite of many mediating cultures working in concert with one another. An example of this is my facets of personhood include being a Canadian, bi-ethnic, gay, "late baby boomer/generation Xer" male. All of these aspects, and others not mentioned, work together to create an identity. This positionality also includes dimensions of culture such as being Canadian, bi-racial, gay, and male. It is debatable whether being of a certain age is cultural versus generational. But what does all of this mean? What is the "fixedness", or the point of intersection, of my identity?

Cultural literature seems not to explore these intersecting identities and the mitigating influences that may result. However, some writers do indicate that research is greatly needed in this area relating to the meaning of identity (Sue and Sue, 1990). An extensive search of the primary research literature (both quantitative and qualitative) was

done by one writer to examine the extent of studies done within cultural issues and adult education. The result was that this is an area that seems to be ignored Ross-Gordon (1991). She reported the majority of the small number of studies found examined race, culture, ethnicity or colour in isolation, while keeping all other identity dynamics “neutral”. A fuller inclusion of identity and the dynamics which shape one’s self concept seems to be, in order to better understand the multi-layering of meaning attached to cultural identity.

### Culture Shock

Picture in your mind the last time you, the reader, travelled to another country, or another part of this country or the city you live within. You, the reader, probably had a lot of fun learning how the local people lived their lives. I am wondering whether you came across anything that annoyed you - either something large or tiny. Perhaps you observed what others were doing at the time, around you and thought to yourself that *they were doing something wrong, or you would not do something or think in - or “they have it wrong” or some other point where you compare others within their own culture and you find that it is they who have it wrong?* Were you wrong? Were they wrong? These feelings are also encountered as we experience culture shock. These experiences come from a “mismatch” of our sense of place within the world through our system of customs, environmental cues, and cultural norms. When we are in a new environment where the taken-for-granted is no longer there to keep one’s balance, it becomes very disorienting. There is a feeling that having not changed so it must be something else external. This, in turn, sparks an increased sense of lack of control on your part conjuring up feelings of fear, loss, sadness, frustration, anger, and ultimately stress. (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988; Furnham, 1989; Oberg, 1997; Pedersen, 1994). However, culture shock is not limited to the experience of crossing from one country (national culture) into another. Have you, the

reader, experienced unemployment? Think back to the first few weeks of not working. What were the emotions? Any major life event has some of or all the aspects of culture shock (Zapf, 1991).

A pivotal life event for me, was “coming out” to myself and eventually to others around me, as being gay. My whole world was turned upside down and inside out for a few years. Feeling this way I needed to come out to theirs in order find help and support (Chapter Two). Interestingly, in the case of “coming out” it is not the world that has changed as much as the meaning the social environment has inscribed upon me as a result of my disclosure. The struggle becomes how much has changed as opposed to how much the world changes its interpretation and meaning (and value) as a result of the new information. The greater the perceived difference between the taken-for-granted and the novel, the greater the shock (Pedersen, 1994).

What is “culture shock”? It seems to be described as either an adjustment process (Yoshikawa, 1988) or as a malady/illness (Oberg, 1997). Both definitions seem to illustrate that the stress of crossing cultures is “curable”. Time being the most important factor. Oberg introduced the term in 1958 in order to describe the anxiety resulting from the loss of one’s sense of how to behave when social cues are either missing or changed (Pedersen, 1997). The reason for this sense of difference and shock is that people are not having their identity validated; they are being negated, wholly or in part, by the new culture. People become motivated to seek out self-validation, or having who they are affirmed by others (Ishiyama, 1995). Self-validation, here is meant to include both one’s internal world as well as how their external world relates to them.

There were many models of culture shock described and explored by Zapf (1991). The models all follow a similar pattern. I have included a recent model here in the form of

Table 2. The table shows five stages; honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, and interdependence (Pedersen, 1995). Although this is a stage or linear model there are times when a person experiencing culture shock can regress, fall back to earlier stages, become stuck at one stage, or be in flux between two stages. The model is more dynamic than the “U” shape suggests (Pedersen, 1995).

The “U” model is so named because the model traces the emotional bearing of a person as they adapt to a new culture. The person starts on a high, or in a “tourist” mode. This is where everything in the new culture or environment is new, exciting and different. There is no perceived attachment or recognition that this person is actually part of the new environment they find themselves travelling within. Then, as the person acknowledges this is an environment they have to actively seek membership as opposed to simply observing the activity as it is experienced, they sense an increased notion of sinking while becoming emotionally depressed. This is represented by sliding down toward the bottom of the U in the curve. As the person begins to incorporate novel learning, taking on the meanings of the new cues their sense of identity becomes “re-integrated” once again. The emotional make-up of the person begins to improve. This is represented by movement up the right hand side of the U curve. The final stage is an increased assimilation of other world views so that a person moves closer toward becoming a more “multicultural” person (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988; Oberg, 1997; Pedersen, 1994, 1997; Yoshikawa, 1988; Zapf, 1991).

It is also a state of mind experienced during specific life events. It is an adjustment with the aim of reducing conflict, or dissonance, between new environments and taken-for-granted behaviour within more accustomed surroundings (Berry, Kim & Boski, 1988).

Cultural adjustments have a persistent existence over time. This is as the result of people, new to the environment, have with others who have become a part of the social context. If



the behaviours between the person from another home culture is different from or in opposition to someone of the host culture may learn to develop a complementary world view (Yoshikawa, 1988).

In describing culture, defined earlier, I see it as being a system of beliefs, transmitted in some way to other members of a group. When studying mores, as in this study, there are two "positions" a person can take with relation to society and the participants who will be introduced a little later. These positions, or approaches, are "etic" or "emic" ones.

Briefly, an "etic" approach is the study of behaviour from a position outside the cultural system being explored (this thesis has been placed on the border, weaving in and out) while examining many cultures comparing them with one another (this will be done to limited degree). A "structure" is usually created (this study will be more one of drawing themes as a result of exploration rather than a structure per se), and criteria developed to evaluate these cultures are absolute or universal (this will not be; everything will be provisional. No criteria will be preconceived). An emic approach in studying culture, on the other hand, is through exploring the system of mores from an internal perspective. Only one culture is examined at a time. Rather than create a structure with evaluative criteria, these are discovered by the researcher. (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1996).

As immigrants move from one context to another, or from one situation to another, their overall identities shift or are transformed in response to their new context. At least one researcher believes there remains a small "core" of identity inside of us (Collier & Thomas, 1988). This seems to be rather difficult to maintain because it implies a tension within a person as they pass through various environments. Even as the outer "layers" of meaning are moulded and affected, there has to be also, to some degree, change to the deep

inner self or identity - including my experience of a "core". Because most situations involve other people, social interactions are key in shaping our identities through our negotiations with other people as they challenge our identities - confirming, or negating senses of selves who we are (Collier & Thomas, 1988). Identity is a combination of ideas about "being" and "acting".

People who experience cross-cultural transitions are said to have deficits in the host culture where their home language, nuances of behaving, and social competencies are not communicating effectively or clearly in their new environment (Westwood & Ishiyama, 1990). How long does this process last? Duration of individual stages vary from person to person but the overall process of adjustment into a new culture can be expected to last about a year or perhaps longer (see Table 3)(Foster, cited in Zapf, 1991 ). This is why, as will be described in Chapter Four, I was looking for people who had arrived between six and nine months prior to the study beginning. This period of time would, theoretically, place the participants approximately at the bottom end of the U curve. The emotions experienced by these people, as a result, would be quite intense making the painting process and outcomes more dynamic and intense.

To sum up, the immigrants you will be meeting a little later will be experiencing culture shock at various levels of intensity and at different stages. Common reactions that experienced can include culture fatigue (Pedersen, 1997), as evidenced by psychosomatic (the brain, under stress, tells the body there is something wrong when physiologically there is not, except, perhaps, at a superficial level) disorders. Culture shock is described as a sense of loss, of letting go of things familiar, as an initial rejection of the new environment, and a general feeling of being lost and helpless (Kim & Ruben, 1988). There is an additional element only recently being explored; culture shock as period of intense learning and growth. It has, traditionally, been treated like an illness (Oberg, 1997, Zapf, 1991), or

as a problem to be corrected rather than as learning. This latter aspect I shall explore further. Culture shock is now seen as a period of internal change, where a person's thinking, as well as emotional, and behavioural processes are thought to undergo their initial, cultural socialization. This includes the "moving away" from what has been considered "normal" within their previous cultural environment (Kim & Ruben, 1988; Pedersen, 1995; Pedersen, 1994). As the paintings of the participants in this study are explored patterns should become evident as the art unfolds over time.

**Table 3 - Five stages of culture shock**

<b>Stages of Culture Shock</b>	<b>Relation to Home Culture</b>	<b>Relation to Host Culture</b>	<b>Time Period from Initial Entry</b>	<b>Locus of Control Attribution</b>	<b>Emotional Dimensions</b>
<b>Stage 1 - Honeymoon or Tourist</b>	identify with home, insulated by prior socialization	seen as exotic; distant, naïve dissociation, child like, first learning, spectator, tourist, outsider	1 -3 mos.	seen as externally controlled i.e. Fate, accident, chance	wonderment, thrill, fun, positive outlook, adventure
<b>Stage 2 - Disintegration</b>	shattering of aspects (or total) identity as established norms irrelevant, not valued	disorientation; withdrawal; helplessness; alien; foreigner	3 - 6 mos.	internal; them versus me; not allowed to participate; don't know how; loss of control	confusion; clumsiness; tension; stress; frustration; self-blame; failure; sense of loss; depression; pain; inadequacy
<b>Stage 3 - Reintegration</b>	initial loosening from home; letting go/loss; yet still strong identity with home - good as opposed to the bad host culture	hostility; sees host culture in stereotypical ways; condescension; beginning recognition of new culture; still bad, negative	6- 9 mos.	external; shift blame back to others	anger; hostility; defensiveness; sense of feeling "stuck"; resentment
<b>Stage 4 - Autonomy</b>	focus is lessened here more as distance is created	begins relating to host culture; sees legitimate differences between home/host; more positive	9 -12 mos.	internal; more fully functioning person	self-assurance; confidence; autonomy; relaxed; empathy; tolerance
<b>Stage 5 - Interdependence</b>	positive aspects carried forward; blended with host culture; look at culture as a relativity	transcends to include aspects of host/home to form new personal culture or positionality	12+ mos.	internal; fully functioning; incorporating aspects of new with aspects of old culture	sense of belonging; trust; authenticity; sense of transcending one culture to become bi-cultural; identity broadens becomes more inclusive; sense of reconnection; coming full circle

Source: Pedersen, P. (1994)

### Cross-Cultural Programming

As Freire suggests (cited in Shor, 1993), teaching and learning are human experiences with profound social consequences. Education and programs are seen as sites where the individual and society are constructed (Giroux, 1993; Shor, 1993). Empowering education is that which is democratic and transformative with regard to the relationship between learner and teacher, learner and learning, and learners and society (Jarvis, 1987; Shor, 1993). Since it is through education that culture is, in large part, constructed and perpetuated within a society; it may, also, be that pedagogy provides the potential for culture and identity to be transformed. However, this would require education to occur, predominantly, outside state institutions of “schools”, which tends toward maintaining the status quo, to other environments of learning and teaching, such as community settings and/or alternative schools. This is particularly true, when one observes the intrusion of large corporate entities investing directly into colleges and universities so that we have things like the “Royal Bank” Library. These financial influences will also be able to shape education in schools to suit narrow corporate needs. It does seem to shudder back to the notion that the most powerful within a culture are able to shape the idea of “normalcy” within a particular society.

In traditional liberal education, culture and social identities are invented through meanings and language from the top down with the educational structural hierarchy (Freire, as cited in Shor, 1993). Culture becomes something objectified, and commodified (Dicker, 1994; Giroux, 1993) through “official knowledge” such as classical Western literature, art, theatre, etc. The learner becomes a passive recipient of this “constructed” knowledge. This relationship may be accentuated in the situation of new immigrants wanting to “fit in” to the predominant culture. In the process, their own culture, and identity may become misplaced or lost (Pedersen & Pedersen, 1984). The models of

identity development, described earlier, would support this. It can be seen that should an individual get “stuck” at one of these developmental stages within the cultural identity models the skewing of their world view would also result in distorted perceptions (Cass, 1979; Sue & Sue, 1990).

According to Westwood and Borgen (1988) there is “an apparent lack of programs that translate this understanding [intercultural communication] into effective practice” (p.115). Communication competence has been defined as;

...the ability to function in a manner that is perceived to be relatively consistent with the needs, capacities, goals, and expectations of the individuals in one’s environment while satisfying one’s own needs, capacities, goals, and expectations (Ruben, cited in Westwood & Borgen, 1988, p.117).

This definition seems to fit Ishiyama’s (1995b) dimensions for facilitating cross-cultural communication, which include

...affiliation/support, social relaxation, interaction management, interaction posture, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, orientation to knowledge, knowledge of the culture of the other, tolerance for difference and awareness of personal boundaries (p.264).

Cross-cultural and diversity education seem to take learners as the educator finds them (Acton, 1997). There is limited attempt at going back in the learner’s history before moving forward. How does this make the learner feel? What does this mean for the student? There seems to be little attempt at incorporating the immigrant’s home culture with the new host culture to create a cultural “bridge” between the two.

In the process of learning cross-cultural competency, or acculturation, there is a stage of unlearning before re-learning can occur. In some literature there seems to be only

passing mention of this (Christensen, 1992; Taft, 1977). It seems unclear what role, if any, unlearning plays in the process of cross-cultural learning and the effect upon identity transformation.

Davidson (1995) and Sork (1988) claim that in planning programs there may not be opportunity to involve the potential learners in the planning of programming, however, with cross-cultural interventions I would consider the participants' input of paramount importance for inclusion in order to be sure that the needs (both, personally, historically and culturally rooted and the more current ascribed and felt requirements) are accurately addressed prior to the learning intervention taking place. This is an ethical dimension that seems to be addressed in the literature from a Western, white, straight, male perspective (or the predominant cultural view) which may or may not be accurate. In the programming literature it appears to be that education is something done to someone else by another (Adams, 1991; Davidson, 1995; Jarvis, 1987; Sork, 1988; Sork & Caffarella, 1989).

The constructivist view of meaning is considered to be a social process rather than an individual one. This creates a need for the learning environment to be collegial, and cooperative, as opposed to a more "expert-driven" and hierarchical one (Todd, 1994). New learners, who are also immigrants to this country, may become overwhelmed during the learning intervention, having expectations raised and left unrealized, while at the same time having meanings distorted as a result of a mainstream representative directing the process of acculturation. This may come through in the participants' wishes to "please" the instructor so as not to dishonour him/her or the instructor's teaching efforts. Some of this was felt when Jasmine, from Taiwan, would ask how she should answer in order to assist me and my study. Any identity changes, as a result of an "expert-driven" or "autocratic" program, and the resultant meaning of the transformed identity may only be superficial. Immigrants' identities could wind up being something more shallow in order to appease

and meet the approval of the educator, therefore, not fully incorporated into their view of themselves in the world. The “good immigrant” identity would be worn like a mask as though it remained something outside of the newcomers, themselves, and worn when required. As Todd (1994) states,

We change a culture by generating a new one: by entering into new forms of interaction; by engaging in new activities; and by using new tools and instruments to develop different practices. The recognition - better, affirmation - of difference is intrinsic to this process. We need to *hear* different viewpoints from different voices if we are to undertake even the first step of entering into new forms of interaction; and this is a process leading in directions which we cannot fully predict, for the process of participating in such interactions [cross-cultural programs] and activities also changes us” (p.114).

Westwood and Borgen (1988) say that communication breaks down when the transmission of meaning from sender to receiver is distorted as a result of the decoding system which is synonymous with, and mediated by, the perceptual system. In cross cultural programming it is readily apparent, through differing world views, that there will be potential, if not a reality, for much distortion between the program facilitators and the learners. When there is loss of meaning occurring, as a result of communication distortion, there is created a level of defensiveness for both the receiver and sender (Dornyei, 1995; Westwood & Borgen, 1988). This becomes particularly acute when people from widely diverse cultures try to learn within one educational environment. With distortion so potentially prevalent it would seem prudent to ensure that meanings are made as clear as possible and discussed fully among all learners. In this way learners have better opportunities for formulating authentic cultural identities that suits their individual or group purposes.



It is not so much the teacher who teaches, but the learner who learns (Taft, 1977). However, it is also the teacher who can stifle the process of learning from taking place. Divergent cultures working upon one another are a source of interference as well.

A method described by Mezirow (1978) by which perspectives, or world views, could be transformed relies upon the concept of “disorienting dilemmas” (p.106). These dilemmas are socio-cultural, epistemic, or psychological events which serve to bring to our consciousness cognitive dissonance. The source of this distortion is through the way we perceive the world. In order for the perspective or world view to be changed, reflective or communicative action must take place. A central theme in Mezirow’s (1978) writing and his “learning theory” is the concept of internalized meaning for the learner. Perspective transformation “theory” has much to offer in providing a way of informing how cultural boundaries become crossed effectively, with identities intact. This will be explored later in this chapter.

### Cross-Cultural Counselling

The uniqueness of the cross-cultural counseling dynamic provides many challenges and wonderful opportunities for progress. You, the reader, should remember, from earlier in this thesis, that ‘culture’ was broadly defined to include, not only colour and ethnicity, but also personal aspects such as religion, birth order, gender, and sexuality. The broadening of the definition of ‘culture’ serves to take into consideration the whole person who is seeking re-integration of the aspects of their identity. The re-integration is to bring back into focus the person’s sense of who they are, after the shock of having their identity jarred out of synch as a result of becoming caught between the grind of two shifting cultures.

Within the counseling relationship, between therapist and one who is sorting themselves out during a period of culture shock, the dynamic becomes challenging because the counsellee will draw from one or other or combination of parts of their cultural background while addressing particular culture shock issues (Pedersen, 1997). When more than one cross-cultural counsellee meets with a counselor this dynamic becomes compounded dramatically (Dillard, 1983).

To begin with, in establishing the cross-cultural counseling relationship, the counsellor's background has to be taken into account. The literature highlights the notion of counselor bias or 'encapsulation' (Pedersen, 1997). In very simple terms, encapsulation, is when one person observes and evaluates the world, including other people, using, only, the observer's own cultural perspective (Pedersen, 1997, p.14). Someone who has a background from within a specific culture's mainstream perspective and who observes someone not of the mainstream, but of some marginalized, minority culture within the same specific culture, and who evaluates the latter culture through only the mainstream cultural lens--as though that was the only culture that mattered -this is encapsulation. A particular person, is therefore, defining the world according to one defining set of cultural assumptions and stereotypes that have become highly entrenched and more important than any other set of cultural assumptions.

With culture shock it is the undermining of someone's world view or cultural assumptions--once solidly defined--being forced to crack and crumble in order to grow and expand (Zapf, 1991). Mezirow (1981) describes how encapsulation can become shaken to allow growth and a more inclusive, of other worldviews, perspective.

Encapsulation is when we become fixed within our own particular cultural lens to the exclusion of others' specific views. There is no responsibility to try to interpret others'

experiences from others' experiences. There remains an impasse which the therapist or counsellor cannot traverse the cultural bridge to understand the experience and perspective of the counsellee. The person going through culture shock becomes an "object" being observed and something to which the therapist applies their therapy (Trevino, 1996).

To help alleviate the automatic and exclusive reliance upon our own worldview, there are processes that can be done. The counsellor can work on their notion of 'knowledge' to enlarge the boundary of this concept to go beyond relying on rationality to including affectivity, emotion, intuition, spirituality, story-telling, and personal experience (Ponterotto, 1996). Within Western society creation of knowledge can often become synonymous with 'rational', 'objective' fact. There are many more ways of knowing as well as forms of knowledge which are not so easily measured (Belenky et al, 1997). These other forms can be more powerful and relevant, yet, are often made to appear irrelevant and deemed without value.

Another aspect to breaking encapsulation is through other cultures, not of a western philosophy, placing a greater importance upon relationships than upon the individualistic self (Dillard, 1983; Pedersen, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990). Coupled with this is the almost exclusive reliance upon Western mental health theories to 'fix' people of a non-Westernized worldview (Sue, 1996). 'Westernized' theories also are equated with a heterosexual, masculinist encapsulated lens with which many counselors seem to rely (McLellan, 1995). This seems to presuppose a 'neutrality' and a misleading 'objectivity' which the 'other-cultured', confused person experiencing culture shocked person must navigate to 'reach' the counselor, at a time when the counselor needs to not only reach out to the counsellee but work to understand--and show to the counsellee that they are being understood and not the other way around (Trevino, 1996).

Pedersen (1997) identifies some notions which contribute to a racist therapeutic practice. However I would broaden these concepts to oppressive therapeutic practices. These include: counselors often assuming that simply their good intentions makes them helpful; some counselors believe that they can counsel people from any background--they have made no effort to experience, address and name their biases because they feel they have few or no preconceptions; many counselors are not only ineffective but can be very harmful while working with minority clients because they overlook or discount special circumstances that influence both the behavior and adjustment of clients experiencing the crossing of cultures; and lastly the tendency of some counselors to rely almost exclusively upon 'either/or' or 'if/then' thinking which is deeply embedded within Western, rational thought (Mezirow, 1981). This sort of cognition lends itself to racism. This sort of thinking reduces the broader world into very linear, and black/white thinking. To my way of being--and being the focus of many oppressive homophobic attacks, I am sensitive to the world of grey we all live within. That is not to say that I am capable of working with all people, regardless of the population a person may come from. For example, I would find it very difficult to work with someone who was busy discounting me as simply a 'faggot'. I find it difficult to work with people who contain a deep hatred of others not like themselves. I prefer working with people who may be confused or wish to work on some aspect of themselves, either alone or within a group. I inform people that I do not mysteriously hold the answers but that each person holds the key to the issues they face. My role is to help with the process of uncovering the answer. This may not suit people who prefer to be told what the 'right answer' is and so what I do may not be of great benefit to them. That does not mean that they may not receive any benefit, but that it could be greatly reduced. This would be discussed up front with the person--as it was in this study. Jasmine was looking for answers that I was to direct her way. She wanted to know how she could best answer or

tell her story in order to get 'the right answer from me'. When I told her that I did not hold the answer but that if she turned her own eyes inward and did not blink or keep her eyes closed while being honest with herself, she would find what she was seeking. This, as was described earlier, is also in keeping with both Gestalt and feminist therapies.

Encapsulation occurs, also, when we assume that only a 'pure' discipline of psychology is best when working with people. Just as people are multi-faceted, with one or more sources of oppression working against them, so it is important to engage as many sources of discipline, or interdisciplinarity to deal with the various oppressions working upon the kaleidoscope of one's identity (Pedersen, 1997). The use of psychology, discussion, art, reflection, music, and visualization allowed each person, within this study, to explore themselves through a variety of ways and perspectives—even though our presence to one another remained somewhat constant.

The relationships we had with one another were not filled with scientific and rational 'jargon'. They were filled with stories and experiences embraced by feelings and emotions. If we relied upon jargon--which is the invention of a particular occupational culture - then the relationships would have been marked by distance and not cohesion.

I feel that I contain a lot of sensitivity and compassion for those found in highly emotional and challenging circumstances. I also contain homophobia. I contain racism. I contain bias. I contain hatred. So does everyone. Often people are afraid to admit it. Why is that? Because many people are afraid to show weakness. People feel shame. And shame is a tool for control. However, to be as effective a counselor and/or teacher as can be, there must be recognition that we feel these things (Corey, 1991). To deny these things only illustrates encapsulation. It does not mean a simple recognition and acceptance of them--the biggest process for a counselor or teacher is to continually work upon broadening their

own inclusivity (Corey, 1991). Encapsulated teachers and therapists tend to believe strongly that they do not contain biases; that they believe in a 'colour-blind' world--with themselves free of racism (Sue & Sue, 1991).

Pedersen (1997, p. 34) highlights 'devaluing' of alternative therapeutic/educational intervention through the example of visualization. He shows that visualization and a more holistic approach to mental health, though very beneficial, appear generally as 'footnotes in the more traditional counseling literature'.

And for many non-Western cultures, it is this internal visualization which people of these cultures draw upon (Dillard, 1983). There are cultures where there are few professional counselors to help with identity issues so people of these cultures have been culturally taught to seek help by going inside themselves, or exploring their life history (which is a series of stories passed from one generation to another), as well as the experiences that they have gone through, which they have turned into stories, 'listening' to their ancestors, or remembering lessons conveyed by their elders. (Dillard, 1983; Sue & Sue, 1990)

Because culture contains the communication needed to perpetuate a system of knowing and interpreting the world, meaning-making is key. Culture allows the participants within a specific context to not only understand the behaviours of others but also the expectations that they anticipate lie behind those behaviors (Pedersen, 1997). This is in keeping with a social constructivist or interpretivist view of the world (Boshier, 1994). Both are needed to create meaning. The social constructivist view allows a group of people to create 'structures' of discourses which create commonly-held meanings among people. However, the interpretivist view, exemplified by Mezirow, proposes that each

individual creates meaning of their unique worlds for themselves (Boshier, 1994; Mezirow, 1981). It is both that are needed for meaning. I don't see combining the two as conflicting but complementary.

In order to reduce conflict between counselor/educator and the members of a group, from different cultural backgrounds there are several key dynamics that should be evident. As with our group, the status of each group member and facilitator was relatively equal (recognizing my more evident power as a function of being facilitator); the social climate we created within each session was positive, supportive, and safe; the contact among ourselves was deep, meaningful, and profound as opposed to something casual and fleeting; and our time together was rewarding for each of us with everyone having the opportunity to give and take in order to foster personal understanding and growth (Pedersen, 1997, p. 51).

For Asian cultures, there is both duty and honour to each person's existence (Dillard, 1983). When there is a birth, that infant carries all the previous lives of its ancestors within its body, mind, and spirit (Dalton, 1994). Each person is, therefore, duty bound to honour the memories of its predecessors and to ensure the memories and honour of their forbears does not become tarnished so

### Art Therapy

In deciding what method I would rely upon I, initially, fell back to what I knew best and what I was most comfortable with. In my case it was art, generally, and theatre, more specifically. However, theatre, is far more involved - including movement, voice, space, time, character, scene development, and so on. In my mind something more in line with doctoral work.

I wanted to remain within the aesthetic, and through the literature settled upon painting; in this case watercolour. Through an art therapy workshop I took part in I found that sculpture was a more deliberate, conscious medium remaining more on the surface, dealing with the texture of things. The use of sandplay (making patterns in the sand) was used for control and soothing reasons. Other forms such as cooking, sewing, needlework were meditative, therapeutic and relaxing. These all made some moves toward the subconscious but not focusing in upon the area of exploration of this study. I was looking for something more.

Exploring clay, I found it's tactile qualities had me thinking of childhood and earlier times. I was told it was a medium used for working through anger and aggression. As such, it has a tie to releasing physical feelings. Drawing with pencils, markers, or pastels were used for people who needed a lot of control in their lives because of fears and anxieties they faced.

As I explored painting, I found the colours immediately drew me to different feelings and emotions. As was mentioned, in the workshop the liquidity of the paints and the use of water generally were seen as being signs of sadness, letting go and grieving. With the experience of crossing cultures, and the attached shock of living within the unfamiliar much of what faces people was a letting go of things familiar and grieving for the loss of their ethnic and cultural home country and, as such, large sources of identity validation. Colours tended to have a very universal language of their own as well, in that a particular colour would symbolize similar emotions, things or events within people's lives, regardless of culture (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994; Hupka, Zaleski, Otto, Reidl, & Tarabrina, 1997; Wills, 1993). Some quick examples included red symbolizing blood, war, masculinity; green symbolizing growth as in plants; blue symbolized the sky and space; and black symbolized death and mourning (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). I chose



watercolours because of the above reasons, in particular, but also for practical reasons as well. Acrylic or oil paints were harder to clean, maintain, and work with. They were also more expensive than watercolours.

Looking at the history of art therapy, and its relatively recent development, I found that it had been used from its earliest time in medical settings. In its earliest days, art therapy was used during and after World War Two when artists visited hospitals to help long-term care war veterans alleviate the boredom of recuperating (Case & Dalley, 1992). Doctors began analyzing patients' artworks to understand the patients' states of mind. "Art therapy", the term, was coined in 1942 by artist Adrian Hill, to describe the work he was doing at the King Edward II Sanatorium in Sussex, England (Waller, 1993). He found that painting not only helped to pass the time, but the painting process allowed for the expressing of feelings and emotions associated with loss, trauma and grieving. This history helped shape the traditional uses to which art therapy has been put - that of a medical one.

The history of art therapy continued from these first days through to the present within the medical milieu, in that the art was a way to analyze or diagnose someone, then fix someone because of some identified deficiency or problem, whether because of illness, death, or injury (Case & Dalley, 1992). Within this study, art "therapy" was moved out of the medical setting and placed within a community education setting in order to give people an opportunity to clarify their identities as a result of the shuffling experience of culture shock.

The art therapists of the 1950's through to the 1970's were criticized for thrusting themes upon their clients or groups, rather than allowing the group to raise their own topics for exploration (Waller, 1993). The small group I worked with would generally raise their own topics in later meetings. In the early sessions I would raise topics until the group

members naturally took over the process and used the space and time to explore for themselves, in their own terms, issues most relevant to them. The use of themes within art therapy was considered a way of containing the anxiety of what to paint; it gave the opportunity to focus the projection found within their minds, as representations, on to paper (Case & Dalley, 1992).

Within art therapy, as in Gestalt, and some feminist therapies, there was a strong anti-verbal tradition in that art therapy regarded explanation and/or interpretation with extreme suspicion (Case & Dalley, 1992; Hogan, 1997; Zinker, 1978; McLellan, 1995). The suspicion was that once something was named, those in authority were then able to manipulate and control it while censoring out possible competing knowledges. However, the use of colour, space, shapes and lines could be incorporated to give general impressions of art without turning interpretations into prescriptive exercises. These findings could not, then, be used for any predictive power in order to control people's lives. Instead, the facilitator's role was added to the participants as one with them (Case & Dalley, 1992; Zinker, 1978). While there may have been an expectation of the facilitator's voice taking precedent, ideally, that was not the case here. The literature showed that with few exceptions, colours, the use of lines and space held similar meanings (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). With the study I provided these universal symbolic meanings for illustration purposes only - and only after the artist had interpreted their own work.

A basic assumption supporting art therapy was that it was a kind of "safety net" for projections and that these images held meaning and value not only for the person but for the group (Zinker, 1978). I would extend this assumption - that images and the result of art making conjured meaning for any one who observed it being careful that "the eye that has looked on an object in the light of certain assumptions became a biased witness when that object presented in a different light for a different purpose" (Barzun, 1974).

People who participated in art therapy were relieved to know that the facilitator's expectations was not for the participants to please the group leader on some level but the efforts of the group were focused upon the participants recognizing their own needs and emotions - and resolve some of their own inner questions or conflicts (Case & Dalley, 1992).

Another fundamental assumption was that each person constructed their own, individual inner world and because of their self and their unique perception created their own version of "reality" and "truth". Perception was reality within this interpretivist paradigm of being in the world (Boshier, 1994; Zinker, 1978). Because of the inner world and one's unique views and actions out into the outside world, the inner self is continually being reconstructed in reaction to the experiences with others "out there" (Hogan, 1997). This, in turn, determined the individual's view of themselves and of others - thereby affecting the expectations and selves of other people. This was congruent with Sartre's notion of the "gaze" and Foucault's "panopticon", discussed earlier. Within art therapy, the participant gradually realized how inner assumptions, such as those identified through Gestalt therapy, determined how one's interaction patterns develop (Fryrear & Corbit, 1989).

Art therapy, like Gestalt, was a counselling technique based upon humanistic and existential/phenomenological philosophies (Waller, 1993). Five concepts were identified as being central to this style of therapy of aesthetics: human actions were not predetermined - freedom was part of the human condition; there was an importance of choice within human life; it is essential to take responsibility for one's actions; death was inevitable and the fact that everyone died could give meaning to their lives and how we lived them; people would be engaged in a creative search for individual patterns that would give meaning to our existence and our continually emerging and changing identities

(Fischer, 1973; Hogan, 1997; Lindauer, 1998; Zinker, 1978). As in Gestalt, art therapy took place in the present; dwelling on the past, in the past tense, or planning for the future were not encouraged; being drawn from only sparingly (Zinker, 1978). Both these temporal considerations were only relevant in terms of how they inform the present.

The element of "play" or fun within art making would lighten the seriousness, intensity, and intentionality of reflection (Fryrear & Corbit, 1989) The more people let go, the more fun occurred and the greater the receptivity to creativity and learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1997). The art process also allowed the group process to develop more quickly. The art itself provided a more concrete visibility, availability, and tangibility for all group members. The imagery left behind after the painting sessions (in my instance, I took pictures of the art and returned the originals back to the respective artists) provided value for the group members to reflect back upon the work (Case & Dalley, 1992; Waller, 1993; Zinker, 1978). The art acted as a reminder of the process, like footprints showing the group where they had come from all the while, not knowing where they were headed. And that was okay; the group could concentrate more on the series of steps, or the path than where the journey led. The art pieces also acted as a catalyst for change for the group or its individual members (Waller, 1993). The catalyst served to avoid placing the focus upon an individual or on any specific content of a particular session (Fryrear & Corbit, 1989).

As the art group developed and grew it became marked by a high degree of autonomy (this is discussed more fully in Chapter Four). With the group I invited to participated, I was fairly directive at the beginning to help establish the rough process, and structure. As the group became more comfortable with, both, my role as a "hands off" facilitator or "leader" was challenged - as it should have been - these art groups became autonomous not requiring a so-called leader for the workshop sessions (Waller, 1993). Near the end of the group workshops, suggestions I may have made were challenged or

ignored in favour of the participant's own ideas. Rather than assume that I was an ineffective "leader" or facilitator this highlighted for the group that the art process and any initial guidance I offered provided the foundation for members to take control for all aspects of their art, their creative process, and for the group. As they became more and more independent as members of a group. This independence developed within each other's broader life as well. Multicultural counselling also looks toward art, or what this literature refers to as "projective" methods. Three potential ways of exploring culture shock are alluded to as potentials; the Rorschach test, Thematic Apperceptions (pictures are presented to the client and they construct a story based upon the picture), and early childhood memories (Dana, 1998). The latter, multicultural counsellors believe, holds the greatest possibilities. My study draws from participants their histories to tap into what Dana (1998) believes will allow me to better understand the participants' general interpretation of the world, their world views and attitudes toward relationships, their sense of self, their emotional expressiveness, and general coping strategies (Pedersen, Draguns, & Lonner, 1989). Rather than present pictures to the women to have them describe stories which may or may not be directly related to their experience of immigration, I feel that having them draw their own pictures and tell their own stories will have a much stronger effect upon their making sense of the world.

For Zinnia, she had made a decision that she was going to find a job before the series of sessions ended - and did it with two weeks to spare. She found herself what she considered a perfect job for her and was thrilled - as the whole group was - celebrating with her. Jasmine decided, as part of the Epilogue, in Chapter Six, to move out on her own and find her own apartment, not relying upon others. It would be interesting to see if she stayed within her own Chinese community or ventured out into another area of the city - as she had suggested she would in an early art session.

For most people, born in Canada, neither of these decisions may appear very bold or profound - yet for two people new to this country, knowing no one from their home culture, and still learning about the broader society, here, these were life-shifting events. Both signs of autonomy - in part, as reflected through their work, during their paintings and group discussions and the later reflections upon their art.

To reflect to the members any change in identity that might have occurred during the time spent in the group I looked for something that could be compared over time. The exercise chosen was the "Body Image" paintings. This was a life sized painting of the member's own bodies (Waller, 1993). Brown parcel paper, approximately three feet wide and eight feet long, was provided for each group member and the facilitator. Each person, in turn, laid upon their parcel paper in a position they felt best represented how they saw themselves at that moment in time. The other two took a large tip felt marker and drew around the person on the paper in a body outline. We each took turns until we each had our own body outline. The group members, then, painted in the body outline how they saw themselves at that moment in time. This was done in the first and last painting sessions with the paintings done in the intervening workshops plotting the path navigated from the first body painting to the second. All the body paintings hung together formed the group portrait of individuals. The art remained as a concrete record of movement in time and space which could not be forgotten.

The most important aspect of images was that they conjured up many meanings at different levels as time and space change. While reflecting the culture within which each participant was encapsulated - in this case Australia, Taiwan, and Canada - all the art was created within Canada, specifically a classroom within a community centre within a neighbourhood called Kitsilano, within a city on the West coast of Canada called Vancouver - we were able to "converse" on such a deep and profound level through art. As

such, images had a particular association for the artist while they were being made. This could change over time as the image took on a new and different significance through the passage of time, increased insights, and the gaining of further understanding (Anderson, 1989). From a psychoanalytic perspective the encouragement of the process of pictorial expression of inner experience was seen as a process of spontaneous imagery released from the unconscious (Lyddiatt, 1971) - or the releasing of a picture from the private, oftentimes hidden self, to the public self and beyond.

The issues of transference and counter-transference were central within art therapy. Transference was when a person transferred strong, raw feelings that originated from childhood experiences on to the facilitator or therapist (Corey, 1991; Case & Dalley, 1992). Even though we were exploring childhood stories I did not feel that this would be an issue, yet I would remain open to the possibility of that happening. I believed that the transference would be on to the paper through the paint and not on to me.

Counter-transference was similar to transference. The image was the catalyst for the relationship. Counter-transference was when the facilitator's own feelings were placed upon the image to form meaning (Case & Dalley, 1992). A caution with regard to counter-transference was that the therapist's feelings might result in a defensively evasive reaction back to the group member's own feelings, destroying the efficacy of the painting sessions (Case & Dalley, 1992). A large part of the process that had to be negotiated was the understanding of how this process of communication involving myself and the group members and the image was going to occur.

The value of using art as an experiential way of teaching was that aesthetics allowed the group members to overcome the difficulty in speaking because of illiteracy, language dysfluency, or biological inabilities. The use of concrete imagery and pictures as

a language was more universal than abstract letters and words. Across cultures, symbols convey similar messages (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). Pictures provided far more potential and freedoms than the limiting, delimiting and exclusionary nature of words, which were necessarily bounded by culture. The use of art could speed up the progress of what was achieved over more traditional "talking heads" because art was so evocative, feelings and emotions could be gotten in touch with in a more intense, meaningful way (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Lubart & Getz, 1997). Through painting and discovering as perceptions unfold, the artist and participant developed a trust in what they observed around them. Aesthetics encouraged creativity, imagination while promoting a healthier, more fully developed sense of self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1997).

In our society we lived as one of many categories of things and people, constantly trying to make room for and conform to labels (Camus, 1982). Even if the group perceived they were rebelling against a category, the participants were still reliant upon labels. By being opposite something the women were still labeling themselves (Cooke, 1997). Then we entered a mode of being that did not rely upon words - and therefore categories and labels held a lesser importance - and this could be extremely uncomfortable and disorienting (Caputi, 1996; Cooke, 1997; Jolley, Zhi, & Thomas, 1998). Names for things and words delineated, and therefore allowed, for the controlling of people, objects, and people as objects. Not having access to this could feel very threatening and destabilizing. The converse may be true - that we may actually ignore feelings we experienced, because we did not have the words for them. However, that did not make the feeling, or the effects of these emotions any less real (Jolley, Zhi, & Thomas, 1998; Lubart & Getz, 1997).

In addition to painting I also incorporated the use of music (world music, jazz, classical, and soundscapes) because this encouraged all of us to remain focused in the present moment of painting and less on what the painting "should" look like (Gawain,



1995; McNiff, 1998; Zinker, 1978). Music played upon our creative, intuitive, emotive brain while minimizing our logical, verbal, censoring brain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Gawain, 1995). This provided, for the study group, a much more active, whole-body approach to what we did and how we did it. We would stand, squat, kneel, sit, pace all the while with the music urging us on in our journey and our selves floating along for the ride. "Creative visualization is especially good when used by a group, because the group energy tends to support the others, and in this case the whole becomes more than the sum of the parts" (Gawain, 1995).

Most people experience blocks to their creativity. I think of it as the two sides, the logical and creative, battling it out for control. Some of the experiences that were encountered navigated as "blocks" included: fear of failure; reluctance to "play" because someone felt or feared they looked foolish or silly (after all adults have outgrown "all of that" when they reach puberty...right??!!); a fear of failure to see one's own strength or weakness; held an over-certainty and reliance upon established formulaic problem solving strategies; or wanted to avoid frustration because of existing intensive ambiguity (Zinker, 1978). People, often, find ourselves bound by the custom of the way things are "always done"; having the ability to fantasize and/or imagine "schooled" out, because of the over-emphasis upon rationality, empiricism, and logic as well as the over-valuing of the "objective", "real world", or "common-sensical" while ignoring or demeaning the inner images and visualizations we experience of ourselves (Mezirow, 1981). Many people seem to hold a deep fear of the unknown, needing to bring balance and avoid chaos. For some they can encounter a reluctance to exert influence over another or be seen as pushy because "polite" sensibilities may this as being "oppressive",. The group practiced this very thing on a daily basis in subtle ways, being comfortable with the knowledge while having a reluctance to "let go" (if there was a lot of investment of time, and energy;

psychologically, emotionally, and cognitively people will retain beliefs, almost blindly at times) (Mezirow, 1995). Some people in the group preferred to let the passage of time direct the process perhaps because of an under-developed emotional life or an unintegrated yin/yang in that there was no examination of opposites which might have been taken as the only options available (male/female, young/old, native/immigrant, as examples); or not using or relying upon our own primary senses as a way of knowing (Fenner, 1996). What, at times, Jasmine was looking for was permission to be granted by another "authority," allowing them to be fully creative and expressive. Art making and art therapy did this while providing the space and time to do so (Fenner, 1996; Fryrear & Corbit, 1989; McNiff, 1998; Zinker, 1978). As a way to bridge disciplines, while "healing", was the relatively recent development within feminist art therapies.(Hogan, 1997). Today art therapists, working with specific groups, (specific racial groups, for example, or single-sex groups) attempt to integrate their practice with social theory. This has been done in a number of ways, with themes in art therapy to address specific issues (blackness, single parenthood, AIDS and so on). The client was not seen as an individual neurotic, but as a person negatively affected by social norms which may not have been rational, constructive or positive. (Hogan, 1997, p.27-28).

Some feminists have evaluated the work of some politically minded art therapists and have now developed and adopted strategies to politicize their cause through art, because many women understood the power imbuing political message with emotion. "We must ensure that art therapy practice continues to challenge those social and cultural conditions which pathologise women and cause distress" (Hogan, 1997, p.19). This made political power an equal outcome in conjunction to the force of clarification or "healing" for, not only women, but other marginalized groups. I fear that used in this way the

political overpowers everything else. I do feel that art therapy does have a wonderful empowering effect for those who turn to it for energy, clarification, and even healing. Politics raised a noise that could, simply, replace one source of oppression with another. People could only become free on their own terms - not on the terms of another force - political or otherwise. When art therapy became a "rallying cry" it grew scarier to me in that the walk toward indoctrination could not be that great a distance. In this study, I did my best to withdraw and take a back seat during the latter half of the workshop sessions to allow the participants free reign over their work, the process, and the outcomes. I admit it did become a tension that had to be examined; to allow total free reign could be just as destructive as guiding the process through a political lens.

### Summary

This literature review has been done to examine some of the dynamics surrounding the overarching issue of; *"How do 'social strangers' come to understand the meaning of their 'identities- in-transition' during the experience of reflection during an eight week painting workshop?"*. To place this discourse in some form of context, I provided a brief character sketch, through "tensions" that I contain, of myself so that you, the reader, could understand some of the facets of my "identity" behind the words. These dynamics were in the form of "tensions" I brought to the study. A detailed biography is captured in Chapter Two of this study. Some of the dynamics explored were the concepts of culture, language, identity, intersecting identities, cross-cultural programming and counselling,. With regard to methodological literature I reviewed, to some degree, areas of Gestalt therapy, art therapy, and cross-cultural therapy. Each of these components contribute to the overarching question, restated above, in that these elements need to be explored on their own within the literature and then together within the dynamic of a field study.

As a result of the preceding discussion and the rhetorical questions posed in the earlier sections some foreshadowing questions, for me to keep in mind, were raised which were explored during the field research and literature searches.

Questions which foreshadowed this study, remaining in my mind throughout, were:

- 1) How are objective and subjective aspects of home and host cultures seen by the learners?
- 2) How are the course dynamics (materials, facilitator, environment) seen as contributing to the meaning of cultural identity?
- 3) What feelings are attached to their cultural identity during transition?
- 4) How are metaphors, art forms and/or language used to delineate meaning?
- 5) How is meaning attached to the private and public cultural selves?

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **HOW TO GROW A VIBRANT GARDEN**

#### Overarching Question

*How do “social strangers” come to understand the meaning of their “identities- in-transition” during the experience of reflection during an eight week painting workshop?*

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe my experience of entering into a long-term same sex relationship which began on the internet between myself and another man who was 4000 miles away when we first met. This is described as a backdrop to the experiences of two people who had recently immigrated to Canada and their efforts to clarify their cultural identities. These two women had identities which were somewhat in flux because of changes they were experiencing as they moved from their home to their host culture. Helping participants with this process of transition was the use of the creative process as the group worked together defining themselves and projecting these interim images through paper and paint into pictures. This art work involved the perceptions, interpretations, meanings, and themes surrounding the participants’ experiences. In terms of a concrete focus, the illustrations also allowed for a pathway of sketches to “fall behind” as the participants made their way through their culture shock. The portraits aided in creating a cultural “mapping” for the participants’ movements as their identities evolved.

Once new, and presumably more encompassing world views or perspectives were developed, the women could put into action the new learning and knowledge they had created for themselves. This project is unique in that the study created a specific space and time to meaningfully listen to the, often, silenced voices of marginalized learners. Reaching out for help.

These voices could aid in enriching theory and future programs, alike, while assisting these learners in an embracing relationship often overlooked, or completely discounted.

The following discussion will describe concrete aspects of the study process. The literature review supporting the more abstract aspects can be found in Chapter Three while the field notes and personal reflections supporting the decisions I made can be found within Chapters Five and Eight. I raised some of the tensions brought with me on this trip and how these would be unpacked as we proceeded. My role was, then, described so that both you, the reader, and the women were clear on how I fit into the study. This allowed you to visualize how you can insinuate through these words, into the study.

The final discussion outlined the overall process, both graphically, and textually. As the words unfold you, I, and the participants know where we are, where we have travelled, and what can be expected, in general terms. It is from this point we move into Chapter Four. More about that at the appropriate time. Let's pick up the discussion at this point.

#### My Biases/Tensions and Their "Bracketing"

The biases that framed this study were many. My parents' backgrounds have created for me an extensive background in learning about more than one culture. This created, for me, a significant level of comfort while interacting with people from dissimilar backgrounds.

My being raised on a farm and being socialized in a small town (my first year of school was in a one room schoolhouse)/rural environment has imbued my personality, values, beliefs and ideation with a heightened sense of community and family (albeit it from a rather mainstream perspective as well). Having gone through identity transitions within my own life (Chapter Two) and currently being a person in the midst of a shift, again, I believed I would be sensitive to issues of other people experiencing dramatic changes in their lives.

My socialization had been somewhat mainstream growing up, however, for the past two years I find myself becoming increasingly marginalized because of my sexual minority status and economic position (Chapter Two). I do not identify or “fit in” with the gay culture nor am I accepted as a full member of the social and cultural “norm”. I am caught between borders in a kind of “no man’s land”. Experiencing this prejudice had instilled in me a high level of self-reliance and discipline; often demythologizing much of what I had been told about “how the world worked,” or my socialization, by those around me.

This, also, placed me in close proximity (spatially and temporally) to the participants. The danger was one of identifying too closely (being sympathetic as opposed to empathetic) with them, rather than maintaining some distance before, during and after the study. This was constantly checked through journalizing and having drafts read by an outside “disinterested” writing group ( my comprehensive exam study group).

As some participants could have, potentially, come from extreme conditions in their home country or family life, I was concerned with my being able to fully comprehend these circumstances. There was some concern that there was a problem with a researcher’s personal values interacting with what the research project accomplishes (Boshier, 1994). However, I felt that research could not be value free because of its necessarily involving people. In this instance I had decided to acknowledge my own biases, personal background so that you, the reader, can understand more about me, and through my voice understand what I perceived. It was also for this reason that the “data” collected appeared verbatim within Chapter Six. The voices within that chapter are the voices, directly, of the participants. In Chapter Seven, I made some rudimentary observations - as opposed to evaluations with regard to what is found in Chapter Four. However, as was pointed out, I did not presume to offer “the truth” about what I have experienced (Hammond, 1989). Truth was multi-faceted and not fixed, as well as very perishable. As circumstances changed so did the nature of what we thought of as truth.

Central to my life were “tensions” that constantly tugged at me as I experienced people, events, and situations. Describing these, with reference to my life review in Chapter Two, should clarify who I am and where some potential “blind spots” existed as I carried out this study. My place in society, has put me in a position where my existence has been shunned by many in this society has instilled within me a strong sense of self reliance and individuality. I have learned to love who I am for all my faults and strengths. I am somewhat reticent in new situations until I felt a level of safety and comfort. Some new situations have been easier than others. At the same time I have worked and learned best in groups because of my strong expectation that “the community” had to work together to live and thrive just as it has had to do in most rural settings. There can be a balance struck between being a strong individual within a collective or community setting. As the group changed so did the potential for throwing this balance off. I had experienced both and believed that I was able to strike this balance in my study group.

I am more of an intuitive, subjective learner as opposed to an objective, rational one. I could work in an objective environment yet am most comfortable in a subjective, intuitive context. There were times when both were called upon - presumably with a much greater emphasis on the intuitive processing. However, this was a preconception I had. I needed to reflect on whether I was allowing objectivity in where appropriate or allowing subjectivity to take over completely in the research process within this study.

Having been raised in a predominantly mainstream environment through to my teen years, yet living as an adult within a more marginalized position within society, I experienced both sides of the cultural gap. Also, with my intersecting aspects of identity positionality bridging cultural rifts (rural/urban, Eastern Canadian/West Coast Canadian, gay/straight, West Indian/White) I am faced with discrepancies between my “public” and “private” self. My public self, as perceived and reinforced by “others”, I feel, see, and identify myself as the former in each of the foregoing pairs of attributes. My life, thus far, has been navigating back and forth across



this gap pleasing “others” on one side and maintaining my semblance of who I am, on the other. I had to be diligent in recognizing which perspective I found myself relying upon, and why, as I worked with the participants within this study.

I had noticed in much of the research literature that sexuality was absent; heterosexuality was considered the only norm. Gays and lesbians fell somewhere in the data. Like Hunnisett (1990), I believe sexuality, gender, and sensuality had a place within research. Researchers seemed to strive to de-sex findings or interchange one sexuality with another, assuming there were only two sexual identities in the world. An heterosexual bias that has persisted. This study was somewhat unique in that it was authored by someone who acknowledges their homosexuality - and any attached biases reflected. I explored issues of sexuality among other aspects of cultural identity. If phenomenology was about intentionality and motivation why has the research literature been almost silent on one of the most powerful sources of motivation for humans? Sexuality was not about the sexual act in and of itself, but transcends the act to a world view; a perspective which was ever-present and was used throughout this study. My bias was the assumption of asexuality, or equating heterosexuality as “asexuality,” are both artificial and unnecessarily limit the richness of any results. This is a tension you, the reader, and I will be experiencing as we both proceed through this study together.

The social concepts of masculinity and femininity would be at play with one another. Sometimes they would be in harmony, most times not. At the root of this tension would be what defines these social constructs of masculinity and femininity. As I moved from one version of the gay culture in Toronto to that of Vancouver, the concepts of masculinity underpinning homosexuality in each of these milieus varied (Chapter Two). Coupled with this tension were various attempts I had made at “passing” as straight in order to lessen troubles within my own life. This had, I am sure, caused me to internalize aspects of heterosexism which may become highlighted as we passed through this study.

Along with a de-sexing found within research, generally, there seemed to be a dearth of emotionalism, another source of motivation or foundation of intention for people in social situations. I embraced emotionalism as human, this defines who I am. Despite the upbringing of my rather stoic, emotionally unavailable and disciplinarian father, my extensive experience in theatre had allowed me to free myself from that restraint and allowed me to rejoin myself back with my emotions in a more holistic manner. The process of cultural transitioning, as I have experienced it was wrought with emotion. To divorce emotion from this process and this study could be equated to flattening a finely etched crystal into a flat piece of glass. It can still be pretty but does it have the same substance, sparkle, and richness to it? The other stereotype was that emotionalism must be intense, up-front, and overwhelming. Much emotionalism can be very understated, just as strong, and yet subtle at the same time. A wonderful movie which epitomized emotionalism on a very understated scale, yet was overwhelming in its intensity, was "Babette's Feast." There was minimal dialogue (when there was it was in subtitles and was generally ignored by the viewer anyway) yet the virtuosity of emotion through the look [which Sartre (1943) had described at length], body language, and actions of the performers told a truly heart-warming story of gratitude. As you read these words before you I have tried to convey the same breadth and depth of emotion in a way that heightened and informed, more deeply, the story of the process which has unfolded before you (Heshusius, 1994).

Throughout this research there was a tension between the abstract and the concrete. The type written words (abstractions) on paper describing concrete experience, as evidenced through paintings (which are concrete). The physical works of art aimed to capture abstract thought processes, feelings, and experiences. Borrowing from a contemporary of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Antonin Artaud described as this,

The formula 'I am cold' which abstracts all the body sensation, all the actual and complex feelings connected with one's individual experience of such a physical state,

exemplified for Artaud the manner in which too glib a use of language desiccates experience and eventually makes people who rely on such modes of communication and thought lose contact with life itself. They seemed to him to substitute the mathematical formula, the abstract blueprint of experience for the complex fullness of the surging flood of existence in all its richness and complexity. (Esslin, 1976, p.69-70)

Throughout this thesis you may have noticed a struggle to keep things simple, and as concrete as possible. This required me to translate abstractions, where possible, to exactly what I meant in more concrete terms. I live comfortably in abstraction yet do need to continually ground myself in concrete experience.

As you, the reader, may have noticed, this thesis has unfolded as an extremely personal document in its tone and contents. This is intentional. My tension had become how much do I disclose to you, the reader, and how should it be done (Rosenau, 1992). Because I was learning as I carried out this study there were mistakes made, hopefully calculated ones. To not disclose relevant and significant information would not be fair to you, the reader, or to the women found among these pages. Yet, there was a level of confidentiality and, therefore, nondisclosure that had to be maintained as well. When the participants were discussed, I erred on the side of their protection and privacy; when it was regarding myself I erred on the side of you, the reader, and disclosed as much as I was comfortable revealing - and a tiny bit more. As I stated, I learned as I proceeded. I hope you, the reader, disclosed things to yourself perhaps you might not have thought of before. If that happened I have been partly successful. If I informed you about cultural identity transition as a result of my exploration in addition to your "self-disclosure" I consider myself wholly successful. The issue of disclosure, or not to, remained problematic (Peshkin, 1998) throughout this paper.

Coupled with disclosure and nondisclosure was the issue of writing explicitly/implicitly. Everything could not be made explicit (Hargreaves, 1996). What remained implicit? In order to clarify this dilemma I had been part of a thesis/major paper writing group who had helped me check for what I am assuming and perhaps should not be or, indicating where things may be able to be left unsaid.

The last tension I wanted to raise was the one around the whole issue of meaning. In phenomenology, generally, there was a tremendous importance placed upon having a specific meaning placed upon key words used throughout this study. Yet abstract concepts, words represent, are open to wide interpretation. For example, the concept of "Black race". Perhaps I could have used the "precise" definition of the "one drop rule" whereby one drop of Black (a problematic concept in itself) blood in a person's background would immediately "name" that person as being Black. What do I mean by Black? Is it African Black, Caribbean Black, South American Black, North American Black? How big is the drop of blood? This may seem absurd - and it is. The problem was we were dealing with perception and meaning. With regard to "race", I had discounted it as a concept, simply because it was now generally understood biologically as having no foundation (Boyd, 1996; Gardner, 1996). As discussed a little earlier, there was a discussion of multiple meanings for concepts, words, and experience versus having only one meaning. The problem became evident when definitions I chose to use were seen as irrelevant, at times, or not applicable to the women - who in turn might have many meanings for concepts being explored. Where possible I had written all of these down and mapped them for us to refer back to as we proceeded. Rather than have me predetermine the limits through imposed definitions, I looked toward the participants to supply these where I could.

What I have outlined, here, were the major biases and tensions that faced me as I entered into the research phase of this study. I used reflective journals and the insights of my writing group to help me navigate around the above mentioned blind spots.

### The Place of Study

The site selected was the Kitsilano Community Centre. This location was selected for a number of reasons; most of them based upon practicality. The centre itself had a number of rooms available for the study period. The price for four hours of time was \$17 (Figure 6) and for approximately 16 sessions this kept the most expensive component of the study to a minimum amount. Another consideration was the access through public transit. There were a number of buses which passed by the centre because the building was located a block off the main east/west bus route within the city. Located at the centre was ample parking should participants have chosen to drive to the sessions. The Kitsilano location was also centrally located within the city with about half an hour in each direction covering the area containing the areas of downtown, Kitsilano, the University of British Columbia, Commercial Drive (a large ethnic area), Chinatown, Richmond, and Surrey (also where there are large communities of people with various ethnic backgrounds).

## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS SOUGHT: RECENT IMMIGRANTS INTO CANADA

### UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MASTER'S STUDENT THESIS - CALL FOR VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS

A study is being carried out to explore the meanings immigrants give to their experience of crossing cultural borders. Also, this study will help the group of study participants make sense of this experience and the meanings identified and incorporate this learning into their new lives in Canada.

In order to complete the requirements of the Master's Degree in Adult Education and Counselling Psychology, this Master's student (candidate) is undertaking a study of the experiences of immigrants recently arrived into Canada on a permanent residency basis. Please find below the criteria for being considered for inclusion in the study. The method of exploration of experience of cultural transition will be through the medium of painting. Prior knowledge or education in painting is not being sought. In order to be considered for participation the following are the criteria:

- 1) Arrival into Canada on a permanent basis within the past 6-9 months (Between January 1, 1997 and June 30, 1997).
  - 2) Participation in a 8 week art therapy program of 2 evenings a week for 4 hours per session; producing at least 4 pieces of painting. Willing to interpret each painting orally. Time period of the study will be from January, 1998 to March 31, 1998.
  - 3) Willing to identify themselves according to their own specific demographic data such as gender, education, occupation, religion, etc.
  - 4) Willing and able to share in very personal experiences, emotion, thoughts and stories primarily on a one on one basis with the group facilitator.
  - 5) Willing to share the stories, interpretations and pictures with a group of approximately 8 other participant members and with the group facilitator.
  - 6) Be fluent in spoken English (either as their mother tongue or oral fluency in English as a second language; written English fluency is not a requirement for the study itself).
- All painting materials and meeting costs will be covered by the researcher.
  - No honorarium will be paid to participants in this research study.
  - The time required for each participant over the time period outlined above will 70 hours.
  - Participants must have access to meeting in the central Vancouver area (Kitsilano)

Please forward your name, phone number and your checked inventory (see below) to the following address in total confidence:

Steve Noble,  
Master's Candidate,  
Department of Educational Studies,  
University of British Columbia,  
Ponderosa G, 2844 Lower Mall,  
Vancouver, British Columbia,  
V6T 1Z3

Figure 6: Page one of Call For Participant Handout/Advertisement

**PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INVENTORY**

*Please check or circle those items that reflect your background characteristics:*

Gender: Male:      Female:

Sexual Orientation: heterosexual: homosexual: bisexual: transgendered:

Country Arriving from:

Country of Birth:

Country most lived in from birth to the age of 20:

Arrived in Canada as a: Landed Immigrant:      Refugee:

Religion:

Self-Described Social Class:

Self-Described Racial Group:

Self-Described Ethnic Background:

Disability type(s) - if any:

Marital Status: single: married/common-law: divorced: widowed:

Age:      \*

Lived in which region of country emigrated from: rural      urban

Birth Order: Oldest child      middle child      youngest child      only child

Occupation:

Date of Permanent Residency in Canada:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

*Those people not contacted or not included in the study will have their inventory returned to them to ensure their privacy and confidentiality is maintained.*

**Figure 7:** Page two of Call for Participants - Participant Background Inventory

The information regarding the study and the attempts to glean from the broadest population base as possible included the use of the Handout and Advertisement (Figures 6 and 7) which described the study, contact information, and a demographic checklist. These were distributed to immigration intake organizations, settlement houses, multicultural media organizations and newspapers ( a full detail of this search for participants has been described in Chapter Five).

Finally, conditions also included the participants being interested in creating and/or able to create as many original paintings as they wanted, and that they were at least orally fluent in English (either as a first or second language). Once a study cohort of three (including myself) was arranged, some time was spent with the participants at the research site to help the research group and myself become accustomed to one another and reduce “performance anxiety” and develop a good collegial relationship before proceeding.

### The Study Participants

The small group of people found within these pages, where possible, were drawn from the general population through the process of a few targeted special interest/cultural community newspapers (see Figure 9). Key attributes were those people who had immigrated to Canada within the last six to nine months and who were at least 21 years old at the time of their permanent entry into Canada. The reason for the six to nine month spread in time was, according to the literature, culture shock stages from beginning to end generally ran approximately one year for most people moving from one culture to another. The most intense period of time, emotionally, runs approximately from six to nine months (Zapf, 1991). There were social and personality variables which shortened or lengthened this seemingly normative time span. I wanted to focus on the time when the person experienced the most upheaval and uncertainty surrounding their identity. The number of people targeted for the group was ten. This seemed to be a little on the large side, however, if fewer joined the study that would fine as well because it would allow for the potential of a more in-depth study. Also, if ten had joined the group at the beginning, I thought that perhaps two or three would drop out early and this would have dropped the number down to a manageable cohort size. If participants had dropped out it would have been interesting to get an understanding as to why they had. However, this was not to be the case.



Reading Chapter Five, you, the reader, will better understand the efforts that I had made to get this group up and running. In the end, two participants were recruited in addition to my participation.

The people for the group were selected in the following manner. All had colour or ethnicity as an aspect of their cultural identity, however, other cultural attributes were searched for inclusion as well; religion (i.e. Jewish, Islamic, Hindu), age (young adult - 25/40, middle aged 40/60, and older 60+ were all be represented), various forms of disability, sexual identity (gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual), class (refugee/poor, professional, wealthy), and marital status (single, married, divorced/separated) (Figure 7).

#### Study Timeline

The timeline for this study was to carry out the literature review over a four month period (December to March 1997/98). This served the purpose of developing a solid understanding of issues surrounding culture, identity, and the movement of one's self concept between or among cultures. In addition, this was a period for me to become acquainted with what was needed to carry out the field elements. During this time period I had prepared and finalized my ethics review documentation, submitting it for approval, and receiving a request for amendments to my initial documentation. This was forwarded through a memo which resulted in my receiving final Ethics Approval in November, 1997.

The field research took place during the period February to June, 1998. Both the availability of participants and community centre rooms were easier to schedule during this time. Starting in late January, 1998 some time was made to allow me and the participants some opportunity to familiarize ourselves with one another, allowing for reflection prior to the program beginning, experimenting with the painting process, and the initial meetings. A way of reflecting was to invite each participant to create, through the painting process, a work of art

which, for them, best illustrated how they perceived their cultural identity. Each, then, wrote or orally taped a descriptive interpretation of how this art related to how they saw themselves.

At some point in June initial analysis began and continued until some point in late July, 1998. As dialogue was recorded and brought in, it was transcribed and some initial analysis done. This first treatment sparked further exploration and changes in the methodology (hence the emergent design concept).

The writing up of results, comparison with the literature, and implications began in early August and continued through to the beginning of September, 1998. The oral defense was carried out the beginning of November, 1998 to complete the study process.

#### My Role As Researcher/Participant

The relationship among and between participants and myself was that of co-discoverer, where the roles of observer/observed moved back and forth (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). The approach behind my role was that of "first learning" whereby I named my biases, background and history (Moustakas, 1995). Once done, these biases were, as much as possible, suspended or minimized so as to allow the total experience of the field and the participants to "wash" over me and become "unconditionally" taken in, observed, analyzed, reflected upon, and interpreted as though this was an unknown and novel event (to a significant degree it is) (Van Manen, 1994). There was as little judging/censoring taking place as possible. Rather, it was, as much as possible, a verbatim participating, recording, and experiencing exercise; one with the participants (Smith, 1988). There was the ideal of equality among myself and the participants, mindful of my responsibilities, and subject confidentiality.

To ensure confidentiality, private names, addresses, and phone numbers of the participants were codified. The names for the participants were jointly decided upon and agreed to everyone in the group. Only I had this code/participant information list. Any written materials

from the participants, i.e. written interpretations of paintings, were photocopied, coded and the originals returned to the participant. Tapes were coded and transcribed, and returned to the participants so that they could continue interpreting pieces of art as they were created through the upcoming workshop sessions. None of the original tapes were kept by me after the field work was completed. The pieces of art created and used within this study were photographed; the pictures were scanned into my thesis and appear, together, in Chapter Six. A select few pieces of art, namely the first and last body images and pivotal painting for each participant, were used in my defense, and then returned to the participants. I retained the pictures and the negatives for my personal archives. These were also coded and cross-referenced with other information gathered.

I was a colleague within a cross-cultural program as a co-learner, with the participants themselves. I set up the meeting spaces and times and supplied the materials. Much of what was discussed within the sessions were guided by the participants' needs at the time of the session. Some of the earlier sessions were "led" by me through particular subject areas I was intrigued to learn about, through their perspectives. Because the situation was new for all of us, there were varying levels of unfamiliarity with regard to the freedom the participants found they had. I had some advantage over the participants being from Canada, but shared in any feelings they had of "not belonging" or feeling "marginalized". I recorded my reflections and observations in my own journal as I proceeded along this journey and shared them with you, the reader, while continuing (Chapters Five and Eight). The participants received a typed transcript of all their interviews for verification. A copy of my thesis, in its entirety, was provided to the participants for their review and comment prior to the final thesis being turned in.

The relationship between myself and the participants was, as much as is possible, equal - recognizing the limitations of this with regard to field research (McPhail, 1995). Rather than considering the relationship as co-researchers, it was one of co-discoverers (Eisener, 1988). All

group members were working at recording impressions and thoughts on what they found, or discovered about themselves through the process of painting and through dialogue. Beyond that, the research was carried out by me.

### The Painting Process and Aspects of Art

Imagine yourself being asked by someone you have never met before, possibly even from a background completely unfamiliar from yours, ask you to paint something deeply and emotionally part of who you are. This is precisely what I had asked of my respondents. I asked them to paint the deeper aspects of who they were at various points within the timeline described above.

But, why use art? This is what this brief section will help to illuminate for you - why did I choose this process? Why did I choose painting, specifically? Through reading the literature connected to art therapy, and the process involved in engaging creativity for those who are not considered artistic, I have found the use of art as a way of bringing people together from very dissimilar backgrounds while helping to connect the group through a common language (Fenner, 1996; Hogan, 1997; McNiff, 1998).

The coupling of phenomenology with the use of the painting process worked to deepen the exploration into the unconsciousness of the people of the group (Zinker, 1978). There were three common points of contact; joining the philosophy of phenomenology with the action, thinking and emotionalism of the painting process (Quail & Peavy, 1994; Rhyne, 1970; Roje, 1994; Wadeson, 1980; Wilson, 1994). These three dynamics; beginning with everyday lived experience of the participant, directing the participants to renew their contact with that world. Phenomenology, like the painting process, was in large part, a process of relearning to see the world in a new, and more encompassing way (Quail & Peavy, 1994).

Phenomenology did not have as its aim to represent the world in an “accurate” way so much as to renew the contact of a person within their world (Roje, 1994). Both painting and phenomenology involved practices of description and interpretation of the lived world (Wadeson, 1980). This was done, in both instances, from the subjective view of, respectively, the artist and the researcher. Painting was an organized expression of how it felt to live in life; so it was with phenomenology. Because both were creative endeavours there was a tension continuing throughout the study of process versus product (Montgomery-Whicher, in press). The processes of learning and discovery were extremely important, however, as the study drew to a close, it became equally important to be able to present this new learning and discovery in a way that best portrayed the evolution contained within the study.

The tension between process versus product was eased somewhat knowing that art and phenomenology allow for a large degree of flexibility within their concepts (Quail & Peavy, 1994). Both allowed for creating new forms, the facilitation of the process, and product to become more aligned with one another (Montgomery-Whicher, in press).

Living as a human being means creating meaning, not the discovery of it (Wadeson, 1980). Meaning is not an implicit attribute of relationships or physical objects. We create meaning based on our past living experience (Robbins, 1980), socialization, and culture. Meanings were created from experience and carried, to a degree, within the medium of language (Roje, 1994). In this study, the medium used was that of images created through paints and paper. How do people most often communicate meaning? Usually this was done through words found within verbal/written language. However, before words are formed, thoughts are often of images (Wadeson, 1980). It was those images that were translated into words. How often has the statement been made, “I know what I mean but I don’t know how to say it,” or “words can’t describe it.” Images were created in the right hemisphere of the brain, where intuition, emotions, nonverbal processing, and imagination were found (Robbins, 1980). This was the part of the

brain where logic and reason were not. When participants picked up their brushes and daubed them with paint they, as time progressed, became more engaged (Cameron, 1992). They gave themselves over to the art materials and let their body, and mind work with those materials with much reduced conscious effort (Cassai & Cubley, 1995). The block that affected people in the beginning stages was the "censor" that exists inside the mind (Roje, 1994). The censor tried to hide and edit what the women were showing the world through their paintings. Once the censor was pushed away, intuition and the subconscious were allowed to take over and "speak" through the brush, paint and paper (Cassai & Cubley, 1995).

Result of logical thinking and reasoning comes from the left side of the brain, where language also emanates (Robbins, 1980). Images were what we stored in our memories as we perceived our external environment, and the meaning attached to these (Wadeson, 1980). A fear of mine was that I would have to find people who knew how to paint or who were artistic. The reverse was true; art therapists writing about their clients have shown that those people who had no art background were the most open to intuition (Wadeson, 1980). Artists had a certain "logic," through technique, rehearsed into their repertoire of actions. Before people with a painting background can truly let go, they must first "unlearn" the "logic" and discipline they have been taught in art schools (Cameron, 1992; Cassai & Cubley, 1995; Robbins, 1980).

Before going on to describe the expression of images, I wanted to touch upon creativity. It had been simply defined as the "ability to bring something new into existence (Luongo & Robbins, 1980, p. 191)". Coupled with this was the concept of imagination. Without imagination the desire to create would remain unexpressed (Roje, 1994). When the study group created, in this case paintings, we did this to have our work seen - to be "witnessed". Each of the participants, through their art, created a separate "reality" or illusion that could be shared with others (Cassai & Cubley, 1995). Creativity was not the same as art. Throughout our lives we

were constantly engaged in an ongoing creative project (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). I used the process of art to advance the “larger” creativity of the participants’ lives and attribute deeper meaning to their identity (Cameron, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

The painting process also fit within the postmodern paradigm in two key ways. Painting allowed for a depiction of multiple realities to come together in one portrayal. Because postmodernism did not ascribe to the views of either a universal inner “truth” nor a fixed external world, art could portray a plurality of viewpoints and perspectives within one piece of work, recognizing that it too was not the one “right” version (Byrne, 1995). However, showing one version allowed a whole range of meanings to be interpreted from one phenomenon of art work (Quail & Peavy, 1994). The artwork did not and usually was not a neat integrated whole. It was more often a fragmented or splintering of many images, sometimes not related. This, too was in keeping with the postmodern view (Byrne, 1995).

The expression of images, in this case painting, was the bringing together of the participants’ inner and outer realities (Cassai & Cubley, 1995). It was also the synthesis of exploring one’s inner drives and placing one’s self within one’s outside world (Wadeson, 1980). How this bringing together, or synthesis, was realized was through reflection. Reflection occurred within the sub-consciousness and consciousness of the individual (Roje, 1994). In order to concretize this reflection, the participants used the painting process as a physical extension of what their mind was processing (Cassai & Cubley, 1995).

A characteristic of verbal/written language, that by its very nature it linear. We write in sentences using one thought at a time. With images we can paint many simultaneous thoughts at the same time (Cameron, 1992). Painting also allows for the use of a variety of dimensions such as colour, shapes, space, time, size, dimensions of lines, shapes, brush strokes, and other painting attributes (Cassai & Cubley, 1995). A person generally sits to write their record of experience.

Painting invariably requires one to stand so that kinetics, touch, smell (of the paint), in addition to the personal subject of the painting increases the likelihood of active engagement with the project (Wadeson, 1980). Painting often increases the level of energy and concentration of the participants, because of the novelty of using this medium to communicate, becoming more focused upon their lives (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Roje, 1994). It can be shown that this also increases the level of openness, revelation of one's self and receptivity toward the overall project of living (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Robbins, 1980). In turn, this allowed for a deepened, richer level of information that resulted from both the subject of the paintings as well as the content within the interpretations. Because art does not get caught up in the objectified intellectualization of language use, there was opportunity for exploring the emotional aspects of the cultural transitions within which these people found themselves (Quail & Peavy, 1994).

For the purposes of this study, various pieces of art formed a visual record of our journey together. The series of paintings provided a map of where we had come from like footprints in shifting snows. Where we were going was not as crucial as where we had come from. We discovered the importance of the trail behind us by turning around and reflecting on the path(s) we had taken through our art. These reflections can be discovered in later sections of within Chapters Seven and Eight. As we progressed through the educational program and the later interviews we referred back to earlier paintings and the interpretations to discuss more fully and deeply the shifting of the participants' identities. Because of this permanence, coupled with the written/oral interpretations done at the time of the painting, forgetting how participants were perceiving was minimized when these were revisited later as the study unfolded (Wadeson, 1980). These individual maps of the participants' journey were solitary paths with group influences. At the end of each of our workshops these paintings were shared by one another. Seeing all the paintings together, with interpretations sparked further reflection by participants, including myself. This deeper reflection sparked a communal and deeper exploration into



unknown territory as evidenced by the transitions we had journeyed together (Robbins, 1980). In a way, we shared how we made sense of our meaning as it related to the study process and the process of reflection through painting.

When I examined the paintings, I reviewed the interpretations provided by the women as well, using three areas borrowed from art therapy. These three areas were; semantics (or the use of the signs, symbols, images, and what these specifically mean); syntactics (or the overall structure of the painting or message); and pragmatics (or the relationship of the signs and symbols to their meanings - semantics - and the relationship of the signs to the artist) (Wadeson, 1980). These concepts will be more fully described in later sections of this thesis as "analysis" activities are narrated. Other dynamics of the paintings were the timelines (one frozen moment, or a time period) depicted; the use of space within the paintings; whether the painting is heightened to a more "universal" theme, or is specifically contextualized; whether the painting appeared to move or whether it seemed frozen in space; the vitality of the paint strokes (light, and quick, or bold and heavy, for example); the variability of sizes of objects within the picture and whether they show a realistic proportionality or not; and the use of colour (what colours are used, and for what are they used) (Cassai & Cubley, 1995; Wadeson, 1980). This will be outlined in the analysis and reflections I carry out later within this thesis.

### The Journey of the Study's Path

This process, which was initially tentative, became more developed and evolved as the phenomenon progressed as is typical of an emergent research design. What was most important was the trip, outlined by my footsteps and the journey from the beginning to where I found myself at the end.

Other techniques were incorporated as time passed and, if appropriate, were included.

The research process included the following:

- 1) Initial contact with research site to determine availability, and costs.
- 2) If not available or too expensive at the first research site another community organization was going to be contacted; if interested a draft “contract” describing the relationship and the study was drawn up and agreed to by all parties (see Figure 9).
- 3) Posted advertisements in community newspapers for participants, distributed flyers to all the immigrant settlement houses, multicultural organizations, and ethnic media organizations and drew from these responses for final cohort.
- 4) Met with each participant “informally” (kept notes after each meeting; these journal entries and reflections appear in summary form within Chapters Five and Seven) and then with all participants as a group. These meetings were not recorded but were described within my journal. Determined access into each person’s private lives. Spent some time with them to dismantle some of the barriers (mine and theirs) that have been in place. As part of this familiarization of the participants with me and vice versa I carried out an informal, casual, half day painting workshop. This was done to get everyone (including myself) accustomed to holding a paintbrush and painting a picture; anything. This helped to drop some of the self-consciousness we all felt as we painted. We also brought in tapes of instrumental music from our various cultures to listen to. We took a couple of informal snack breaks.
- 5) Each participant was invited to use the painting process to create illustrations, initially, of how they perceived their current cultural identity. Attached to this art was a brief written/oral interpretation, by the creator, of how this painting reflected how the group of three saw themselves. The outcome of this exercise was a life-size “body image” painting which reflected how they saw themselves in the current moment.

6) A week before the study I met with each participant individually.

7) The field study. After each workshop session, I took the paintings home to be photographed to be returned to the respective artist at the next workshop. After the second workshop each person took their original painting from the session before and tape recorded their interpretation of the work with two key thoughts in mind: what was going on in their minds while they were painting (process), and what does the painting as it was at the end mean to them (product). This process was repeated through the eight weeks of meeting twice a week for four hours or a total of about 64 hours of discussion, painting, eating, and reflection.

8) One month after the final of workshop session the study group (including partners) held an evening of celebration and discussion with regard to our lives and future plans. The postscript found within Chapter Six is as a result of this celebration and of the emails the participants forwarded to me after the series of workshop sessions.

9) Throughout this process I reflected upon my experiences and participated in the painting process as well with my personal interpretations. These can be found in Chapters Four to Six and Eight along with the detailed voices of all the participants. My code name was "Sunflower", my life-partner's code name was "orchid" and Zinnia's life-partner's code name was "Aster".

By taking in a variety of perceptions the end result of the field study was substantially deeper and fuller than if I had used only one method of having the participants describe who they felt they were. In total, about sixty paintings were completed within the eight week period. All have been reproduced as part of Chapter Six. An outside reader group reviewed drafts and checked for implicit/explicit researcher bias.

### Summary

At this point I would like to catch my breath, allowing time to take in what has just been described and experienced settle a little. Over the past three chapters the road travelled through the introduction of the first chapter, followed by the autobiography of me in the second chapter and the concepts that will be used in the study described in Chapter Three. These will all weave this study into a tight fabric through the methodology in this chapter

As we progress, I remind you that Chapters Two, Five, and Eight will be drawn upon so that both the images and reflections come together to form the whole. The “data” from Chapter Six combine with the reflections from Chapters Five and Eight and the “analysis” found within Chapter Seven

The threads used to tie this study together included the ideas contained within phenomenology, art, art therapy, to some degree, postmodernism. The main strand represented the process by which we would be able to see what this transition, in part, looked like. This focus was the painting process coupled with elements from art therapy. These strands would weave in, around, and through the study as we proceeded. All the while there will be the words and seeing the paintings of the participants as they discover, explore, and reflect upon their broad cultural identities.

Just to remind you of the question which underpinned this study was “*How do “social strangers” come to understand the meaning of their “identities- in-transition” during the experience of reflection during an eight week painting workshop?*”

The purpose of this study was to explore and chronicle the experiences recent immigrants had of culture shock as uncovered through the creative process. Central to the narrative was that concerning one’s cultural identity as it found itself, suddenly and

traumatically, in flux. As a type of backdrop to the relating of these experiences I underwent participation within the study to make sense of my own sudden shift as a result of the sudden and unique change in my own circumstances.

Now that we have just reminded ourselves of where we have been I would like to proceed further. The next section will explore the process of discovery as the study progressed over the months leading up to the study. I will narrate my story of putting this research together before carrying out the study. These reflections make up the chapter which follows this one.

## *CHAPTER FIVE*

### **THE WORK INVOLVED IN THE PLANTING OF SEEDS**

#### Ethics Review Process

In order to prepare for the ethics review process - the exercise of having the Academy approve of what I was doing - I must be sure of what it is I wanted to accomplish and how I thought I should proceed. In order to set something for the Academy, I initially met with my faculty advisor to discuss early versions of the first few thesis chapters. The central discussion seemed to be surrounding the imposition of structure into my study.

Preferring to enter my study with a more phenomenological, or "stand back and see" demeanour in order to be unobtrusive, during the time of the study, I preferred to have the structure, like much of the research, to emerge fluidly depending upon the participants and what their foci might be. My advisor had suggested that there was nothing called a phenomenological methodology and that to go into a study without a set structure would make the research more difficult.

In order to meet the needs set before me, I acquiesced to establishing structure within the study, before the field research began. With my idea of phenomenological structure per se nullified, I was forced into sitting down and outlining what I had hoped to accomplish.

In further discussions with my faculty advisory he had also suggested that, instead of observing and participating within a group of recent immigrants going through an established acculturation program, that I do away with using the outside program offering. He suggested that I lead a program myself and not evaluate - but describe the dynamics as they unfolded before me.

To me, this was a sudden shift in focus and research dynamic. This would create a much different composition than what I had set out to undertake. In the proceedings of the field work I had planned to participate and observe within a regular course offering of an acculturation program as provided within a community development setting. In this scenario, I felt I would be able to be more on par and operating from the "inside" of the group dynamic with the study participants; the power differential would not be quite so explicit. I felt I could achieve a higher level of trust with the participants, coming from cultures, potentially, where people seen as being in positions of authority or power may be suspect, and because of this, shape their participant responses. Moving from the position of participant-observer would have allowed me to become an "inside" member of the group, working with them conversing with them.

However, delivering a program placed me, squarely, within an authority, facilitator, leader position - a role outside the "inside" dynamic of the group. This move in focus would shift, substantially, from being participant to being observer - and not being able to invest much time on being on the "inside", to sense the group dynamics from that side of the program relationship.

This created within me a high level of frustration, sense of loss (in that my original idea had been undervalued) - but, also, because of this a much higher level of energy to navigate this hurdle. I had envisioned exploring the experiences of people new to Canada within a relatively well-known, and reputed acculturation program. It was the experience of the program upon which the immigrant identified that I was most interested in. This new change in direction, externally imposed, seemed to negate what I had planned.

It also had me thinking about how I could negotiate some semblance of equity (knowing true equity could never be realized) with the potential participants, while establishing and running a program, continue as a participant and, observe the dynamics of a group (albeit as the outsider to the group dynamic). The new exercise, this study would involve, would prove to be much more engaging for me as, both, the designer and the participant. This opportunity would also allow me to see, immediately, the effects of designing something like this in a way I felt would provide the participants with the most valuable learning experience possible.

### Data Collection

What I was hoping was that the study would be a straight forward setting for collecting data. After meetings with my writing group to talk over my feelings regarding this turn of events and pondering which approach may be best I settled upon my modeling of behaviour despite the new role I found myself in. While I was drafting a relatively structured model for the overall study, including how each session would operate, I kept in mind opportunities to deviate from the established course within a particular session.

I believed in order to establish some open rapport with Jasmine and Zinnia I would run the first two to three sessions in a similar fashion and then slowly move the majority of control and responsibility for the sessions over to these two women. This also seemed to be in keeping with the arts therapy literature (Case & Dalley, 1992; Wadeson, 1980; Zinker, 1978 ). I believed the participants knew intuitively, those areas they wanted to explore, to work on, and share with the group.

The model of art therapy I decided to work with was educational; one which emphasized communication with others and the creation of self-knowledge for



themselves within their own terms (Stevens, 1971; Waller, 1993). This was instead of the psychological/medical one, which seemed to espouse a belief of deficiency, whereby there was a problem or a lack of something that had caused a malfunction and needed to be fixed. From my way of seeing things, people carried the answers to most of the issues they faced within their lives but, at times, might need some help with developing a process which allowed them to work through issues and teach themselves ways of being different to become a changed, more effective person. A way of implementing change was through communication and allowing people the space, time, and means of teaching themselves on the awareness of what they are experiencing, the significance of this, and how they may want to change some aspect of that - all within their terms.

#### Self-Disclosures Within the Study

My role, as the catalyst to having the group learn in their own terms, while opening myself up to Zinnia and Jasmine in a way they were able to see who I was and vice versa so that everyone knew with whom we were communicating, in addition to teaching each other about one another's respective perspective. It was important that we each taught to inform, but not persuade, or cajole, or manipulate. Once the learning dynamic had been described, walked through, and was being practiced by the group, then my role became one of sitting and listening. My role was not to interpret their stories but to place mine alongside theirs. Not to place any one story in a position of privilege but to allow ourselves to listen and internalize the stories we heard along with the stories of ourselves we knew. The listener would, undoubtedly, take what they heard and incorporated it - or not - with their previous knowledge, experiences, and identity.

I had to prepare to open myself up to Zinnia and Jasmine so that they might feel more relaxed to open themselves up in return in a form of mutual sharing. If this was not done with sensitivity there was a real potential for manipulation.

One of my caveats throughout anything I was involved with, was that each person only needed to say or divulge what they felt most comfortable revealing. With my own self-disclosures I was - or would be helping to establish a level of trust. The key self-disclosure I pondered prior to the study was in what way should I communicate my being gay. What I would have to work through in my own mind before the group began was how - or should I - reveal my being gay. This issue was central because it was an aspect of what makes me interact and react within the larger world.

Because I would struggle with this for some time I suspected I would strike upon the appropriate path. I felt, in a way, the authenticity of the study would rest on how this entire issue was addressed. After deliberating through long walks and reflecting upon my past it soon became apparent the question became not whether, but how I should best handle, yet, another process of "coming out" while retaining the integrity and reality of the relationship.

To announce my sexuality would have the effect of setting me up as my sexuality; that I was my sexuality. This, in turn, had the potential of creating me as a "flat", characterized entity - and may only serve to put a distance between my self and the group.

I felt this would have to be raised because it was a significant part of who I was. For me, the question became was - do I tell each potential participant prior to the study that I am gay or wait until the study has commenced and allow this to flow through naturally as one of many self-disclosures I would make as a part of the process?

To allow the revelation to arise naturally would not set the issue up as something “special” or what defined me but was one of many aspects of who I was. The perception, however, may be one of concealing or withholding information, thereby manipulating the process. But I wondered if this was any different than withholding what religion one observed, or what age someone was, or whether one of the group grew up in a northern wilderness or poor, downtown area. If being gay, straight, bisexual, or trans-gendered should be treated differently - I wondered why should it be? In fact, why did I have to actually give this aspect of myself special consideration. Why could not I think of my sexuality in the same way many of us think of our age?

To place my sexuality within the initial meeting of potential group members did not sit comfortably with me. Some may argue, that I should be up front with regard to this so that potential members could make an informed decision as to whether to participate or not. However, at the initial meeting I did not feel that this was relevant. The study itself was what mattered: how were meetings planned; what did each workshop entail; who was covering the costs, and so on. To come out with - “Do you have a problem working with gays - because I am one?” or “I am gay is that an issue for you?” or even just “I am gay.” To me, this bracketing of one aspect of who I was in such a way placed homosexuality as an issue, a problem, something separate that must be dealt with separately. I did not ask each potential participant if they were gay or lesbian. The Participant Background Inventory form was not returned to me until after they had begun the workshops. So if I do not ask them what their sexuality was prior to the study, and if someone turned out to be gay or lesbian, they may feel more comfortable knowing that I did get specific about the issue and therefore, they might have seen this as not an issue for me. I knew that in the Academy - and within society generally - most people are assumed to be heterosexual until they are “found out” that they are of another sexuality.

If this should occur this would set them up as “special”, “different”, “not of us” and separate; a separateness that I know I have felt much of my life because of a lack of desire by others to understand.

I left this whole matter until the study had begun. And it was within one of the earlier sessions that I raised the matter of my partner, Orchid, and our move that we had recently experienced - this was in reference to Zinnia’s own search and move into her own home with her recently married husband. And it was Jasmine who spoke up and said “Ohhhhh....partner....I’ve heard that used in Richmond many times and now I understand what .....partner...means...yes, yes”.

We began talking about sexuality in general - theirs and mine. You, the reader, have no idea how enlightening that was for me to have who I was no longer separate but one of many within a room. I felt natural, accepted, and welcomed because who I was came out as part of a conversation and not set up separately like an announcement. Interestingly, when I did mention my partner, the whole atmosphere of the session and later meeting times changed. There was a greater lightness and relaxed manner about the sessions. Perhaps the two women harboured some concern about meeting with a male in a room for several hours a week, but then when “homosexual” was included in the mix of dynamics, that concern seemed to evaporate. Still, I felt that I proceeded in the right manner. My sexuality was not who the women saw after they explored the topic in the normal, natural workshop...we kept right on going with the other issues they wanted to explore.

However, for Jasmine, the idea of homosexual was confusing. The session after we had spoken about my life along side theirs with respect to sexuality, Jasmine said that she was very interested in the topic of gay because this was new for her. Her first

question was, "Now, how do I speak to you - as a man or a woman?". My response was short and I thought clarified, "Try speaking to me as your friend....as a human being...not as a gender." Jasmine responded by saying that was not so complicated as she had thought and yes that was easy to do and thanked me. I have mentioned this little exchange to some people, who happened to be gay or lesbian, in passing conversations and resoundingly the response was that if it had happened to them they would be very angry and hurt.

How could I be angry and hurt? I feel that kind of response would be made if I was only looking at the exchange through my eyes and not trying to reach out and understand the other's perspective. Jasmine wanted to know, to understand, and I was not going to close down dialogue because of my taking myself so seriously when here was someone who wanted to know me. In China, officially, homosexuality does not "exist" and is something of a tremendous source of shame in that country (Jennings, 1994). Within China being gay or lesbian has been pushed deep into the underground. Because there is no official acknowledgment of homosexuality, there are no laws outlawing aspects of homosexuality (Jennings, 1994). The control measure of shame and humility was what was being used. Here, was someone from Taiwan, China who had limited, if any experience, within this aspect of life and wanted to understand my perspective. The first step to acceptance, in my mind, is the willingness to understand - and to achieve that is dialogue.

With some cultures, notably some Asian cultures there is a tendency to defer to an authority who is directive and prescriptive (Lum, 1988). Somehow, I had to establish group norms, whereby we were a group sharing and communicating, ensuring the flows of interaction stream in all directions, naturally. I felt the key to this was to be sure to

take a more phenomenological stance of taking a very laid back approach to my involvement within the discussions as well as painting alongside the others.

Decisions which would be required to ensure smooth operations of the group would be raised by any member, but would have to be consensually agreed to. So, over the next few weeks I was trying to put in my mind a set of ideas and concepts which would ensure I could explore what I had originally set out to understand, while maintaining a high regard for the group's integrity and sensitivity toward each member.

An issue I had to sort through was the record-keeping. Based on my experience of the theatre special-reading course I had decided not to include a tape recorder or video recorder into the workshop sessions. Within the special reading course, almost every class session - as we tried out new theatre exercises and experiences, and, later, debriefed upon the session - was recorded. A significant amount of attention was paid, by the group, to the recording device. Was the camera aimed properly? Was the camera working? Who would move around the room with the camera as the group went through their exercises? Who would make sure there was tape in the camera? Who would get the camera each session? And so on.

Then, while the session was in play the group would look for the camera and focus on it. In a way, the group (and I was guilty also) was playing for an audience - the camera. We were no longer natural, and uninhibited. We became self-conscious and to a degree, "artificial". We were performing. We were censoring. We were trying to give our "best side" as opposed to all sides of ourselves. This dynamic in our workshops would not allow a freer flow of interactions and, so, preferring something more natural and

“authentic” I would “become” the “recording device” in each session, alongside the paint and paper. I would make use of a diagram that I would design for each session where key points could be plotted (See Figure 8)

When exploring the idea of recording the sessions I reflected back on the experience, as well as tried to anticipate the group I would be working with in the future, I was anticipating new immigrants into Canada, some from countries where there were oppressive, secretive government regimes in place. To introduce a tape recorder, or video recorder could have been extremely threatening and, therefore, stifling to some - or all - of the participants. To keep the recording of sessions from being intrusive I developed a sort of three-focused approach.

I did want the participants to record their thoughts, but maintain their privacy and confidentiality as much as possible. Since these workshops were quickly developing into a series of reflective exercises I wondered about a type of reflective journal - and then struck upon the idea of an orally produced reflective journal. Why not have each participant interpret and reflect upon their experiences and the paintings in the privacy, comfort, and safety of their homes? They could take their time or stop and start as reflective thoughts occurred to them. As revealed in the literature review of Chapter Three, gestalt therapy, feminist psychology, and art therapy all incorporate the aspect of “homework” into their therapies. I felt that to be able to facilitate this sort of journalizing being easy to deal with I would need to keep the reflective questions the same throughout and few in number, but broad in scope- so that it would “feel” less like an onerous, repetitive study to “pump their brains” and more of a free-floating, open exercise for them.

Because much of art therapy literature discussed the therapeutic process instead of the art product I felt both would be equally important, for different reasons in this study. To keep the reflective questions few and uncomplicated I focused on two. The first was "Describe to me the process and what you were thinking about while you were painting?" And secondly, "When you look at the painting what sorts of feelings and thoughts come to you; what does the painting mean to you?"

These would be the questions for the participants. If they wanted to add to these that would be fine but in using the same two questions I hoped a path would develop over the series of workshops that could be reflected back over as the participants began to gaze backward to see from where they had come. In addition, others, like you, the reader, who find themselves walking the path taken by these individuals may have an easier time of it when the road taken has the same means of transport throughout the journey.

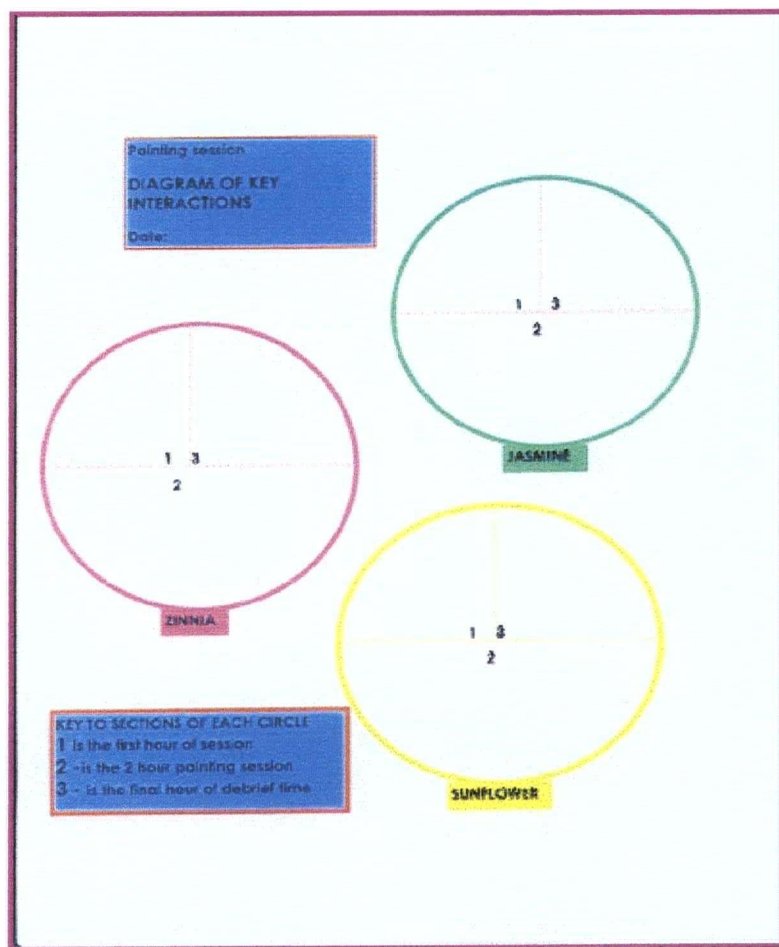
The way the tape recorded reflections would be handled was through the participants forwarding their recorded thoughts to me with their paintings. I would photograph their paintings and transcribe their tapes; returning both the paintings and the tapes back to the participants. As paintings were completed and further thoughts recorded, the process would repeat itself. At the end, the tapes and all paintings would remain the property of the participants. The pictures of paintings and transcriptions and field notes would remain mine. This would be stipulated within the Informed Consent Form.

The second method used was my reflections, after each session was carried out. Highlights, topics discussed, or interesting issues of the session would be noted in the form of a "snapshot" or "sketch". My notebook would remain in plain view of the



participants but most notes would be done after each session. By doing this I felt the dynamics would be less inhibited than if I was sitting in the room with a tape recorder going and my scribbling of notes. The action of information gathering - and not the phenomenon of watching and participating in a group of recent immigrants making sense of their life changes, through painting, would have become the focus. When, right before me, it was the participants, themselves who were gathering the information through their interpretations and paintings. The people would become lost to the research process; the participants would become objects under scrutiny and manipulation rather than subjects living a life experience.

The final method of taking in information would be through an Interactions Diagram (see Figure 8) modified from the art therapy literature (Waller, 1993, p.123) for the purposes of this group. The diagram was very simple and quick to use and was not intrusive. The end result was a thumbnail sketch of what happened within each workshop session.



**Figure 8:** Blank “Diagram of Key Interactions” diagram

A diagram consisted of three circles, one for each participant and myself. Each circle was divided into the three key time components of each session. In this case the circles were divided into an initial discussion period, the painting period itself, and the time for debriefing.

Arrowed lines of interaction have been drawn among the circles with key words or ideas expressed attached to each arrowed line. Each session would be structured in the same way, again, to allow a path of interaction to develop.

With the paintings, themselves, the privately recorded interpretations, the field notes, and the Interaction Diagrams I felt that I would get the data I needed, without

being overly intrusive in my role as observer. I would be able to be, very much, in the presence of the group as a participant.

Another issue I pondered was that of coding the identities, for the purposes of confidentiality, of the participants. I knew that this was going to be a very personal journey for all concerned and so wanted to "personalize" the identity code while retaining confidences. Rather than the James Bondian 007 numbered code I referred each participant to a flower - as they blossomed forth in their new surroundings. The group members chose a flower and they, then, decided upon a flower to call me (also a kind of "temperature check" of their attitude toward me). This would ensure confidentiality while "personalizing" the study.

In order to contain the study I limited this group to a possibility of ten members. If, I was only afforded one person, then, it would become a more in-depth study of him/her and myself. If there was more than one I had prepared to encouraged them to bring a friend. I knew what it was like to feel alone in a new, unfamiliar environment and having a familiar person nearby would help the people and the group relax more if there was a sense of familiarity in the room. However, I would dissuade two members of a family to participate together. My reasoning was that the closeness of family members to one another could be very inhibiting when exploring one's identity with others unknown to them. If the group was different and was designed to work within a family unit then, of course, family members would be encouraged to work together. Much of our initial and fundamental identity stems from our initial socialization within our childhoods and our family units. And as this identity travels across cultures this familial identity becomes buffeted about. To have a family representative within the group may cause self-censuring to a much larger degree than if the person was on their own, particularly in those cultures where maintaining family honour was paramount. The value of the

painting experience may have become minimized. As it was this did not become an issue as no family members were mentioned as wanting to attend. In the instance of Zinnia, she specifically stated that she knew of other Australians who had just arrived but she did not want to work with them, preferring to understand what other cultures were going through other people not of her own culture.

In having a friend, instead of a family member, there would be an element of familiarity but perhaps the personal distance between friends would be, presumably, greater than between two family members. However, I understand from my own experience that this may not always be the case. By opening the sessions to friends all members would, perhaps, be more at ease and more open to explore. There was also something to be said for a room full of strangers and the anonymity that this allowed for. In the case of recent immigrants, the workshops would mirror what they faced in their larger worlds...learning how to be in a room full of total strangers where they had to learn to reach across cultural boundaries to get to know and understand others.

My experience of participating in AIDS awareness seminars, as an Aids Vancouver volunteer, (something I would liken this current study to as far as the level of the personal engagement would be) people tended to be very inhibited as far as self-disclosure was concerned. These seminars tended to last a day or weekend so were relatively brief, as opposed to the two month workshop, in this instance.

I felt that friendships would, naturally, develop as time and space permitted the group members to slowly reveal themselves, on their own terms. I felt the group would eventually move from a process of a series of simple revelations to one communicating and teaching each other on how to cope. A side benefit would be the creation of a network of friends, all in a similar situation to one another, which could, potentially, last

beyond the structure, space and time of this series of workshops. This was another reason why I encouraged friends to participate rather than family members - this potential for a network of friends to develop.

A number of ethical considerations had to be explored before the group could become a reality. In order to be more explicit about these ethical considerations the ethical review documentation process for the Academy helped focus how and what I wanted to do with this field research.

In a way, the ethical review documentation was an opportunity for me to “walk through” the workshops from beginning to end and put some initial structure to the process (See Chapter Four). I knew that when I met with prospective participants they would need to know what they were getting themselves into. The ethics review would also help in putting together the Informed Consent Form required by the academy. For this particular study the Informed Consent Form went a long way to allaying concerns prospective participants would have and begin to establish a comfort level right away.

1. Who is sponsoring this work?
2. Who are the target audiences?
3. How will results be reported?
4. Can politics be avoided?

#### Accessing the Field

In order to draw from the largest number of potential people to find about ten participants, while maintaining some semblance of cost efficiency I decided to draft a

one page announcement of my study (See Chapter Four) for possible newspaper insertion, or flyers. With this document in hand I approached some of the largest immigrant services organizations in the city of Vancouver.

I met, initially, with the organization where I was going to participate in one of their acculturation programs to observe their acculturation program in process; M.O.S.A.I.C.. The people, there were very helpful in placing my announcement and contact information in both their intake locations within the city. Following this I proceeded to the Multicultural Society of Vancouver, who promised they would spread the word to their members.

Following this second very positive response I proceeded to the Immigration Services Society who also promised to distribute my flyers to people who approached their reception desk. These three organizations represented where the majority of new immigrants visited when they first arrived in Vancouver from outside Canada for assistance with language education, job finding assistance, housing and acculturation education. These seemed to be the best contact points between Canadian culture and new immigration within which to insert my study notices. There remained one large cultural community I needed to contact - the large, Asian community within Vancouver.

This community was serviced by the large, well-known Chinese intake/settlement service called S.U.C.C.E.S.S.. I met with their head of research and, through my flyer and Informed Consent Form outlined my study. However, the person I was speaking with refused to take the flyers or help me until the documents were translated into Chinese; he would accept Chinese-only documents for distribution. I, humbly, told him that admittedly a limitation of my study was the need to understand and speak English. He informed me that the vast majority of the people their organization

dealt with were unilingual in Chinese and did not read or speak English. I suggested that surely there were some Chinese immigrants who understood and at least spoke English. He had said that those people were very rare. There was an overwhelming sense that this person just was not interested.

The language limitation of my study would not be able to reach far into this organization. I asked if I could leave half a dozen of my flyers for those who did speak or understand English. Again, I was told no - Chinese only. I wondered if this was actually the case - this business that they only accepted unilingually Chinese speaking people or was there something else at play here?

Albeit this was my one and only encounter with S.U.C.C.E.S.S., I wondered just how well this organization helped Chinese immigrants acculturate or enter the larger Canadian society? Or perhaps their role was to integrate Chinese immigrants into the Chinese communities within the Lower Mainland, specifically, and did not focus upon other aspects of immigration/acclturation?

I did not get the sense that this was a bridging service into the broader community so I left a little dejected, and disoriented as to how I could reach the larger Asian community in a different way maintaining the English language as a bridging medium. I would wait about a month, phoning the settlement/intake organizations I had visited to see what kind of interest there was for my study and to see if I needed to replenish supplies of my study notification/contact forms.

Over the month the interest seemed to be quite low because of two main factors. One, the institutional-type of study perceived seemed to put some potential people off. Two, my own lack of tie in to the immigrant community. I was a native-born Canadian

exploring the experiences of immigrants and was not a member of any of these settlement/intake organizations. This seemed to put me at a disadvantage.

My next step was through the media, namely the newspapers. Pulling a list together of all the community and cultural newspapers in Vancouver I found about two dozen. I stayed away from the large dailies because of cost and felt recent immigrants would prefer the local and cultural newspapers in an effort to manage their transition into the broader community while trying to keep ties with their home land. However, advertising in most of these newspapers would run a few hundred dollars for one advertisement, appearing one time, in one newspaper. Being self-financed with limited funds, this cost alone would have stifled my ability to carry out the study. There had to be a more cost effective way of using the newspapers.

And then I stumbled upon a possibility. There was a package offering of eight newspapers for one price of \$150.00. The catch was that the advertisement could only be 13 lines. The newspapers covered the greater Lower Mainland with a combined circulation of about one million people, and was available for either a Wednesday or a Sunday edition. The newspapers included: The WestEnder; the Courier (west side Vancouver); The NorthShore News (North Vancouver); The Richmond News; the Vancouver Echo (East Vancouver, including the Commercial Drive area which is largely an ethnic minority/immigrant population); Burnaby Now; and the New Westminster Record. I ran my advertisement for three editions - one edition per week- so would appear in about 3 million copies, in total. The first week was a Wednesday, then the second and third weeks would be both on a Sunday (the largest circulation day).

After my initial posting of my advertisement on the Wednesday a reporter from the Vancouver Echo called to interview me and write a small newspaper story about my



phoned to see if they had received my letter. They had received it but said they would have to shorten the message for television. I had said that was fine. I asked how often they would read my study announcement. They said they would describe the study for one week during their community bulletin section, four times a day.

From my initial meeting with M.O.S.A.I.C. - my first outreach to the immigrant/multicultural community - until one week following the final day of Roger's community announcements, was a time span of about 10 weeks. The response over this time was sparse.

Shortly after the Roger's advertisements I received a listing from Roger's Multicultural Channel of their "Multicultural Channel - Independent Program Supplier Contact List". This list contained 28 contact names who created community programming for Roger's Multicultural Channel. With this information I wrote cover letters and forwarded a supply of my one page study announcements to these media people.

While I was doing this I decided to, also, forward a similar letter and supply of flyers to various cultural groups in Vancouver. I would find both addresses and working telephone numbers for about 19 of these groups. A problem I encountered was a number of organizations, which had listed addresses, did not have a working telephone. I was left with the following 18 organizations to contact: the Afghan Association of British Columbia; the African Canadian Association of British Columbia; Chinese Cultural Centre of Vancouver; German Canadian Congress - British Columbia region; Hispanic Community Services Centre; Hungarian Cultural Society; Italian Cultural Centre Society; Japanese-Canadian Citizens Association of Greater Vancouver; Korean Society of British Columbia for Fraternity and Culture; Malaysian Singapore Brunei Cultural

Association; Taiwanese Canadian Society; Ukrainian Canadian Congress - Vancouver; United Croats of Canada; Vancouver Finlandia Club; Australia/New Zealand Association; Russian Community Centre of Vancouver; and the India Cultural Centre of Canada. About a week after, I sent the 46 letters and supplies of flyers to the cultural groups and suppliers of community, cultural programming I followed up with telephone calls over several days to ensure the letters had arrived.

Many replied that they were not interested or that they could not help me. Others said that I would not be sensitive to their community's new members, I felt as they expected me to carry out some sort of mainstream "brainwashing". Only members from within their communities could help in this way I was told, on occasion. "Outsiders" obviously were not welcomed - even though I thought immigrants and I were all, at least, living in Canada. The help that would be forthcoming was minimal. I was very discouraged and disheartened about this time. Without people knowing who I was, I was being judged and condemned for being perceived in a certain way. Without having met me or discussed what I was aiming to do, the walls seemed to have gone up blocking my efforts to reach out into these various communities. I have just found that people, regardless of their background, find judging such a natural, automatic process of protecting themselves - judge me for my sexuality; judge me through my "whiteness" I could not understand or identify with being a person of colour despite half my family being people of colour; judge me for being male (and being told by a woman that White males have to learn to shut up) and therefore having no business exploring gender and femininity, and now, being judged for being Canadian and not being able to help those who have chosen Canada as their home. I suppose using essentialisms to judge, I had entered a deep period of frustration because people seem to not want to understand one another - just to judge the "other".

I had approached the four key immigrant settlement agencies in the city, had paid for advertisements to reach a combined circulation of about three million newspaper readers, had an announcement of my study appear for a week on a multicultural channel, had written and phoned forty-six additional community, immigrant, and multicultural contacts to inform them, and had a newspaper story written about my research. To the group of forty-six organizations I had forwarded over 1000 study announcement flyers. Still, the response was minimal.

I was exhausted. Either the message was not getting out (but I felt that it had to large measure), or it was getting out but there was no interest. Reaching into the immigrant communities was proving very difficult. I was reminded of the time when I was in corporate human resources and trying to reach First Nations communities for the purposes of targeted recruitment efforts and hiring Aboriginal apprentices for the organization I was working for. I was told I would not be able to hire too many First Nations people because I was a "White" man, as well as an outsider. I was not of the their communities. The Aboriginal community would only open to me when I was introduced into the community by an Aboriginal representative of that specific community. This was in the mid 1980's so this may have changed, but I am not aware of that. I began entering First Nations communities with a Native mediator for some time until the corporate human resources executive cancelled my efforts stating that it was costing two to three times as much and double the time to attract people - and should I not just use the mainstream media and headhunter firms because they were more cost-effective?

My experience was proving the same again with the immigrant communities. With everyone raising their drawbridges in my search for participants is it any wonder why there seems to be a difficulty in communicating across cultures? To invest my time

in all the communities before being accepted was a daunting task to find ten people to work and study with. However, in groups seemingly isolating themselves, I wondered if this apparent strategy of insularity was a significant part of why there was so much misunderstanding across cultural communities?

My final thrust in my recruitment efforts was to turn to the one area I did not want to resort to - the university community of visiting international student population. I did not want to draw from this population because many were here for a few years before returning home - the sojourner. This group tended not to have the same sense of permanence as someone who immigrated to Canada as a landed immigrant so they tended to be less committed to making Canada home and the somewhat artificiality of campus/residence could cause a distancing from the wider cultural community.

Also, the population tended to be better educated than many of the immigrants who arrived on a permanent basis. Because the population was from within the academy, there might also be a tendency to try to "perform" to my expectations, believing that they would know what a Master's student would be looking for or needed to complete their thesis. Within a community setting, some of these concerns would be presumably lessened. Of course, different concerns and issues would be raised. Some have been mentioned such as my being not of their community, some "performance anxiety" issues and the spectre of a "state institution" seen as a possible threat, despite the university only being maintained in the background.

My way of thinking was that if I kept the workshops as much within a community setting as possible drawing from as broadly as possible, outside of an institutional milieu, the concerns to watch for would be somewhat lessened. However, I contacted the Resident Manager of Student Housing at the University of British

Columbia to place a brief advertisement in the Student Housing Newspaper, The Resident. This paper circulates to all the campus residences, including those of the foreign students. While I was doing that, I sent over the various graduate student email networks within the Faculty of Education messages about my "Call for Participants" for my study. These final measures in my search for participants would reach a further 1000 people.

In total, my efforts for reaching out to the broader community would include approximately something easily over three million contact points (or about 1,000,000 people multiple times). Admittedly, some people would be reached more than once - if I could get a message repeated so much the better, because an initial and single contact is less likely to have an effect than a multiple contact over a period of time. What were the results of these efforts? The next section will describe this and how I gathered my participants together.

#### Putting the Call out: Gathering the Participants

In this instance, the title referred to the prospective participants putting the call out to me. Within the total four month period of looking (beginning in November 1997 through to the end of February 1998) my first telephone call came through the second week of January 1998. This was from a recent immigrant from Taiwan who had read the advertisement within the Richmond News and who was interested, wanting to know when she could start; she really wanted to get going. I outlined in a brief summary form what the study was about, that I would pay for all the costs, and, most importantly, the time commitment involved. All of this was fine for her so we agreed to meet the following week, informally, at the Community Centre where the workshop sessions would be held. This served two purposes; it would solve the problem for the participants of finding the centre before the series of workshops began. If a prospective participant

lost his/her way there, there would be no disruption to the operation of the group once it was up and running. I preferred clearing any problems on location during our preliminary meeting prior to the workshops beginning.

The second purpose of meeting at the centre was to show the prospective participant the actual meeting space and orient them on the other facilities available, such as washrooms, snack facilities, parking, and so on. If the basic needs were attended to, the group could be more focused and relaxed. Friends from school informed me that two to three people spoke of being interested. Things were quickly looking up. These people were from Latin American countries. This would add a wonderfully rich and diverse cultural mix.

A man had read about my story in the paper and had called from Kelowna, British Columbia - a few hundred miles away. He was from Australia. He couldn't participate in my study but had simply called to tell me how wonderful it was that a Canadian was finally doing a study of this nature. Because of his frustrations with "polite" Canadian culture he had turned to sculpture in driftwood to work out his anger and disillusionment with Canada.

He told me that most immigrants need this help with the transition process because there was a total lack of understanding on the part of Canadians toward immigrants. He had mentioned he felt very isolated since coming to Canada. He admitted that he found a surprising amount of emotion invested in the migration experience. I asked this doctor how long he had lived in Canada and he had said three years. But he was tired now and was going back to Australia, and taking his story with him. How unfortunate! He called to wish me well in my study and that what I was doing was long

overdue. We spoke for about forty-five minutes but then we rang off and my search continued. Even though this person was not able to join, the call of encouragement did much to buoy my flagging spirits of that time.

Later that week I received a phone call from an art therapist interested in what I was doing. She said she would be interested in working with me at some point. I spoke of my plans and, in broad terms, my approach. She gave me her name and told me to contract her when I was done. Again, although this person did not call to be part of my group her call had a wonderful, positive effect upon me. To think - to work as an art therapist! It opened before my eyes some future possibilities. But the present was more pressing.

I received about a dozen telephone calls to see if these workshops involved teaching people painting technique. I told these people that, no, it was not to teach technique, and that painting technique was not actually encouraged in what I was doing; the sessions were to paint out feelings and to use paint to communicate. All of these callers were recent immigrants who wanted to learn to paint to use up some of their spare time. They could not understand what it was I was doing; they believed that painting had to have a style - an end in a beautiful picture. The process was not as important to them. If I had said - "Oh, yes, it is a learn-how-to-paint workshop series for new immigrants" and then focused upon or drew from their immigration experiences, this would not wear comfortably for me, ethically. I could not pretend it was one thing and carry out my study. This has some resounding echoes of manipulation and stealth. I had to be honest and up-front from the beginning. I was curious that there were, however, so many recent immigrants interested in learning about painting technique. However, these calls were also telling me that the message was getting out.

The end of January, 1998 I received a call from an Australian woman keenly interested. So we spoke briefly about the study, the costs would be covered by me, and the time commitment I was looking for. She remained quite excited ever since she read the story about my study in the Vancouver Echo. She mentioned that she was currently in a Life Inquiry Through Art course at another community centre but that this sounded as though it would more specifically address her particular circumstances of immigration and having recently also been married to someone who was the son of European immigrants. We agreed to meet the following week.

At this point I thought I had about four to five people - a number I would be happy with. However, the two to three I thought I had from Latin America ended up not joining the group. After four months of putting the word out, I ended up with two people - one woman from Taiwan; one woman from Australia. These two, coded Jasmine and Zinnia, respectively, along with myself would end up being the participant cohort.

I thought about my small number for a while. Is a group of three - myself included - too small? I would not be able to draw from a breadth of experience I would gain from a group of ten. But I could take the time I would have spent with eight other people to focus upon these two people in attempts at deepening the experience for them and for myself.

Looking back on my experience with this research, as a whole, and of reaching out to communities of immigrants, I would have done what I ended up doing but I would have worked harder at getting reporters to write news stories about my work. This, to me, seemed like shameless self-promotion but people seem to read these stories. I suspected



if I took much more time and spent weeks around each community and met repeatedly with the organizations I corresponded with through the mail and telephone my response rate may have been more positive.

A big limitation was my paltry budget - most reserved for running the workshops themselves - not for gathering people for the workshops. I have quickly discovered just how expensive newspaper advertising is in this city (for my efforts about \$500). I also embarked on a word of mouth campaign informing people of what I was up to. But it did not seem to lead anywhere. I would have to work harder at establishing myself with these immigration/settlement organizations.

Another recognized limitation was the fairly limited window of time I was looking for - the six months between January and June in 1997. For example, the most recent figures from Canada Citizenship and Immigration were for the year, 1996. In that year there were 44,600 people immigrating into British Columbia (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1998). Approximately 25% of these people were under the age of 16, so were not eligible for my study. Another ten percent were between the ages of 16 and 21, and also would not have been eligible. This left approximately 25,000 people. Of this number, approximately half were not fluent in English at all, which would drop this figure now to about 12,500 for the year. And to, then, limit the time period to half of the year would lower this figure to somewhere between 6,000 and 7,500 people (allowing for overlap of the different categories described earlier (Citizenship and Immigration, 1998). However, this was in 1996, and I was looking for people who had immigrated during the first half of 1997. This was a time when immigration to British Columbia was slowing down, and particularly in the case of the Asian community (particularly immigrants from Hong Kong wishing to retain their Hong Kong citizenship once this country reverted back to China's possession in that year) the flow was reversing.

Unfortunately, the numbers for 1997 were not released at the time of this writing, however, generally through 1997 and into 1998 I believe the flows of immigrants into British Columbia were much slower, because of the repatriation of Hong Kong back to China. The economic situation around the Pacific Rim countries had, also, become a dire emergency for many months. Hong Kong was now in a recession, so money available for immigrating, I believe, was limited. The economic situation in central Canada was much brighter than in Vancouver so I suspected immigrants who may have wanted to immigrate here may have moved to Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and other places outside of British Columbia. I believed that if the window of time was wide open the results would, also, have been dramatically different.

Well, who are the two who formed this group - Jasmine and Zinnia? Next, I'll recount my experiences of our initial meetings together and my first impression of both these unique and remarkable people.

#### Initial One on One Meetings....Jasmine and Zinnia

January 19, 1998 at 1:00 p.m.

#### Jasmine.

Before meeting Jasmine I ran to make photocopies of my Ethics Review Committee Approval Form in order to give a copy to Jasmine. Prepared with the copies; my two Letters of Informed Consent, a demographic inventory (and extra copies of these latter documents in the event Jasmine had friends who may want to participate), and a blank 90 minute tape.

I walked over to the Kitsilano Community Centre, several blocks away. The reasons for deciding upon this community centre were several. This community centre

was central within the city. With this was its ease to getting to through using the city transit being a block away from a bus stop. It also had lots of parking for those people who preferred to drive. The meeting room rates were the most reasonable I had uncovered. While it was in the centre of what was predominantly perceived as a "White" neighbourhood; the area the centre was situated in has a broad mixture of cultures around it, without being dedicated so much to one particular culture as would be the case in parts of Richmond, North Vancouver, Surrey or other areas. Rather than being, culturally, a specific area, it would be more accurately described as a particular area of class, perhaps. I also knew a lot of students lived in the area because of its access to the university, so hopefully, I could draw from that population, but from within the community to some degree.

The day was cloudy, but dry, having rained heavily through the morning. The air felt lightly damp and cool - but not cold as I walked with my jacket open. The freshness in the air seemed to mirror the general mood I carried with me about the beginnings of what I was embarking upon.

The clapping of my sandals against the sidewalk as I walked along to my appointed time, allowed me to drift my thoughts into eddies of reflection, wondering what Jasmine would be like. When we spoke on the phone, she asked me if I was Chinese because she said I sounded like I was from Mainland China - because my voice was so soft-spoken she had said - something she considered very Chinese. So, as I walked along I also wondered what Jasmine thought I may be like before meeting me. I thought of Orchid as well, when I first spoke to him on the telephone six months prior. Before I reached Orchid, however, I had reached his brother, who had also asked Orchid whether I was Chinese because I sounded like I was. I have no idea what attributes of one's voice makes one sound like an ethnicity other than an accent. And since I did not

have a Chinese accent, having never spent time in that country I was very much at a loss. So I continued to take in the cool air and thinking my thoughts of how first impressions are formed. Before I knew it, I was heading up the large, flat gravel steps that led toward the front doors of the Community Centre. Across the street a small knot of teenagers were stooped in a huddle sharing their "in-group" tales, gossip, and language of identity maintenance.

The lobby of the Community Centre was empty save a lone, young man writing with all his powers of physical effort and concentration; truly a person possessed. He was bowed before several bound altar-like stacks of magazines, although occasionally would raise his head to observe his surroundings.

I had arrived five minutes early so sat by the corner windows, overlooking the football field and running track awaiting Jasmine's arrival. I suddenly felt like one of the stock characters in one of those formulaic spy thrillers. How will Jasmine recognize me or I her?

I pulled out the large, brown envelope containing the documents and cassette and across the envelope in black marker wrote J-A-S-M-I-N-E and propped this upon my knees, with her name showing to the front door and open room before me.

About ten minutes later a young, Asian woman entered and headed straight toward me. She said quietly, "Steve?" as though she knew who I was. I put out my hand to shake hers in welcome and acknowledgment. Then came that common, perfunctory, regularly-anticipated, uneasy, tense, and awkward moment which marks the beginning of the process of getting to know, before this moment, a completely unknown person.

I asked if she had any problem find the place. She said "no" - that it was not a problem. Jasmine spoke fluent English, though occasionally there were moments of pausing while she carefully chose her words.

I produced the envelope and pulled out the two copies of the Informed Consent Form and we went over every section, step by step, pausing for any questions or comments. We discussed why the artist should disclose their concept of their own work before opening it up to the group for their comments and my comments would be given no more or less weight than the others. I sensed that Jasmine was preferring to have the group interpret her work and then tell her what to do next and, perhaps to retain group harmony, agree with the group. However, because her opinion of her experience was most important I suggested that the group would be interested in her stories and experiences shining through the light of her words. And that, yes, certainly every one would be able to comment upon one another's work. I said to Jasmine that this was not about evaluating but a group for telling stories and describing personal experiences.

We discussed - what if there is no meaning for the artist toward a particular painting? A very unlikely scenario - or so I thought - but it was exciting to contemplate. I could see Jasmine was going to challenge and heighten the group's general sense of curiosity. She was very grateful to hear that she could use her Mandarin as well as her English to communicate with the group. Jasmine asked if I was an artist and was quite shocked (good or bad?) to find out I was not.

As we read through the study outline she was finding herself more and more interested. Jasmine liked the idea of having fun and meeting others from a variety of cultures, painting, music, and food (I like to cook and bake and because the sessions were several hours, I felt it best that I provide food so that we could "break bread" with

one another as we shared our life stories.). The whole package seemed to work for her. I showed her the blank tape and we discussed what it would be used for. She felt I was being over-cautious with confidentiality, however, when we discussed the potential of someone raising some highly personal, emotive, and private matters she was glad - and relieved that I had taken the route I had.

I reminded Jasmine that I had no idea of what to expect from the paintings or the stories the members would provide so was always taking the most cautious path. And because of this notion of having no set expectations from group members, it was important for her to relax and just be herself - not trying to be someone she thought I was looking for. My role was not to judge but participate and describe our experiences using everyone's words.

We went over the taping of her story of her immigration and what sorts of things she may want to consider including - but really, I said, that she was free to speak about anything she wished. She wanted to know what would happen if she became too emotional and could not go on. I said, simply, that you do not go on. Period. No questions. This seemed to relax her mind. As did my going in depth of how I was going to safeguard her privacy.

With regard to meeting time, Jasmine said any afternoon Monday to Friday would be fine for her. Jasmine was happy and said it was a good idea about my wanting to give back to the group - this was good and would show my commitment to the group. This seemed to resonate for Jasmine's sense of the world. She said that she wanted to be sure this advertisement I placed was legitimate and she said she was thrilled it was and she would do whatever she could to help in the study.

This was when I gave her extra copies of the Participant Background Inventory Forms (Chapter Four) for any friends who may have been in a similar situation to her - explaining this may make the study experience easier for her - she was a little taken aback by this and said her father who was in his eighties would benefit because he was having a tough time right now in trying to fit into Canada - but he did not speak English. So we ended that topic there.

We ended the meeting by walking to the room to be used for the art workshops. Jasmine liked the community centre saying it was central (even though she lives in Richmond), there was parking, and it was right on a major transit line - and meeting me first, on her own, in a relaxed manner was all great, she said, for getting rid of her concerns and anxieties. The main focus for her in this meeting was determining whether this study was legitimate and she was thrilled that it was.

We spoke about Eastern and Western philosophies - she believed I needed to know something of her cultural philosophy. I agreed and said that I had begun a study into these to help in my understanding of the worldviews represented within the group (refer to Chapter Three). We ended shortly after our philosophical discussion and we promised one another we would call - she if she had any questions and I when the study would start up. Jasmine was a true relief. She was naturally curious, has a wonderful sense of her self, was fun, and was fluent in English - though at times she haltingly fought for the English - Taiwanese equivalent. We, both, were uneasy or nervous but by the end we were quite comfortable with one another. Giving a copy of the Ethics Approval document also gave the study an overall air of credibility and legitimacy I thought Jasmine needed - as someone new to this sort of thing and to this country.

February 4, 1998; 1:00 p.m. Zinnia

Walking along the sunny street on my way to meet Zinnia, from Australia, with my bundle of papers and a blank tape to give to her I was hoping she would be able to find her way to the community centre. She informed me on the phone that she did not leave her area of Vancouver very much because she loved where she lived. I assured her it was one bus straight across Broadway; the number nine would bring her round trip to the workshops and return her home. Her voice on the telephone sounded quite energetic and light - full of life.

Zinnia arrived in a wonderful electric teal, fuzzy angora sweater. She had jet black hair cut short and black slacks. As soon as she looked in my direction she smiled and said "Steve?" - I knew it was Zinnia. She came right over and sat down - it was obvious she was looking forward to our meeting and these workshops.

We went through the Informed Consent form together. As we did, I discovered that Zinnia was taking an art therapy course called, more specifically, "Healing through Art". I informed Zinnia that I was drawing, both, from art therapy and art education; my focus was looking at art media as communicative/educational processes as well as therapeutic rather than as a process implemented to fix a lack or deficiency of something that needs to be repaired.

She was quite taken aback by the fact that there were only three in the group - counting myself. She said she thought she would have to beg and plead to join our group. Little did she know that it was I that seemed to be placed within that role. I assured Zinnia that there was lots of space. I said that I actually hoped that she may be able to help by inviting others to join us. Zinnia said that she did know of other Australians, recently arrived, but that she didn't want to be around them - she didn't know why but



that was how she felt. She knew of another woman, however, from Hungary who had arrived in Canada about the same time as Zinnia had and, like Zinnia, she was also recently married in the past few months. So, this Hungarian woman may have had some similar situations to talk about. This possible third to our group would not participate as it turned out because of personal reasons but did want to join a larger group at a later point in time.

The idea of having a small group of paintings and having the tape Zinnia makes, she said, was like creating a time capsule she could continually reflect upon, to hear over again and served to mark this very transitory period of her life. She spoke of the idea of framing the pictures and having them remind her of this point in time. Zinnia asked if she could do the interpretations of her work right after the painting. I suggested that perhaps she would prefer having some time to ponder the process and the painting was always there to spur new thoughts over time, but that, yes, she could do the interpretations right after if she wished. We agreed, however, that interpretations should occur in her own time whenever she felt it appropriate; she thought allowing some time to reflect would be a good idea. Zinnia thought she would have to sit down and speak all at one on each painting. I said that may work for her, however, if she preferred to do a series of shorter reflections on the same painting(s) that would be okay as well. The importance I said was to work at her own pace.

I assured Zinnia that I had as an aim to have fun, while - I - we - learned. When people, generally, laugh, I feel, the learning seems to move to a more profound depth. A sense of play. And to help take us there, I would be bringing snacks each week. The concept of "breaking bread" with friends brings back the cohesion which sharing food seems to encourage - shadows of a farm kitchen table perhaps?

I let Zinnia know that I thought Monday and Friday afternoons would be our time because these days seemed to be markers for beginnings and endings (of weekends and work weeks). She found that that would be fine, and that preparing for, and reflecting back upon weekends would suit her well. She found that lots tended to happen on the weekends so the Monday and Friday idea would be great for providing her with a time and space for calm reflection in an, otherwise, hectic life.

The role of me within the study was also covered - that I would be painting and disclosing myself along with the rest of the group. The members had the right to challenge me if I become too directive in the workshops' operations. This seemed to take Zinnia off guard but she welcomed it, wholeheartedly.

Zinnia loved the idea that the concept of having closure for the group was already being thought about. We discussed ideas of how we could celebrate our time together - a potluck dinner, music, setting the room up like a gallery, and a discussion of how next steps could be carried out after the group closed.

We discussed having mixed nationalities in the room and that was fine for Zinnia; the more the merrier. She asked if there was going to be a tape recorder in the room. I said no - our paintings would be the recording devices, as well as their taped interpretations and my field notes I would make outside each session. It was important not to feel we had to censor or change how we were because a machine was taking down our every inflection. It was important just to be in a space and time we created in our own terms - collectively. Zinnia was relieved to hear this because she said she would not be able to relax if she knew everything said was being recorded.

I stressed the importance of confidentiality within the study and would err on the conservative when in doubt - and whenever possible would work consensually. Zinnia

left as abruptly as she had arrived because she was leaving on her honeymoon later that day. Marriage as a point of transition on its own was going to be quite in the forefront of her thoughts. We, again, confirmed the meeting times and these were fine for her - she agreed that ten people may be too many for a real in-depth experience so a few less would work to our advantage - and that I shouldn't worry. Hmmmmm.....I thought - here is going to be a wonderful person for the group.

And as I was left sitting in the corner by the windows, overlooking the football field and the running track, thinking - yes - a small group would work just fine. The people I had met so far were very motivated, creative (Jasmine was a writer for newspapers and magazines, while Zinnia was an industrial designer), fun, and extraordinary in their down-to-earthiness. This could allow this group to really dig down inside itself - find the marvels buried there and communicate this outward - on to paper. What the group recorded and produced constitutes the following chapter. It is to the "data" of the study, this thesis, now, turns.

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**FULL BLOOM OF PARTICIPANTS' IDENTITIES**

Introduction

*How do "social strangers" come to understand the meaning of their  
"identities- in-transition" during the experience of reflection during an eight  
week painting workshop?*

What follows were the verbatim words, interpretations and images of the small group upon which this study was based. The group agreed to the "garden" metaphor to base our code names. Possible choices of flowers were discussed and selected. The first two voices, Jasmine and Zinnia, will be relayed for you, followed by my own. The code name the group selected for me was "Sunflower". The reason begins my own section. The italics within the voices of Jasmine and Zinnia were mine. These additions were meant to clarify any potential ambiguities or to include notions relayed verbally but were not noted by the speaker. This attempt to provide as full a voice as possible was not intended to take away from the specific voice, but to imbue it with a richness. Jasmine and Zinnia spoke of and relayed their experiences of their immigration to Vancouver through the workshop series. I, also a participant in the workshops, relayed my own social "strangeness," through the experience of exploring aspects of my gay identity in transition. I decided to be a participant to "take in" the dynamics of what the group was sensing. This way I was able to be an insider and outsider to the group to some degree. To begin with, Jasmine was about to show herself.

### *Jasmine*

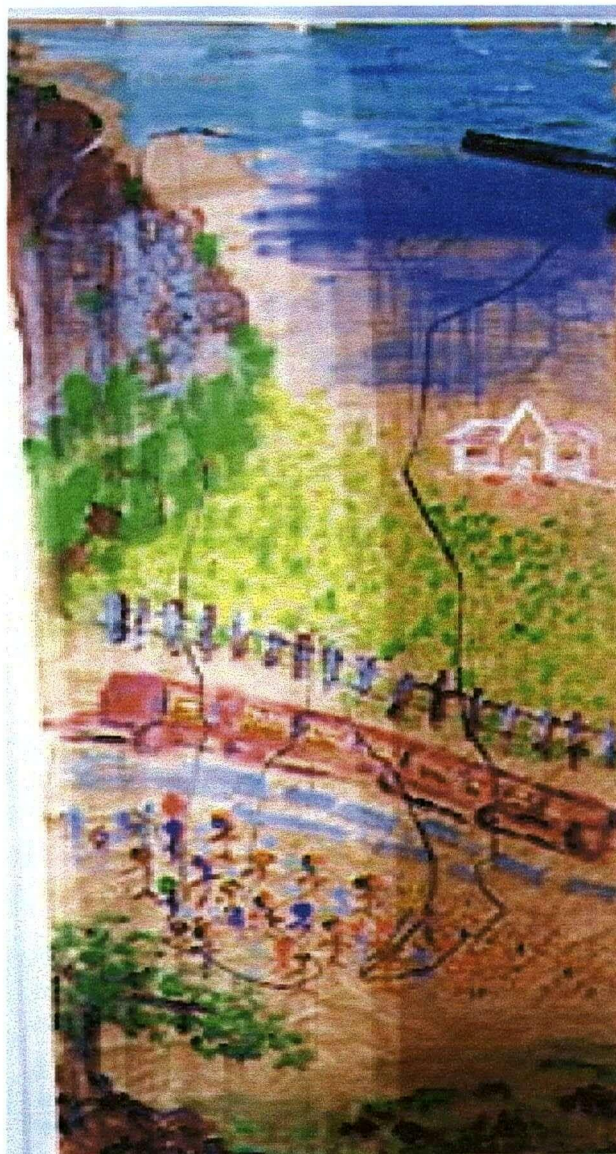
Jasmine was selected as this participant's name because, as hopefully will become apparent, Jasmine, a native plant of Asia, needed a bright light in order to flower. If all this plant received was shade and shadow then it would not produce its bright, white flower and pungent, alluring perfume. Jasmine's background, throughh her Participant Background Inventory was completed during our first day together, included the following:

**Participant Background Inventory**

*Please check or circle those items that reflect your background characteristics:*

- Gender: **Female**
- Sexual Orientation: **Heterosexual**
- Country Arriving From: **Taiwan, Taipei, R.O.C.**
- Country most lived in from birth to age 20: **Taiwan, Tainan**
- Arrived in Canada as a: **Landed Immigrant**
- Religion: **Belief God's words, but haven't baptized**
- Self-described social class: **General**
- Self-described Racial group: **Asia - Chinese**
- Self-Described Ethnic Background: **Yellow - Chinese**
- Disability type(s), if any: **None**
- Marital Status: **Single**
- Age: **Early Forty**
- Lived in which region of country emigrated from: **Urban**
- Birth Order: **Middle Child**
- Occupation: **Chinese Newspaper Reporter**

**Figure 10:** Jasmine's completed Participant Background Inventory



**Figure 11:** Jasmine's First Body Image



- Forest. Stream
- Train - BIG PUSHING
- Desert - Sand/Wind
- People Looking at me to come forward
- People standing still.
- Blue colour = New Immigrant
- Cockroach - Dark, crawling and start to stand and walk out into space/universe
- Robot - strong as time goes on in new home.
- OASIS - White house/tent = shelter
- Sand in background
- Green oasis
- Standing on cliff; seeing ocean and sky
- Follow music. Calm down. Walk where always green fields.
- Feel train coming - I go opposite way.
- Turned; I'm on train; see outside
- See a lot of people; look at anyone - see many things.
- See house in field - move forward to house; didn't get in
- Lie on grass; very comfortable; see sky; two people

**Figure 12:** Flipchart notes from Jasmine's first body image, February 13, 1998

Hi Steve:

My name is Jasmine. I think you know it. My Chinese name is Flower. I hope we can work - work very well and really help for your study. Good luck. It will be right for you.

I was born in Taiwan, Tainan. For most of my early twenty years life I was in Taipei. Taiwan is a small country but Taipei is an international city. We can get information from all over the world. It is a very active city. I been working as a publisher and printer and editor for TV station in Taipei and now I work for the "Chinese Daily" as a reporter based in Vancouver. This is some of my general background. I would like you to know.

Now I am in my early forty. Single. I quite enjoy my single life. I like travelling and travel around the north and south Asian countries. I been live in England for one years. I like Europe culture. I never thought I would emigrate to another country. Immigrate in Canada to me is an accident. And decided by no means.

Canada was no dream to me. Only one reason I came - in my - I wanted to change something in my life. I never been to North America before. I thought it would like Europe but it isn't.

Here was no culture of Europe I like. And I don't - I do not feel like in a foreign country. I have to make adaptations to let me fit in to. I want to stay long and to have to find a way to live.

I find my first job in Canada is a sales person in mall. And I feel uneasy. Not about work. It is people who I work with because they all come from different countries and they have different character.



In another part I feel uncomfortable was for who treat immigrant worker - attitude. Which you have to say "thanks - for give you a job" and they are not concerned about your ability. They [*people of an ethnic minority background - either Canadian born or immigrants who have come to Canada at an earlier date*] take advantage of us. They ask us to work for one month or more for free. By reason, was giving you Canada experience. If you need a job you have to accept it.

If I am a young newcomer [*into the workforce*] might be easily but I had a full working experience in my own country and earned more. Why? I struggle with the situation [*of people of ethnic minority background, notably some Asian people taking advantage of her for free labour in order to obtain "Canadian" work experience.*] for quite a long time. Father is seventy.

Hi Steve Nobel,

My English name is [REDACTED], Chinese last name is [REDACTED]. I hope we can work very well and really help for your study. Good luck.

I was born in Taiwan Tainan, but most my nearly 20 years life I was in Taipei. Taiwan is a small country but Taipei is a international city, we can get information from all over the world. It is very active city. I been worked for publisher as a planer and editor, TV station in Taipei and now I work for Chinese daily newspaper as a reporter. This is same my general background I would like you to know.

Now, I am in my early forty, single. I quite enjoy my single life. I like traveling and travelled around north and south Asia countries and been lived in English for near one year. I like European culture. I never through I will immigrate to another country. Immigrated in Canada to me is an accident and decided by no mean. Canada was no dream to me. Only one reason I came, it might I wondering to change something in my life.

I never been to north American before, I though it will like Europe, but it is not. Here was no culture as Europe I like and I does not feel in a foreign country. I have to make an adaptation to let me fit in sooner. I want to stay long and have to find a way to live.

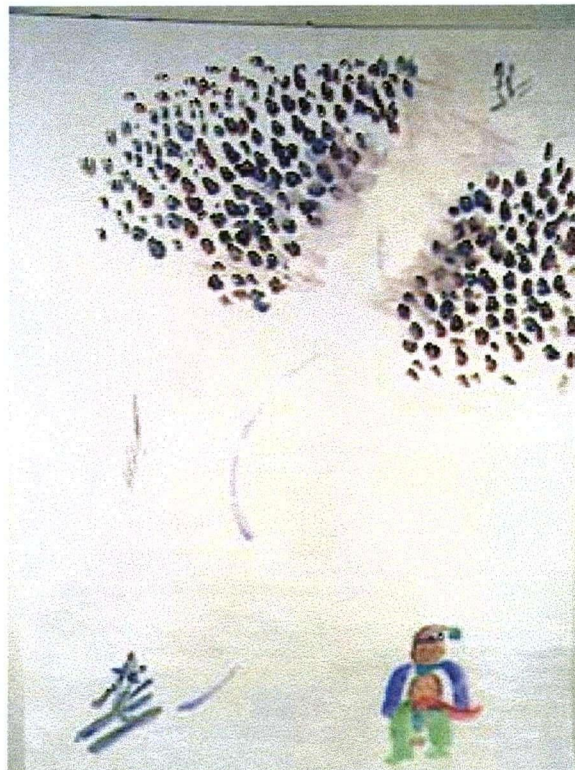
I find my first job in Canada is a sale person in mall and feel uneasy not about work, it is people whom I work with because they all came from different countries and have different character. In another part I feel uncomfortable was boss who treats new immigrate worker attitude, which are you have to say thank for give you a job and not concern about your ability. They took advantage from us that was asked as work for one month or more for free by reason was give you Canada experience), If you need a job you have to accepted. If I am young new comer might be easy but I had full working experience in my own country and earn more. Why? I struggle with this situation for a while. to be continue.

Figure 13: Jasmine's letter to me

Second time we meet [February 16, 1998] discussing about the thing that makes me most uncomfortable in Canada? I think people - my own race - in a multicultural environment. I always thinking how I can be a part of them and how to fit in. I - I live alone for quite a long time. Maybe in my mind, people always made me feel too complicate. I like being alone and make life more easily. But life - things can be in your

control. I have to deal with people all of the time and be cheerful and smile. Even I don't feel I want to.

In my painting this time show my mind something out. People, crowd - one becoming two - not too many colours. Snow white. It might mean I started to doubt myself. From on top of the snow mountain. Cold. Alone. Down into the crowd. The white colour split into the crowd.



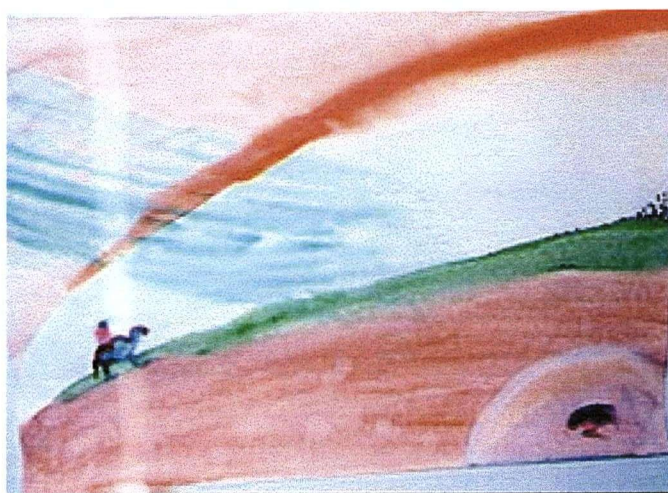
**Figure 14:** Jasmine's first picture, Ski Hill

It might mean I try to fit myself into [crowd]. The white colour was mean peace and simple. In this painting also show out - I don't want to be alone any more. I find someone I can hand in hand together. The two person hold together, happy sit on in snow. Is a picture just like love story. An old movie. It might mean I want a true love. Love and be loved. Maybe just like that.



February 20, 1998. In my painting I have a dessert - desert - sorry....Camel?

When? Sunrise or sunset? Horses. A tent with line and men. Crowd. This painting is might mean I need to work hard in to a really - really like which I face of. It is hard work but I ride a beautiful camel. From the beginning work one step by one step with the horse. The horses. The tent with light is somewhere, a man waiting there. The way might mean - will more quick to fit into the crowd. Could that mean me standing on the end of - on the end - on the end.



**Figure 15:** Picture two, On Horse Alone

- From Peace to Complicate Environment
- From Alone Become Into Crowd
- Test New Things. From the Dark Ground Into a Space, Future Path.
- Train and skytrain opposite pass away come out again.
- I riding a camel in the desert.

**Figure 16:** Flipchart notes from Jasmine, February 20, 1998

Might mean my life time is passing....

Sunset might be more meaning in this painting. Attain my own, the man with - a man waiting but the face is not clear. I don't know who I have to choose - God or Devil?

February 23, 1998. Paintings; first the ship. In the beginning the music made me more very sad [*As part of this day's visualization Chinese and Taiwanese music was played softly while they thought about their immigration experience.*]. Everything that came out is white and black. I saw ships and navigate - navigate - my eyes try to break through - through. The sky is dark. The ship is dark. It might mean that I am in Canada. The ship tried to break the difficult ice through - difficult through or means something deep in my heart. I need to break down.

- In starting I am in a bad mood.
- Dark colour coming out. One ship, slow moved into snow, ice water.
- The smoke is a black colour.
- The ship (after) into a harbour.
- I saw buildings....lights.
- It look like Hong Kong.
- In the end, my looking at fireworks spread in the sky.

**Figure 17:** Flipchart notes from Jasmine, February 23, 1998

Then the ship sailing to a harbour. It look like Hong Kong. Buildings line street. It is Hong Kong. I walk in the street and the crowd and hand in hand with a friend I never forget. In the end I saw a big fireworks. Then everything fade out into white.



**Figure 18:** Painting three, Fireworks

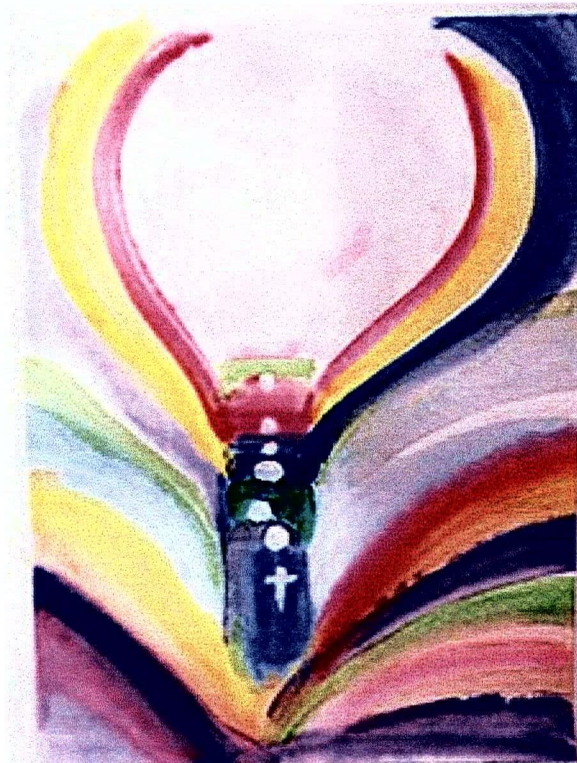
Painting Two - crowds. This might due to my recent decision. Relig - my religion decisions.

- I saw the church members.
- They all coming forward to me; hope me be a member and following God.

**Figure 19:** Flipchart notes from Jasmine, February 23, 1998

I study bible for a long time. But I haven't been baptized. This day I started to think about the baptizing but I still face a lot of my own problems. I get myself too much in pressure so I saw the church member. They wear long sleeves, walk toward me. I don't know what I need to choose. I think my faith is not enough. I can't see anything. I question about the church and the church member. I'm not really belong. Just like that.





**Figure 20:** Painting, Religious Decisions

I would like to read a .....just something....my feeling about myself. So if you can't understand or you wanted to know you just find someone to translate for you. Because I can't speak this into English.....

**THE GARDENER**

(verse 15)

I run as a musk-deer runs in the  
shadow of the forest mad with his  
own perfume.

The night is the night of mid-May,  
the breeze is the breeze of the south.

I lose my way and I wander, I  
seek what I cannot get, I get what I  
do not seek.

From the heart comes out and  
dances the image of my own desire.

The gleaming vision flits on.  
I try to clasp it firmly, it eludes me  
and leads me astray.

I seek what I cannot get, I get  
what I do not seek.

**Figure 21:** Verse 15 of the Gardener, by Rabindranath Tagore (1881-1941)  
First Asian to receive Nobel Prize for Literature (1913); India's Poet  
Laureate.

(Source: <http://www.iit.edu/~shartan/tagore/gardener.html>)

February 27, 1998. Today we talk about the childhood and our own past life with  
any difference with Canada. And thinks - thought something about our childhood.

Basically, I had a good childhood - happy - and most are good memories.

In this time - in the painting I'm standing on a wharf surrounding with the ships  
and boats. I smile with someone and a waving man come forward to me. The place look  
like Granville Island. In the middle of the painting was one of the memory in my  
childhood. When we were young, my mother always sit out in front of the house, a  
Japanese style house - in a sunny day.



Mother let us lie on her leg and pick our ear. It was very comfortable. And the feel with mother was safety and warm. I think I had a strong influence from my mother. In one of the paintings I was on a plane and looked down from the window. I saw a coastline; looked like Vancouver. In the whole imagine it might mean past was past and something new was coming. The waiting for the past and the plane for the new I pass on.



**Figure 22:** Painting, Jasmine's Arrival

March 6, 1998. We discussed about the working experience in my home country and what was the difference with Canada. Yes, it was different. Working environment, people I work with and the boss attitude - the most important part I think is I have the same ability but I can't get the same income in here. I feel sad in somehow. Even though sad, though, I still try to keep going on by hope and belief that things be better and better.

So, in the left side of the left side of the painting the job, pulling our people - it show I have no chance and already pull out from the job by someone and somehow. It might mean I come to Canada and I can't go back again. I have to find a position into...In the painting I walk around the middle of the bridge - it look like San Francisco.

I don't know why - just like the weight of my confidence. Now, I was - I had already in the middle of the road. I can't go back any more so have to keep going. I look

at the urban city and office building in the blue sky weather. It's very clear. I need to press on.



**Figure 23:** Painting, Just Do It

What will happen in my career in the future?

In the right side bottom of the painting I saw myself want to spoke well with the people at the beautiful seaside in the comfortable weather and around there - have a nice house and landscaping.

I look very happy and enjoy around it. It might mean what I want in the future. I hope I will be very successful in the future. The last part I put on my handprint. It mean - Just Do It! Just Do It! And no doubt about - even I can't do anything right now but Just Do It! Trust me have good luck. Bye.

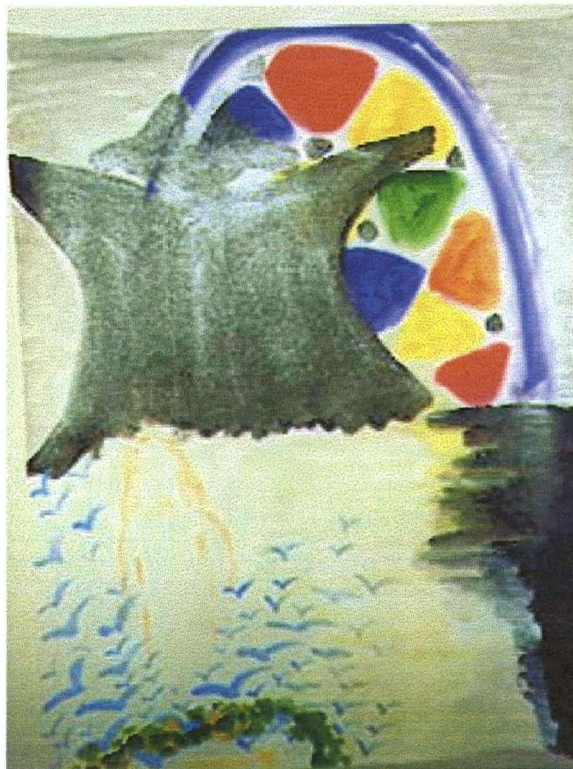
This time the background music, Steve is a Chinese song. So I recorded more - let you listen some to the Chinese singer [*muffled music and singing plays on the tape for two minutes*]. Well? is anything different for you?

March 10, 1998. Today we talk about religion which was a hard part for me to talk about. My life way I look just lately. I try to change it. Even try to do different way I have before. Unfortunately, I was too old to change. My belief in God to help me. I

believe God's word; he is true but I can't get into the church organization and the member behaviours.

Sometime I thought I was treat myself too hard and also easily to treat the people same as us. What kind I do? [*sigh*]

This painting was directly show what I think in my life. And meanwhile I consider about be baptized, so God with me, but Devil also with me. Who is who and what is what? You are not alone.



**Figure 24:** Painting, Your Are Not Alone

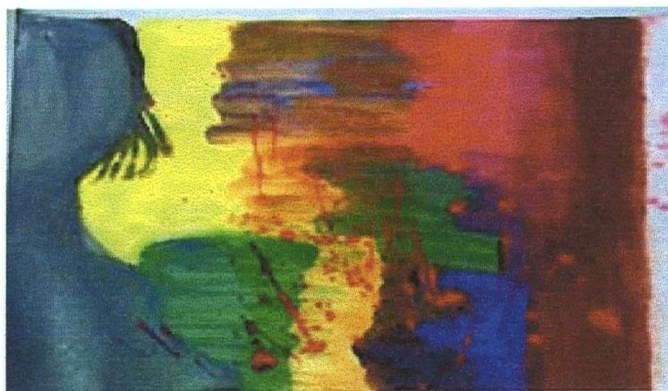
The way may always find deep inside of my heart. I don't know. I don't want to say. I don't want to say who is right and who is wrong. When we are young to make a decision was easy. You like was right and you don't like was wrong.



But when we in the middle aged was confuse. But true is true. Isn't it? I don't want to say that they don't want to be a missionary. I don't go to church as usual - as usually.

And this week I talked to the mission - "Don't come to my place to study bible with me again. I have to face this inquiry by my own."

I decided not to be a church member at this moment. But I told him I won't give up to be with God. I truly believe God know me very well and my anger [*something Jasmine did not want to speak about*] always with me in whole of my life. Let us have more peace and joy. I think all these paintings talk about my feelings; Devil and God.



**Figure 25:** Painting, Shadows within Jasmine

March 13, 1998. I forgot what we are discussing today but look into my painting. This one have a strong concept in my heart coming out. Which was man and woman are equal. We are same. Unique. Unfortunately, girl or woman, must always be taught by words which was to be like a beautiful flower - loudly, gently, softly to please for men.



**Figure 26:** Painting, Femininity

What is it all about? But we all do this way. Seems you can't be yourself any way. Maybe no one force you but you just follow this sense. A fighter and a flower - even devoted my self love and marriage be satisfied by no situation. In spite of the whole of my life think this way.

Equal and respect, but in the finally I still fail I thought - why I say I fail?

Because you can through my painting show men were bigger and strong - bigger and strong than woman. What a pity was. In my mind I don't care about the social point of view but I care about what I was feeling.

I still was controlled by social standard, didn't I?

Talked about God's words; your desire will be all for your husband. And he will rule over you. This was the fault of the men - human being. Human. So who ruled us like - I don't know...maybe.....I know.

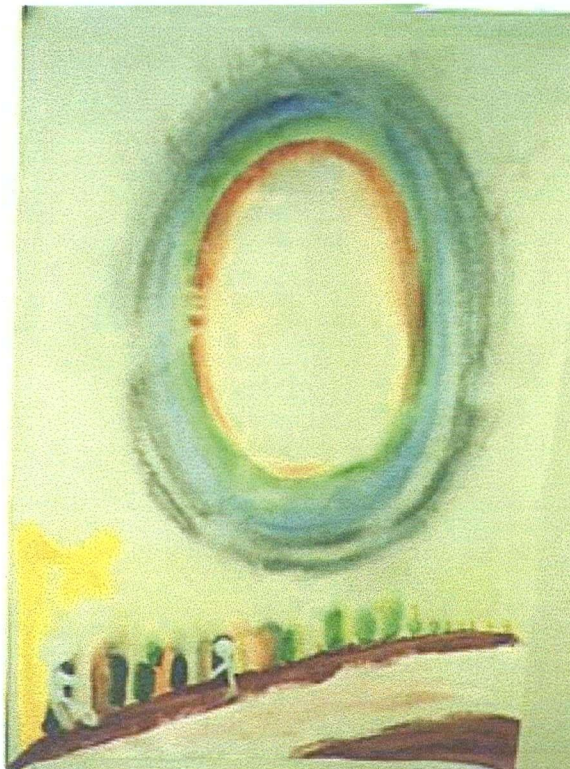
March 17, 1998. Talked about the social environment feeling in Canada.

Because, basically, people in here are very nice but we just do not know how to make friend, I think so.

Almost everyone was an immigrant. Only who came first and who came late. If everyone opened their mind and accept each other it would be wonderful.

In my painting was symbolize in this issue. I can paint it. People look each other on the street are talk some casually but do not really try to know each other. we only meet and pass through.

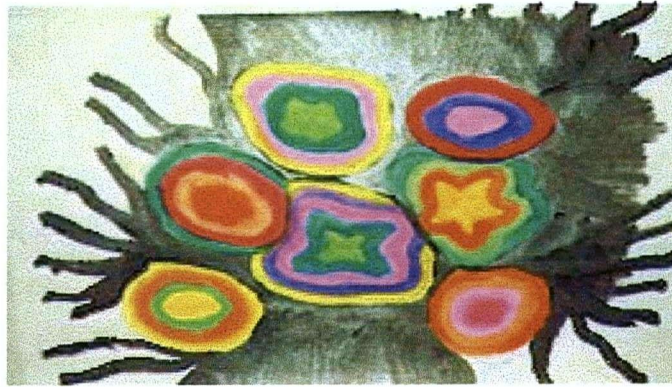
The circles are paintings mean here people are cold outside but warm heart. Warm inside.



**Figure 27:** Painting, Hard Shell of Interactions

We just do not know to show our love to each other. I try lot of colour - I try lots of the colour from the outside into the inside.

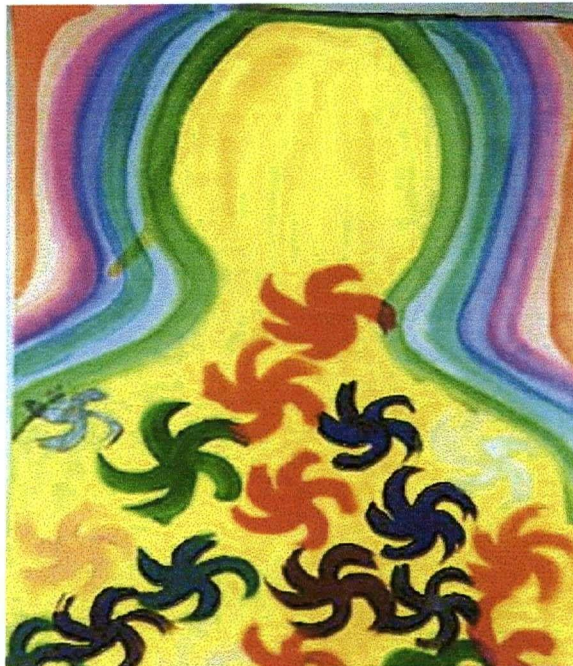




**Figure 28:** Painting, Cold Outside, Warm Heart

But it's not look good - warm? I can feel some cannot see barrier between us.  
 What can we do? Perhaps it was not the culture barrier. It was because modern life -  
 people don't care each other any more.

Another painting talk about the cultural difference. In my age, family, education  
 was not so open and show off in front of the public.



**Figure 29:** Painting, My Racial Distance

Chinese didn't show from the outside actions, for example, kiss or close hug to each in front of people believe. Love or you can say they care each other. I am like these kinds of the Chinese. To hold love but used to show in outside. I do not really like this characteristic I have.

In my paintings a big man and woman have face to face, very closely and in between have a small bench for man and a woman sitting closely in front of public.



**Figure 30:** Painting, Public Park Kiss

It my - was definitely hope I can show my love like that. I do not know what the jumping frog means. It might - mind us of a little mermaid like the Disney movies. Two love people need to have from the creation.

March 24, 1998. We talked about our working goal in Canada - or in the future. Working to me always is very important. Not only living but also for satisfying.

In my age, working goal was very clear. I know what I had - what my ability and what my work experience. Today two painting with me from the past like I already have and turn up my ability and the working experience up like a sunflower.





**Figure 31:** Painting, Future of Work

I would like to - I would like to - I would like to do my best to work easily.  
Without any unnecessary pressure. More freedom in the end of my life. I won't give up  
any opportunity I will meet.



**Figure 32:** Painting, Chinese Flowers

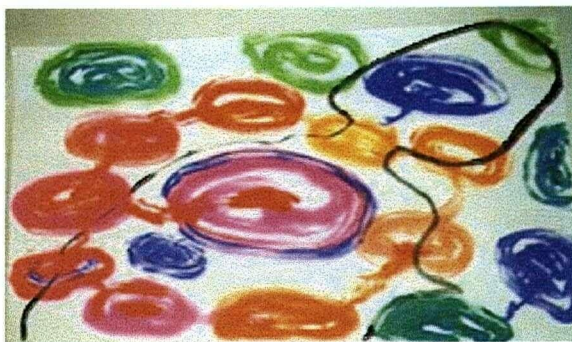
Here open and freedom just like I planned and low Chinese character - graphic  
on the painting. I say in Chinese [*the writing that appears on the painting above appears  
translated as:*]....

Journey to Freedom;  
 Journey to Freedom through  
 Painting and Writing.  
 When such an opportunity arrives,  
 I get very excited;  
 This opportunity for freedom.  
 No limits or restrictions;  
 No boundaries -  
 Until the end of my life.

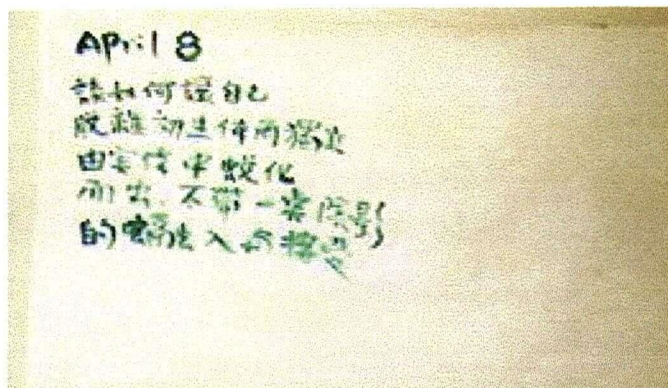
**Figure 33:** Painting, Thoughts From Painting

This is what I think of my painting.....

April 8, 1998.



**Figure 34:** Painting, Elements of Self



**Figure 35:** Final thoughts on the back of one of Jasmine's paintings



On April 8<sup>th</sup>, on the flip side of the painting, the English translations of the above inscriptions reads:

**APRIL 8, 1998**

How to become independent of my earlier life;

How to become integrated and accepted without the shadow of my early life.

**Figure 36:** Thoughts from painting: Elements of Self

April 6, 1998.

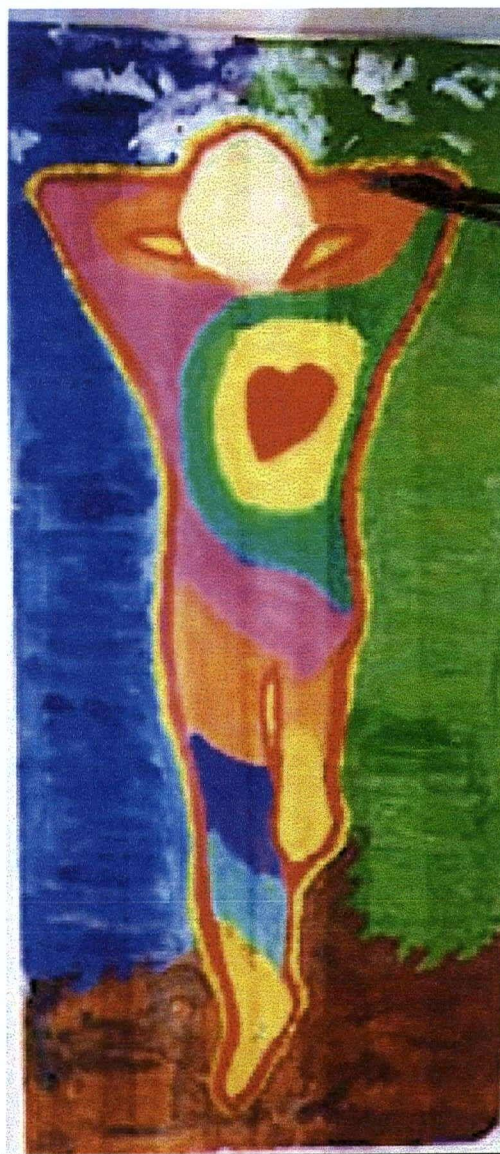


**Figure 37:** Painting, Sending Flowers Home



**Figure 38:** Painting, Looking Back to Move Forward

April 13, 1998.



**Figure 39:** Jasmine's final body image



***Zinnia***

Zinnia was selected, as will hopefully will hopefully become apparent, because this plant is a warm, seasonal plant and is used primarily for cut-flowers. These plants are easy to grow and provide much love and is a magnet for butterflies. Zinnia's background, according to the Participant Background Inventory, as she completed it on the first day together, was:

Participant Background Inventory
• Gender: <b>Female</b>
• Sexual orientation: <b>Heterosexual</b>
• Country arriving from: <b>Australia</b>
• Country of birth: <b>Australia</b>
• Country most lived in from birth to the age of twenty: <b>Australia</b>
• Arrived in Canada as a: <b>Visitor/Working Holiday Visa</b>
• Religion: <b>Atheist/Agnostic</b>
• Self-described social class: <b>Middle class</b>
• Self-described racial group: <b>Australian, Caucasian</b>
• Self-described ethnic background: <b>Australian</b>
• Disability type(s), if any: <b>None</b>
• Marital status: <b>Married</b>
• Age: <b>27</b>
• Lived in which region of country emigrated from: <b>Urban</b>
• Birth order: <b>Youngest child</b>
• Occupation: <b>Designer</b>
• Date of permanent residency in Canada: <b>Not received yet.</b>

**Figure 40:** Zinnia's Participant Background Inventory Form



**Figure 41:** Zinnia's First Body Image

**BODY IMAGE ONE**

- Calm, peaceful
- Enjoy nature scenes
- Fleshy colour - real me
- Neglected Head
- Base - Australia - Jump off something solid; support; without was in free air.
- Colours for energy and strength.
- Orange - bright colours of Australia; Beach; Vibrant
- Canada is greys
- Lots of trees; look at stream
- Very joyful.
- Like during an outstretching of arms on trapeze.
- Move away from that.
- Hands feel different; new - energetic - lot more to absorb - purple only at fingers - new energy.
- Soothing colour; soft blue - nurturing.
- Fast last thing - is face or back of head? Haven't changed that much since left Australia.
- No identity. No face.

**Figure 42:** Flipchart of Zinnia's thoughts on her first body image

February 13, 1998.

I'm going to answer a few questions for an art therapy investigation into recent immigrants and culture shock into Canada. The questions I'm going to answer are:  
number one - Who am I?; number two - How I arrived in Canada?; and number three - How I became a part of this study?

So, first of all - Who am I? Well, my name is Zinnia, that's Z-I-N-N-I-A, but I've recently actually changed my name or I'm in the transition of changing my name to Zinnia-Aster, as I was recently married on the twenty-fourth of January. I come from

Australia. I was born in Australia and did my university degree in Industrial Design in Australia, so I'm a qualified Industrial Designer but I land myself into - into all sorts of different work involving art and creative - creative side of things. Um, I'm twenty-seven. I come from Brisbane, which is on the east coast of Australia. Um, where the weather is, uh, very uh, warm, and uh, sunny [*slight laugh*], and blue skies.

Uh, so how I arrived in Canada - well, I ah, finished my university degree and promptly got work with a manufacturing company - a furniture manufacturer and I soon - soon realized that I'd like to go overseas and work overseas. So, I applied to the Canadian Immigration for a Working Holiday Visa, which I received. They gave me twelve months to get, ah, save my money and get myself a ticket.

And in the process, I thought, "Well, you know, I'm going overseas, maybe I'll go to South America on the way." So, I left Australia on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1996. I went to South America for two and a half months where I had a great - wonderful, wonderful experience and I landed in February, 1997 [*in Vancouver*].

I knew no one. I knew absolutely no one. It was cold and I set myself up rather quickly with some contacts - got out of the hostel pretty smart, quite smart and got some work in one of the design firms downtown.

Ahh - and not long after that I moved into the house where I am right now which is 43770 Garden Path Lane, where I met the man I just married. And, ahh, we, we, ahhh, spent eight or nine months living together and I didn't want to leave and he didn't want me to leave either and my working visa was coming to an end, so we tied the knot and consequently, here I am.

Ahh, my status actually right now is probably still a visitor. We've got the immigration papers all lined up and ready to go - ahhh - we've just found our new



address which is - ahhh - a lovely little townhouse which was built in the 1930's which I'm very, very excited about moving into.

It's going to be a dream because we are sick of living with other people and really need our own space. So that's going to be happening in the next couple of weeks, which is - very - you know it's exactly what I need right now and I don't feel as though I can get going unless I have a place to live in so we've solved that part of things.

And, *[sigh]*, I guess the next step is - um - the immigration part of things which is just a matter of literally filling in the forms which we've already done and sending in some dollars and waiting, I guess, until they *[slight laugh]* give me my landed immigrant status so - yep - I'm still a visitor and probably in about two weeks' time I'll be nothing because I'll be in the transition between being a visitor and a landed immigrant.

It's an uncomfortable situation to be in - it's - well - yeah - it's not an easy thing. It's not like being at home, that's for sure. But, um, well, we'll work it out.

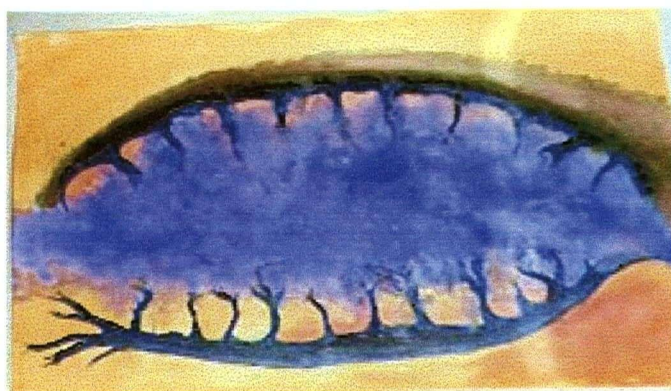
So how did I become a part of this study? Well, I recently put myself into a "self-inquiry through art course" at the Garden Community Centre, which is just down the road from where I live. And one of the girls brought along a little newspaper clipping which was - ah - ah - an article about Steve and what he was doing and that there was - he was requiring people that were in my situation to do a study. And given my - my expanse of time right now in that the HYBRID Studio - that I was working at before Christmas was awfully quiet and my boss can't afford to pay me. I'm in - ah - a period of time where I've got - ah - extra time. And - ah - I'm definitely happier when I'm busy so - ah - I got involved with it and - ah - I'm really looking forward to it.

Today is the first day and - um - I know that - it's going to be of value to me. I know that it's an expanse of time but I know it's of value to me to document this period -

ah - of transition in my life, both in a visual - in a visual format - through the art and even through this cassette. I - I think in - ah - twenty years' time it could be a real insight into some things for me and, or maybe my children.

So, um, I guess that's all the information I need to - ah - document for now.

So, today, is the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, 1998 and I'm documenting some information about a painting that I drew on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February. This painting I titled, The Burning Bush Fires of Australia, and the growth - root growth in Canada. And, basically, this only came about as, as, as the painting developed.



**Figure 43:** Painting, Burning Bush Fires of Australia

It didn't start that way at all - when we were imagining images I never knew why but for some reason I came up with this curved - ah - image - ah - with the - with the segmented sections of it and I - and I - I just started to draw that and it - would - it became to me in a very dark blue or black colour. So that's where I started with those two - round top and bottom curves with all the little segments broken into it.

And, then, as I further developed those in my mind I started to think about those little segments as areas in my life and that the colour through the middle - the purple - was me and who I am right now....now....and that I, I needed to infiltrate every little segment of those sections and that's where it was but I started with the blue first and I

worked on each little segment and each little segment was unique because it had its own shape and it had its own way of entering into it, and its own, its own unique dimension so I worked on those and I thought about those as areas of family life that I needed to consolidate. And as I got further along, uh, I then worked on - I think I worked on the bottom section and they started to become trees, um, which started to look like trees in - in - in the outback of Australia. And, I, I, kept going with that and as I developed them a bit further the - the top ones were like roots and they were growing downward and I thought - this is kind of like Australia and the growth of Australia, and - and - and the Australia was already established - they were already full-grown trees and although not fully grown but there were others - that were certainly a lot closer than the roots just coming down from the top which was Canada and the purple was just infiltrated through and you could still see areas where it still hadn't even got close to developing it and as I started to think about the roots idea I thought - well - maybe I - I should be drawing some new growth above the soil there? So I built up a layer like a mulch, green humus - like a build up to nurture the roots and to nourish them. And I thought I needed to put the new green shoots up there - but I - I couldn't put them down yet and I think that's simply because I'm not there yet. So, I ah - then go - well - what - what else could they need to be nurtured and it really is the warmth of the sun and that's where the orange wash came through on the top and it was like a warm, glowing sunshine orange. And then that further entered down into the bottom section where it started to become quite a bush fire there and they started to be the burning off of those trees in the outback. So, that's about where this one goes for me.

So today's date is the 6<sup>th</sup> of March - Friday, 1998. We're in our new place; we're in a mess and I've managed to dig out some music and an answering machine and my paintings. The first one I'm going to talk about is the Viking Invasion and - ah - I look at

this one today - it - ah - it's - I guess it - it hasn't really changed from where I thought it was. I don't - I don't feel quite so powerful about it. I - I feel as though that green mound of peace is still maintained intact.

- Numb?
- Aster - Danish
- Strong red Line and Being Divided
- Colours Made Me Feel Right
- Green Mound - Hill/Mountain
- Am with the Mountain
- Didn't draw myself - too conscious
- Blue - distance - Mum and I - Red Became River
- Blue - Australia - Blend into Background
- Purple Viking ship - attempting to land on the green land so I add roots - make it solid

**Figure 44:** Flipchart notes from Zinnia on Viking Invasion, February 20, 1998

And that - that - I don't really have to stress about the Vikings [*her brothers in Australia*]. Um - and - but I guess I know that there's - there's a big difference between - ahh - the peace now and - and - the - the - the - the - the - the lack of peace when the Vikings [*her brothers*] were here. I'm calling the Vikings my brothers, so yeah, basically this started out as a very rich red line and, and the thoughts we were thinking about the last time we saw our family and - and - that was my wedding when my brothers came with their wives and my mum across the seas from Australia.



**I don't care about Brothers and Wives ----THEM**

**But I care about MUM.**

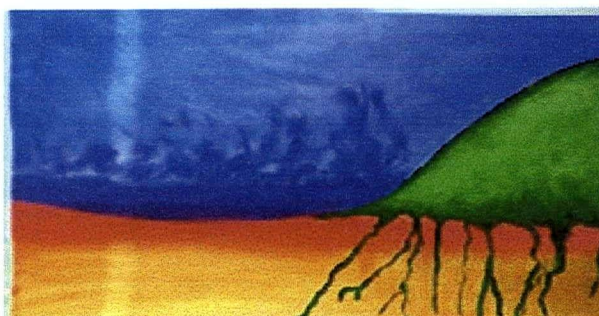
**Squamish, Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> [January] [WEDDING DAY]**

- closedness
- pretending - no eye contact
- saying good-bye but not caring whether or not I saw them.
- Distance - differences - no common ground
- **AIRPORT.....MOTHER**
- sadness
- permanence in good-bye
- wanting to give her [Mum] strength, help, but knowing she would work her own self out.
- **Gratitude for my freedom**
- **Her [Mum] open-mindedness, strength**
- **Wanting her [Mum] to be strong, to build her up. Make her happy.**  
**But also wanting my own energy for Aster and my life here. Need a balance.**

**Figure 45:** Flipchart notes from Zinnia, February 20, 1998

And - ah - brought with them their [*slight laugh*] relatively aggressive natures.

And, anyway, the red sea I guess was a band of energy and - ah - a green mound was my peaceful earth; my little space in Vancouver.



**Figure 46:** Painting, Viking Invasion

Um - and I guess it was the coming of our piece of Australia across to try and embark on my land, here. And - ah - it was quite a fiery energy that came along with them and - ah - the - ah - the tree really had to put down roots so that green piece of earth really had to put down roots to hold its ground here. So - ah - I guess that's what I must be doing.

Putting my roots down.

There - there was an element of my mother in there - um - and it was about trying to get her across that red sea as well. She - she - was the blue image - I think - the blue up in the corner. That's rather like a blue sun but it got washed - washed back and that's probably to do with them washing back her energy level. So that's that one.

The second one is - ah - called The Year Gone By, and the transformation of energy and basically I started thinking about what it was like when I first arrived here. The colours of things and the feelings that we had. I started by landing here which is the big red blob in the middle of all this greyness.

And it was grey in two senses; it was grey in that I didn't know where I was going and it was also grey in the actual colourings of the place because I arrived in March and it was really quite cold and snowing.

But, anyway, I arrived from my South America trip - really with a lot of energy and a lot of fire. A lot of passion. And spirit. And I went through my merry way, quickly getting a job and finding a place to live, and watching the seasons change and go through, you know, meeting Aster [*Zinnia's husband now*]- ah- just - amazing - amazing....

I've never been so busy in all my life.

I was constantly tired and go-go-go-go-go - no time to have a break - ah...Until September when my mum came over when I took some time off. But even then it was go-go-go-go-go - so the energy is very rich and very red and very strong and very flurry-some - and all very - kind of stressful actually. Because, you know, when you first arrive you've got a lot to get together and you're stressed because you've got to find work to survive. Blah - blah - blah - anyway - that energy seemed to subside or soothe itself round Christmas and, you know, there was some times at Christmas that I found rather difficult being away from home. Um - just being up there for three days with Aster's family was - wasn't my best Christmas but - um - my energy level was really subsided and - and -

I felt almost dulled - when the wedding came along.

Um - I - but I can - I can see that the - the path is still being carried out - a path through the greys is still being carried.



Figure 47: Painting, the year gone by



But - ah - the energy's definitely building on the sides, there - and - you can see where the right hand corner it's like a ski slope and that represents Aster and I - two paths going down the ski slopes together on our honeymoon and having some wonderful times together.

#### **INITIAL LANDING**

- Fire in my belly.
- Energy to go, go, go, go
- Fast, Push Hard, Work, Try, New
- Hard but Push....Snow...Cold
- Redness for Energy.
- The changes of the seasons
- Work, Work, Work Spring, Summer - no sleep
- No Time.
- Then Fall, Time to Slow Down
- Christmas = Not Mine, No One, Bad, Hate
- Pushing Struggle. No More.
- Slow Down, Wedding - Excitement, Skiing, Top of Slope and Down. Now. Stop.
- Time to Climb back and Build Up for Next Challenge. New Period. Redefine with Aster.
- New Energy. Building. And Now. Pinker. More Balanced.
- Comfortable - Now shared with love, serenity, newness again. But this time with a softness. More mellow; more relaxed.
- Time to enjoy the small things.
- Still Passions and Energy.
- Don't want complacency or boredom.
- Still need challenges but two share the struggle and triumph.

**Figure 48:** Flipchart notes from Zinnia, February 27, 1998

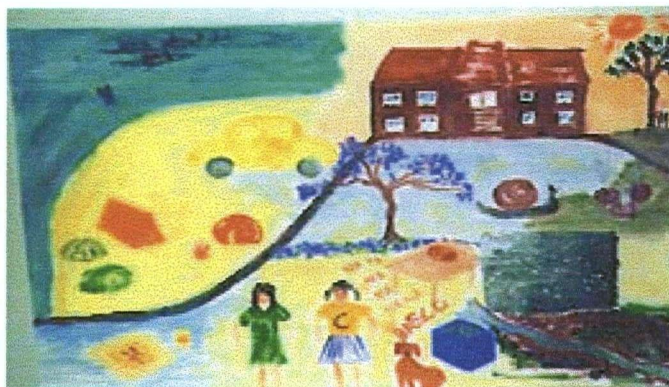


And forming that bottom left-hand spiral together; that spiral of love and passion and relaxed energy. You can see that the same pink energy comes from that red but it is combined with a soothing energy from Aster that makes me more mellow and more relaxed and less stressed about life - I guess.

So, and that is repeated up in that right-hand corner and I think that's - that's our future together. It's going to go off in a flurry of pinks and whites - soothed passion and comfort.

So - um - yeah. This one also has cherry blossoms in it and the change of seasons is very strongly evident in what - you know - in my garden and around me. So that's that one. Okay.

So today is the Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup> of March. And I'm going to talk about a painting that I did on the 22<sup>nd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> of February. I haven't got a title on this one but if I - if I gave it a title I guess it'd be a Mix Mash of Memories of Australia, from my childhood.



**Figure 49:** Painting, Mix Mash of Memories of Australia

And some of - in the year before I left. The one of the - the one that came back to me strongly in this one is my memory of the jacaranda tree - trees that come out until about September every year in Queensland, where I come from - a very beautiful purple -

purple flower that covers the ground with a carpet of purple. And they dot the landscape around the city that I lived in. and there was one of these trees in my primary school.

There were several of these trees in my primary school. And I had one in my drawing with my primary school there. I think my - my primary school days at Ashbury State School were a very creative time for me - both in the performing arts and also in the creative side of painting, drawing, and creating stuff.

And my friend at the time, Marigold, her and I spent hours together doing fantastic projects and we got some - shared some fun times together and they - the top right hand corner is the two of us at our tree scraping the sap out of it which we used to go around and collect. And this is all at our school and then there's some puff balls which are these fungus things that grow in the dirt and the dry heat and you stamp on them and they shoot up a spray of stuff. We used to go seeking for them. Then there's an image of a snail because often we used to collect snails and play with them or cut them up or do whatever.

And there's the black square - there's a painting we once did of the milky way; we stayed up really, really late one night; I was staying at her house which always found to be a very creative house.

Her father was always reading really interesting books or playing interesting music, and it was very rich environment. She grew up with lots of brothers and sisters and I always liked going to her house - that's for sure.

Her mum used to bake an apricot loaf and that picture there is her kitchen table with the apricot loaf on it. It was really good.

And then there's a creek in the bottom right-hand corner where we used to go and play. And the blue box is one of the art projects that we did - we created a spaceship.

We used to lie in the gutter and go spotting for space shuttles, too. And then, there's a picture of my dog, whose name was Basco. And we used to have a call for him - "nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, Basco, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah - and I had totally forgotten about that until I started to do this drawing.

It brought memories from that particular era. The era of netball; where I'm weaving the purple and yellow and "C" for centre. And then there's my school uniform; my high school uniform.

Bottom left-hand corner are some fish and chips with some beer. Which is something that I shared with Dad, actually. The top left-hand corner is the ocean and Morten Island and tents around a campfire on my birthday.

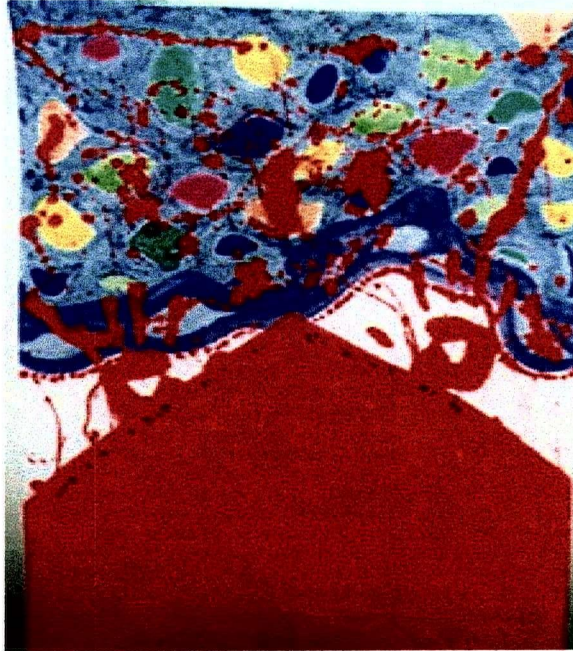
My 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. Before I left Australia. With a whole group of friends, swimming out and finding a Jubong out near the wrecks.

And the car in the middle is the first thing I actually drew. It started the flourish of all these memories. It was my mum's car. My mum's car driving me to school everyday up that hill; up the big hill. We used to drive up to Ashbury State School. I think that was a particularly nice time which I used to share with her every day. She was a busy, working mum. A single, working mum. So the time that I got with her alone was pretty well absorbed.

In this painting I did was called The Ammunition - The Ammunition For the Arrow of Adventure. That was painted on the sixth of March and this one was a really passionate one with lots of energy to go out and seek work.

And it started off as a bow and arrow shooting into this unknown area of structures of grey stuff with lots of coloured pockets in it and all of those coloured pockets representing experiences that I am able to take or have and I guess I was filling

my arrow of adventure with all of these red balls of ammunition which are my past experiences and my skills to go out and seek this - these pockets of colour and my attitude right now is to shoot in every which way.



**Figure 50:** Painting, The Ammunition of the Arrow of Adventure

Shoot madly, and wildly at all the - madly, and wildly at all the potential experiences that are out there for me to have. I mean I'm not interested in being stuck in one particular world, that's for sure. I want to be absorbing the colours from lots of different areas. I don't want to be stuck in one colour.

I just want to have life as but a daring adventure or nothing at all and that's pretty well my thoughts on this matter. I think it is - you've got to go for it and take everything that comes your way as an adventure.

And there's the build up of red against that purple wall around it - like a membrane and that keeps coming up in all of my images. It's almost like the build up of cells before menstruation and the shedding of those old cells making new growth, right.

And I've got two prints of my hands in red - there - which is something I wanted to do to bridge that between here and in the future. And, and this painting gave me a lot of motivation, actually.

It was done on the Friday and on the Saturday I went and redid my - my resume and my new business logo for - with - using my new name - Zinnia Aster - which I've now taken on.

And my new logo which incorporated an arrow into it. And it also incorporated almost like a swirly swirl of my ammunition that's loaded to the arrow and so it really motivated me to get out and do that.

And I've started the job hunt and I've - I've - I have to do something positive each day in search for work, and, so far - it's been working. I've been sending out lots of resumes and getting into the vibe so I hope it pays off. I think it will. So that's that one.

So, today, I'm going to talk about two paintings I did on the Eighth and Third of March, 1998. And today is actually March the nineteenth.

And the theme for the week was "spirituality," which was something that I really haven't consciously sat down and thought about for quite a while. So, it was a very valuable experience. And the two paintings that I did were called Judgment Day and Soul Nurturing.

And the music that I'm actually playing is the Cowboy Junkies and a song called Misguided Angel. And I like it a lot; it talks about a soul like Lucifer. But I can't help



but compare myself, I guess, to Jasmine's predicament because I don't know why but I feel far more enlightened than her and I wonder if she may perhaps feel the same about me. That she is more enlightened than I am.

But having been in a situation like what Jasmine is going through right now where you are very strongly being pulled towards being highly involved with the Church and trying to make a decision about that and not knowing which way to turn.

I know where she's coming from. Aside from all of that my painting represents my spirituality. And the first one is about, you know, judgment day and it's basically looking at a view from my back looking at me and I'm looking into the light and I'm alone and all I have to offer is myself.



**Figure 51:** Painting, Judgment Day

And it's really - it holds a lot of feelings for me and it basically boils down to all you have in this life when you die, is yourself. I don't have anything else. You don't

really have any of your achievements; you don't really have - you don't really have any of your material possessions - you don't have any of that. All you have is yourself and your soul.

And, so, you have to live this life knowing that - knowing that and - and - um - and - I guess - if you - don't - um - live your life in a way that fulfills, or answers to your own particular rules or morals or beliefs, then you are not going to be happy at the end and then some things aren't going to go right.

And, so, I think all of your life, now, is about preparing your soul, which leads into the next one - or nurturing your soul.



**Figure 52:** Painting, Soul Nurturer

So I think the prime thing we have to remember is to nurture that soul; don't sacrifice it for anything - don't do things that aren't within your belief system. And make it grow - challenge it - feed it; don't shove it into a corner and forget about it.

And pursue these earthly things; pursue things that nurture your soul. So, the paintings basically you can see - one, two, three, four, five little kidney - they look like babies in a womb and an egg. Little shapes travelling through different life times.

And we are responsible for that soul in this lifetime. Who knows what happens at the end of this life time? Who knows?

But I feel very, very strongly that we need to nurture it. Because if we don't nurture it in this life, it's going to be...there's a reason for having to nurture your soul right now, and I'm not sure what it is but I - I - it's like you have to be responsible for this little baby in the womb. And, yeah.....

So I just listened to what I was saying and I seem to always get stuck on the reason for having to nurture your soul. And I guess that's because I don't know what's going to happen in the end when we die.

But I am - I feel strongly about the fact that we do need to nurture our soul in this lifetime. But, another thing that came out this week for me was a film that I saw by a Japanese film maker. I don't - I can't remember his name.

I remember his name; his name is Sun Ho. And the film's name was called, The Ballad of Nuriyama. And it was a fantastic film; it touched me in a way that I've not been touched before. And, basically, what - what it was saying - well - what it said to me was that in this lifetime, in this - this - world that we live in right now - it is virtually impossible to die gracefully and this film was about an older Japanese woman who lived in the countryside with her sons and their various wives and aside from some of the



issues that I've pointed out - about animals and humans as animals - or as a tribe. This issue of dying gracefully, she really proved - I think - for me - she - she - when she died, she was getting older. Basically, what the old people used to do was they would go to this mountain, called Mount Nuriyama, and it would be quite a journey to go there. And so when they first started to feel weak or they started to feel like they were becoming a burden on their children or the crops because there wasn't enough food for them, etc.....they would say; "Okay, I'm going to Mount Nuriyama this winter." Or whatever, whenever they chose the time. So she was a strong woman and - you know - she had such a lot of life in her when she decided that she needed to leave.

She prepared the - prepared the children for their winter. She made sure that there was going to be enough food for them and then she said, "Okay, I'm going to Nuriyama." And which her son had to carry her for about a three day journey, or something.

We - she never ate or spoke or anything until - well - at all. And when she got there he said he didn't want to go. He was clinging to her and she was beckoning him to leave, which he did. And on his way down he saw another son bringing his father up to Nuriyama and the height - the contrast of the two elderly people - the woman versus the man.

The father had been bundled up into a - um - a net and was clinging to his son, as his son was throwing him off a cliff. As opposed to this woman who went willingly - wanted to go - wanted to go and sit on top of that mountain in the snow, with no food, and waiting to die.

And I just thought about all the people in our generation, where we live here, in these cities where we shove them into nursing homes and feed them from drips and just

such a degrading process of dying and it made very strong to me something that I feel about when I die is that I want to try to die gracefully. If that means euthanasia, that what it will be.

So, yeah - and the other side issue to that is I see the grandmother really as a very strong woman and when she died she held out until the end and unfortunately she had to be placed into a nursing home which was a horrible and I make a comparison between that and my next door neighbour who was one hundred and when she was getting close to death her daughter sold her house and moved up into the mountains and she died out in the mountains. Out in the country. And I just - you know - I think that's so much - so much nicer. So.....

So these paintings are from the Thirteenth of March and the theme for this was gender or sexuality and - um - I - have Indigo Girls playing in the background because they are symbolic of an era and - and - and - it's not an era that's over but I guess it's an era that's faded a bit and I guess I miss it.

I - the circle there in top is us dancing around - us meaning my very close girlfriends. It's a very strong female energy there and it involves road trips - Indigo Girls - and total female energy, and female positivity.



**Figure 53:** Painting, Indigo Girls

And - I - I - I know that I'm thinking of my girlfriends; Petunia, Rosebud, Marigold, Peony, and Poppy. And it's a time and a place that I think is passed. We're all now living in different parts of the world; different parts of Australia. We're all moving around and I think we're going to have to draw on that past era in our future. And I think we will but - um -but - ah - that was a time where males were not important to us and it was - um - a time when we really bonded our female energies together. And in a sense those males are trying to break in to - - to the women's circle and one of them on the right hand side got too close and he got burned.

I think I feel sorry for some of the males that were in our lives at the time. I think all of them had a lot of respect for us, but they were kind of envious of what we had because they never had anything near like that.

So that was a time and a place in Australia and that was a real separation of male and female but there's swirls all around the outside of this one and it is basically my new era and I'm now growing far more close to a male than I have ever been - that - the colour from the men is swirled in with my pink so it's Aster and I and I - I went through a transition I think.

Number One - travelling alone in South America and all of the experiences that I had there that me put my guard down. Number Two, being away from that circle of females allowed me to blend with the opposite sex in a more mellow, relaxed way.

So I - I've come through a transition in that respect, definitely. Not that we were men-haters, but there was always an upstanding - upstanding - not a judgment but we didn't want to see any of our sisters going into a relationship with someone that was a loser, or someone that wasn't right for them.

Basically, I think we were all way outgrown most of the men in the circle that were around us anyway and part of the reason why I think I'm attached to Aster is because he's so far away, and so new, and so fresh, and away from all of that. And so different. There was - there wasn't any men in that scene that were at the same level of any of us. We were all far beyond it. So, it will be interesting to see what becomes of us all.

The second painting.....which just fell down..is - this is a weird one - I'm not sure where this is coming from and I didn't do it. I didn't feel very conscious about painting it. The first one I did; the first one - the image of us dancing around a circle was very strong to me.

And it was also mimicked at my wedding as well with Tulip, and a couple of the girlfriends there but they're friends on a very distant level. Uh, anyway, the second painting was - I was concentrating on my associations with females in Canada and how - the - I guess - I guess what this says when I look at it now is that I'm the red and I'm the swirling ball to the right and the purple, closed blue or black - is the Canadian women.



**Figure 54:** Painting, Frozen From Female Friends

And I'm very different. As you can see there's no - there's not much the same there. They're swirling in different directions, in different universes and - um - in some senses - I guess - I look like I may have been fragmented - I'm trying to get close there and keep being blown away - almost that's like sperm in the first one. I'm calling it a sperm, which as Aster pointed out to me - it looks like an ovum. Women dancing around an ovum and the little sperms trying to break in and fertilize the egg.

But - yeah - I guess - in the right hand of the painting in the circle and - ah - I don't - I think I don't consciously care too much about it - trying to break into it. Ummmm....but....ah...I also want to recognize my differences. I don't want to become totally like them - I want to be recognized for who I am. But - ah - there was something - that one - wanted me to balance the painting and it is still very off-balance as I am - am looking at it now and I ended up bringing some of the purple from the Canadian women on to my red to try and blend it in a little bit more.

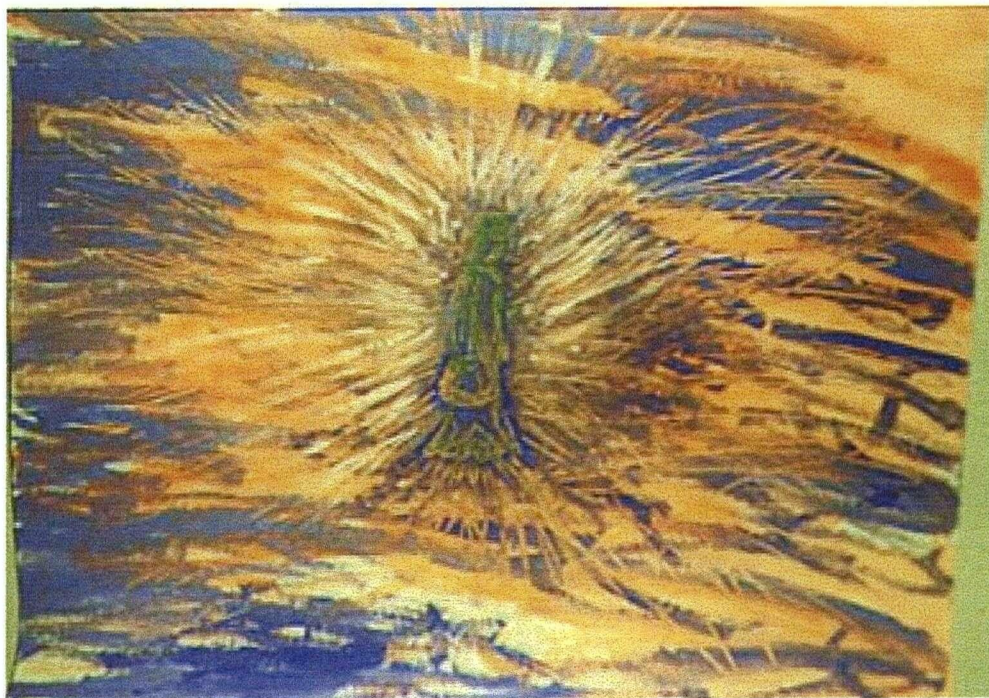
And then there's the swirls of the pink and the purple - that's them and me - me - pink and purple. And the combination of the two makes some nice swirls so perhaps ultimately that's where I want to be - able to combine my pink with their purple. Not sure.

So today is the Nineteenth of April, 1998. And a lot has changed since I last spoke on tape. I haven't listened to the last excerpt but I know that between then and now, probably nearly a month has lapsed and I've now got a full-time job with Canada Gardens, doing the merchandising for their store and - um - my life went from having lots of spare time and no money - to having money and no time.

So, consequently, I got two more days of the sessions to do with Sunflower [Steve] and Jasmine and I need to talk about two paintings that I did.



The first one was done on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, so basically a month ago and it was called, Bohemian Woman. And if I can cast my mind back it was basically - I think - about someone who is very in tune with themselves and very in touch with themselves - someone who didn't need - I was actually relishing it at this point in time - relishing not having money but still very content - which is kind of ironic because now - I guess - I'm content.



**Figure 55:** Painting, Bohemian Woman

### FLIP CHART NOTES....from Zinnia

- Passion for life - Simple Things
- Frugality - survived on a shoestring; rush in this; needs met; seek and you shall find, e.g., toy in street, unbanked cheque.
- Three Way Balance - Aster and I alone; Aster and I outside; myself outside.
- Bohemian: time more valuable; free, uninhibited; no guilt of earning - relax more; social needs met in an easier, community-based way; neighbours; looking forward to summer - group barbeque, getting to know people in the local area.
- Active versus Passive - job front - too many windows; turn down anything - am I closing doors? Depth for Aster and friends at our house.
- Key to Depth now = EMAIL
- Job=Computer=Email=Home
- Consciously not wanting to be the party thrower; decided not to have a house warming; don't want to push anything that doesn't feel right.

**Figure 56:** Flipchart notes from Zinnia on March 17, 1998



**Figure 57:** Paintings, Pieces of Bohemia

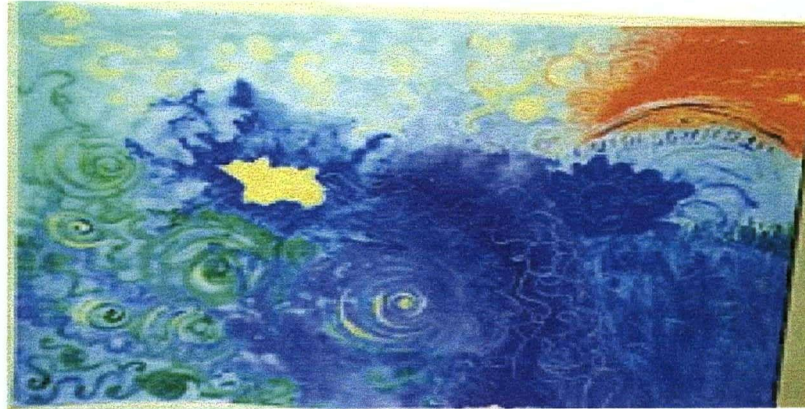
I think I seem to be, perhaps happier - more challenged I guess. And at that point in time I was - um - not challenged terribly in realms outside of my own and - but I was still relishing my time that I had and - and - feeling pretty in touch with myself and I still - I still can - I can still gain from that. I still am in touch with myself. I just am in a world that - I'm partaking in a world outside of where I was then.

But I can still relate to that person, totally. So, yes, it was a spiritual sort of painting - I think - and the woman basically has a sack over her shoulder. She's carrying groceries and it's about just the basics in life and what you needed - and it was basically a sack of groceries.

And I was content because I had fresh fruit and vegetables that I had in my sack over my shoulder. And I think that's me - when I was painting it I - I - I - I didn't - I wasn't painting it to be me but maybe I was painting it in a future perception of myself. She's actually pregnant in the picture, very mildly pregnant - and she's wearing a very long, flowing bohemian-type dress and she has long hair and she's very feminine and very in tune with herself and not worrying about what's extraneous to her. It's just that she knows her inner self and that's where it is so that's the Bohemian Woman.

The second painting was done on the Twentieth - that month - three days later - and it doesn't have a title but on the back I wrote "Breaking through the ice, soul to soul, free up. Let's get down to the real core and stop putting up boundaries."





**Figure 58:** Painting, Putting Up Boundaries

And if I remember rightly, this - this painting started off with the blue on the left-hand side creating a strong ice blue - impenetrable boundary around that yellow source of energy. And - I don't - I think I painted the yellow later - perhaps - so it's this blue, impenetrable whole and then over on the right - the - the blue patch of the sad face - I don't know if it's a demon but it's a negative face - but it's negative in the sense that - this painting - it's still blurry to look at now but I think it - I think this painting was about having an - having an inner sadness or - um - having a depth - and sadness doesn't always mean a bad thing.

Sadness can sometimes mean a history that someone has. A sadness can mean a depth to someone and I - I - like depth to people. I don't like that shiny, glossy surface of happiness; of happy smiles that people put on. And I, essentially, like to understand the core of the person and I like to - I like to know about the things that are troubling and at the same time I like people to know about the things that are troubling me. And I think I was feeling frustrated in this painting because you can see there's lots of unhappy faces, hidden beneath the depths there all amongst it and I basically - it's not saying that I'm unhappy. But it's saying we all have a sad side or a side that hurts or whatever and that that's okay. That all part of it and - and in some senses I like that.

This is not a negative painting - it looks like a negative painting but it's not.

There's not much more that I can logically say about this painting except the top right-hand corner is a source of energy. It's a - it's a - brightness that's there that balances off the darkness and the yellow untouchable section - that inner brightness trails off the darkness and it's giving - it's getting energy from the small area of yellow on the bottom right. So the yellow bottom right and the yellow heart - or core there - are linked in some sort of sense. They are giving energy to each other or one is feeding from the other. I'm not exactly sure. I think I painted it by pulling from the top left-hand yellow. It's pulling those squiggly bits down. Or may be I did it the other way - I was just pulling from that section of yellow energy down there - up into the yellow.

But as you can see, where those squiggly bits meet - that yellow core - they don't go right in. They are still not penetrating through that last bit of blue. Yeah - so - I don't know - that much about this one - except you - you know you can see the spirals of the yellows and blues up in the sky, there, using a lot of those spirals and - yeah - I like this painting. It's kind of complex and maybe in a few months I will be able to look back at it and feel it - a little bit more definition - I don't know exactly what was happening there. That's it.



**Figure 59:** Painting, Video Fight



**Things that made a garden grow:**

- Water
- Sunshine (fire)
- Nutrients (air)
- Earth

The correct amounts of all of these things. It's easy, and it will happen whether you like it or not.

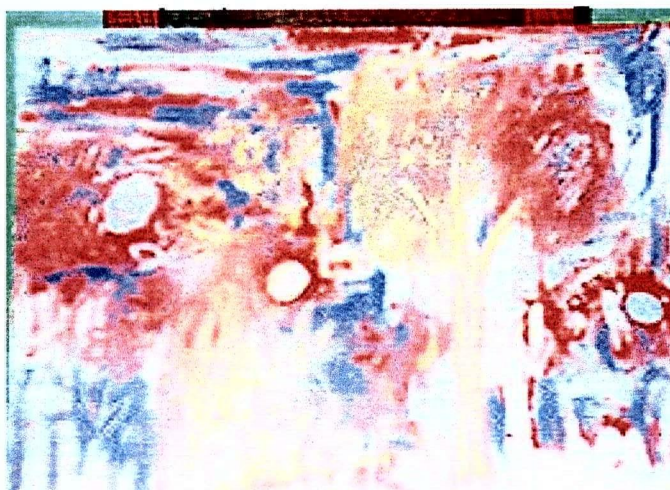
**Figure 60:** Flipchart notes from Zinnia in April, 1998



**Figure 61:** Painting, Work Worlds



**Figure 62:** Painting, Zinnia's Canvas



**Figure 63:** Painting, Zinnia's final painting, untitled



**Purple - spiritual, Canada**

**Orange - Warmth, sunsets; High Energy - Australia -**

**With Blue**

Going back to the first day, Burning Bush Fires of Australia, I think now I could draw those green shoots above the ground. Mum is thinking of coming over and that would create probably more mulch for the garden. Life is like a garden. You plant little things here and there, things die back. New shoots arrive, there are times of dormancy, and times of high growth. When things die off, their energy is used for something else.

There are many colours and types of plants, and each takes different types of soil and light and nurturing, but all of them grow, whether slowly or rapidly, they group up and out, never down or in.

My life is like a garden. And right now I am growing plants which like the Canadian environment, so I will nurture them. The seeds for Australian plants still exist and are also growing. Not so rapidly. But there is a time and a place for everything.

**Figure 64:** Flipchart notes from Zinnia, April 1998



**Figure 65:** Painting, Zinnia's Second Body Image



The Following Were Efforts Done by the Group as a Whole:

**IMMIGRATION ISSUES**

- Multiculturalism; Hong Kong and Taiwan versus Mainland China; Trying to fit in; Learning; Speak Own Language More Easy; Didn't go into Chinese; What is really Canadian Society?
- Surviving in the community; stay in Chinese community don't need to speak English; Too many cultures in Canada to deal with; How to Fit in; Many cultures all mixed together; many different ways to think.
- Having to get used to the "Mainstream"; in 10 days started to work; In the beginning will do anything; Reflection = Difference.
- Do My Own Way - Don't Worry What "They" Think About; Independent; Like Things on My Own; Try to Understand different people; Accept them if not fine; China people think Taiwan people are rich; Taiwan people owe something to mainland Chinese.
- Even here in Canada - Mainland Chinese people think Taiwan people are rich; Mainland Chinese people think Taiwan people are better, richer have more culture; After arriving in Canada, met lot of Mainland Chinese people. Very proud people. But still believe Taiwan people think they are better than others. More rich than other Chinese People. More educated than other Chinese People.
- In Canada meet many more Mainland Chinese people and this is very stressful.
- The Cultural Revolution of Mainland China severely damaged the Mainland Chinese people but Taiwan kept Cultural Traditions; Think China is also part of my country.
- Went to China, very sad. Went. Didn't feel like I belonged. Very distant. Father from China. In Taiwan the people are very open-minded and try lots of new things. China is more closed and isolated. Government keeps tight control on its people.
- More Chinese people immigrate to the United States before coming to Canada - more than Taiwan people do. So some have their minds opened before arriving in Canada. Fit more easily with Canadians than with Mainland Chinese people.
- Hong Kong. Now it does not know where it belong. It is not a country. But it makes a lot of money. Was British colony. How to survive? Culture not in important to Hong Kong. China people in Hong Kong do not treat China people very well.

**Figure 66:** Flipchart notes on Themes to Explore from Jasmine/Zinnia, although most of the input was from Jasmine, February 13, 1998.

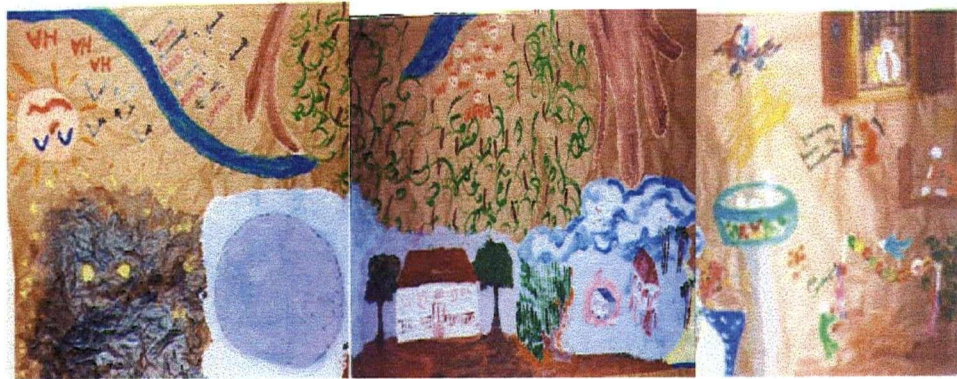
- Vancouver - very clear cultures - Canadians, Chinese people, and East Indians.
- Australia is very multicultural but closed to allowing other cultures to have a presence.
- Raised in Australia, I'm not racist but maybe sort of
- Canadians pretending too much, they are too politically correct, but when they are under stress they will split and show their racist side just like other cultures.
- When we get really under the bones of things we are all racist in a broader sense.
- Vancouver is not like Australia in that in Australia people are more open, honest, and up-front.
- People hear speak around the back door and dance around the subject for example by husband won't say no because he does not want to hurt people. I can say no because I won't pretend.
- But Canada cares, it is totally friendly [*Jasmine*] - Canada cares about families and treat their older citizens with respect - more than Americans.
- Meet new people in Canada - only superficial friendships here. There feels that immigrants cannot have long term relationships because doors to outsiders are closed tight here.
- The strongest relationships I have is with other immigrants.
- Not many people have their feet planted on the ground here.

**Figure 67:** Flipchart notes predominantly from Zinnia on issues and themes upon immigrating to Canada, February 13, 1998



- I couldn't live here without my Danish-Canadian husband
- I make friends easily
- But after eight months I have few friends who are deep
- Here people seem to be very closed knit and freeze out outsiders
- It is for this reason a house and home are important; allows me to establish harmony and beauty on my own terms
- Current house is not me - need my own little world with which to build a strong private self to have healthy public self.
- Australia meant beautiful clothes because I sewed my own; I left them all behind. I created designer clothes; it was an expression of myself. These were all tailored to and for me.
- Canada has meant living with a back pack; buying clothing off the shelf and meeting new people here. Few things here feel like me. Find the clothes in Vancouver very unstylish, no sense of style in clothes. Clothes here are like a uniform with the same drab colours and the "outdoors" look.
- Will have to continue to work through the differences between Australia and Canada - even the chocolate tastes funny here.
- It is exhausting working out the constants in my life all over again.
- I try to keep what I like about myself and change what I didn't like; in Australia I had lots of friends and travelled in a number of different social circles and I was in the cog of the wheel of the social life there. I was constantly introducing new people to others but I got lost in the social life but nothing was returned to me. I do not want to create that whole mess again in Canada. I am taking this time in my life to redefine who I am on my own terms.

**Figure 68:** Flipchart notes on further themes raised by Zinnia, February 27, 1998.



**Figure 69:** Three Panels of an eight foot long Group Painting, by the three group members. Entitled, Earliest Childhood Memories, February 27, 1998.

*This group painting was done before the group did their individual childhood paintings. We were discussing our childhood through a normal conversation which we started each session with, allowing topics to bubble to the open as we explored various aspects of our lives. Within this session, the issue of Zinnia's brothers was raised so we moved into discussing our families and childhood more specifically. The result was this group painting.*

*Jasmine's recollections were a series of episodes which she recounted. These included her being beaten by her mother with a hair brush one afternoon because her brother, the youngest in the family, was playing with Jasmine and was hurt (bruised) when he fell down. Jasmine's mother came running out to see why Jasmine's brother was crying. When Jasmine's mother found out she beat Jasmine with the bristle side of the hair brush telling Jasmine that she was only a girl and that the family must protect the son. With only one boy in the family he was to be given extra special care. Another episode was riding a motorcycle with her father and her brother and feeling extra special because she was joining in with the two males within the family.*

*Another episode was often she was allowed to lie in her mother's lap while her mother picked her ears, and feeling the warmth of the sun and the safety of her mother. This memory is very profound for Jasmine as she related it to us; she became quite soft and mellow as she related this.*

*The last episode was playing in a small pool with her two sisters in the summers. These memories were generally quite pleasant and happy for Jasmine; she was quite teary, though, when she related the hairbrush incident. There was also a tone of anger in her voice as well.*

*For Zinnia, her earliest childhood memory was fleeing in the middle of the night away from her father. There was a sudden family separation for Zinnia, her mother and her brothers fleeing in the middle of the night. She remembered headlights in the pitch black darkness of the night. She remembered screaming that they had left their "Daddy" behind and where was he?*

*The next scene in this time of fleeing, was the purple hull of the airplane as her family flew away from her father. She remembered the very noisy airplane but the safety of her mother's arms as they slept in the plane to escape her father. The purple in the painting she referred to was her mother's feminine energy of safety, warmth, and protection.*

*The next scene in this early drama, was her finding a place to stay. This was the upstairs of a pub in northern Australia - Queensland. Her mother would work downstairs in the day and her family would live and play in and around the pub. This would last for approximately a year before they were packed up again and had to move.*

*This move took them to a place called Ingham in Australia, where they finally were able to establish something of a permanent home. This was on the coast and was*

*warm and tropical. The last place of rest in Zinnia's story of flight brought some warm memories as she turned away from us while telling us her narrative and relived her memory. There was a longingness as she thought about this place and memory.*

*The last story on this group picture was my earliest story which was already recounted in the Chapter Two so I shall abridge it here. It involved my brothers and me when I was four years old. We were playing around a creek and I fell in. I thought it was deeper than it was and called for my brothers and their friends to help me get out. They stood on the shore and laughed at me and called me names like "Baby". The brown presence in the picture was the soothing nature of my mother when we returned home and she had heard what happened. At this point, I just want to point out the presence and power of our mothers in each of our stories; something that came through loud and clear the day we worked on this painting.*

*The last part of my story involved when I was growing up, was older, and found myself in public spaces like high school and university. I have always had a nickname. When I was older I had a nick name on the farm because I was quite heavy as a child. Later, through these years at school I was constantly being laughed at and called names because others labelled me as "different", "faggot", "queer", and so on. I suppose after a lifetime of being ostracized and jeered, at one becomes rather thick skinned. And it seems to have been a theme that began from my earliest childhood memory.*



**MY FIRST LIFE STORY**

- Night. Black car. Silence. Lights of Car Behind.
- Anxious, wondering about leaving dad behind.
- Asking where is my dad? What about dad?
- Knowing we were leaving our home. A journey. A plane. Very noisy; hurt my ears.
- MUM
- A support, no worries because Mum was there and she had it together. I needed for nothing.
- Then a pub in old Queensland. We lived upstairs, I think. Mum worked downstairs, I think.
- The smell of clean toilets, a cleaning fluid, the place was kept clean. MUM; nice, happy, content.
- Downstairs in the pub, was the beer smell.
- Outside. Mango trees. Nice, short period. Then. Ingham...a caravan.
- A home. Comfort. Mum happy. Away from everything. Sunshine.
- Sugar Lane fires; that smell. Beautiful Burning Sugar Lane; molasses.

**Figure 70:** Flipchart note of Zinnia's First Life Story, March 6, 1998

- A beach
- Warm breezes
- New School; Wooden Building
- The Toilet Block
- Frogs that Changed colour
- Palm trees
- New school. Nice People. Change Felt Good.
- New girl in class. No friends. Treated differently.
- Going home to Mum, Happy she was there.

**Figure 71:** Further flipchart notes on Zinnia's First Life Story, March 6, 1998.

#### **MY FIRST LIFE STORY**

- Three pictures come out in this time.
- It's not really connected to my childhood.
- First One - I walking in Steveston Trail in Richmond. I looking at the sea and wharf (some wood standing in the water).
- Second One - At night. I standing (walking on the Toronto Yonge Street; Christmas lights...I am happy).
- Third One - I'm in my sister house; play with my sister and their childs. Warm feeling.

**Figure 72:** Flipchart notes from Jasmine on her Childhood Memories, March 6, 1998.

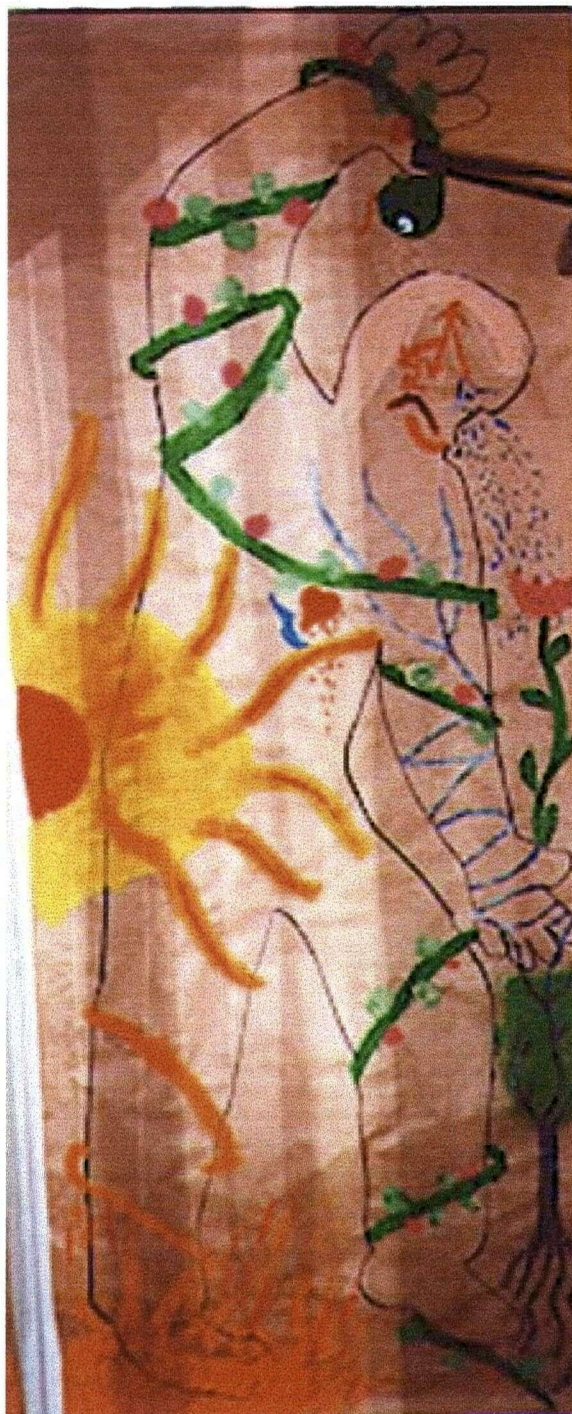
### *Sunflower*

*The group selected my flower name because they saw me, like the flower, as big and bright. I may add that I found a similarity between the Jasmine and the Sunflower, in that both need the full sun in order to grow to their full potential. The following is the Participant Background Inventory that Sunflower completed on the first day of the sessions.*

PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INVENTORY	
Please check or circle those items that reflect your background characteristics:	
Gender:	<b>Male</b>
Sexual Orientation:	<b>Homosexual</b>
Country arriving from:	<b>Canada</b>
Country of birth:	<b>Canada</b>
Country most lived in from birth to age twenty:	<b>Canada</b>
Arrived in Canada as a:	<b>Newborn</b>
Religion:	<b>Raised as an Anglican, however, am Agnostic</b>
Self-described social class:	<b>Lower/middle</b>
Self-described racial class:	<b>Coloured and White</b>
Self-described ethnic background:	<b>Jamaican and Irish</b>
Disability type(s), if any:	<b>None</b>
Marital Status:	<b>Same sex, Common Law</b>
Age:	<b>38</b>
Lived in which region of country:	<b>50% in rural and 50% in urban</b>
Birth order:	<b>Middle child/ 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 sons</b>
Occupation:	<b>Graduate student</b>

**Figure 73:** Participant Background Inventory form for Sunflower





**Figure 74:** Painting, Sunflower's body image one



### Body Image One

The first body image done by me of my body left an picture of just the outline and seemed to show things acting upon my physical self. And because of all these externalities, the body line seems to take a diminished importance.

The green vine enveloping me is beguiling because of the flower - being magenta - symbolizing a "letting go" to allow for a period of change and growth. The thickness of the green and magenta vine shows an intensity of grounded growth. The vine turning into a serpent's head is a point of caution for me as I venture into this process of reflective growth.

The tree is, again, a figurative symbol of knowledge and insight with the tree branches grabbing my hand and entwining my arm, pulling me in - reaching deeper inside of me. The silver of the branches is reflective of the moon.

The influence of the tree seems to cause me to reflect and become energized which is shown by the series of red arrows shooting off in my mind. This causes a mixture of emotions and ultimately of tears which flow and feed the vine and serpent only to grow stronger forcing me to think and feel more intensely.

The sun and fire are taking over me; the fire seems to be overtaking me with a rope of sun energy joining that of the fire. The importance, here, is that everything happening is external to me having influence. I saw much of these external forces as a metaphor for people in my environment telling me who I should be or what I ought to do, ignoring that I was getting caught and lost among all of this.



**Figure 75:** Painting, Home

### Home

For Orchid and I, our sense of home has become a deep and committed sense of being. For our own reasons, we prefer to keep much of our lives in private, and to make our passage through our, largely heterosexual, environment more smooth. We remain low key.

Our home is our space to be, to relax - and to take off our masks to the world in the same fashion than most people take off their coats after a hard day. The painting shows my concept of home as outlined in black with the four quadrants of colour which surround our home. The green/yellow is the detaching of positive and negative energies; the yellow and magenta is both the detachment and letting go - the separateness we feel at times; the magenta/red is a harsh masculine energy and emotion (violence); and the green and orange of the negatives and positives of feminine energy. All of this swirls

around our home, yet, we have worked at having it become filled with oranges (femininity), blues (devotion, peace, tranquillity), white (living and love), with a core of red ("masculine" life, energy and vitality).

These different colours and emotions reflected to me the different elements of what Orchid and I do every time we leave our home and venture out into the broader world. We seem to slip on a mask or facade when we go out together, and pass opposite sex couples walking hand in hand, or hugging, or sharing casual intimacies. We feel we have to forego that in order to maintain the peace - and safety. And reserve all of that to the space and time we have cleared which is called home. And living and being at home together is the most natural for us - it is when we have to don our masks and be just a little more wary, just a little bit more on guard to a world, in comparison that somehow seems artificial and inhibited.

The concept and reality of home is very important to us. And the power of this I have seen with Orchid who prior to beginning to building our home with me was very social - going to bars and dances and family gatherings to now focusing on our life, space and time together. Perhaps it is the calmness and freedom that home can provide. The caution here, of course, as much as home keeps our space free, it can also be a block to the outside. And so we have begun to be selective about letting the outside in so as to keep our tranquillity intact.



**Figure 76:** Painting, Farm Memories

### Farm Memories

An initial painting of my early life on the farm. Here, are selected items that immediately sprang to mind. The small green bundles represent the thousands of bales of hay I helped handle over the many summers and the paleness of the clouds of hay and grain dust.

The icy, cold of snow in the winter and the footprints I would make in the -40 degree Celsius winters walking along the maple tree-lined lane to the school bus all covered with hoar frost crystals cloaking the branches. The air was so cold the inside of my nose hurt and my breath was taken away. Or the image of my mother struggling against the blizzard to bring warmth back to the house (see Chapter Five).

The brilliance of the magenta/orange reminded me of the warmth and humidity of the summer sunsets on the farm. The humidity cooling slightly, the June bugs and fire flies, the crickets chirping and toads croaking while I would sit out on the coolness of the lawn in the duskieness of an ending, long, hot summer's day.

But central to the painting is a symbol, for me, of the farm; the glove. The haying glove protected my oldest brother from his hand in a hay elevator; the winter glove

protected me from a rabid fox one winter while I was trying to make it to the school bus; the gardening glove while we worked our half acre family kitchen garden; and all the other farming activities a glove was needed to make life safer and healthier.

While I was painting this, I was thinking about my growing awareness of who I was as a person while on the farm - and my growing sexual awareness. Which is the purple egg-shaped image open at one end; as though a birth was occurring.

Interestingly, the colour purple is a signifier of insight or a tapping into our truer self and of seeking our self love. This last point is particularly difficult to do if a person is seen as being different in any way within a rural environment - and being sexually different went against the prevalent and omnipresent village Church. This is depicted within this picture through the figure with the grey lines of expletives and epithets from people of the community making fun of me for being over weight or being "different" (homosexual) - as the pink, or gay, aspect of identity began to slowly hold its face up to the glare of the public gaze; in a less than accepting environment. The cocoon-like structure also shows a kind of insularity which I was trying to maintain while determining who I was but felt nobody else would understand or care. [My mother by this time had warned me that if any of her sons "decided" that they were gay that she would be extremely disappointed - with two older sons married it was easy to know where this "charge" was being aimed.] So, my separate, aloneness within the broader world became a growing experience of mine from my early adolescence on the farm.





**Figure 77:** Painting, Hard flower

Hard Flower - Perceptions of who we are, or perceived to be took over my thoughts, from a sexual identity perspective here. This was sparked from the group's discussion about homosexuality and Jasmine telling me that she was confused - not knowing how she should speak to me - as a man or a woman - because my gayness and that being gay I may have a "sensibility" of a female as opposed to anything masculine.

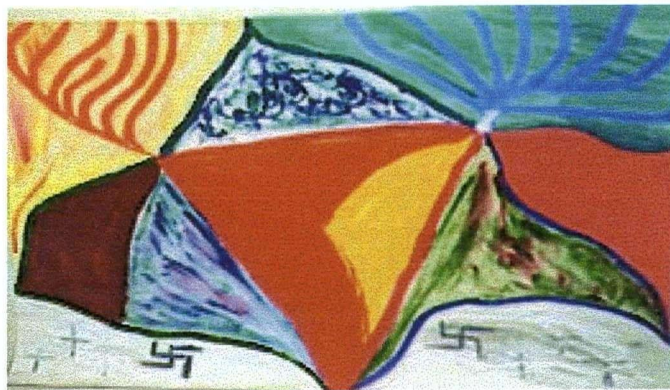
Reflecting on how I've been perceived in different areas of Canada, I began drawing (I mention this as well in Chapter Two). Central to my thoughts was the perception - hence the eye in the painting - people have toward others. In Chapter Two, also, I mentioned being seen as a gay person with feminine aspects while living in Toronto and socializing with men who happened to be gay in the conservative, corporate, Bay Street environment there. And being gay in corporate Canada has caused many gay men to be "straight at work; gay at home" to protect themselves from being fired from or harassed at their place of employment. Many gay/lesbian people avoid other homosexuals so as not to being found "guilty through association". It is quite a paranoiac experience. In Vancouver, by contrast, I was seen by others in a hiking group for gay men as being "too butch to be gay". To my knowledge I had not changed to any significant degree, but the context and, therefore, the meaning attributed to my

mannerisms by people in different environments had. So, the picture reveals a pink area with a blue hammer, and sickle while the green area contains orange (symbol of things “feminine”) flowers.

For me, the experiences heighten questions with regard to sexuality. Is gender socially constructed? If so, as the feminist and queer literature strongly points out - could be construed to me that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice (I don't believe this is the case but perhaps sexuality is a combination between genetics/biology and the meaning society and culture provides through socialization is an added influence. If only people could understand the damage many homosexual men and women have had to endure simply because of who they are at the hands of heterosexual men and women - and of homosexual men and women deep in the closet because of their shame of who they seem themselves to be!!), but somehow heterosexuality was “natural”, “normal”, and “biologically predestined” (like homosexuality I suspect this, too, is a combination of the nature/nurture dynamic). If these two sexualities are on either end of a continuum (indicating deviation from a “norm”). Does this mean that bisexuality is the “norm” but through a combination of genetics and environment people spiral out to these polarities of the continuum? Perhaps bisexuality is the loser as the polarities of homosexuality and heterosexuality war against one another for hegemonic control? What is “normal”?

So I painted a large, brown, earthy area where various sexualities are depicted. I was wondering, despite there being three symbols of opposite sex couplings, would the two same-sex couplings (one each of male/male and female/female) grab the attention more? Or less? If it was more, as you, the reader, look at the painting, then that same propensity for heterosexual people to see same sex couplings as “strange” or “sick” may affect how some same sex couples live lives that they wish to be ordinary, married lives - just as opposite sex couples have the privilege of taking for granted.

Central to the picture, as I moved back to the centre, my thoughts moved to the concept of love (the pink lines and hearts overlaid with the yellowness of thought) and how we get caught up with labelling, thereby being able to manipulate and control the concept. So it seems with sexuality. Where, from I see the world, I wonder how we can qualify love, rather than celebrate the love two people have for one another. I suppose the rainbow of colour symbolically shows that we are far away from living equally - not only in places outside of Canada - but in some very fundamental and profound ways - right here in this country as well.



**Figure 78:** Painting, Organizing religion to organize intolerance

Religion - This was to reflect our thoughts and feelings on religion and spirituality. The vibrancy of the middle triangle embracing femininity, masculinity, and thought seem to go to the heart of who I am and with a single, thick line of pink - of gayness and spiritual love - seemed to make the symbol of how I feel complete. The mottled triangles seem to describe chaos or confusion and turmoil. The colours, being cooler, may indicate a calmer or more subtle negativity.

The solid pink and brown seem to be the steadying or grounding influences in my life, more recently - namely the recent (one year plus now) relationship and the



grounded bearing the whole development soaks into my life, like a sun-parched patio plant.

Where I aspire, in time, to arrive is the more thoughtful, peaceful, and tranquil space of my own “religion” through personal learning and education. For me, to turn to organized religion sparked a very virulent reaction inside of me. When I thought of organized religion, I thought of cults, mind-control, conformity, judging, classism, and feeling once again the marginality of my sexuality. Although churches wish to portray their place of worship as “pure”, “honest”, and “politically neutral,” I find them hypocritical in their collective stance. To me, the cloak of their “holiness” in symbols - symbols similar to those that could be found within other organized “religions” such as nazism - have simply created a pastoral “respectability” - though they control considerable coercive power which is, at times historically, and currently, was/is brutal.

So the whiteness of innocence and purity representing “the Church” as ascribed by its membership is actually a dirty grey, with the crosses being only faint memories of my childhood and the signs of overt hatred much stronger and ever-present in my life - through the media, the public/secondary/post-secondary education [Probably the most powerful engine of social construction the state has within its arsenal for maintaining the status quo.], government and politics, and through other processes of social construction.



**Figure 79:** Painting, Sketch of a Small Town

Sketch of a Small Town - This picture is a happy picture full of calm devotion and happy memories. The black swirls outside my outstretched arms - shaping the limits of my world growing up - was the broader world "out there". My world growing up was very much the rural setting within which I lived.

As this picture highlights, the memory of Christmas was a wonderful, exciting time for us. The large maple trees of all the lanes on the farms (used for wind breaks, shade, and maple syrup) for climbing. The endless rolling of green fields full of various crops and animals; the informal communications we relied upon to help one another. The other form of reliable, yet, informal information was the infamous party-line system of telephones - which tied and kept the country-side unified - where several neighbours were on one telephone line. Listening in on others' phone calls was how neighbours knew when to pitch in with help because of illness or some other routine natural disaster or back off in times of grief, death, or some other routine disaster of the human - or other - making. At times this medium of communication could be a great source of, both, comedy and drama - but always a way of weaving the threads of community together.

The school, in red, was for all of us growing up - was what organized much of our free time away from the farm. Where lifetime friends have come no matter where any of us find ourselves now. The lives we shared within that school remain interminably entwined to ourselves and our sense of our selves.

The last aspect of growing up on the farm is the kitchen and dining table. Every holiday our entire family sat around and ate wonderful food, with a heavy pervasive Jamaican flavour, swapped stories, news, gossip, and laughter. My father carved the turkey, or roast beef on these special occasions, my mother dished out the vegetables according to birth order - everything incredibly structured. After dinner mom and I

would take out the dirty dishes together and wash them up, returning with the dessert.

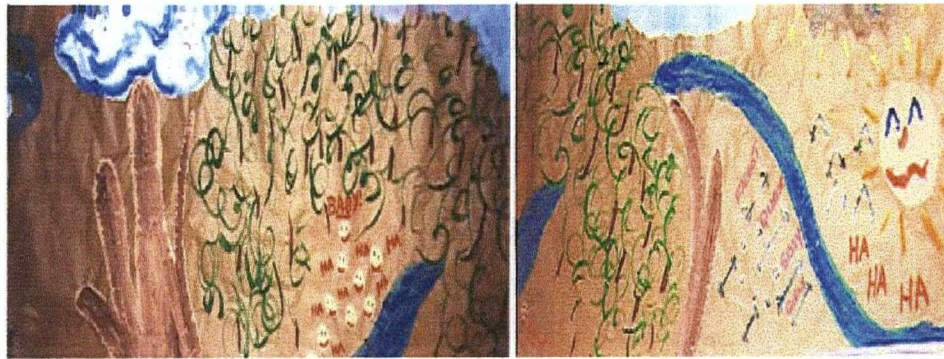
With lots of wine our dinners during the holidays and birthdays would often run several hours and were pools of calm in an otherwise hectic, day by day, struggle of bending to the whims of mother nature.

The kitchen table held the pulse of the family and of rural life anchoring our lives in place. At times, I can smell the warm, cheery smells, the dimmed candle lit room and clinking of dishes and cutlery when, from the kitchen, there would be the punctuation of my mom's screams as she waged war against, yet, another mouse which did not have the sense to not wander forth during culinary repasts.

- When I was a child my home was filled with a lot of laughter, brothers fighting, competitive sports, activities of running a farm, looking after sick animals, neighbours helping, keeping the peace.
- Everyone had a job to do to survive: Winters brought ice on the house windows.
- Inside, snowdrifts along the walls.
- Great big dinners at holiday time.
- Jamaican/Irish/Canadian cultures struggle.
- Mom ruled so Jamaican culture and food more the norm.
- We had a tiny house but lots of land.
- The land ruled us.
- We learned how to live together in a small house and listened to the radio at night. No television. Lots of imagination. We had lots of community events which we had to prepare for at home.
- Kitchen table heart of home and home heart of community. Kitchen table - heard all the good/bad news. Telephone party line kept the news of the neighbours flowing home. Home extension of identity and of community.

**Figure 80:** Piece of automatic writing from "Crossing Borders" conference entitled, Home, June, 1998.





**Figure 81:** Painting by Sunflower in two panels, First Childhood Memory

First Childhood Memory - The memory of childhood holds many themes which may, potentially, hold meaning in our adult lives. The three of us, within our group, painted together on a large piece (eight feet by four feet) of mural paper our reflections of our first childhood memory.

The episode, for me, was when I was about four years old. This is described in my reflection chapter, so, briefly, I fell into a creek (known as Lynn Creek in North Vancouver) when my brothers and their friends were with me. No one moved to help me and I screamed for help. I can only remember them laughing and calling me “Baby”. I would get myself over to the other side of the creek with my own power. And when we eventually made it back home, my mother took one look at me and “gave me the wooden spoon,” though my two older brothers would receive the worst of it later that afternoon for allowing me to arrive home soaking wet. My brothers would hate me for getting them into trouble, and I would feel guilty for being so helpless. My mother wrapping me in her arms was bitter sweet because her warmth and love would mean so much to me, however, I would pull away at the same time as I felt the hot tears of my brothers flow down their cheeks.

So in later years - in my pre-teens, adolescence, and adulthood when I heard words of “Faggot”, and “Queer”, and “Sissy” - as well as others far worse - meant for

me. I wouldn't succumb to that level and retaliate. These words were fired at me with rounds of accompanying laughter - yet their barbs would not penetrate me - or at least not as deeply as they might have. By then I had learned a lot about myself and had been able to grow proud of who I was - all of who I was and that I would not ever be content and wanted to grow further, but in my own terms.

Surrounding my earliest childhood memory was the feminine force of my mother who always seemed to know just how to fix things - without giving an appearance of "meddling" - and went to great lengths to eventually withdraw her influence (I can't imagine how difficult that was for her....watching her children, her sons, her boys, hers.....move away to discover their worlds) from her sons. All of her four sons have developed into very, very different people from one another - when the four of us get together, the differences are quite stunning. I have heard people question my existence. Family outsiders assumed that my parents had three not four boys. I became invisible for a number of reasons and on a number of different levels; this exclusion shapes, very much who I am today.



Figure 82: Painting, Peek

Peek - This picture is also about barriers and perceptions with the eye, again, playing a prominent position. The mouths open - inviting mouths....seeking.

Yet, we are all blocked by our shields and masks of deception, protection, and guard. Depending upon the context, the people and times we may engage one or other of our self-aspects to block or engage contact with our worlds. The further we move beyond barriers the colours become warmer as our internal, withheld emotions become more intense.

But as we forget, so often, and as Orchid continually reminds me - if we could only learn to trust ourselves to open ourselves to other human contact. Not just family and a close circle of friends but people - strangers - on the street. If we become acquainted with as many people as we can, pretty soon the concept of “stranger” and “social stranger” would lose their meanings. But as we mature, we seem to develop cynicism, mistrust, and inhibitions... and therefore we develop strangers...first within our selves...then from others.

I marvel at just the immediate contact Orchid can achieve with total strangers. And I watch and I learn....and through action am doing.

But if we open ourselves, the vines of ourselves are nourished and encouraged to grow forth and connect. Entwine and know the other. We may not depart as friends, but the moment is deep, intense, and memorable. And at times, those vines of ourselves find they need others in order to exist. In these instances the budding and fresh bloom of friendships of the central pink (signs of connection, love, and spirituality) flower in this picture represents, for me, a torch of hope - to judge less and just experience our lives more openly and for the moment.





**Figure 83:** Painting, entitled, Seaweed

Seaweed - This picture completely baffled me. I had nothing in mind when I painted except for colours and shapes. The deepness of the blue was a rich calmness. The green and yellow border seemed to tell me that this was a thoughtful balance of reflection contained within myself. As I drew, my gaze toward the inside of the sphere I recognized it as a face; a face blocked by a shape I could not make out.

But the purple and magenta seemed to be flickers of letting go of emotion in order to seek a self-love. Was it me facing a mirror - or me facing a mirror facing society? Was this my mask slipping? For me to peek at?

The stare then drew my eye to the orange star - almost like a “brand” - of feminine energy. Rather than be embarrassed by it, as society tries to indoctrinate us - I nurture it, use it as a complement to my masculinity - as I have heard the First Nations refer to homosexuals - the two-spirited people. Rather than be cursed, I am lucky to have strong aspects of the polarities of sexuality. I shuddered as I saw this pathway leading deep inside and this moment of discovery and growth.

The “flames” obstructing my face helped to clear my gaze a little more as to who I am. And, more importantly, regardless of who I turn out to be I work toward being as true to myself as possible through learning, growing, and expanding my potential. If it feels right and is comfortable to me - it is “normal” for me.

Turning back to the blue and now I see slashes of black and grey. I realized that this is turmoil of calm and grief - of letting go of elements outside of myself that do not help but harm who I am. The lesson of letting go of the past to embrace the present. And the future - well - that is tomorrow.

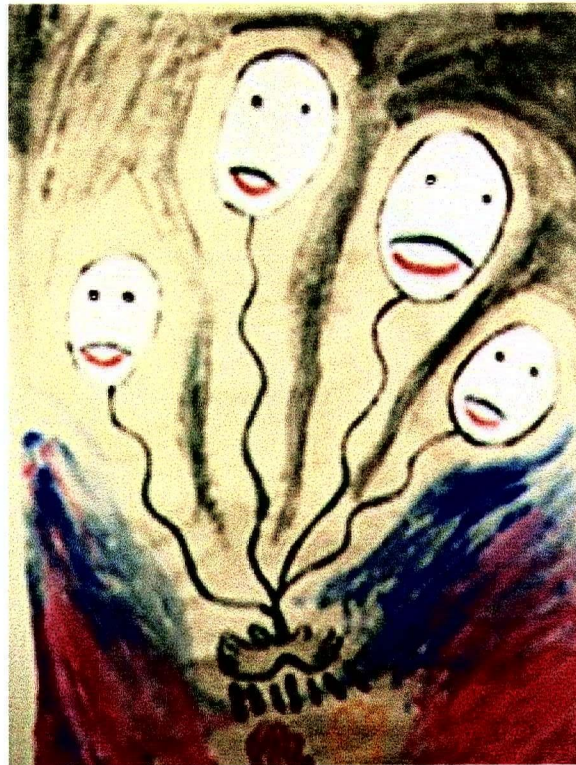


**Figure 84:** Painting, Pinwheel

Pinwheel - The pinwheel is a symbol of change; of being blown and buffeted by various winds within our world. The winds are blue and white so seem to have taken a more positive direction. The pinwheel sails in the wind, the colours spiralling, yet, the face is not smiling - but seems sad. Why?

If the hand at the bottom is noticed it is unclear as to whether the hand is letting go of me or the hand is grabbing me, grounding me. But I had an overwhelming sense of wanting to be let go. Let go of what, I was not sure, but thought that would reveal itself.



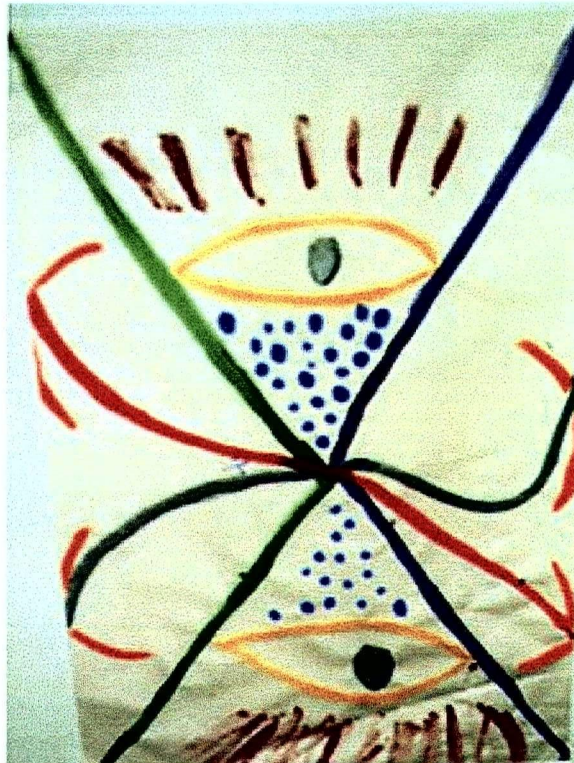


**Figure 85:** Painting, Balloons

Balloons - These helium balloons were people in my own life who prefer to show their positive aspects to me, yet, are shrouded in black negativity of being judgmental. They and their influence pull me to follow their lead into conformity and the status quo, yet, I have never found myself within the status quo because of who I am and my values and beliefs. It is simply a luxury that comes at too high a price and I feel that I could never learn to afford.

The hands at the bottom of me - both of my cultural backgrounds reaching up surrounded by my vibrant life energies.

Again, the question seems to be one of reaching to hang on or one of letting go. I don't want to become awash in their negativity. Letting go is one of life's hard lessons for me, but if I can't let go I can't continue on my journey of growing....of becoming.



**Figure 86:** Painting, false smiles

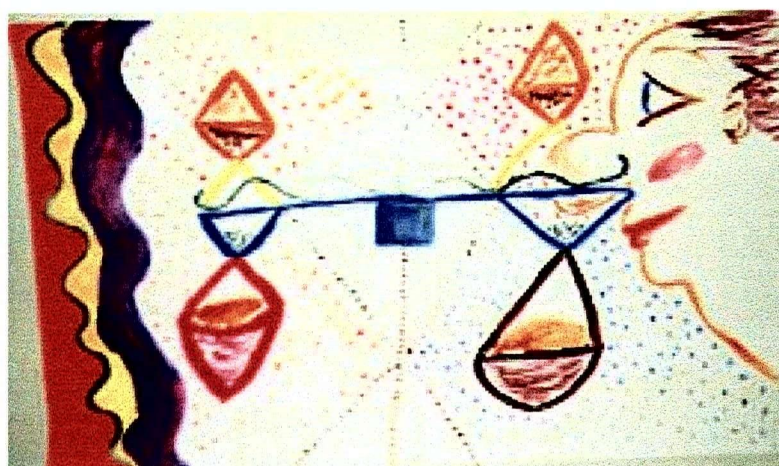
False Smiles - Again, another painting seemingly focused on the look. Of perceptions of others toward me. And, again, the eye is the prominent feature. The thin line to symbolize the mouths which seem to smile, yet cast disapproval at the same time. The mixture of red and grey lines for smiles and frowns and vice versa, shows how confusing cues can become and how people can manipulate these cues.

The group spoke about this with regard to the difficulty of “reading” the local people of Vancouver. The “insincerity” of the people was discussed. As was the polite smiles and then being “frozen out” from social circles. Zinnia mentioned the “political correctness” of Canadians, yet, she found the racism, here, very pervasive.

She had mentioned that Australians were quite racist, however, it was all out in the open as opposed to Canada’s “hidden” variety. The question raised to me was “Is racism and other forms of prejudice will be around for some time to some degree, so



what variety is it we should or could live comfortably?" The kind where the "look" hides who we are or where the "look" and message about who we are, is more synonymous? Do we hide it and call it euphemistically - "systemic discrimination" or hold the prejudice and oppression out in the open and deal with it? Zinnia is of the mind that openness is the better direction - in being open we could have a better way of identifying the power with which racism and other forms of oppression needs to thrive. It all begins with the "look" of judgment.

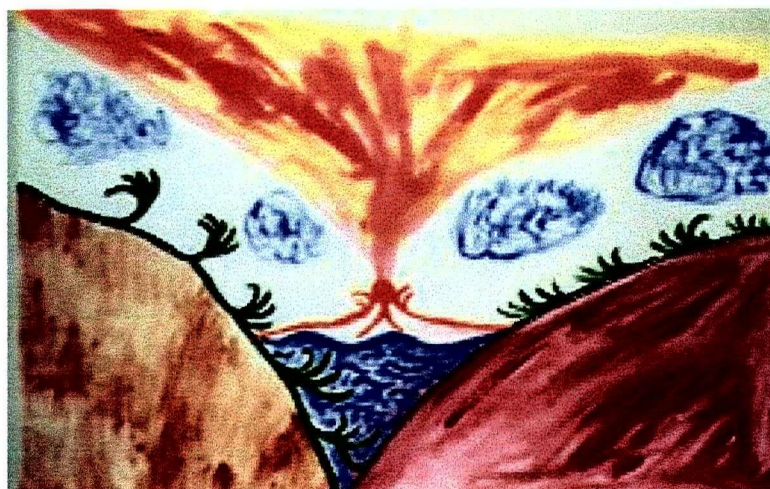


**Figure 87:** Painting, Balance and Tension

Balance and Tension - This picture had me exploring the issues of tension within my life and my identity - my project of becoming.

The scales of balance (in this case - blue - signifying equilibrium). The baskets of weight are pulling in different directions in order to obtain an equilibrium. Exploring the colours of the baskets - two are orange ("femininity") pulling against the brown (groundedness) and magenta (letting go of emotion and allowance for change and growth). Much of this source of emotion is surrounded by "feminine" energy. The goal of my maintaining equilibrium appears on the left-hand side of the page. The colours symbolize the emphasis for my development; that is self-love (the orange and purple), a

greater thoughtfulness and depth of learning (the yellow), and with some resistance (the black border) a more full, creative, vital life incorporating all dimensions of my identity.



**Figure 88:** Painting entitled, Balance

Balance - Being dangled over open water may be reminiscent of my early childhood memory. Again, the symbol of self and of “femininity” is orange. The funnel emanating from my body imager are of thoughtful growth. Yet, what makes me ponder is the apparent lack of arms in my image - which may mean a lack of control over that thoughtful change.

Yet, the “feminine” energy is grounded so as not to allow me to fall into the waters of uncertainty. Overall, I see this as a positive, hopeful image - but it does serve to remind me to work at balance in my life. As I reflect, I am reminded that a good friend of mine, in talking about developing a new relationship, telling me that as much as Orchid is going through large changes with his move to Vancouver, that I am as well. Knowing me, she had said that I am doing everything I can to create a smooth transition for Orchid, but that I am likely forgetting that changes are just as profound for me as well and that I do not recognize or acknowledge this. To not recognize this - this balance



within my own sense of self will be off-centred and will create an unbalanced relationship. So this painting has been a terrific point for reflection.



**Figure 89:** Painting entitled, Seasons

Seasons - Our identities are fluid as the water in the stream; never exactly the same at any given moment. Changing within the contexts we find ourselves. Yes, as we pass through our lives there are some similarities as we age - or pass through the seasons of life.

Interestingly, the orange background of femininity in the painting seems to illustrate the omnipresent influence of our “feminine” (ascribed with intuition and emotions) aspects of ourselves. In order to grow we need the addition of nourishment provided by the sun colours and water. The flecks scattered throughout are of various, passing influences which have an effect upon us as well. So, to think identities are fixed - to me through this painting - show me that this is a fallacy. And the effect our age has been upon our world view.

As I write and reflect I am reminded of a dear friend of fifteen years’ duration. But with physical distance and aging on both our parts we have changed - he perhaps more so - or the meaning I attach to him. Going from working toward equity for others

and being easy going he has become proud and adamantly conservative wanting nothing more than the maintenance of the status quo and equity only as long as it extends to “his kind of people” (White). Perhaps with age, he has become conservative; perhaps as a result of recently buying his first house (he is now concerned about what ethnicity his neighbours are - he believes this has a direct effect on property values!!). His views, to me, are shocking and regressive - and what is more - he is proud of his views. To sum up his attitude a line from him was “ Immigrants had better consider themselves extremely privileged and thankful to have us allow them into this country, it is the best country in the world.” Ironically, his parents were both immigrants from Europe.

But this seems to be a much more recent attitude; gained in his forties - I suspect age may have played some part in this. Yet, I’m only a few years younger and harbour quite contrarian views - if I could I would be opening the borders wider because I see it as my privilege to having more immigrants enter creating a deeper richness here. Something else is at play. Our identities seemingly shift with time. But I have seen this view before in my mother and her views toward immigrants from Jamaica today. She had it pretty rough when she arrived and she sees that we coddle immigrants and Canadians do not ask for these people to be responsible - through her eyes. In both, these instances, I see that my mother and my friend have bought into the power of the myth provided by the prevailing hegemonic authorities.



**Figure 90:** Painting entitled, The Eye



The Eye - Here, I had no clear thought as to what to paint so just began with a light green and just let my mind wander. So, I then began just doodling with grey lines - like branches - or a maze - going nowhere and everywhere at the same time.

I wondered what those lines of - growth - like shoots, worry lines, crevices and cracks - but no these were fluid and alive - and then I thought what is all this concealing; what would this reveal - and out popped an eye. But slowly through dots of paint, the pupil emerged, and then the iris and then the white of the eye. But the dots close up don't seem to signify anything - it is only when I stood further away that this possibility arose.

The colour blue for the eye arose because of a book I had just read, written by Toni Morrison (1994), entitled The Bluest Eye - a book about the concept of "beauty" relating to a Black child who felt she was ugly until she could realize the possession of the "bluest eye". Yet, the beauty remains hidden by the eye; the beauty we all have within us.



**Figure 91:** Painting entitled, Fire

Fire - The self can be a prison if we prefer to judge rather than to see. As we judge so we are judged in return. This is the concept of fire for me. All around we cast

our judgments of being too one way or another. But as we continue to judge, the fire reaches us and consumes us.

Perhaps, being a constant target of being judged I've acquired or have learned to have a sensitivity to this. I have watched and listened to people - both educated and uneducated - both experienced and inexperienced - judge others. I find much of this evaluation from people who appear to have no knowledge or experience with what they are devaluing. The person becomes objectified; something to come under control and manipulation. It seems to be a way of distancing away - by caging and compartmentalizing. The other not only is the person caged without - the self is locked within. So, rather than risk engagement we all, to varying degree, harbour the potential of becoming voyeurs in life and not full participants.

Despite looking through the window - in the window I know I'm not in the fire - not being allowed in except with implicit societal conditions placed upon me and others not of the mainstream (nor wanting to; preferring my freedom found at the edge) but the viewer of this picture is standing in a position of privilege and power. The power to judge and label.....and also to put out the fire.



**Figure 92:** Painting entitled, Group Process



Group Process- Coming near the end of our time together I reflected upon our time and space journey. The two colours of purple and pink are representative of Zinnia and Jasmine, respectively. The purple seems to be recurrent for Zinnia, as is the pink for Jasmine.

For Zinnia, she seems to be searching for a new version or aspects of herself. I suspect Zinnia has a high level of self-love - her journey is more focused upon the insight into her own life project of becoming her version of a more idealized woman - a very exciting journey for Zinnia as she creates her own space for her new home and life.

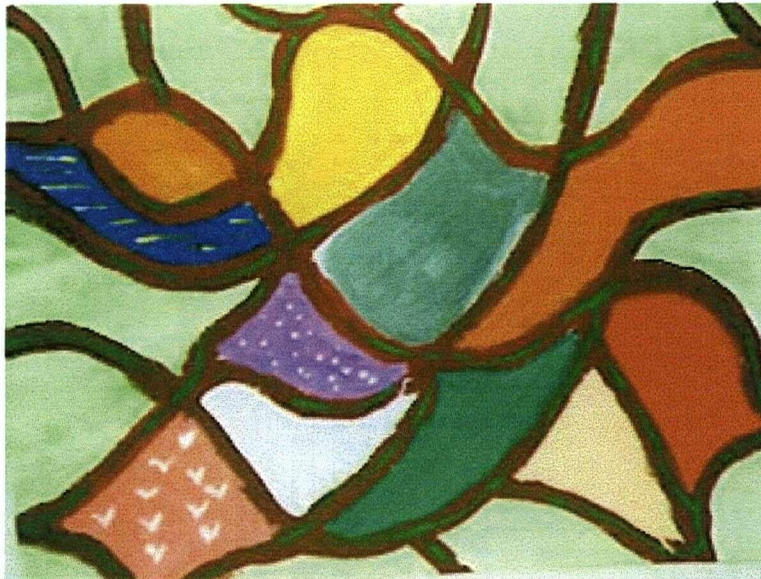
For Jasmine, her journey seems to focus around love and a sense of belonging. The visions or eyes used by Zinnia and Jasmine seem to be eyes of an openness to not only look but see what is around them. Jasmine seems to be caught between her independence of self and a desire to be connected to another through love and commitment.

Where we spent our time is illustrated in the central orange ("feminine" space) full of twining blacks and greens. The dynamic point in each session is the brilliant yellowness of thoughtful reflection.

As the picture shows the areas of Jasmine and Zinnia - the orange area seems to be fixed in some way for our workshop periods with the real dynamic movement happening through our interactions of lively discussions, laughter, and quiet reflective times.

Despite our interactions, there remained boundaries between each person and with the individual and the contributions to the meeting. I suspect the first, earlier sessions would have a much thicker boundary, but, as we became more and more comfortable and trusting of one another, and of ourselves, that boundary gradually

became thinner. The tangle of our identities have, to varying degrees, become entangled and have disentangled in new ways and flows within the energy the three of us created for ourselves.



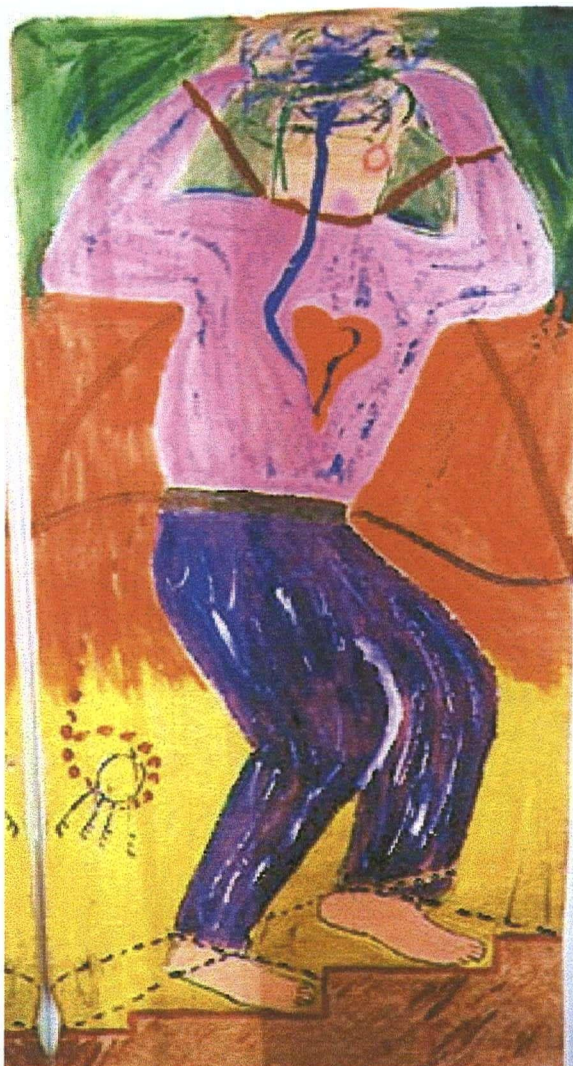
**Figure 93:** Painting entitled, Mosaic

Mosaic - This picture represents the final work I painted (save the final body image). This is a reflection of how our individual identities were exposed to one another. The patches of personality revealed are the ones coloured in. the others cloaked in green are aspects which have remained concealed for whatever reason.

The brown and greens are the grounded balance we use to work toward an inner harmony. Where and what we explored has been the colours of sadness (letting go?), of love (of our selves, and people in our lives), of our ideal (woman, man, identity), of similarities and differences (“femininity” and “masculinity”) - in short of humanness - caught in a time of major transition. When the three of us looked at that painting we had agreed that this journey was a welcoming opportunity to see aspects of each other’s identities and were struck at the similarities of experiences even though we had come

from very different identity constellations - we shared for a relatively short time a definite space and our kaleidoscopes collided at times and overlapped and merged at others.

Perhaps, in time those patches or aspects hidden will become revealed; others revealed may recede into the background. The shapes and colours will change. Yet, for a short while we held a canvas mirror to ourselves, individually and collectively, and this journey is what we saw....our "social strangeness" cloaking us in our humanness.



**Figure 94:** Painting entitled, Sunflower's body image two

Body Image Two - Our last painting workshop together we worked on our second body images together. Although this was the final session with the group it began a very long and intense period of reflection, organizing, and writing for me.

So, I have a number of ideas whirling in my head - for the moment blocking the clarity of my vision. My mid section is fill with warmth and love - of being connected to two extraordinary people who just a three short months prior were not even aware of one another. These people allowed me into their lives, their thoughts, fears, frustrations, happiness, and acceptance.

Yet, I see the issue of self-love and working toward a deeper sense of spirituality for myself. The green behind my head is the balance of the world I am working within.

The orange supports the pinkness of my "feminine" love for Orchid and with Jasmine and Zinnia. It is through the dimension of "femininity" that we, the three of us, reached out to one another and through our contact - touched each other's senses of self.

The yellow characterizes the contact of our unconsciousness which we occasionally made brief contract with. The painting shows that I am walking toward something, all the while remaining quite grounded in my experiences. As compared with the first body painting my wholeness and presence is very much here in this painting. I do still see some external influences which can - if I let them - bind me to a degree but I also carry the keys to unlock my restraints. Also, the restraints supposedly holding my fee are dotted showing me that these are very weak and will break under the least amount of pressure.

The energy which went into this painting was full of positivity and hope. The brilliant red of my heart shows a strong, vital energy with the purple (self love and

insight) tying my heart and brain together. The brilliance of all these colours reflect the energy and intensity as we all painted with great silence and concentration.

The energy from this exercise and being able to address emotions and ponder - hold my self up to me and see my reflection frozen in a moment in time will carry with me for a long, long time.

### **Workshop Closure and Celebration**

About six weeks after our last regular workshop, we had a celebration with Aster and Orchid present. We discussed our backgrounds and what we had learned from the study. Jasmine repeatedly said that the study was a very important time for her because she was allowed to think thoughts with others and talk about them where she may never have had the opportunity. The time together helped to clarify her thinking and sort through emotions which were flooding her.

Zinnia said that her image of the bohemian woman helped to concretize the whole experience for herself. It gave her a target to aim for. She was more committed, she said, to get back to Australia before it changed too much. She also wanted to visit her mother and find out what her life was like.

Orchid and Aster were finding out for the first time what this little group was all about. We heard about Orchid's dreams and aspirations. We heard about the East Coast [of Canada] culture. We heard about Aster's aspirations of being a screenwriter and his work in the film industry within a technical area. We shared the stories of how Aster and Zinnia met as well as how Orchid and I met.

To top off the evening, as usual, it involved food. I had baked a four layer banana-almond cake for the group. They were dumbstruck. In the cake I had put little tokens of appreciation; necklaces I thought they would both like. When they found their

packages they were thrilled and excited by their gifts. Also, I had placed coins in the cake as forms of good luck and fortune. This was a family custom borne originally from my maternal Jamaican relatives. We vowed to keep in touch and take up the brushes again, as a group of friends. This evening was the least I could do in the form of giving back. I had offered to arrange a small gallery showing but Jasmine declined; she wanted to keep her private thoughts to herself and the group. We respected her wishes. Now, I understand Jasmine wants to write her story of her experience with our little group as a freelance story in her South Asian newspaper for future immigrants finding their way to Canada and Vancouver. She said this was her way of saying thank you to me. And so the cycle of reciprocity continues.

#### **Postscript: Where Are They After the Study?**

This study takes only a snap shot of a group of people as they passed through a specific period of time with a definite beginning and ending. However, their lives and their development continues beyond the confines of this artificial "slice of life".

Jasmine emailed me a few weeks ago and then telephoned to keep me informed of what she was doing. Jasmine had decided to move out of the house she was sharing with a family who had emigrated from mainland China.

She is, currently, living with her brother and his family, who also lives in Vancouver. Jasmine is aiming to find an apartment of her own somewhere within the larger Vancouver society, outside of the present Chinese enclave she lives within.

Jasmine also mentioned that she was offered a position back in Taiwan, however, the position did not pay very much and this organization was not prepared to help defray some of the relocation costs. In addition, Jasmine stated, she had developed some roots for Canada and wants to stay here now. She continues to believe that over the

longer term the greatest future is here, although she said she would keep options open with regard to Taiwan. A very recent update from Jasmine is sad news. She has left Canada, citing the continued tensions within her Chinese community in Richmond and the lack of employment opportunities here. Jasmine has moved to the United States to take up a lucrative position translating text between English and Mandarin. It appears that her move from Canada to the United States is permanent.

Zinnia and Aster travelled back to Australia for six weeks this past fall so that she could finally say good bye to her home culture while allowing Aster to become acquainted with her past, just as Zinnia had been able to do with Aster's past here. On the return trip, Zinnia brought her mother here for at least one year so that her mother could enter a program of study here. Zinnia hopes that her mother will like it here enough to live with her and Aster. After all, she stated, it is the very least she could do to help her mother with regard to Zinnia's brothers. I am meeting Zinnia, Aster and Zinnia's mum this weekend....and who knows...perhaps a little more painting for old times' sake....

I continue to write and edit this thesis after the study has come and gone. I applied for and was accepted into the doctoral program so that I can continue my research and writing within the areas of identity-in-transition using other aesthetic means to explore different life shifts. I hope that in time Zinnia and Jasmine and I can get together to update our selves with regard to our lives....to take up the brushes once again.



## *CHAPTER SEVEN*

### **GATHERING THE HARVEST**

#### Introduction

According to art therapy, the requirement for taking notes and writing great volumes of interpretive analysis should be minimal. The focus for all three interventions is upon process. The participants, through an interpretivist ontology, or through their own "lens," create their own world as they each, respectively experience it. Also, the aspect of 'homework' is critical. As a result of doing exercises in the participant's own time and space, a 'trail' of the process is created following each participant to continually reflect 'in the moment' and retroactively.

For the purposes of this thesis I have made notes in a broad, thematic fashion for each of the three participants. The streams of thought are not considered 'the correct ones', or the 'definitive'. They are based upon what I have experienced and are what I perceived. This is why the data collected, through the paintings, flip chart notes, interpretations, and my notes of sessional interactions have been included - for you to reflect upon themes. Some may be the same as the ones I write about, others may be, different. No one of would be right; yet neither one of us would be wrong either. But, neither is that the point.

As you read through this writing you may experience a spark of something from within your own life which causes you to reflect upon it further. Great! That is the focus for the overall process here.

For each of the three participants, Jasmine, Zinnia, and Sunflower [myself], the format will be the same. Each participant will have themes which arose from what could be observed from within the paintings, themselves. What can be observed, and what I can draw upon, will include: coverage across the painting surface; colours used; lines within



the paintings; shapes within the paintings; painting methods; and emotions which were evoked within me as I witnessed the paintings. The second source of themes will come from the words each participant used through the process. Themes will be drawn from those words, or notions, which are repeated by the participant.

The third source will be to examine the beginning and ending body paintings for Jasmine, Zinnia, and Sunflower to see what, if any 'movement' occurred over the entire painting period. In conjunction with this, each participant was asked to pick a painting which, for them, was the most inspired, revealing, or provided the greatest point of clarity for them. These are included as a way of demonstrating a beginning, middle and end to the overall study process.

As a way to sum up each participant's body of work, thematically, I will look at ways I see the person 'moving' throughout their time spent within the workshops. The movements are large, small or not at all, and will be, in ways, different among the participants.

The latter part of this chapter will, then, go through the various aspects of one's identity that we explored as a group to more critically analyze the three participants. Again, these are not definitive but are based upon my own interpretations. The aspects that are explored include: gender, sexuality, religion/spirituality, birth order, age, ethnicity and a more general area where social/work environments, the concept of home, etc. will appear. Part of the discussion will include how our social learning has been shaped by how we responded and how what we had learned within one cultural milieu do or do not transfer to another. As required, literature sources will be used, as needed, to further illustrate particular points.

### *Jasmine*

#### As Seen Through Painting

While observing the array of paintings Jasmine completed, about half of them contain magenta and green tones. Within the colour spectrum, these colours are complementary, which in turn, bring balance to one another. Green, on its own, is the colour which represents the midpoint within the colour spectrum - being neither warm nor a cool colour (Wills, 1993). It is balanced on its own. This colour is also said to reflect the balancing of the good and bad qualities within a person as well as the balancing and maintaining sympathy among a person's mind, body, and spirit (Wills, 1993). The colour magenta symbolizes a "letting go". Letting go is the shedding of personal aspects of our selves, our ideas, and our world view which we no longer see as appropriate or comfortable for us to continue containing within our selves (Wills, 1993). It is a sign that we are growing in a different direction while we let go of where we have come from. One of Jasmine's paintings is entitled, Looking Back, and is filled with magenta to signify that which Jasmine has, or is in the process of, let go.

Jasmine's earlier works are done with pastels, brought with her. Within art therapy, pastels are used because a person seeks a high degree of control within their lives. This is Jasmine, in the beginning. Her paintings are muted, light, and highly controlled. Later they become bold, rich, bright, and quite colourful. Many are filled with deep magentas which illustrate her continual process of letting go in order to grow and find her new self as she begins navigating beyond the throes of the more intense aspects of culture shock. Jasmine uses the colour "blue" to signify the new immigrant [someone she initially saw as being nothing more than a cockroach - Chapter Six] - herself - and blue is considered the colour of peace and tranquillity and a "space" to meditate. Blue seems to slow things down and give an appearance of space.

### Shadows

In many of her paintings, Jasmine, when she paints herself in them, appears in the form of a black shadow figure. The shadow is considered the opposite to light. The image of a shadow is thought to be something unreal, quickly fading and always changeable (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1994). Within Chinese cultures the shadow holds an equality to the yin aspect. To hold a shadow in these cultures is considered a sign of lack of personal purity. Those bodies which do not hold shadows, or unable to cast one are considered pure (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1994). The bodies generally considered to be without bodies are emperors and the Gods. At high noon when the sun is directly overhead no shadows are cast. This is the vertical axis that is thought to be used by Chinese emperors to ascend and descend the heavens - and so they contain no shadows. Everyone else contains shadows because it is a sign of the impurity which each of us contain (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). Blackness, she describes as chaos, and darker times; or of evilness (an aspect of her self she readily identifies - as well as a mention of anger she has carried with her all her life - a darker emotion). The Chinese people also associate blackness as representing the north, winter, water, and the tortoise (Wills, 1993). When blackness is associated with a shadow, it seems Jasmine sees some negative aspects of her self. Blackness is also considered the sign of chaos because the beginning of the world was considered, by Chinese cultures, to form from the blackness of chaos (Wills, 1993). Black is considered part of the feminine yin - containing femininity, intuition, earthiness and maternal instincts - the notion of the Black Madonna has a strong history as a good omen (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). Also, a shadow is something that is without substance, yet is a signifier of something's existence. This may be how she sees herself while living in Canada -

without substance - not really here, on some level - floating through her existence, here. This is reflected in her discussion of not being baptized and therefore not considering herself a full person.

On occasion, Jasmine uses white. She uses white in reference to her mother, the Church, and the painting of her going down a ski hill, and for purity. In China it has the added dimension of mourning (Wills, 1993). For Jasmine, whiteness connotes peace as well. The colour white is considered to hold all or none of the colours (Wills, 1993). In Chinese cultures white is considered to be void because it contains the potential of all colours. Also, white is considered the colour of first light (of inspiration) (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994).

With regard to shapes in Jasmine's paintings there are shadow images, circles and dots found to symbolize flowers and aspects of Jasmine's self - and body outlines. This last shape seems to support the notion of her self, not being fully committed here. There is a lack of groundedness perhaps, and a reflection of her impurities which she has highlighted as more important than many other aspects of herself.

Jasmine's movement in painting, as this reflects herself, is dramatically seen in the use of lines from beginning to end. In the beginning Jasmine's lines were thin, feathery, and at times smudged. All of these highlight, a lack of definition for Jasmine of her self. Yet, the lines seem to be full of skittishness. As the sessions continued the lines became thicker, bolder illustrating her greater sense of being in the present - a presence which is embraced by confidence which Jasmine was learning to wear once again. The lines also show a greater intensity and deliberateness as though there was a greater certainty of what she was seeing as she painted. Yet, for the most part, the heads she drew had not faces except for the notable exception of her painting of her self-as-flower.

### Flower

The symbol of the flower, for Jasmine, is a symbol of how she has been taught all women in Taiwan meant to be as children, and later as adults. The flower, in Chinese society, is a symbol of the passive principle taught to women of that society. The flower is also considered a receptacle for where bees and other insects impregnate the flower. Yet the flower is also a sign of love and harmony within a primeval state (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). Coupled with this the flower is a signifier of the attainment of a spiritual state for a particular person (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). The society she grew up in and which has taught her how to be instructed her that all women are like flowers; she is to be fragile, smell and look pretty, and serve and please man. This is the way of her femininity. During many of the sessions she is always wanting to know how she could please me by answering and speaking so as to make my thesis easier. I respond by saying that to make my thesis easier, she simply needs to be honest within the group and to me.

As with Jasmine's brush strokes, I find the emotions from her paintings that are evoked shifted significantly, as our group progressed. In the beginning her paintings speak of a loneliness, of tight control, of an insignificance, and of being muted. This sensation shifts to brightness, of much more intense and open feeling, and of some releasing of energy as thoughts are being let go and freedom is being cultivated and allowed to flourish. Also, Jasmine's early paintings seem to show little motion whereas her later pictures show much more motion - sometimes floating, other times more frenetic. At times, the paintings seem to suggest a sense of increased freedom; of escaping from something.

All of Jasmine's work cover the full page which shows a strong element of her self being present in the world, whereas the shadows and the body outlines are a sense of how

she sees others' experience of her, as well as her experience of her self, and of how others interact with herself. Despite her moving in crowds and living here she senses herself as a social stranger. Nobody knows who she really is - partly because she seems to have controlled her revelation to the broader world as a way of preventing her self from being hurt, partly because she has found the world, here, cold.

### As Seen Through Words

The first overriding theme Jasmine describes is her not fitting into Canadian society. She describes herself as moving toward and through crowds, but always moving in a direction opposite to the rest of the group. Both of these senses show Jasmine's discomfort with not feeling like she belongs.

### Crowds

Crowds, also for Jasmine, create for her self an image of a 'complicated' life. Being alone she suggests is a simple life. It seems to raise an element of being able to keep control of one's life by having fewer people are involved with her life. These elements also highlight Jasmine's sense of separateness to others. However, in finding a separateness points out, for Jasmine, that she feels she is missing something. This raises another of Jasmine's themes - love. Love also implies a sense of belonging, or being a part of another's life. Jasmine speaks of this frequently. I can only mention that some of this is linked to an experience she has had while in Hong Kong, prior to arriving to Canada. This experience has had a profound effect upon Jasmine - and is contained in some of her paintings. Her Hong Kong experience shapes, particularly this aspect of love

which seems to well up inside of her at times. To maintain her confidence and her wish that this experience remain private I have agreed to honour Jasmine's privacy and confidences so I am leaving this experience to this overarching mentioning.

### Invisibility

Jasmine raises her sense of invisibility while in Canada. Partly, this sense of being a social stranger is as a result of her remaining within the Chinese community. This sense of invisibility, as described by Jasmine (Chapter Six), was as the result of the "tension" she experiences as a Taiwan person surrounded by large numbers of mainland Chinese people. Although, she says, she thought it would be best to move into a larger Asian community at first, she found the mistreatment she experienced served only to isolate her within the community she felt would be a safe haven. Cross cultural counselling literature suggests that finding similar communities for settling when moving to a new country sometimes is prudent in lessening the effects of culture shock there would appear in the case of Jasmine the issue of intra-cultural tensions. These seem to have served to more profoundly isolate her further creating a sense of invisibility. Though as the postscript suggests she is making a move out of this Vancouver suburb and into the broader, mainstream community in her hopes of becoming more visible.

### Flower

A number of sub-themes emanate as the result of her vision of "woman-as-flower" metaphor. She has been taught from a early age that girls, and women, were weak and fragile and that man would control her; everything she did was for man's pleasure and needs. Arriving in Canada she feels that she is fading as a flower does after

the heat blast of mid-summer has sapped a flower's energy. Flowing from this, age seems to be of some concern to Jasmine, though she is only in her forties. She feels that despite her immigrating to a new country that she is "too old" to change her self.

Yet, she finds herself undergoing some traumatic and sudden changes as a result of her work life. In Taiwan, she worked for that country's largest television station and as a magazine editor for a large Taiwan travel magazine. Here, she finds she is forced to work at minimum wage in a retail store with the expectation that the first few months of her work was free in order for her to obtain "Canadian work experience". Jasmine also works as a freelance reporter for a Chinese language newspaper. She sees her skills being undervalued here and as such she feels that she, as a person, has become undervalued as well [the image of the immigrant-as-cockroach is powerfully telling].

Yet, Jasmine holds out much hope with her emphatic, "Just Do It". This has given her much renewed energy to continue on in her journey. Many words show us the whole process aspect of her experience of being "in transit" through: skis, camel, train, plane, ship, horse, we see her being carried from one point to another.

### Too Much Multiculturalism

Interestingly, Jasmine, who has come from a predominantly, uni-cultural country finds the multicultural aspect of Canada as too confusing because there are too many different cultures with their own respective views trying to live together. This may be why Jasmine sought out the Chinese community, here in Vancouver - not so much that the Chinese culture was the one she initially preferred, necessarily, but because this was a similar culture to the one she knew in her home country and was perceived to be easier to live within rather than trying to learn and navigate among multiple cultures all at the same time.



### Home

Jasmine sees a vision of home as being an oasis from the larger culture. Home as shelter. Yet, Jasmine sees herself as being locked out of the “house”. Does she have a key to get in or not? We find out part way through that her feeling is as though she does because she is focused upon succeeding. Yet, she relies upon the writing of Tagore to tell us how she felt about what is happening. She tells us that she “seeks what she cannot get [and] gets what she does not seek.”

### Departing and Arriving Passports of Self

The beginning and ending points of our time together, for Jasmine, are dramatically depicted in her two body images. They almost appear as though two different people had completed these paintings.

Jasmine’s first painting, the body image done at the beginning, shows a body outline being painted over and partially hidden as though invisible. This is accentuated in the area involving the crowd and the train. Both the train and the crowd are moving, but in different directions and Jasmine is alone on the train. She is alone on a train that is taking her in the direction it wants to take her, without any control or influence from Jasmine.

The final thought through the second body image shows Jasmine’s body image in a dramatically different light. The contrast is most striking. Here, her body outline is a bold, energetic red, filled in by solid bright colours. This shows some real confidence and a feeling of living much fully, in the present, for the moment. Even the body position is different from the first body image. The second painting shows a relaxed, yet

confident, aspect to Jasmine's body, whereas the first body image looks helpless, and perhaps tense and defending one's self -her body was in the midst of struggle and of weeping.

This sense of being under siege is reflected also by the water lines flowing down the first body image while the head is wrapped in blues of water; the head remaining invisible. This first painting evokes profound sadness - almost futility. The second image shows a clear head and hands cradling the head in a relaxed position with clouds circling overhead. Though the head is clear, the face remains blank. As time progresses, I suspect Jasmine will be able to work more fully on seeing her face more clearly - and not just as a face within a flower metaphor.

The outline of the body image in the beginning shows no substance to the body, yet the second image shows vibrant energy and a present image. Most noticeable is the huge pink heart she painted. This shows lots of love present and a much happier person, generally. Wrapped around her are the base colours of green (for balance), blue (for peace, space, and tranquillity), and brown (for earthy groundedness). These three come together to support Jasmine in a positive movement, quite contrary to the time from which her first image was captured. Was there a pivotal moment and painting between body image one and two? Yes, definitely. This will be explored next.

#### Passport of Pivotal Painting

When Jasmine was asked which painting, for her, brought the greatest clarity, or inspiration, and was the turning point within the study process, she immediately went to the one with red hand prints on it, Just Do It. Her repeated and emphatic phrase of "Just Do It", was captured in those red (vital energy) hand prints, as well as within her interpretation of this painting, and seemed to reflect a sense of clarity and cohesion for

her. Both Zinnia, and I readily agree with Jasmine because we remember how animated and alive she was when she completed that particular painting. It is as though this is a way for her to purge destructive energy that is holding her back and opens the way for her to find herself in her other body image and a positive mind set. A door had finally opens. When Jasmine points to this work, that energy from the painting magically appears. This red energy, and this painting, was a constant to carry Jasmine far into the future, the three of us agree. This energy is captivating Zinnia as well, particularly from her recent successes, of her new home and job, which she says stems directly from her experiences within this study. Next we turn to Zinnia's experiences.

### *Zinnia*

#### As Seen Through Paintings

For Zinnia, she identifies readily with a few colours strongly. Orange, Zinnia identifies as being both feminine energy and of Australia. The literature points out orange as being the colour of femininity, as well as the colour symbolizing the energy associated with creation (Wills, 1993). Orange is seen as lying half way between red (masculine energy, and physicality) and yellow (the colour of the intellect) so this colour serves to bring both extremes of warmth into balance (Wills, 1993). Orange is seen as a colour that lifts depression and encourages great freedom (Wills, 1993). The linking of feminine energy and Australia can be seen as a way of Zinnia's strong devotion and attachment to her mum, who Zinnia sees as being "left behind".

The other strong colour for Zinnia is purple. Purple is always linked with orange in Zinnia's paintings. This colour has been said to symbolize self-respect, dignity, and a realm of spiritual awakening or awareness as connected to our sense of self (Wills, 1993). It is also described as the colour of appeasement (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994).

Purple is related to achieving insight into who we are. The colour purple is used to generate personal inspiration and growth. In some cultures the colour purple is the “autumnal” passage of life to death, where death is considered a phase as opposed to a final destination (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). As we shall see later two of Zinnia’s paintings are related to her increased self-awareness.

The third colour Zinnia mentioned briefly, but refers back to as the same symbol is the colour grey. Zinnia sees grey as representing Canada. Canada is seen as being this hue because she does not know what stood before her as she arrived here. Grey, however is also seen as being a colour of grief, sadness, and boredom (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). Grey is seen as a neutral colour, though at times it may be associated with mourning or grief. For Zinnia, it may have simply been a neutrality having no real strong emotion either way.

The final colour recurring for Zinnia is the colour blue. In most instances it seems to be used to symbolize space between objects or people, such as the two worlds of Canada and Australia in the painting called Video Fight, or the two worlds of hers and her new job which shows a collision, or in the painting The Vikings. The blue in her painting Day of Judgment seems to signify a strong sense of peace - as blue connotes this as well as a way of slowing down one’s pace in movement (Wills, 1993). Zinnia also sees blue as a nurturing colour to calm her down and support herself.

### Swirls

When Zinnia paints there are three main shapes she relied upon: swirls, splatters, and roots as shown by thick lines. The swirl, Zinnia sees as a symbol of her energy - without beginning or ending - just constantly going. The swirl is seen to be a sign of the repetitiveness of life and is, in fact, the centre of all life - Zinnia calls the swirl her life

energy - for good reason. The swirl contains within it a dual energy and tension - that of both expansion and contraction - or perhaps the tug of war Zinnia faces while adjusting to Canada (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). All of the swirls go counter-clockwise reflecting, perhaps, the reverse movement from the southern hemisphere. If one watches water going down a drain in the northern hemisphere, it swirls clockwise; in the southern hemisphere, including Australia, the swirl is the reverse. This may be one explanation, there are undoubtedly others. Zinnia referred to the swirls as energy patterns, or likens them to an amoeba, the womb and sperm. All of these link themselves to the act of creation, of birth, an act reserved for women.

### Roots

The image of roots, and putting down roots appears in a few of her paintings as well. Roots are something Zinnia resisted in the beginning. This seems to be happening because, although recently married, here in Canada, in her mind putting down roots will represent a form of permanency. Zinnia has said at the moment she is not prepared to do that and that over a few years she and Aster may return to Australia to live. So Zinnia struggles with this idea. In her painting, The Vikings, we see some deep roots under the green mound of her space in Canada. Zinnia mentions that these roots are in reaction to the "invasion" of her unruly brothers, into her space. To put down roots in reaction to her brothers' arrival indicates Zinnia is feeling threatened in some way and feels forced to hang on to something she feels is rightfully hers alone. So the roots in this painting - are they for a show of bravado for her brothers' benefit? Or are these the beginnings of some longer term commitment? That is hard to know for sure because the future remains unknowable.

### Splatters

Splatters are used in a few of Zinnia's paintings as well. This device is used to highlight the impression of chaos within the scene depicted. This is particularly evident with regard to the paintings involving Zinnia looking for work and the collision of her world with her new job environment. Both of these contexts illustrate a lack of personal control, in that she feels that she either do not know how to approach something, or that what she expects will happen - do not occur. The splattering, as an exercise, also helps, physically, to release energy that is created while the intensity of the painting exercise is being carried out.

Zinnia loves to mix her paints using a lot of white to mute, particularly the blue and the purple. This helps to lessen the intensity so Zinnia could transpose a nuance of feeling through a lighter or darker hue. Yet, most of the colours remained quite bright and vibrant showing an intensity of emotion.

### Etchings

A device Zinnia use within some of her work is to take the pointed, wooden end of the paintbrush and etch designs into the wet paint -as she does for Bohemian Woman, her final painting, Women's World, and Zinnia's World. Like using a pencil or pastel, this gives her great control in creating just what she wants. Zinnia does not do this, extensively, but it appears there ae moments when she seeks control during her painting, without being as obvious about this need as Jasmine is in the beginning.

The final two elements of Zinnia's painting is that there are feelings that are strong and present in each of her paintings. Through the vibrancy, intensity, at times purity of feeling, and variety of tints and shades of colour which she uses, Zinnia is exhibiting a greater variety and subtlety of feeling than Jasmine allows. It is interesting

to note, for Zinnia, that there are some colours, out of the twelve that everyone in the group is provided with but she does not rely upon to any extent. These are: brown, black, white, peach, turquoise, and magenta. This represents half of the available colours the group has to work with. This indicates that there is not as much groundedness to Zinnia's work, nor is there a sense of "letting go" that there is with Jasmine. There is not the struggle of good versus evil which is evident with Jasmine. Turquoise is associated with helping to defend the unwanted, which makes this an interesting colour for Zinnia not to consider, particularly in relation to her brothers and their "invasion" of her home.

#### As Seen Through Words

Among the words recorded by Zinnia are some which reflected recurring thoughts. The first theme, for Zinnia, is the immigration experience of wanting to change - not just countries or homes - but aspects of herself. The impetus for leaving Australia is the opportunity to change. Zinnia feels there are some fundamental concepts which she needs to change with regard to herself. She describes, while in Australia, herself as a "party person", where she had been always bringing people together and having parties. In this process, Zinnia describes that she lost herself. When Zinnia begins to take up Canada, as her home, this is a key aspect she wants to change - as is reflected in her painting, Bohemian Woman, - an idealized version of Zinnia. This becomes a focus for Zinnia in the days ahead.

#### Bush Fires

Tied to this element of change is the notion of reinventing or the rebirth of her self. The pivotal painting, for Zinnia, is the Burning Bush Fires of Australia. Like forest

fires, Australian bush fires are both a period of destruction - or of letting go - in order to allow new growth to occur - and so of rejuvenation. For Zinnia, this is a powerful metaphor for the immigration experience.

### Home

A third theme, which caught much of Zinnia's attention, particularly at the beginning of our time together is the idea of 'home'. Where she had been living at the beginning of the study is described as a house with other people. This holds a tremendous sense of impermanence for Zinnia. When she and Aster find their new space for themselves, it is quickly transformed into a home; a private sanctuary she can create and make her own and be her self. Once this occurs it seems that roots of stability began to appear in her art work.

### Social Stranger

Another theme is the idea of "insider" and "outsider". Zinnia voiced, strongly, her sense of being an outsider in Vancouver. We spent some time discussing Zinnia's frustration with Canada's (meaning Vancouver's) "phoniness". Zinnia describes how she has been here eight months and, save Aster, still has no close friends despite her efforts to "crack" into established social circles. She is feeling like a "social stranger" to borrow from Kristeva (1991). Canadians are described, by Zinnia, as cliquish - wearing "pasted on smiles" while preferring to be insincere in their "politeness". We also spoke of how Canadians (Vancouverites) like to hide their racism and prejudice behind their propensity for being "politically correct". Zinnia states that Australians can be quite prejudiced and bigoted - but at least, she states, they are up front about it; Canadians "dress-up" their prejudice in politeness. Being an outsider is particularly painful for



Zinnia because much of her life she has been such an integral part of “the inside” within her social environment. Since moving to Canada, Zinnia states that her closest friends are not native born Canadians, but other immigrants. Being on the inside of mainstream society, per se, is not considered worth the effort. She prefers recent immigrants because they are sensitive to Zinnia’s experiences which help her feel included.

It must be noted here that Zinnia kept referring to Canadians when she was describing her frustrations. Personally, having travelled from coast to coast and from Windsor to the Yukon border, to use the “generic” label of “Canadian” greatly “flattens” the image. There are dramatic differences when one considers the environment of the east coast of Canada (Cape Breton/Newfoundland (with its strong Celtic influences), Halifax (with its centuries established Black community), New Brunswick (with its strong French influence), the First Nations influence within Labrador, and then the myriad “cultures” within Quebec and Ontario and so on across the country. I understand Zinnia’s frustration because it is something I have experienced as well here, however, there are open and friendly places across Canada. I encourage Zinnia and Aster to take a trip across Canada to see for themselves how diverse Canada can be.

At the same time, this struggle is going on Zinnia was fighting with her brothers, who remain in Australia. They will call her repeatedly and verbally attack her and Aster, long distance, from Australia. When they are here in Canada for Zinnia’s January wedding, Zinnia describes her brothers as Vikings, meaning uncouth and barbarians who are seeking to “violently conquer” Zinnia’s world. The experience unsettles her to a great degree. She pushes them away in an effort to create them as outsiders to her life. She speaks of trying to “save” or “rescue” her mum from the hands of her brothers. Yet, she finds the distance between Canada and Australia a double-edged sword. She finds the thousands of miles between her and her brothers a great buffer or defense. She can

simply hang up the phone whenever she wants cutting them off without repercussion, and often does. However, the separation from her mother is problematic. She finds being apart from her brothers empowering; being kept from her mother is disempowering because Zinnia can not protect her mother. The notion of “outsider” takes on another dynamic with respect to other women within Canada.

While growing up in Australia, Zinnia was close to a circle of other females who would inform, inscribe, and teach Zinnia much of how she will later behave within society. One of the effects of this is that Zinnia likes the friendship of other women. While Zinnia has been here, in Canada, she has tried to befriend Canadian women and has found it difficult because the Canadian woman’s definition of femininity seems to be different from Zinnia’s own. Again, she finds herself on the outside. This study provides Zinnia with an opportunity to be on the inside of a group which involves at least one woman. Because of my being gay, this seems to provide an inclusion for me as well and, somehow, a focus upon my femininity seemed to follow naturally. The dynamics of Zinnia’s navigating Canadian women as her being an outsider - and, interestingly, as a woman - while finding a space where she is included to a profound level is an interesting tension Zinnia seems to face in some aspects of her broader life as a recent immigrant.

Much of Zinnia’s discussion focuses upon feminine energy and a cohesion with other women. She describes much of her motivation to act in terms of “feminine energy”. This notion of being connected with other women in order to succour strength is captured in a few of Zinnia’s works. In her work surrounding her childhood memories she relies, almost solely, upon females for connection with her world - her closest girlfriend of the time and her mum. Male figures seemed to be largely absent. The next painting, chronologically dealing with the feminine theme, also revolves around her

girlfriends where she describes the extreme closeness this group has with one another, and where boys had to meet the approval of the group before a prospective male could date one of the female group's members. Zinnia, at once, both, seems to empathize with "boys who were burned by the group" and, yet, says that the members of this group had "outgrown" the boys they came in contact with. In order to create a sense of being in the world, on her own terms, it appears she will have to voluntarily disengage herself from her reference group. She does this by "going abroad". First, she goes to South America because, in her mind, she feels she is travelling abroad any way. While she is there, there seems to begin a "transformation" about her in that she became more "free" where men, and relationships were involves. She begins to explore intimate relationships, on her own terms, before continuing on to Canada. It is almost as though she has begun to purge herself of some of this female group's influences which has created and enforces group norms and blockages against the broader social world. She is wanting to move and grow beyond her Australian referent group norms. Being in a new country allows Zinnia to recreate herself without worrying about the barriers, which her referent group in Australia imposed upon her. This creates the next theme; the freedom to recognize, experience, and know other feminine energies unlike her own.

The new feminine energy, Zinnia finds in Canada. She finds the energy of women, here, counter to her own. Yet, she discovers she is taking on some of the energy from Canadian women. She remains positive because she believes that at some point there will be greater synchronization between her energy with that of Canadian women.

### Collisions

Much of Zinnia's immigration experience is marked by collisions. Collisions raise the image of happenstance, of a randomness of experience. And because of this,

both, collision and randomness become tied into the last of Zinnia's themes. Zinnia arrives in Canada on a visitor's visa. She has no intention of becoming a permanent resident, here. Her meeting Aster was quite by accident. Her falling in love with Aster was random. Her deciding to stay in Canada and marry Aster - that was an intention born through accident. It was this decision to marry and stay in Canada which really marks the shift for Zinnia from being a tourist to being an immigrant. This is something Zinnia has not planned for, but has to become accustomed to quite quickly. In a profound way Zinnia, when she left Australia, fully intending on returning to her native country. When she decides not to return, there is a deep sense of loss, of not having control, because she has never been given the opportunity to say good-bye to her old way of being. I feel that is why our group's revisiting childhood memories was so valuable to Zinnia. It gives her an opportunity to revisit that which she is forced to leave behind. It is also why she and Aster are heading back to Australia for six weeks this autumn - to allow Zinnia to say good-bye while giving Aster a chance to see parts of Zinnia's life that were previously unknown to him, as well.

There are other collisions during Zinnia's immigration. There is the violent collision of Zinnia's brothers into Canada, disrupting Zinnia's wedding. This remains with Zinnia through our time together, despite her protests to the group that she "was over it now". These family collisions would appear in The Vikings, as well as in the Video Fight, and her descriptions around these, including the family fights she relates to Jasmine and me. The next collision for Zinnia is when she lands herself a position she feels is terrific for her, and her industrial design background, in a furniture/interior design operation within Vancouver. We hear Zinnia's many descriptions of working for and with a group of gays - meaning men who happened to be gay, or alternatively the word "fags" was used. In Australia, the two terms of "gay" and "fags" appear to be

interchangeably used, however in Canada, "fags" is a derogatory word. Zinnia says she always liked "gays" because they usually are so much fun, and possess great senses of humour. But the group in this organization she is working within, she states, were always so serious and uptight - apparently nothing like me. This Collision of Work Worlds takes some of Zinnia's focus and energy away from our group in the final few sessions, though her talking to us about it seems to help her. My being gay and trying to inform her that men who happened to be gay were people too, and are just as varied in personality, temperament, and attitudes as any one else did not seem to placate her. This resulted in quizzical looks, as though this could not be true; such is the power of stereotyping - cross-culturally. The final collision involve the concept of femininity which is constructed for and around her in Australia, as opposed to what she discovers in Canada. Zinnia did not elaborate too much with regard to crashing femininities, however, it is depicted as something that has just happened to her. All of these thematic components support the move evidenced within the two body images she has completed.

#### Departing and Arriving Passports of Self

The two body images are similar in body shape, and position. There are consistent perceptions of her self, however, her environment seems to change around her. Looking, further, at the two paintings it is interesting to note that the purple, described as the energy of Canada, in painting one, becomes the purple of Australia in the second painting. In the second painting Canada becomes yellow.

The environment seems to have shifted within the first as compared with the second painting. In the first body image it appears as though Zinnia is free-floating by barely touching Australia while tentatively entering Canadian space. The second body image shows Zinnia grasping on to Canada. Interestingly, her feet seem to be more

deeply planted on to the colour of Australia as well. It appears that Zinnia is no longer free-floating but seems to have reached some semblance of balance between Canada and Australia.

The environment shifts from being blue to a light pinkish-blue. This latter colour represents a movement to greater peace and spirituality. The space of free-floating appears to have become less of a focus, allowing Zinnia to exist within a greater sense of peace.

The internal colour of Zinnia's body begins as a magenta and shifts to an orange. The magenta symbolizes the letting go, as in this free-fall that appears in the beginning. The orange, symbolizes femininity, and a strong power of feminine energy which Zinnia seems to have tapped into over her time with the group.

For both images, Zinnia's face is absent. As Zinnia states, she does not know if she is seeing the back of herself or she can not place a face upon her image. It may be that her image of her self is still, profoundly, shifting. Finding and painting her face will be a stronger confirmation of how she identifies with herself. The orange, within the first painting, which surrounds the blue mound of Australia seems to have moved from "Australia" into Zinnia, herself, here in Canada.

The colours in the second painting seem to have become muted and more diffuse and not as solid and intense as the first body image. It suggests that Zinnia's energy has become more a more subdued energy, as opposed to the earlier frenetic energy of the beginning.

### Passport of Pivotal Painting

This was an interesting discussion, as a group. When we spread out our photographs of all the paintings we had completed as a group and reflected upon which piece of art captured our most clarified thought, with regard to immigrating to Canada, Zinnia, in short order, selected the painting, The Burning Bush Fires of Australia. This selection was made because the metaphor of destroying the old in order to allow the new to grow forth was strong for her to identify with. Perhaps destroy is not quite the right word - but to push back the known to allow the new and the unknown to grow and develop.

Both Jasmine and I select the Bohemian Woman. There seems to be a pulling together of key energies of Zinnia to form an idealized version of her womanhood and femininity. The energy Zinnia has when we turned to this latter painting is similar to Jasmine's describing her own pivotal painting. This points out Zinnia's inadvertent focus upon Australia, or a looking back, as opposed to a looking forward toward her idealized version of her self. I suspect Zinnia's going back to Australia for an extended visit will allow Zinnia to look more forward with regard to her views of her life in Canada. It will have been interesting to be there when she looks back at the version of femininity and gender she left behind in Australia versus the version she returns to in Canada. After all, no matter how current one's passport is, you never can "return home" to the way things were.

## *Sunflower*

### As Seen Through Paintings

The paintings completed by myself were varied and appeared to be disparate, however, there were themes which appear with regularity. In exploring recurring colours I find five which struck me fairly frequently: red, blue, orange, brown and green.

The red colour symbolizes the masculine principle. This hue is also a sign of intense life energy and vitality. This colour is also symbolic of things relating to the sun and of war. It is an intense colour, not used in therapies much because of the highly energizing quality it has upon people. For Chinese people, red is considered the luckiest colour because it represents the sun and the phoenix (a universal symbol of resurrection and immortality - or death and rebirth by fire). Christianity has viewed red as the colour of martyrs and their blood and as the fire of the Pentecost. To me, red is the colour I associated with Orchid and the influence and energy with which he has shaped our relationship. I see masculine energy as that life force which we all contain within ourselves, just as all people contain a feminine energy.

The orange, which is prevalent within my works, is the colour I associate with myself - the feminine energy of orange. This colour is also considered the colour of fidelity (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). In China, this colour is also associated with the colour of happiness - elements associated with my relationship and love for Orchid. This colour is also the energy of creation and is a gentle, nurturing energy which complemented the energy of red. Orange is in the midpoint between yellow and red in the spectrum and influenced the intellect as well as physical vitality. There is, to create the greatest harmony, a need to balance both masculine and feminine energies. I feel this is not just to balance the maleness and femaleness of two people but both energies within one person; something I try to work at cultivating.



The brown used within several pieces of art is another colour I seem drawn unconsciously to. This colour has not been used a great deal in art therapy but, for me, reminded me of the earth and being grounded, something Orchid does for me. For Christianity, brown has been used to renounce the dictates of the status quo world and live in the larger world on one's own terms. Coupled with this, brown is the colour that signifies poverty and humility (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). This philosophy resonates deeply with me, having been pushed off to the margins for as long as I can remember. How can I trust and believe in a world which only judges, and then labels me, as something sub-human? I value myself much more deeply than that, and, so I take the world as I find it and change what I can while seeking and finding pockets of people who have the courage and compassion to see me and love me in return. Brown is the colour of a love which is grounded, simple, uncomplicated, and without condition.

Green is a colour, which I surprises me to see in my paintings with such regularity. Green has been a symbol for immortality, hope, of life and of the calling forth of spring. In China, green has signified wood, water, and things from the East. This is also the colour of balance occurring in the middle between cool and warm colours. It is also considered a female colour as well - and is the colour of hope, longevity and strength (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). Harmony, balance, and sympathy have been said to be contained within the colour green. This colour also has drawn the elements of one's person into synchronicity, namely one's body with one's mind and spirit. These were elements I saw in myself as forever working upon improving because of my focus in helping others while working on improving myself. I feel this is important, as a teacher and counsellor, that those I work with see my humanity and not some veneer of "perfection", "objectivity", or "judgment". This latter aspect I know I will never contain, nor wanted to harbour. After all, society through much of my life, has shown, described,

and told me that I was less than perfect. This has only given me incentive to constantly remain open and learn; to remain sensitive and wary to condescension, judgment, and superiority from creeping in to my work. I also associate this colour with a personal motto I hold dearly because of always being judged by people who were closed to others' experiences, and that is "the more I learn, the more I don't know." I just realized how powerful the colour green is as a positive colour for me.

The colour blue appears, but holds a lesser importance for me. As mentioned before, blue is a colour of space, slowing down, of peace, devotion, tranquillity and inspiration. Blue also has a feminine energy component attached with it, in that it has referenced Mother Earth. Blue refers to things related to the sky. For Chinese people, Blue, refers to, or represents the heavens, spring, and wood. In Christianity, Blue refers to the Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ, so also of nurturing - an aspect Zinnia mentions with regard to her first body image. The colours I do not rely upon to any great degree are: purple, magenta, black and yellow.

### Eye

The shapes relied upon, and repeated within my paintings contain two key themes. The first one is the extensive use of the "eye". The eye is considered a signifier of intellectual perception (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). The opening of the eye is likened to the opening of knowledge (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994). The eye, for me represents the perceptions we hold of ourselves (both our private, idealized versions as well as how we believe others see us) and of others around us. The "gaze" of others has a profound effect upon me as I saw how people experience with and react to me, and particularly to my sexuality. I have always found the eyes, the most important aspect of a person because as much as eyes let in the world, they reveal much with regard to one's

internal self. Related to the eyes are faces and these appear in various forms within my art work. I look for and continue to seek how people respond to me - and am diligent in how I react, in turn. I become sensitive to faces and eyes. I know I am, and have been, shaped by people within, and who pass through, my life. However, I believe both others and my experiences of myself interacting with the environment shape who I am and my life project of continually "becoming" a more developed someone. A number of influences in my socialization show me how little control I have in how I become because of the social natures of my life. The face and eyes are always of prime importance to me.

### Vines

The second major theme is the shape of vines and heavy/thick lines - like vines. These shapes remind me of growth and of selves being able to insinuate into others' lives, sometimes in unexpected ways. The vine is also a sign of strength and vitality while allowing an embracing support, as evidenced with the painting Peek that I completed, which symbolizes the vines embracing two selves in order to create a blossoming relationship with one another -the key to opening up the doors to belonging are the eyes, as we try to see without being seen.

### Washes

The methods I use are to rely upon pure, deep colours and of using "washes" - or a thinning of paints. The pure colours reflect a deepness and presence in the moment of my emotions and "being" in the sessions. The washes reflect the wateriness relating to sadness and sensitivity I experience through some of the sessions, as well as to my own circumstances of "letting go" of things within my own life. As Zinnia points out sadness

is not always a bad thing - but can be a signifier of painful growth occurring. To feel is to know the world in some profound ways. The feeling of growth is not always related to happiness or achievement can be in more important ways lead to sadness and loss. The coverage of paper within each piece I work with is over the full page and heavy with paint, showing a definite presence within each session.

### As Seen Through Words

As I describe through pictures, I describe as well, thoughts on how “the gaze” as found throughout the larger environment shapes how I respond to my world. That interaction shapes who I am and who I become over time and how people experience me. The act of perceiving is linked to this. Perceiving is not merely the act of “seeing” but of experiencing. How do we not only see but touch, taste, hear, and smell the other in our experiencing. In much of our world, people rely upon words as spoken, heard, or seen. In this study we also include touch, smell, and taste in addition to seeing and hearing. We do not see just with our eyes, but with our whole body. This study allows for this to happen. Within my worlds I find the concept of home returning over and over.

Home is not considered only a physical space and time but it is used by some people as a profound concept that connects their identities into a unique space and time. Some people create a sense of home where they can display things like a museum because of status they see their home bringing. Their spaces are sterile- like their identities but obviously exudes their sense of money, power, and/or status - just like their identities. But does it reflect their inner selves? Yes, it shows that people with homes like this exist “to have”, not “to be” or “to become” on their own. Like their homes, these people, have become “showplaces”, that to have the most expensive, somehow demonstrates their net “worth” as “better” people. However, I digress.

Home, to me, is something that is important so the things that help shape and define both myself and my space, tend to be hand made, and "signposts" reflecting life events, life passages, or time periods within my life. There are aspects which show my singleness, just as I have entered into a strong relationship, our home has come to reflect that as well. Home tells the story of ones' lives. These touch stones have allow us to continually reflect on our lives, but also allow us to relax as we live, work, and love in an environment which has come to mean so much to us - but not so much that to lose the things in our space will be catastrophic - or seen as a huge financial loss - only another passage of time.

Another theme is the situational nature of our identities. The context within which we have find ourselves continually shifts in how we interact with that context as it changes. We are influenced by many dynamics, for example our gender, sexuality, age, occupation, religion, ethnicity, regionality, among various others. If we find ourselves at a parent/teacher meeting, we will "be" different than if we were sharing a romantic dinner, than if we are in an on-the-job performance review. In addition, to our shifting selves is the overlay which is the "seasonality" of our lives. The springtime, which is usually likened to our childhood, is different from the summertime of our early adulthood, to our autumn of our peak career years through to the winter which is our years of retirement and reflection. The study of demographics (Foot, 1996) points out that as we age, we tend to behave in similar ways to others before who have reached that age previously. Everyone works with stereotypes during the various ages that are passed through. Have we heard about the "terrible twos"?, "that's what happens in grade school?", "the rebellious teenager"?, the "indestructible twenty-something"?, the "empty-nesters"?, "the big 4-0"?, or perhaps the stereotypes that swirl about concerning the "helpless senior citizens"? These are stereotypes attached to passages or seasons of our

lives and we seem to pass through these seasons in similar ways (Foot, 1996). The combination of our situational, and our seasonal aspects of our identities provides for each one of us, a unique positionality for our identity which stereotypes can never reach. We shift and change partly because we choose to, but in profound ways because of simply passing through specific spaces and times - and the passage of time itself.

### Social Strangers

Another theme raised is invisibility. At times through much of life I have been encased by silence. Society assumes heterosexuality, foreclosing other aspects of my self and other ways of being. People I know through my life, my family comes to mind, see me as a son and brother, but not as someone who happens to be gay. A significant aspect of who I am is discounted as a significant knowledge. I wonder about the aspects of Zinnia and Jasmine which they would like to bring forward for the world to know, but keep locked away because of the fear of shame. This sense of invisibility raises the notion of being a "social stranger". We, all, harbour this aspect of hiddenness and invisibility. What we fear in those we do not know or who we consider "strange" raises the spectre of that which we all contain and, in turn, fear - our own "invisibility" and "strangeness". We try to distance ourselves from that which is unfamiliar. Perhaps this is why Zinnia and Jasmine, both, find this extremely difficult experience of being "frozen" out of social circles they have encountered. The members of these circles may see Zinnia as a social stranger - and being unknown raises the fear, in turn, of being able to identify with their own unknownness, or stranger within. Being gay also includes having to disclose or "come out," repeatedly, within a society which does not want to hear about it - or at least wants to shape what is heard. I can remember a faculty member telling a group that bringing a group of gay men and women to speak is fine as long as they don't

try to “persuade” people about “their lifestyle.” Every time I move to a new social environment I have to choose whether to remain “invisible” or become more visible through another round of “coming out”. Every time I move towns, schools, or jobs I enter, in large part, as a stranger. Invisibility is a trap, or can be seen as protection, but always seems to have an oppressive aspect to it. Men and women, in large part, cannot hide their gender, or their skin colour, or ethnicity, or perhaps their disability - these are generally known and experienced and so do not become an unknown source of oppression - directed at themselves. In comparison, the oppression faced by gay men and lesbians, some ethnic, religious backgrounds, and some forms of disability can be much stronger because society oppresses that which is invisible through ridicule, and ostracism creating shame within many people who contain this invisible stigmatism and are trapped. To disclose often means to enter into a more personalized form of humiliation and ostracism; all the while the struggle remains hidden from view. Free will for many is taken away in order to gain acceptance for that which is visible and socially acceptable.

### Letting Go

During my developing longer term relationship and experiencing with Jasmine and Zinnia, I find myself returning to this notion of “letting go”. This is similar to Zinnia’s idea of rebirth or the regeneration brought about through bush fires. Whether developing a relationship or immigrating (which is, after all, developing a new relationship with another environment) there are aspects of one’s self that no longer fit within the new context. These must be re-shaped, shed, or “let go”, and grieved over before incorporating new aspects of self as the experience further develops. I thought I could keep my deep sense of independence while developing a relationship, for example. Entering this relationship, independence had to be, in part, let go of to make room for

dependence and the inclusion of another's wishes and desires. I had to grieve and then learn a new, more inclusive way of being. The loss hurt and caused sadness, but this was also a strong sign to me, and to others, that I was in the process of growing. Orchid was going through this growth, through loss as well, as he entered this new relationship - in addition to his immigrating 3500 miles. When he first arrived he thought he could continue his life from the East, here in Vancouver. He was always looking "over his shoulder" to things in the East because that was known to him - as opposed to looking at what was right here - that which was initially unknown, and was rooted without a history for his roots to sink into. When this does not work any longer Orchid draws from his memories of living here for a few years, about 15 years earlier. This does not fit either, so he eventually grieves aspects of himself that no longer fit and learns to let go. Once this happens, Orchid could turn more fully, to the present and draw from the immediate environment. As he was drawing from here, he and I were developing a history together - a history neither of us had of the other when we first began. We find having a history to refer to and speak about - just as in culture - allows us to ground ourselves together in a tie of bonding, love, and friendship.

Our lives are different in that Orchid made such a long distance move to enter a new relationship; yet, we did not have a history to draw from, regarding each other. There were no roots, initially, to keep the relationship stable. Those will be nurtured and developed in ways we can only sense because of the notion of Internet-based dating and relationship building are new within this society. A large part of this is letting go of aspects of our personal histories and self-concepts, to a degree, in order to make room for a newer, revised history which includes both of us together.



### Departing and Arriving Passports of Self

The two body images began with the invisibility I seem to begin social interactions with, the body outline with little substance, hiding my sexuality. Through two months with Jasmine and Zinnia I can feel myself allowing to more fully appear before them, as they are more fully developed before me. The second body image is far more in the present and completed showing myself to myself.

The body image, initially, shows a person who feels trapped and full of tension to a person, at the end, with the 'keys' of freedom close at hand. This is also depicted through the image of the heart as compared by both pictures; initially, the heart appears weak, small and weeping. At the end of the study, it is large, bright, robust and integrated between mind and emotive life. I was able to let go of some of the self-imposed limitations and criticism I placed upon myself to realize a greater freedom to move, act - hence the upward movement and the bare feet.

The first body image is also quite neutral, not only through the body outline, but also through the more 'neutral' colours of green and orange. The latter painting contains a body full of pink (my gay aspect) and purple (an achievement of self-respect and dignity). The second painting makes me feel happy and fulfilled to the point that I have it hanging by the front door of our home; the first body image remains rolled up and hidden away.

In both images the face seems evident, particularly the first one. This leaves me wondering whether this is now how I see myself much of the time - a sense of 'normalcy' - this sensitivity and struggle. In the second image the face is partly hidden by the

whirlwind of how I compose the written portion of this study - I find what lay ahead, after the actual study is completed, quite daunting. The self doubt returns. This image is one that has been flashing in my mind for some time.

Interesting, to me, is the perception of how I envision my entrapment between the two images. The first image reveals my belief that I am caught by the environmental forces acting upon me, whereas the restraints I find are of my own construction as revealed in the second body image. This is a move to highlight a greater sense of personal empowerment. Recognizing that I have control of some aspects of my life is something I struggle with throughout my life as others tell me that I am bad, evil, and unnatural is a dynamic tension that wavers and ebbs depending upon the context in which I find myself.

#### Passport of Pivotal Painting

The most dramatic painting for me is the painting called, Home. Jasmine and Zinnia listened to me describe why I selected this one and they seem to understand and agree with me with regard to the importance of home - because this, too, seems to be an aspect of their immigration experience; the grounding comfort of home when the environment around is uncertain, and temporary. The concept of home, as an extension of identity, allows Orchid and me to incorporate both our identities (public and private) into one entity called home. This has allowed us to "see" ourselves reflected in our surroundings and space - and for others who enter to have a full sensual experiencing of ourselves as one - and as two separate people.

## Identity

The notion of identity is the cornerstone from which the rest of my analysis flows. Looking back at the Atkinson, Mortenson and Sue (1989) model for racial and cultural identity development I incorporated at the four components which they use to determine the level of development for all three participants. These dynamics are: the attitude toward self, attitude toward others of the same ethnicity or culture, attitude toward others of a differing ethnicity or culture, and the attitude one has toward the dominant group.

Zinnia's ethnic identity development seems to be somewhere in the third stage of this model. Zinnia has a strong sense of appreciation for her self, particularly as evidenced through her paintings which focuses upon her self image. She is improving herself through shedding those 'qualities' she feels are no longer helpful to her and has a positive and, seemingly, more inclusive image to work toward - the bohemian woman. Interestingly, counter to stage three of this development model, there appeared to be some group depreciation in that Zinnia does not want to be a part of this study if there are other Australians included. Other than this, there was little mention of other Australians, generally, though her mother, her brothers, and some friends in Australia are described. If we move to the attitude Zinnia exhibits toward others of a different minority ethnicity, Zinnia exhibits a sensitive and empathic connection toward others who are immigrants to the point that Zinnia states that her closest friends in Canada are other immigrants from a variety of backgrounds and not native-born Canadians.

Coupled with this is Zinnia's negative attitude toward native-born Canadians because of their perceived phoniness she has experienced with these people. She is not overly concerned with her depreciation of her same group members (Australians), or

dominant group members - or of any possible ethnocentric basis for judging other minority groups or immigrants. This places Zinnia somewhere within stage three, yet having elements of earlier stages as well.

Jasmine seems to be within a stage two of the ethnic identity development model. Jasmine struggles with liking and not liking aspects of herself through her childhood and her moving to Canada and losing her occupational - and therefore her societal - role. Jasmine sees this loss as something that lessens her social-worth and therefore she sees herself as also losing some of her self-esteem. Jasmine mentions that her greatest difficulty while living in Canada is with other Chinese people, from the mainland of that country, who have treated her poorly, here, to the point that she has decided to move away from the Chinese enclave she is presently living within. Jasmine's views of other minority groups never really become voiced so this remains unclear. Jasmine, though, tends to think highly of native-born Canadians (both White, and visible minority "Canadianized" groups), stating that they are friendly, and that they really look after, respect and love their older citizens. The reaction she has had to Canada was that there are too many different cultures here (the various White, Black, and Asian cultures which do not conform to the Canadian "mainstream" cultural "norms"), each with different ways of seeing the world and behaving - Jasmine finds this difficult to navigate among and through. So Jasmine is experiencing some dissonance within her identity and how this can be placed within the larger Canadian society and culture.

It is more difficult to place me within a particular stage because of my subjectivity. I place myself, roughly, within the fourth level of the development model - or "Introspection". Coupled with this introspection is an ever-present concern. I focus upon happy with myself for honest reasons (I feel strongly that it is - but why?), I wonder I am proud and happy with my diverse family of Jamaican-Canadians - despite others

telling me that because I am White, that my Jamaican heritage does not matter, my paternal Irish ancestry and Orchid's warm, human Celtic, and East Coast traditions. I am sensitive to how I see, accept, and experience those of a diverse ethnic background. I am being told that "colour-blindness" remains an impossibility so I wondered how I have come to know other ethnic minorities - particularly my own maternal family. I explore how and why I am critical of the dominant social group and how the dominant group works to maintain its control through power, hypocrisy, social construction and meaning - and as well, how the dominant group creates, or devalues, and possibly forecloses certain types and sources of knowledge. This is an area I am examining deeply, but at this point I am becoming increasingly disillusioned with what I am finding.

#### Culture Shock

When I hear Zinnia has shifted from being on a visitor's visa to becoming a landed immigrant, while recently becoming married in addition to shifting physical homes I, initially, thought that she was in a process of stage two of the culture shock model, or "Disintegration". What I find, instead, is Zinnia at a point of reintegrating her identity through our time together. She is in the process of letting go of some aspects of her home in Australia, while still exhibiting some hostility toward native-born Canadians. There is some blaming directed outside herself - that others are acting upon her and causing a sense of anger, frustration, resentment and feeling "stuck". That is until she made the move to concertededly find a job which she did in pretty "smart" fashion. Then the sense of being "stuck" began to dissipate.

Jasmine, perhaps, because her home culture is substantially different from her host culture in comparison to Zinnia's transition, continues through the stage two of "Disintegration". There seems to remain a high degree of not being valued, particularly

as a result of her greatly reduced occupational role. She has found this disorienting, as well as her struggles with religion (Christianity) seem to, further, accentuate this internally-sourced diminishing of herself. Jasmine seems confused because of the multicultural aspect of Canada and not knowing how to interact with my homosexuality. At the beginning, Jasmine was withdrawn and disoriented. By the end there was a departure from this internal self-blame to an outward focus. There is no growing anger, from Jasmine, or hostility but there is some increasing frustration. Over the months, following the study, there seems to have been an increasing reintegration of the earlier, apparently, shattered and disparate aspects of her self. This is evidenced by the postscript of Jasmine having given up living with mainland Chinese people and beginning the search of finding a home for herself outside of the Chinese enclave she has been living in for the first several months while in Canada.

My "shock" relating to culture is the coming together of Orchid's life with my own. Within two months of knowing Orchid, he has been living with me, forming a strong and committed relationship. But as Zinnia describes, we also face collisions where our worlds do not always smoothly meld. Nor is that something that I was expecting to happen - a smooth transition. We have progressed through the "tourist" or "honeymoon" stage where Orchid was still focused on home and was having a lot of fun, finding the new world here thrilling, exciting and new. He has been experiencing my world as a "first learner", finding my life quite exotic in comparison to his, while I find his equally new and different. We have passed through the feelings associated with disintegration and reintegration to, now, begin building toward a more autonomous relationship. This is about one year later. Interestingly, this seems to mirror the approximate time the literature states that one could expect to pass through the various stages of "culture shock".

As Orchid has passed through the first three stages of our transition, so have I. The bumps have been relatively few and less abrupt than I thought they might. I feel that this has to do with our attitude going into this; we knew the first year was going to be tough but we both agreed that this was forever, and that no matter what troubles come our way we will work through them together and grow from the experience as opposed to "forget the whole thing" at the slightest resistance. Over the coming months we aim, as do Zinnia and Jasmine, to become more interdependent and "authentic" within our own circumstances.

### Gender

Through the time together, as we discuss and draw from our perceptions and experiences, we find how socially constructed our identities are. Our identities are built through others for the purpose of fitting a particular cultural expectation. When this environment shifts in profound ways, people find the identity that had been built no longer fit the new environment. People call this new awareness - or the struggle with it - "culture shock" - or as Mezirow describes - a "disorienting dilemma". However, what becomes more evident is that aspects of identities become highlighted as needing a shift, but also illustrates how the home culture has also used the creation of one's identity as a means to control and oppress. The key dynamic, although there were others, which highlights this notion is how different societies have created gender and how this translates into a system of control.

For Zinnia, growing up, she relies upon a female social reference group which "controlled" her accessing of males because this social network approved who would be allowed to make contact with members. Zinnia mentions that she feels sorry for some of the males because, presumably, of the treatment these people receive. Feminists may see

this as taking control away from men and giving it back to women, however, the power of the group can be overwhelming as to become oppressive for individual members - of which many societies are also seen as being guilty. When Zinnia left Australia and travelled to South America she felt free to explore her gender with men and states this was a terrific growth period for her self, without the influence of her female reference group. After this time in South America, Zinnia is able to be alive and free to enter into a meaningful and lasting relationship with Aster on her own terms without the "interference" of her adolescent female group. That is not to say that the female cohort is a singular negative influence upon Zinnia, the group seems to have been able to help Zinnia understand those qualities in people which she most values through discussion with other female group members. Zinnia misses close female friends, however and this is, in part, why she and Jasmine have become good friends. Zinnia has tried to connect with Canadian women, here, but as her drawing describes, she experiences this as a collision of phoniness she had experiences.

Jasmine faces the limits strictly placed upon her womanhood in Taiwan, by experiencing the relative freedom of women in Canada. Growing up, as Jasmine relates to us, in Taiwan there are repeated instances when she is told she, as a female, is identified as being weak, and of a lesser value to her society. Having one brother and three females in her family the boy becomes the most important sibling because the son is seen as the only opportunity to perpetuate the family name - and therefore their honour. Jasmine relates a story where she is beaten with a hairbrush by her mother because her brother falls down one day, as a child, and bruises himself. She is punished, significantly by her mother, because her brother is the only male heir in the family and her role, as a female, is to serve her brother. I say significantly that it is her mother doing the beating because it shows the degree to which women within the Taiwan society have



internalized the devaluation of women. Another incident relates through the woman-as-flower metaphor is through an art work she has painted. Growing up, she has been taught that females are to look pretty, be weak and servile toward men. She is taught to serve all the needs of her future husband. Also, as a woman and of Asian ethnicity, she has been taught not to be demonstrative when showing love to another such as public kissing, snuggling, or hugging on a park bench - as depicted in her painting, Park Kiss. This behaviour within her home culture is not considered polite or decorous. Arriving in Canada, Jasmine has been struck with the lack of her perceived relative freedom when held in relief against the relative independence of Canadian women. She states she wishes she could be publicly affectionate with a lover but she feels she can never because her cultural training holds her back. Early on, Jasmine repeatedly states that she likes her independence and freedom because it made her life simpler. As we progress and we discuss Zinnia and Aster, and Orchid and me, Jasmine begins to focus more on developing a relationship with someone - I presume not with a Taiwanese person's culture but someone with a more Canadian aspect. Some feminist psychological literature points out that women from some Asian cultures do not prefer the aggressive individualistic men who are more common in the West (Chia, Allred, & Jerzak, 1997). These women prefer the softer, gentler, cultivated male interested in the arts, and who possess a greater sense of themselves, in their own terms (Chia, Allred, & Jerzak, 1997). I feel that culture is not as important for Jasmine, however, a male with the qualities just mentioned, regardless of culture, is who Jasmine may prefer. Despite both Zinnia and Jasmine being from different cultures, they both have experiences of oppression; perhaps with Jasmine's gender creation being more explicit than Zinnia's genderized upbringing.

My upbringing is more androgynous in nature, from my perception, being neither overly feminine nor masculine. On a farm, both, men and women worked side by side

performing the same work. However, women and children tended to perform the housework as well while men, normally, did the daily barn chores. I worked the fields as young as nine years old and then became my mother's right hand person helping with cooking, sharing in the cleaning, and was her "stand in" when she was busy helping out in the community or on the farm. I participated in Boy Scouts, Air Cadets, theatre, the high school band and was forever camping out of doors so one might have thought that I was some sort of rugged, "masculine", individualist - but I, rarely, saw myself as "typically male". I learned more from my mother and idealized her while my brothers focused upon my father. My father, for many of my years, while I was growing up, was largely absent. We lived about an hour outside of Toronto, so my father commuted from that city to the farm most weekends and holidays. The rest of the time it was my mother raising four sons on a farm. I just assumed I was "masculine" - just that I did not like competition, sports, or athletics, preferring community events, socializing with friends, the arts and that sort of thing. I enjoy the company of women, cooking, cooperation, and working within a group. I always consider my friends as important as my family because I see as much or more of them than my family at times, particularly in the last few years.

### Sexuality

The introduction of my being gay was something that had to be pondered prior to the study commencing. My past experience with people and the disclosure of my sexuality, seems to always raise a strong reaction - either negative or positive. One's sexuality does seem to be one of those areas of a person's identities that still, generally, raises an immediate reaction. This also holds true within this study as well.

When Jasmine finds out that I am gay, through my mentioning "my partner", her response is that "partner" was a "code" word for gay. This is raised when she says she

has come across this in Richmond, where she lives, when someone else had used this word and it ended up that the speaker was also gay. Jasmine has linked this concept of partner to being gay - presumably that if a couple is heterosexually oriented that they will use the words "spouse", "husband," and "wife", for example. The word "partner" seems to have taken the gender and sexual orientation out - to the point of genericizing it, or as Jasmine suggests, codifying it through hiding the true nature of the relationship.

Jasmine seems to be quite confused about homosexuality, in that she just does have any experience with someone who is gay - or lesbian. Her comment that she is confused with regard to how to address me - either as a man or a woman surprised me. But it does seem to be a legitimate concern for Jasmine. Jasmine seems to have a dichotomized vision of the sexual world. Female sexuality is created to satiate the male appetite and to produce children to ensure the family name and line continues. Anything in between this just does not seem to be possible or considered. Jasmine is fascinated with my world; to try to understand it - she is also quite taken with Orchid as well, when we all celebrate together.

Jasmine asks the seemingly common question of "well, haven't you been with a woman before? Perhaps that was all that was missing?" This demonstrates the lack of understanding that sexual orientation is not something that one opts in and out of. This aspect of finding a "good" woman is the answer, seems to be a commonly thought of question I have been asked over my life. I ask Jasmine if she has ever been with a woman in her life? She, then, begins to understand that it is not quite as simple as that. I did raise the notion of bisexuality, however, Jasmine could not understand that. She said that people were heterosexual and perhaps homosexual - but to "switch" back and forth between men and women, just is not possible.

Jasmine has also said that the topic of sex and sexuality are difficult to talk about because these are usually private matters spoken quietly and not publicly - and between a man and a woman. The freedom to speak, though, seems to be comfortable for Jasmine.

Jasmine wants to know who is the man and the wife - again drawing from what she could relate to in her dichotomized world - and I said that neither, Orchid nor I, "played" a particular role. We - Orchid and I - had strengths and weaknesses and our relationship draw upon the strengths, while we help each other work through the weaknesses.

Zinnia, when she discovers my homosexuality, completely opens up. For the first three sessions there is a coolness toward me, in that she - and Jasmine - does not know how to understand me. My being male is a problem, particularly a male working so closely with two women. However, when my sexuality is disclosed, it is a complete removal of suspicion. Shortly after Zinnia found out, we were setting up the room for the painting session and she ran over to me and does a "body-slam" into me, laughing as she does it. It is almost like a sign to say that she thought I am okay and things are safe now.

Zinnia, has obviously experienced gay men (I'm not sure about her experience with lesbians, or bi-sexual people) and seems to have formed some stereotypes around the notion of gay men. She says that gay men are safe to work with, that they are usually carefree and have great senses of humour. Later I find out that this humour seems to stem from shows like television shows like Dame Edna and Absolutely Fabulous, - where camp is evident. Zinnia seems to work with these stereotypes, so when she encounters gay men different from this she is frustrated. This is evidenced when she begins to work with a group of gay men here in Vancouver and she finds them difficult to work with

because they are serious, up-tight and close knit, blocking her from their circle. When I discuss that there are as many different types of homosexual people as there are heterosexual people, it seems to take Zinnia back a little.

And when she meets Orchid and I, together, she is interested in finding out more about us. There is a keen interest to find out about how we met, what we do - and watches us interact. During one moment Zinnia calls Orchid and I "fags". I can see Orchid become a little uncomfortable - just as it took me aback as well. I, then, realize that Zinnia is using the word just as we use the word "gay". The same word but with different meanings. When Zinnia discovers what "fag" means here she apologizes. I say there is no need to apologize it is that we didnot understand the meaning she is sending the word with. Zinnia, however, is most comfortable when our discussion reverts back to heterosexual topics.

For me, being raised as a heterosexual within society and my family, yet living as a gay man I find it reasonably easy to traverse back and forth between the heterosexual discussions and the world of being a gay man. As I listen to Jasmine and Zinnia's stories, I continually find myself "translating" their narratives into more "gay" frames of reference and what these would mean for Orchid and me. Yet, I can fully "understand" the heterosexuality with which Zinnia and Jasmine speak. I don't believe Jasmine and Zinnia fully understand the homosexuality with which I hear and interpret. I listen to Zinnia ask me if I am going to have children because I would make a good father. As I hear this I think of all the problems that that will entail and the assumptions the question is supported by. I am thinking about the strong debates still raging over whether gay men should be able to raise children or not - and all of that - it just seems to me to be much more complicated. It still remains within this society that much is blocked for gay men - or lesbians - to undertake. It is also during this time that the Surrey School

Board book banning court case has been going on with regard to three innocuous books introduced into kindergartens. These books show families with two dads or two moms and, yet, the school board (that arbiter of society's mainstream status quo) does not want these books introduced because, as the school board's lawyer states during the court case, these would mark the end of heterosexuality as it was known today. I just thought even though having children might be attractive, it would be tough on any children we would have - not because of us - but because of society's meaning attached to the homosexually based family unit. In this instance it is toughest on the children, and less so upon us. It is nice to hear from Zinnia, though, because the idea of children has an appeal.

### Age

The issue of age for the group seems not to be not of an overly great concern for its members. It is interesting to note that Zinnia is in her late twenties, Jasmine is in her mid forties, and I am in my late thirties. There is a spread of almost twenty years among the three of us, yet we are able to communicate on such a profound level.

Jasmine does, in an understated way, describe herself as becoming old - even in her forties - and thought that she must begin to look toward the end of her life. In part this may have been age, however, I feel that it may have been that she remains single in her forties. There appears to be some pressure from somewhere that she is somehow not a complete woman because she is not married and raising a family. Yet, as Jasmine listens to Zinnia and me describe our relationships - I feel that she may have seen that there is another attribute a relationship brings with it and that is love. I feel that she misses being loved by one person and that seems to turn her head toward the notion of a relationship once again near the end of our time together. Jasmine seems to see herself in

the "autumn" of her life and she is beginning to see, both, the past from whence she comes but, perhaps, she also has begun to see the first glimpses of an approaching winter.

Zinnia is much in the summer of her life with her recently married husband and her intense love for Aster. She speaks of having children and raising a family. Zinnia is much forward looking - although her gaze is not so much toward winter - even though she did describe the film she saw from Japan about being able to die with dignity. That image arose through her exploration of spirituality and the juxtaposition of death with life. Zinnia's life is much on the more near and intermediate term of going back to Australia for an extended visit, bringing her mum back with her and getting her life organized with Aster. I find Jasmine thinking more often and profoundly about her age and her life reflectively than I find Zinnia. Zinnia is busy living the years of life Jasmine was reflecting upon.

I find myself, interestingly, more in line with Jasmine than with Zinnia. There are fewer years between Jasmine and myself than between Zinnia and me. I am thinking about my evolving relationship with Orchid, our future plans, dreams, and what we wanted to accomplish, however, I am also thinking as Jasmine was with regard to the winter.

Perhaps it has to do with the passing away of my father and the advancing years of my mother (who is the youngest among her siblings) and her siblings. I have watched many friends die of AIDS and I have witnessed the parents of friends pass away. As my own years crest toward my fortieth year I have found myself begin to wonder what the second half of my life will bring. The second half. The last half. The one containing winter. I find myself more in sympathy with Jasmine than with Zinnia, although I

remember my twenties, my summer time as I find myself sort of at the closing days of summer. I still feel the bright sunshine and the warmth but there is something in the air that tells me autumn is near through the quicker cooling off in the afternoons, the colder evenings and the shortening days tell me that autumn has begun settling in, in subtle ways.

### Religion/Spirituality

This area seems to be an area that has affected both Zinnia and Jasmine in different ways. For Zinnia, spirituality - instead of organized religion - seems to be something that she has not given thought to for some time. She speaks of her past when she was dating a male who was religious and who was trying to "convert" Zinnia into a more religious outlook. Zinnia relates that she was feeling "trapped" and overwhelmed by this religion. She liked the male but did not like having organized religion pushed at her in such a hard manner, because of organized religion, she decides to end the relationship. She prefers, now, to see life in terms of energies and spirituality. Zinnia speaks a lot about feminine energy but does not speak of a spirituality until the topic was raised in one of the sessions. It seems to be through this reflecting upon spirituality that she moves through to the image of her idealized version of herself - the Bohemian Woman who is a spiritual being. This spirituality is seen as being at peace with the world and having a contented groundedness which Zinnia is focused upon achieving. Becoming more spiritual has become a goal for Zinnia.

Jasmine, is focused upon religion - in this case Christianity (Mormon). I am watching the oppression of religion through Jasmine as she is displaying remorse at not having been baptized and therefore not being a complete and whole person. This sense of being incomplete heightens the sense of the "shadow" in herself as not being a whole



person. She wants to be a whole person and at first thought that attending church is the best way of reintegrating herself into one. The church she is attending at the first was a Mormon church. The Mormon church members visit her and tell Jasmine that she must become a member of their church. She is feeling so much tension because she is not sure and this becomes a focus about half way through the sessions. Through our discussions with regard to the church and spirituality, Jasmine struggles for many days. In the end she decides not to attend the Mormon church any longer because the members are putting a lot of pressure on her. She decides that she needs to decide what is best for her. Once she decides that she is not going to be a member of this church she says that she feels much better, and more free. Perhaps, that is a sign that the decision is a right for her.

Long ago I have stopped believing in organized religion. I have found it, in my experience, so riddled with authoritarianism, heterosexism, prejudice, paternalism that is oppressive and hypocritical. I have seen family members and people known and strangers to me become blind followers to the bible and interpret all manner of meanings into the writings of this book - all to reinforce their biases and prejudices in the "name of the Lord". My feeling on organized religion is that it does not matter how many times one goes to church or how well one knows the Koran, bible, or whatever text. Everything matters in how one lives their lives, how they treat, work with, and help others. I do not see that as organized religion - I see that as being spiritual. Spirituality is more a personal, private belief as opposed to the organized variety built upon money, power, and hypocrisy. My view of organized religion is that it is tainted and fosters hate - not unlike the deep hatred of other organized groups - for example "the Church's, Temple's, or Synagogue's" attitudes toward women as priests, toward homosexuals, bisexuals, and transgendered, toward abortion and birth control, among other issues - and this same

body turns around and espouses a belief of being merciful and treating others the way one would like to be treated in turn. No, I have found organized religion harmful and oppressive in many ways - and just not relevant. Spirituality and having a compassionate connectedness to others regardless of who they are is the ideal to which I continue to strive. In the discussion around organized religion I remain silent until it comes time to show my painting. I explain my painting in terms of my experience and my belief as a person who happens to be gay. I am sensitive not to try to dissuade Jasmine but to explain to her and Zinnia my beliefs. As did Zinnia for Jasmine and I. Jasmine took all this in and listen but she does not feel that we are trying to dissuade her from her search within religion. However, hearing our beliefs allows her to place her beliefs alongside - or in opposition - to evaluate our beliefs in relation to her own. In some way, through all of this, Jasmine realizes some level of freedom, in terms that were hers alone.

### Work

Just as we are three different people in most other areas, so it is with work as well. Zinnia has gone from being unemployed to becoming employed with an organization that she loves to work with. Work seems to give Zinnia a focus as well. Although there are some rough patches at the beginning because she can not quite figure out her coworkers, she ultimately likes the work. Because it is a new firm opening up Zinnia is allowed to put her own imprint upon what she is doing and makes a personal mark for herself within the organization. Her painting allows her to energize herself to find work by the end of our sessions - which she handily achieves. For Zinnia, work does not translate into money, but in being challenging and creative, as well as involving socializing with people. If these latter aspects are present she is happiest. What seems to get Zinnia looking for work faster than anything is when the job becomes "boring". As

soon as the challenge, the dynamics, and the creativity are gone - so is she. I do not get the sense that work, for Zinnia, translates into an identity for her to any large degree. Work, for Zinnia, is a necessary evil to achieve other ends; I get the sense that if Zinnia does not have to work she will not; she will, however, continue being involved in creative projects of her own making.

Jasmine has lost a significant aspect of her identity because of her lost level of work responsibilities. In Taiwan, she was an editor while in Canada she is a freelance reporter and worked in a mall for minimum wage - after she is required to work for free for a month or more. This shift in occupation role seems to have shifted her sense of identity - and diminishes her self concept. To some degree Jasmine is the opposite of Zinnia. Jasmine likes to work hard and be recognized for her hard work - because she invests in her identity through her work. I do not get the sense, however, that Jasmine works for the money and the status, however, she works because it is closely tied to her identity. Through the group, Jasmine has seen that working is not necessary to fix her identity. As part of the postscript Jasmine relates how she does not take a job in Taiwan because she prefers it here in Canada. Money does figure into her rejecting the job in Taiwan - but that is tied to travelling and relocation expenses that the company is not prepared to pay to Jasmine. It appears that Jasmine has her eyes set on Canada and working through some tough times ahead to make it here, in her terms of success. However, her sense of identity seems to be gradually divorcing itself from what she does for a living.

I, too, was once one of those people who had their position inextricably tied to their sense of themselves. I worked on Bay Street in Toronto in the heart of the financial district where money and status were what ruled that area during the 1980's. However, when I unexpectedly lost my job I went through a period of real turmoil as I tried salvage

my old identity after the job loss. I found it beyond my grasp and for a while felt that I was an utter failure because I could not reach my identity "out there". What is hardest are the friends I had who continued to work in the area and who were rich and had their status, whereas everything I knew was gone.

Moving to British Columbia to a physically new area where I knew no one I thought would allow me a fresh start, however, I was not prepared for the outright rejection of my applications here. And then to follow that by being laid off from two organizations in three or four years was just too much. I have, over the past two years, turned to self and contract employment and wish I had done it sooner. It gives me back control to my life in such a profound way; work has to fit into my life and not the other way around. I can take on what work I wish and can "fire" those people who do not fit into who I am. For the first time in a long time I feel completely autonomous and free to just be and become. There is a rough thumbnail sketch which describes central Canada's work ethic with that of the west coast: People in Toronto/Ottawa/Montreal tend to live to work whereas people on the west coast tend to work to live. In my experience that is true. Work has become incidental and marginal in my life - and I have achieved the most success in my life as a result because my personal life and my relationship are at their strongest since I can remember. Success to me does not mean money or status. Success is measured in happiness found in me as a person and my personal health - not my financial wealth. Focusing upon money and work as keys to success, in my experience, only brings blindness, emptiness, and, ultimately, unhappiness.

### Ethnicity

Through this group ethnicity does not play a evident role. We do not speak of ethnicity because it does not seem relevant. Jasmine speaks rarely about her ethnicity

except as how she feels she is hurt by mainland Chinese people in relation to her being a Taiwanese person. The “racism” seems to be intracultural as opposed to being transcultural. With regard to racism, Jasmine does not feel as though she is being victimized because of her “race”, although in her postscript she does mention that “race” may become an issue at some later point as she moves about through the larger society.

Ethnicity is not an issue for Zinnia. That is not to say that Zinnia, Jasmine, nor myself do not contain racism. Racism, in part, is how someone else witnesses another’s words or actions. In this regard, we all contain racism. When I discuss my maternal relatives being Jamaican, for the first time in a long time neither Zinnia nor Jasmine said the inane such as “well, you don’t even look Black”. They simply respected my background and asked me about being of Jamaican heritage. They were interested, but not interested in judging. For me, that was one of the most validating experiences I have had for a long time. We shared our cultural heritage with one another and wanted to know more about one another so continued sharing stories in some personal ways which helped both validate who we are and our backgrounds - and taught us, that there is a possibility that colour does not need to play an overwhelming role in crossing cultures in order to better understand.

### Closing Word

By way of closing, and summarizing, I thought I would do this in terms of systems of oppression. Oppression renders all of us powerless to act autonomously. There are many sources of oppression which affect our identities. As seen above, how one’s gender is learned and taught can be, both empowering and disempowering. Jasmine was taught to be servile and “weak” and “fragile” to serve only men’s needs. This greatly restricted Jasmine’s ability to be who she wished autonomously. For Zinnia,

although it appears that she was given freedom to act through her female cohort group in Australia, there were dynamics which could be restrictive in how she acted. The group "told" Zinnia how to behave and "told" males who were suitable and not suitable for their members. This, too, sounds of oppression and control - albeit presumably to achieve "the best" for their membership, however, it still served to be exclusionary, to some degree.

Religion, for Jasmine, seemed to be a source of oppression as well. Religion seemed to render Jasmine helpless and not being able to act freely and with autonomy. She was being told what to do, even if it does not feel right for her. For Zinnia, she seemed to be free-floating a little bit, but when she developed a greater sense of her spirituality this seemed to create in her some direction and greater freedom to move toward her ideal.

With, both Jasmine and Zinnia, it became obvious the heterosexist vision they viewed the world within. There seemed to be stereotypical experience with regard to gay men as far as Zinnia could imagine. Jasmine had no experience with regard to homosexuality; this could be the extent to which her home culture oppresses the notion of gayness in people within Taiwan. Heterosexism is a demonstration of how societies oppress knowledges with regard to sexualities beyond the parameters of heterosexuality. And being gay, I have lost much of my growing years to develop a more fully developed homosexual identity - an identity I does not begin to develop until I was almost out of my adolescence.

Work has become a source of oppression for Jasmine as well. When she arrived here she lost her ability to work at the same job type she worked at in Taiwan, and lost her ability to earn the same pay as in her home country. To add to this, Jasmine, was put

in a position where she had to work for free for over a month in order to gain “Canadian” work experience. This sort of work oppression was not experienced by Zinnia. If anything, her experience with regard to work could be considered successful.

Age seemed to weigh more heavily upon Jasmine than it does on Zinnia. Jasmine has begun to notice the “autumn” of her existence. As such, she sees that perhaps she has fewer options ahead of her. Zinnia, remained in the “summer” of her life so she saw a great many opportunities ahead of her. This is marked by her beginning to develop a family - something which the wholeness of that experience still laid before her.

Something both Zinnia and Jasmine experienced, to varying degrees, was their inability to develop strong social circles with native-born Canadians. The image of being “frozen” out from friendships with native born Canadians was predominant with, both, Zinnia and Jasmine. They have had to rely upon other immigrants with which to develop strong friendships and social circles. And as each topic was raised the kaleidoscope of Jasmine’s and Zinnia’s identities continually shifted to allow for the exploration. It was like a zooming into the foreground of the topic while the other aspects faded to degree into the background. As the topic shifted so does the geography of the foreground and the background. This dynamic would be, presumably, mirrored as Zinnia and Jasmine found themselves in varied situations during their immigration experience into Canada.

This program provided a series of touchstones for Zinnia and Jasmine to reflect upon as they continue to make their way into the larger Canadian society. This knowledge, they have created for themselves, as a result of this study, allows them each the power to move in a more informed and free way will, most assuredly help them both achieve the success they wish to realize, as they have aimed, while continuing within their new home of Canada.

## *CHAPTER EIGHT*

### **PONDERING THE PROCESS OF GARDENING**

#### Reflections About Painting Reflectively

Imagine yourself in this moment being asked by someone you have never before known, ask you to paint your innermost thoughts. That is it. Pick up a brush, daube it in a colour and paint - paint something. Without never quite knowing what. Now I have heard many times from friends, people who have called me about this study say they don't know the first thing about painting.

Well, that is great! The less you know about how to paint the more likely you will gain a lot from these paint workshops. I would show you how to clean brushes, and where to put everything when you are through. The first workshop would be to just let you explore with the paint, the colours, mixing colours, thinning paint and applying the paint with things other than a brush.

Our first session is really just gaining some experience in using the paints. Art technique is not encouraged. When I read about this, it made sense (Case & Dalley, 1992). My art background was within theatre. After years of discipline through voice classes, movement classes, and studying theatre styles and genres - everything seemed to be about technique.

It seems, it is with painting as well. Art schools and training are all about technique. Methods are all about "staying within the box". To ask someone to abandon style and discipline is like telling that same person to abandon all logic and rationality. Both are about paradigms or ways of seeing and making sense of the world. Because logic and emotion are not as closely related as painting technique and abandoning painting rules (or unlearning technique) it is in many ways easier to push logic down and raise feelings and intuition up than to break through the automatic, reflexive discipline of technique.



When you pick up a paint brush for the first time - often since public school days - there is a pull and struggle about “what should look right” or wanting to make a “beautifully composed picture”. These workshops were not about that. Some did look “composed”. Others did not. So our internal “censor” becomes switched on and struggles to overtake our intuition - and we consciously try to exert our intuition instead of just letting it function and allowing it to naturally assume control within this context.

Our society and the general education/socialization we receive from a very young age espouses that knowledge is created through logical, rational thinking and reasoning is the knowledge most worth creating. The other half of our brains, the intuitive, feeling, imaginative side is taught to remain within the background as a “weaker” creator of knowledge; its creations of lesser value. How often through our public and high school lives have we been told that we have no talent - that we cannot paint - or those who were selected and placed within the arts curriculum stream were laughed at or teased because choosing arts courses was seen as “taking the easy way out” because the knowledge created was not as important as business or math - or did not lead to a career - or these days a job. Rather than break this cycle of thinking our schools seem to reinforce it (this year schools are in the process of cutting out arts courses wholesale to “cut costs”) just like our public system supports most other aspects of our societal status quo. And most of us have bought into this way of thinking. We have been trained to demand concrete, measurable proof before we believe it. Creativity and its measurement often slips between the cracks of empiricism. So if there is no tangible proof that something is - does this mean that something’s existence is any less real? How does one quantify or prove “hope”? Or of “love”? Or “luck”? Or our belief of something? Or of “creativity”? We can name these but we cannot prove their existence; they are simply abstractions that resulted through the use of conventions within our language. So it is with intuition.

As in anything, the more people gain experience of something the more comfortable they become with it. The first time we paint we feel “artificial”, “awkward”, “untalented”, or “this is silly”. But as we practice more and more these ideas fall away. We begin to understand what it is to “let go” of these ideas and our internal “censor”...and ultimately ourselves. We shut down our logic and just let the brush, hand, paint, and paper create without thinking about the finished product. We become caught up in the process. We shut off the world around us and intensely focus as we begin an internal dialogue within ourselves, then between ourselves and the paint and paper. Yet, strangely there is a sensation of feeling ourselves not in control but as bystanders, onlookers...the audience to ourselves and our creation. We lose ourselves within this conversation - in a kind of flow or rhythm of creativity.

As we learn to further let go or abandon ourselves to the process, we become more physically free and energized as we interact with the medium. At times of deep, focused concentration Jasmine and Zinnia would become pure physical energy, silent in their roaring internal conversations, thoughts and deliberations. Even after they had drained everything of themselves on one painting, they would pick up more paper and continue creating further paintings - they often did not know what they were painting or elements of what a particular painting represented. In those instances it may have been them tapping into their subconscious, on some level, to uncover material, not yet consciously known to them. Art may be the vehicle to make bring this out for them to look at and understand. The knowledge that these paintings may have more qualities represented may not reach their awareness until days, weeks, or months later because there may not be any connection to their current world - yet. As the kaleidoscope of their world - and of their identity shifts like tumblers in a combination lock the connection may “click” into place at some point in the future. I believe such was the case with one of my own paintings which I entitled Seaweed (Chapter Six). This also happened to Zinnia and Jasmine as well.

Critical to the painting process, itself, was the notion of moving from the participants' outside worlds - out there - to this more intimate, delimited space and time we called the painting workshops. In order to accomplish this an autogenics (self-talk) or visualization exercise was designed and carried out by me. At the beginning of each workshop session the two women, in a darkened room, relaxed in a comfortable position - sitting, laying down or lounging. With eyes closed they would listen to the music/soundscape I would bring and I would walk them through the relaxation exercise and slowly draw their focus into the room (See Figures 95 to 98). This allowed for a period of stillness, of reflection, and of "composing" thoughts in their minds of emotions, feelings, memories, thoughts, or other cognitions or affective inclinations related to the topic we had just been discussing within the opening hour of our time together. The basic script was the same each time, however, the ending of the script would move into the topic of our opening discussion. They may have been reflecting back in time to another place, or to the present, or toward the future and how they saw themselves at some point beyond the timeframe of the workshops.

## AUTOGENICS SCRIPT

**Voice:** To actually experience the effects of your own personal control over your lives I will, now, take you through an exercise each of you can do on your own. This can be done using cognitive therapy, self talk or autogenics. For today, I will talk you through this exercise.

To get started, scatter about the room and face a blank sheet of paper posted on the wall, make sure you are not close to any other person. **(As they do this make sure the tape recorder is ready to go).** All of you lie down on your back, close your eyes and spread your arms and legs so that you are comfortable. **(Allow a few moments to allow the group to settle, get comfortable. As they are, slowly turn the music or soundscape up to a comfortable level; this should be for background effect only. The effect should not overpower the mood. Once the room is silent except for the music/soundscape, begin slowly walking around the room. Be sure the rhythm of your voice is slow and quiet.).**

Imagine that the tension throughout your body is a liquid, your body is like a sponge fully saturated with water. **(Pause, take your time at the beginning because this is a new experience for most. Some people, through tension, can begin to laugh - allow this to happen. This is an expression of tension release. Allow time, however, for this to subside - this will indicate that they are concentrating again).** Imagine the tension is beginning to shift. The pressure is slowly moving from your toes, and ankles; it is draining from your feet slowly. This tension is now moving through your shins and your calves. Feel the pressure slowly moving. The pressure is now passing through your knees and is slowly moving through your upper legs - feel the pressure moving

**Figure 95 :** Page one of the autogenics script

completely from your legs, draining completely from your legs. Your legs now feel like lead, very heavy and limp. Your joints in your legs feel like rusty, dead hinges. They can't be moved. The tension is passing through your hips and is settling in the small of your back. This pile of tension is like a big lump sitting there. Your lower body is heavy, limp, and immovable. Now, concentrate on your fingers. Relax your hands to allow the tension to drain from your fingers, from your palms. Allow the stress to start moving up your arms toward your elbows. Feel your lower arms go completely heavy, limp, and weak. The tension is moving slowly through your elbows, up your upper arms to your shoulders. Feel the pressure gathering in your shoulders. Feel your arms go heavy and limp, absolutely no feeling at all. Now focus at the top of your head. Feel the pressure move down through your eyes, your nose, past your mouth to your chin. Allow all the tension to move to the pressure in your shoulders. **(Pause for a few seconds)**. Allow the tensions in your shoulders to move down your spine, slowly. Let this pressure join the pressure resting in the small of your back. Feel the pressure sit there.

Your arms, legs, head all are becoming heavier and heavier. Feel them sink slowly into the floor. **(Pause a few minutes)** As your arms and legs get heavier feel the tension in your lower back drain away through the hole in your back into the floor. Now, feel your body with no tension getting heavier, sinking into the floor. **(Wait a few seconds for complete sensation of heaviness to take effect)**.

To be sure that we have wrung all the tension we are going to wring our bodies a little more to get every bit of tension out. When I tell you tense only that body area I indicate. Only tense that part and leave everything else as is. To start with, tense your right thumb. Feel the joints in your thumb freeze completely. And relax. Tense your left

**Figure 96:** Page two of the autogenics script



arm. Feel your elbow and arm and hand tense right up. Hold it. And relax your arm. Tense your right leg. Hold it tight. Hold it a little longer. Relax. Tense both your legs. Flex them tight. Hold it. And relax. Flex both your arms. Flex both arms tight. And relax. Finally, flex your whole body. Feel your muscles flex and tighten completely. Hold it. Hold it. **(Pause briefly)**. And relax. **(Pause)**.

Your whole body should feel completely weightless now that all the tension is gone. Feel absolutely nothing at all. Imagine that your body is as light as a feather. Total weightlessness. Feel your body begin to lift off the floor. Feel yourself floating just above the floor. Gradually, feel yourself slowly float further off the floor. Slowly, feel yourself float higher and higher off the floor. Gradually, float closer and closer to the ceiling. Stop floating up when you are just about to touch the ceiling. Feel yourself floating at that position. **(Pause here. Let the participants feel the sensation for themselves, in silence.)** Feel your body slowly begin to float back down to the floor. Don't let your body float down too quickly. Gently, feel your body slowly float down to the floor. Slowly. When you get to just above the floor, let your body stop there. Feel yourself float just above the floor. Slowly, let your body settle on to the floor, as before. Quietly, lie there completely limp. Enjoy the peace. When you are ready, and after you hear everything I say first and I tell you to begin do the following. First just listen so that you know what to do. When you are ready, keeping your eyes closed, slowly sit up where you are. Sit there quietly and continue to relax. While you are sitting there think about yourself. Think about the theme we discussed. When you are ready open your eyes and look at the blank sheet of paper on the wall before you. Slowly get up and move toward it and the paints. Pick up a brush look at the paint and dip your brush in the colour that speaks loudest to you. Begin painting without thinking about what to paint

**Figure 97 :** Page three of the autogenics script

just let your arm and hand and brush paint whatever it wishes. Don't think about it, just let it happen. When you are ready begin.....**(Allow them to paint between 1 to 2 hours minutes. Then call them into a circle and debrief about an hour about their experiences as they processed their thinking and the final product.)**

**Figure 98:** Page four of the autogenics script

The first few sessions I led the group but then my role gradually fell away in this respect of leading them in the visualization in order to allow them to take control of the process for themselves - hence the name self-talk. I felt it was important to give the group control whenever possible. I suppose the ability or process of “giving control” to others is, in itself, a form of control. However, the group, as I saw it, allowed me that ability.

We would decide to paint outside in the surrounding park for the last several sessions. I was, somewhat, concerned about this because of the lack of separation between inside and outside. I was also concerned about them and me being able to concentrate on the painting in an environment where passers-by would stop to watch or comment upon our work.

The concentration was just as high outside as inside - and perhaps higher because of the many more potential distractions. I found that we would sit in reflection far longer before beginning to paint while outside (this might have indicated a more difficult time to concentrate but I found some of the strongest paintings came while Zinnia and Jasmine were outside.

While being outside in the park, raised the realization that they were part of a much larger world and not something artificially removed from the world outside. Even as they painted in the most public of physical spaces their acts of creation remained profoundly personal and private. Private in that only the artist knew what was being processed in their minds as they

engaged in painting. That level of privacy established a deep realization that even as their broader worlds were causing some perspective transformations, they always seemed to discover that much was in their control - painting allowed them to reclaim a sense of ownership, control - and energy. This would be dramatically illustrated by Zinnia's renewed energy in her wishing to find a job by the end of our time together - and did!

Jasmine felt the same in her painting of her hand print and her thoughts of "Just do it!" Those were reflections stemming from interaction with paint and paper and self. The act of creation can and often is a positive and powerful influence which spills over into other areas of one's life.

While we painted outside, each of us, in our own personal space, the interaction with passers-by chatting with us about "the nice colours" or "Wow -what a vivid picture", or "how long have you been painting?". All of these comments sparked a deep inner sense of connection with the humanity they were offering up on paper with the interaction with people - especially children. The art became integrated within life in a way I could never have, otherwise, achieved in the classroom, isolated from the outside wonders of children, adults, pets, and nature. So as art reflects life; life is mirrored back in art.

Because of art and painting, the sessions for our purposes, were focused more upon process than product. And the process was never-ending. The painting, as in life, can continue as long as the artist wishes to paint - whiting things out, painting over others - or extending lines of one object transforming it into another.

Each workshop, however, everyone was given a fresh piece of paper or canvas upon which to "dialogue". You, the reader, can imagine - there was a lot of internal conversing - much of which was hidden from our sight - but more, still produced for us through the materials. On



occasion one of the women would arrive at a workshop with a previously done painting in tow, in order to continue where she left off because at some point an inspiration, related to the painting had sparked more thoughts and away she would continue.

As we progressed from meeting to meeting, a trail of scattered thoughts were being left behind as we travelled. Just because each painting was completed within a specific space and time does not mean the interpretation(s) remain equally fixed. Our sessions were an intense period of reflection/creation/interpretation/reflection so that our conscious and subconscious simply could not keep up with all the activity within the sessions. There were at least 64 hours of painting involved, plus their at home, personal time of taped reflections. It was a very intense time. Additional time would be needed beyond the workshops for each person to reflect on everything that was discussed, thought about and reflected upon. As these people's circumstances changed - as the nuances of the identities shift, slide, meld, reform, and develop, so will the interpretations, and the importance of this artwork, back on to their selves. As Zinnia said, the artwork and her tape recorded interpretations shall preserve, as part of her family story and her early life in Canada, to hand down to her children. A living history. Because her children's interpretations, values, and identities shall shine upon the art and reflect back to them and give them a unique meaning all their own as well.

#### Observations Of Interactions Within the Study

Because of the highly visual nature of this study I have decided to present my reflections on the series of workshops, which comprise the study, through a series of Key Interaction Diagrams (see Figures 103 to 116). These key interaction diagrams highlight some of the more important issues, thoughts, and processes that arose as a result of our discourse, reflections, and paintings. I decided to put these diagrams here as opposed to the preceding chapter because I felt

the words, as found within the workshops should be kept separate - away from words of interpretation - to let the words and pictures which cascaded within the study to wash over you, the reader, as they did me.

The following diagrams are a brief synopsis of the notes taken, the doodles and jottings as I progressed from workshop to workshop. It may be helpful to refer back to the previous chapters to read the reflections within the study with the actual words and pictures of the study. There may be discrepancies between dates as they appear in this chapter and those found in the Chapter Six. The reason for the dates not always matching is the time lag between when the pictures were done and when the interpretations by the artist on the art work was carried out. Sometimes the lag was a couple of days; other times it may have been over a week. So, the exact dates were not always remembered by the artist. The reason for the time lag was for me to take the art home as soon as it was completed to "archive" them; that is, to take pictures of each piece of work and date them before returning them to the appropriate artist. This also allows some reflective time for the artist between the time the art was done and when it is interpreted.

There was a gap of time near the end of the study, between March 20 and March 30. This was because of Zinnia landing her "dream" job part way through. Because of her work schedule we had to accommodate the time she needed to get oriented at work, but, we kept in constant touch to make sure the interest remained. Jasmine was anxious that the study would stop because she was getting so much out of it. We kept in touch by telephone and when we were able, the workshops picked up again. When they did I noticed a measured drop in Zinnia's energy and interest. It was as though the last piece of the puzzle fell into place and the time together was no longer needed. Jasmine's energy remained quite high and seemed to continue at an intense level. I suspect that Zinnia's success fueled Jasmine in her thoughts toward her own future. The break seemed to be an interesting time for Zinnia. If we had continued without the break I suspect that

Zinnia would have remained much more focused upon our work, along with Jasmine. Jasmine has taken Zinnia's lead and is making some remarkable changes in her life as well (Chapter Six). But for now, have a look at how this study unfolded, through my own reflections....

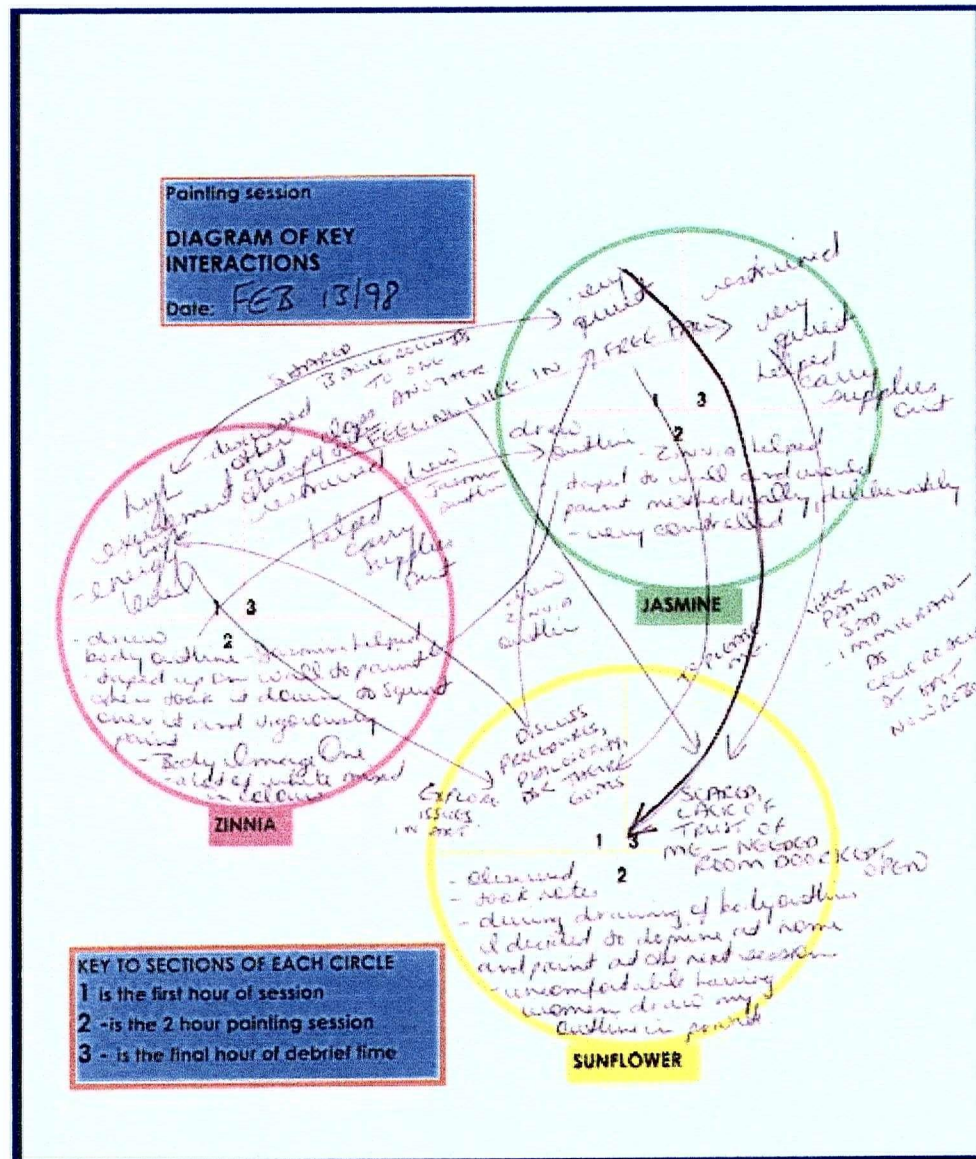


Figure 99: Key Interactions Diagram, February 13/98

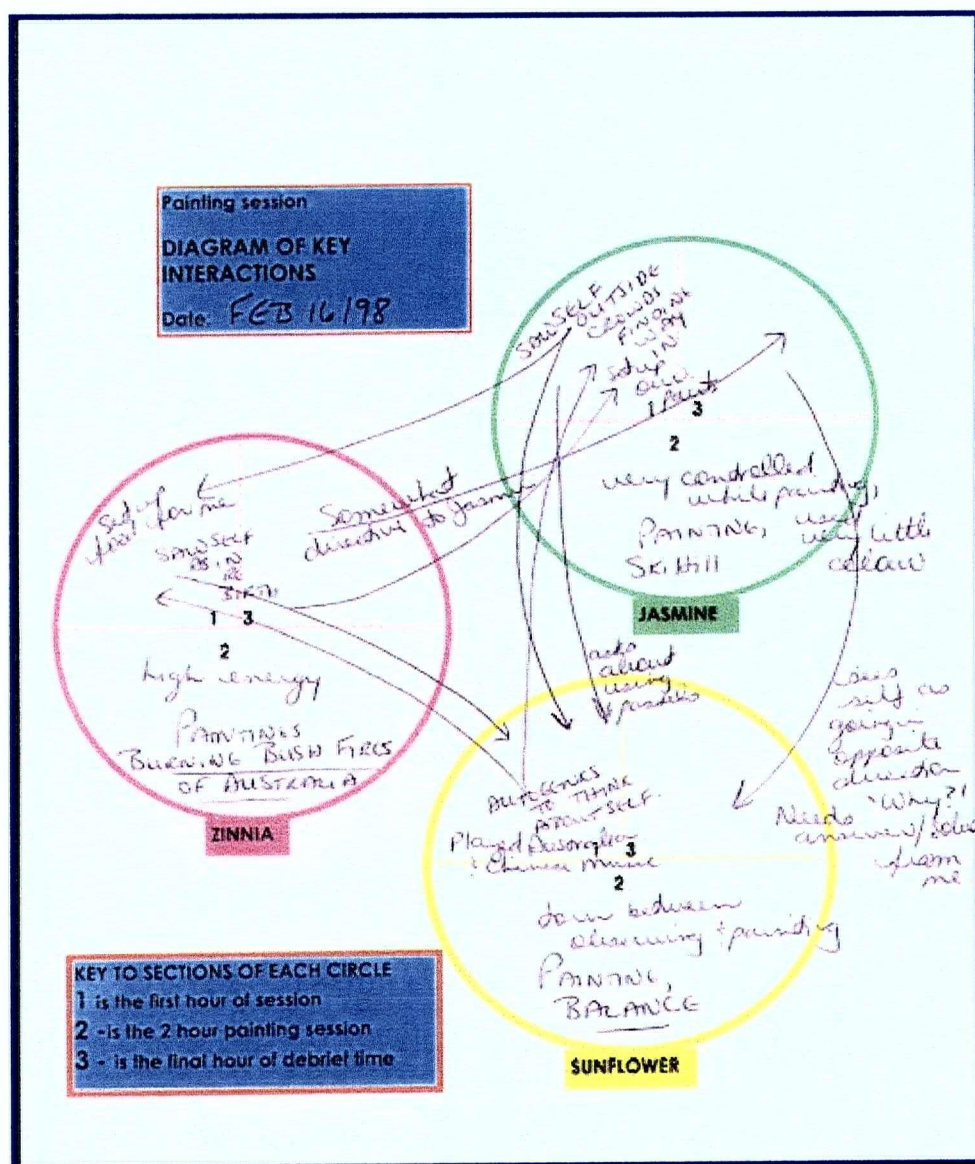
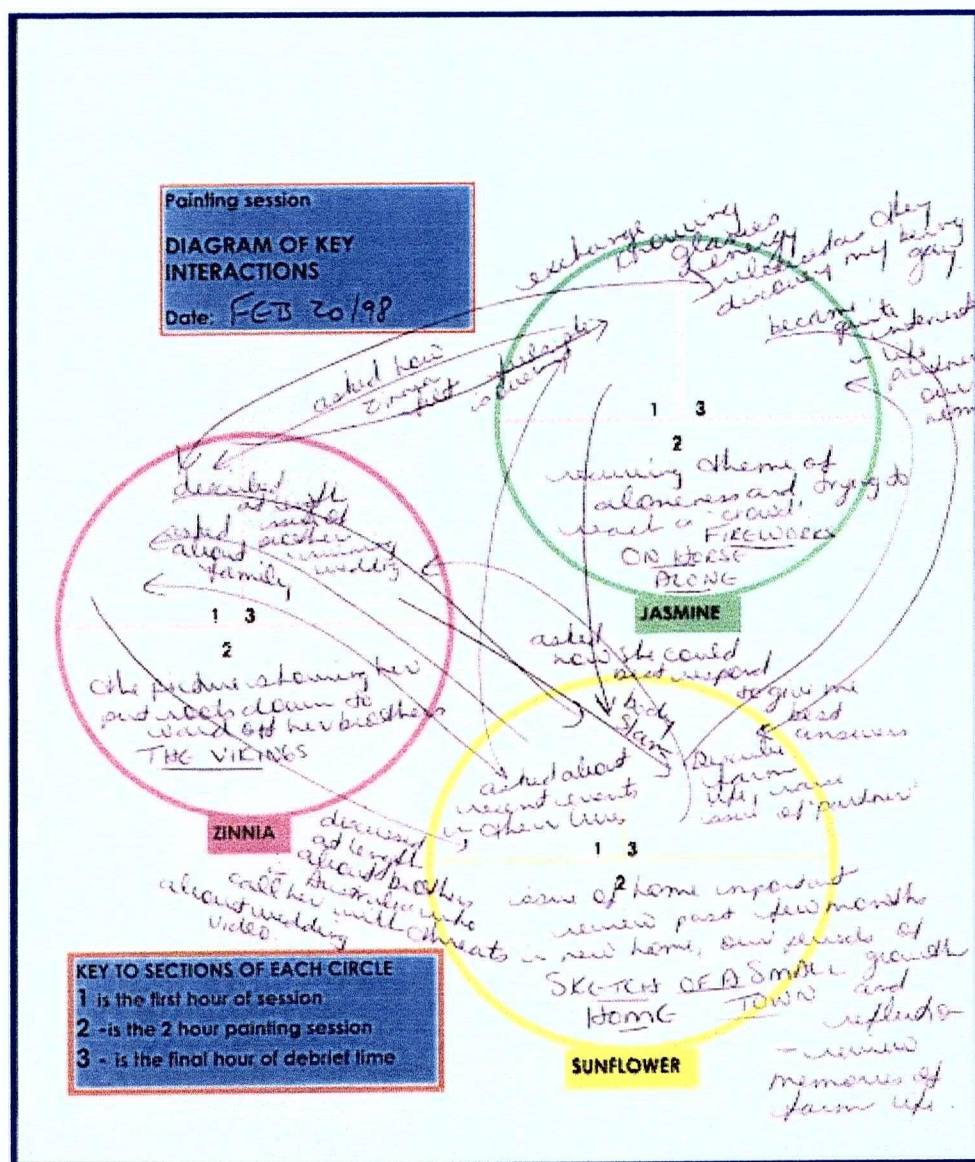


Figure 100: Key Interactions Diagram, February 16/98



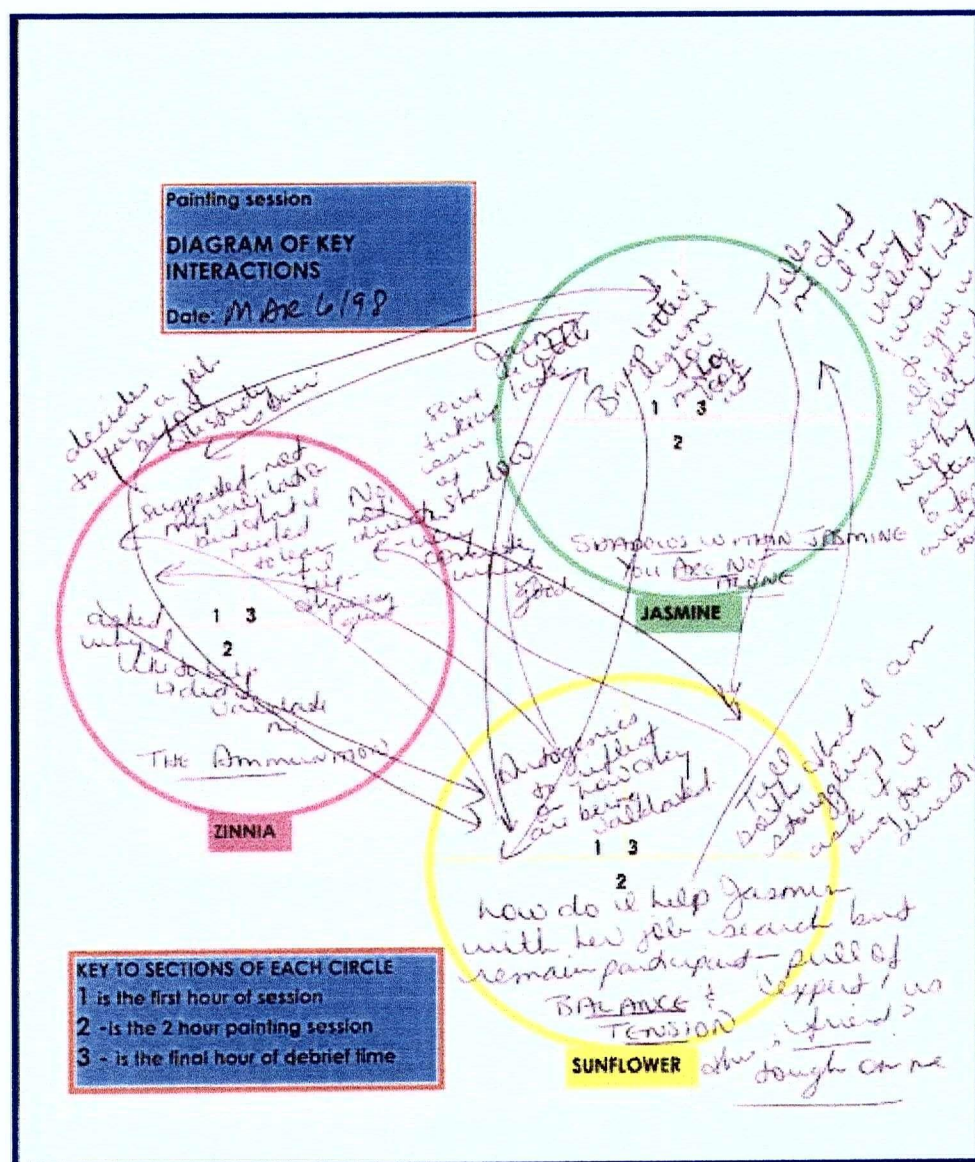


**Figure 101: Key Interactions Diagram, February 20/98**



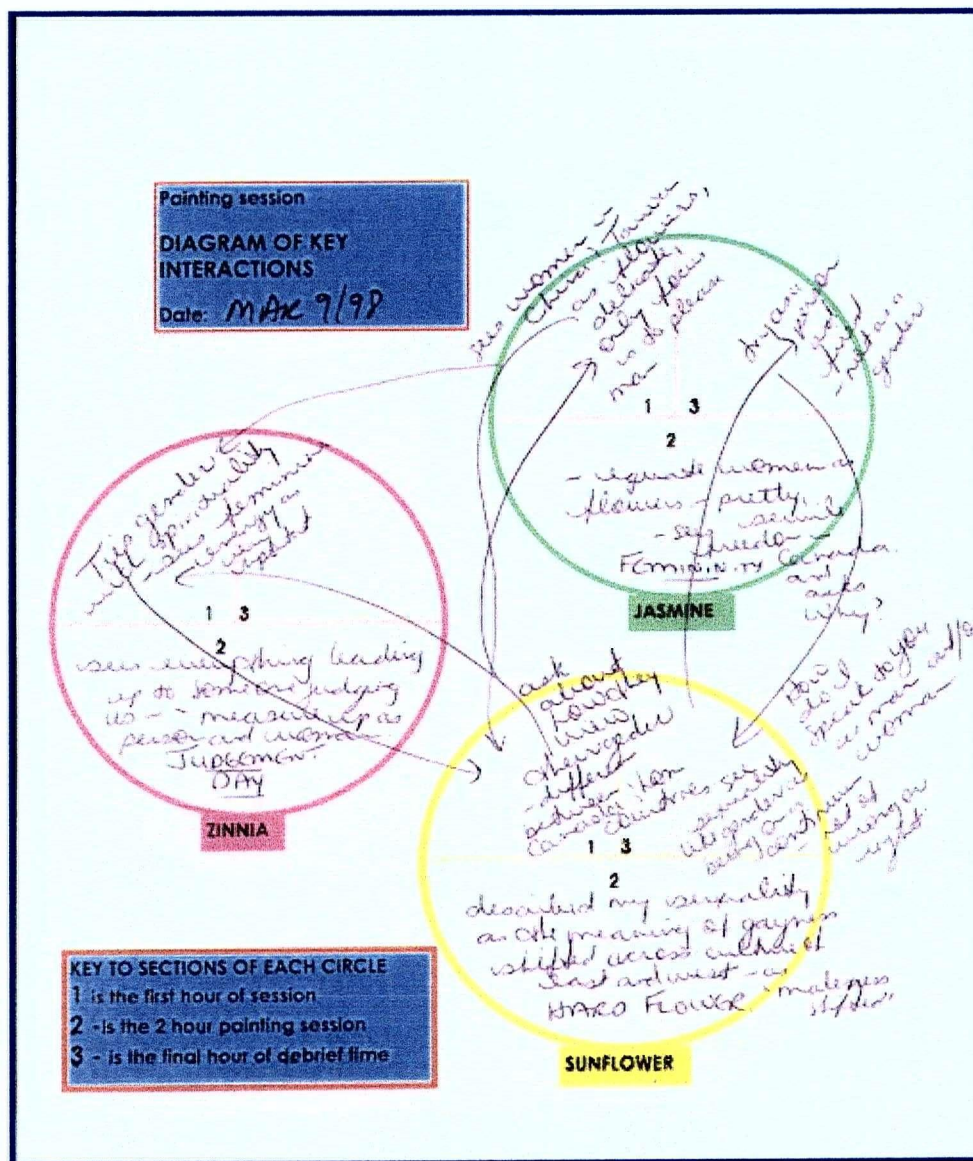






**Figure 104: Key Interactions Diagram, March 6/98**





**Figure 105: Key Interactions Diagram, March 9/98**

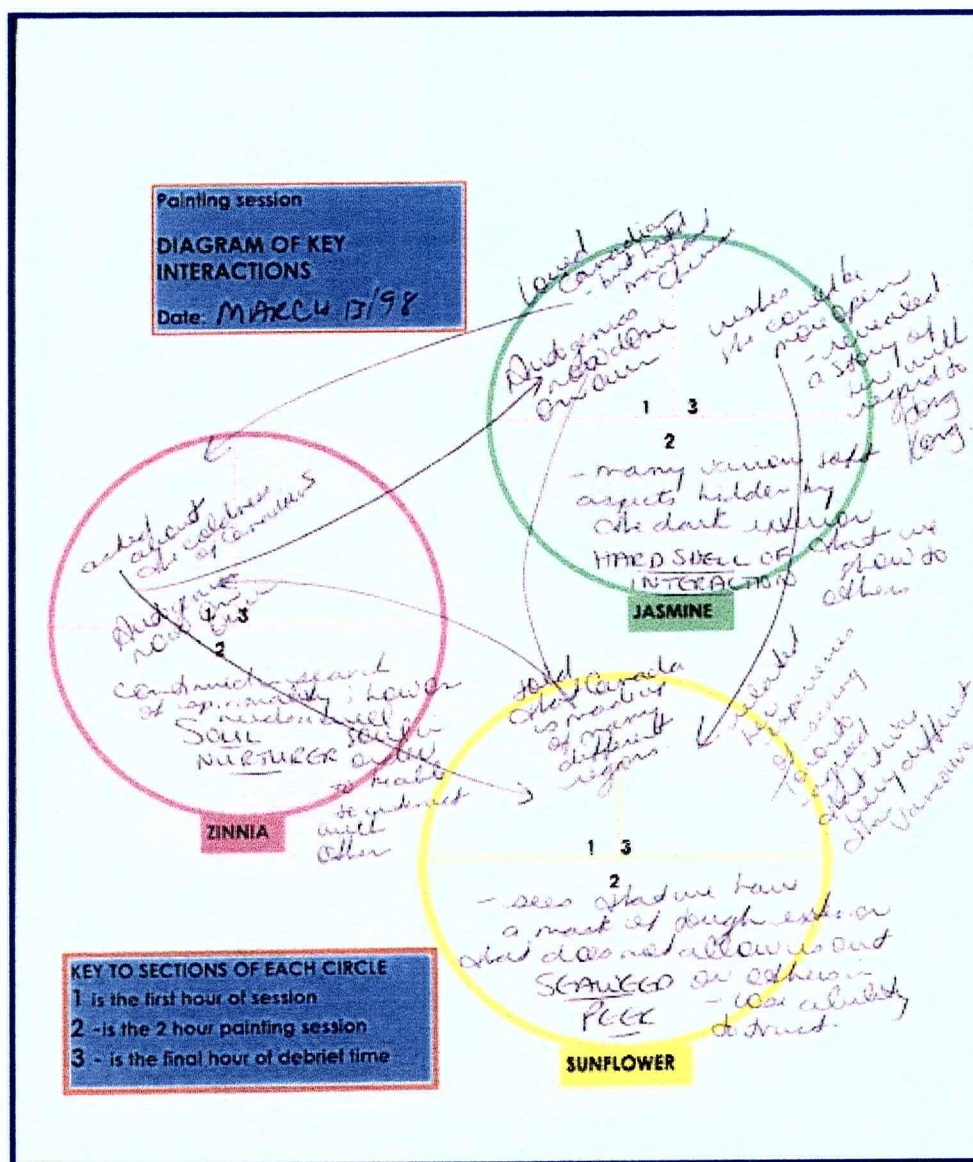


Figure 106: Key Interactions Diagram, March 13/98

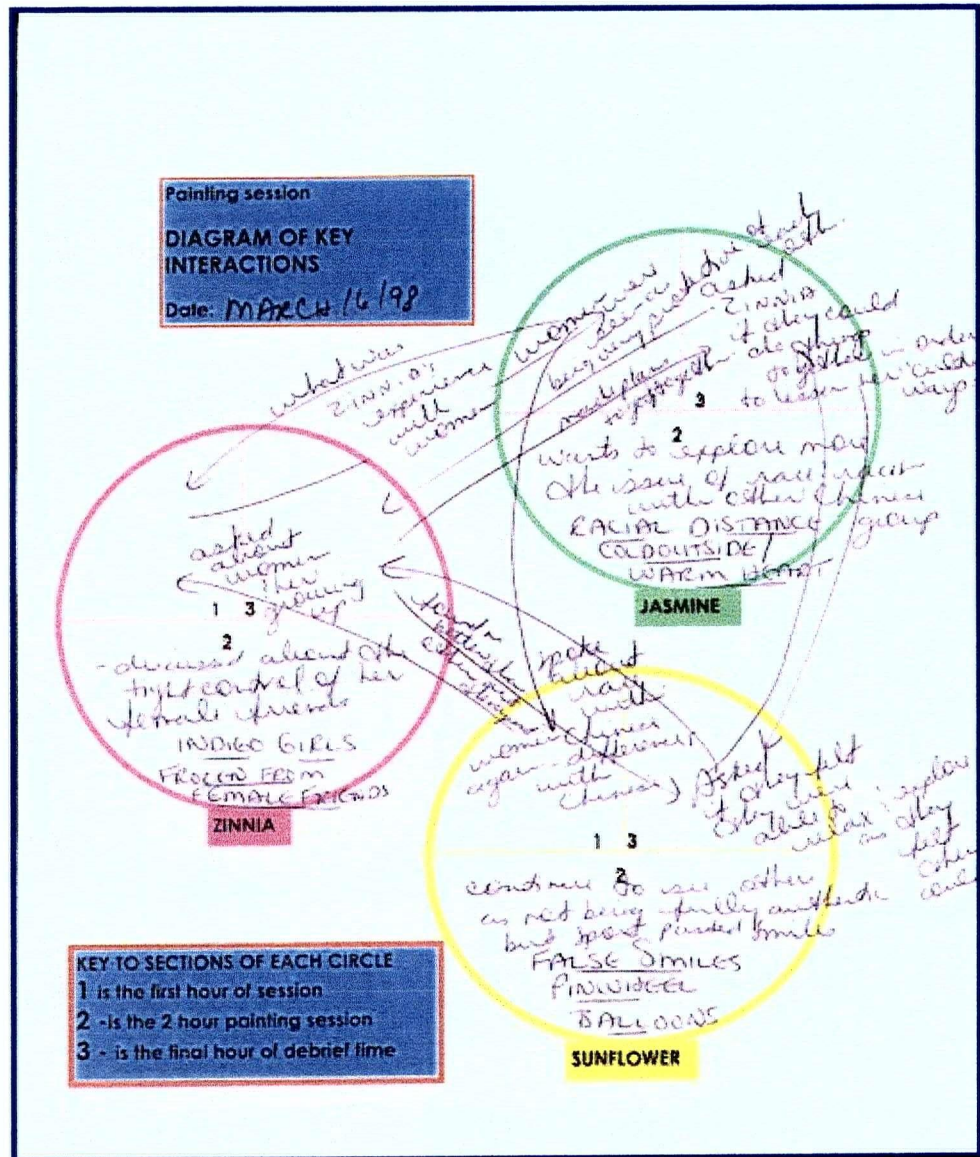
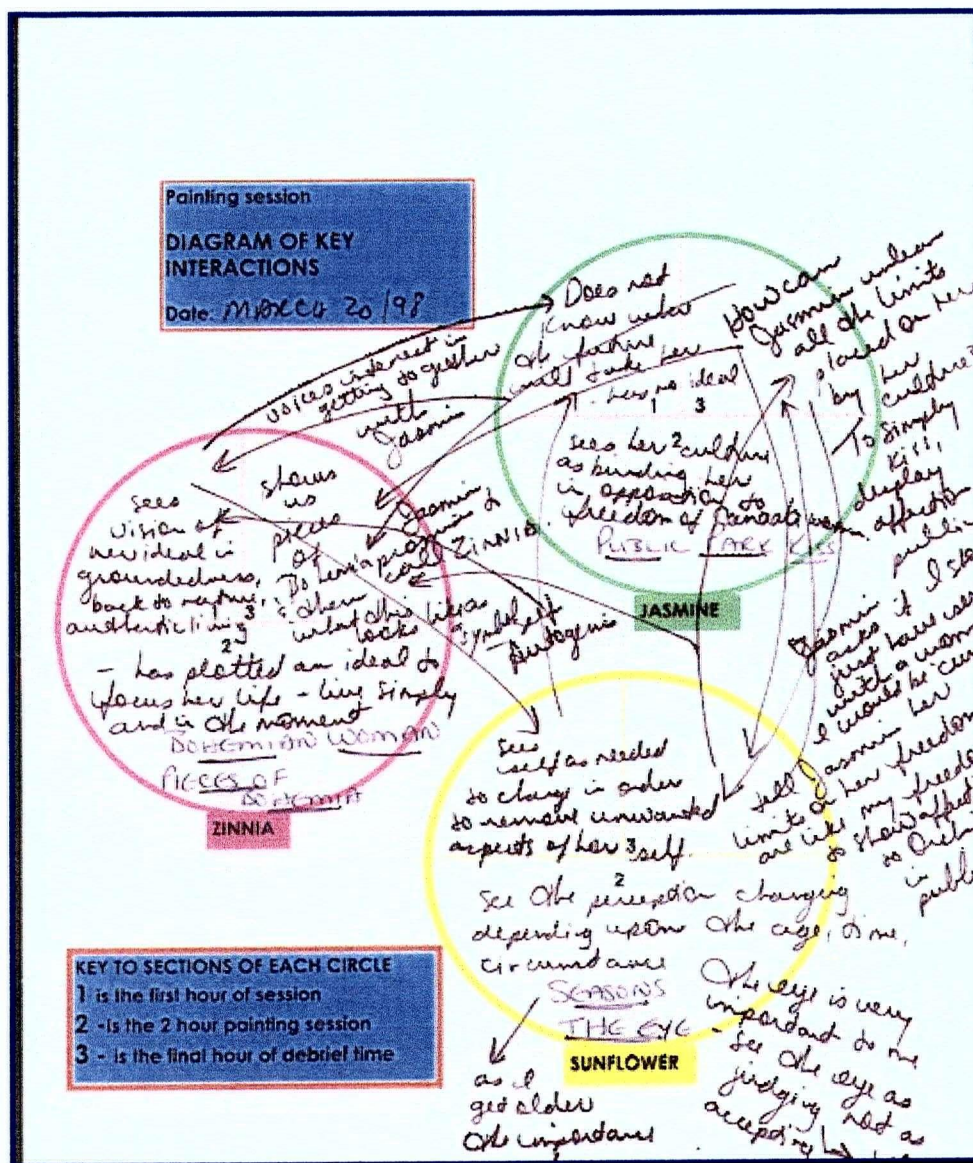


Figure 107: Key Interactions Diagram, March 16/98





**Figure 108: Key Interactions Diagram, March 20/98**

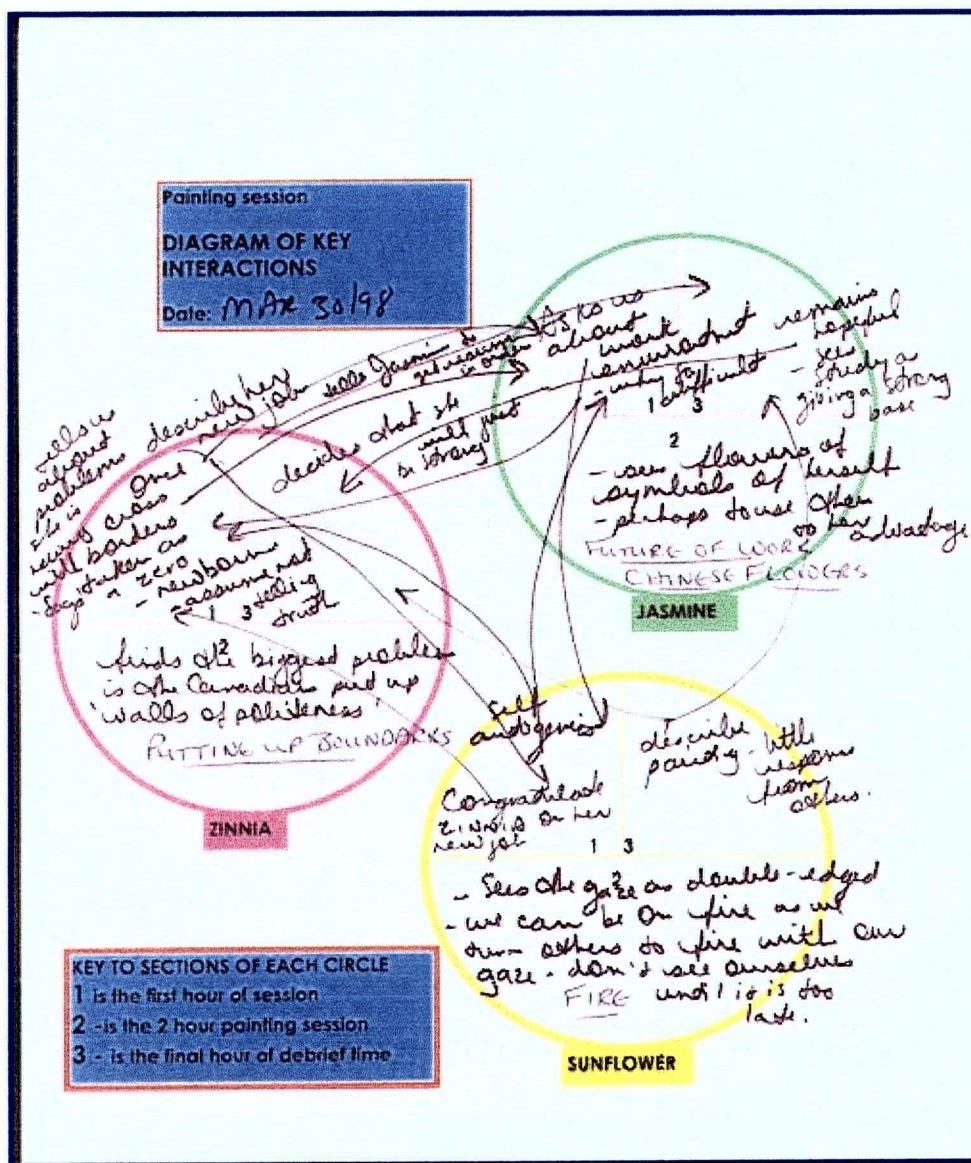


Figure 109: Key Interactions Diagram, March 30/98



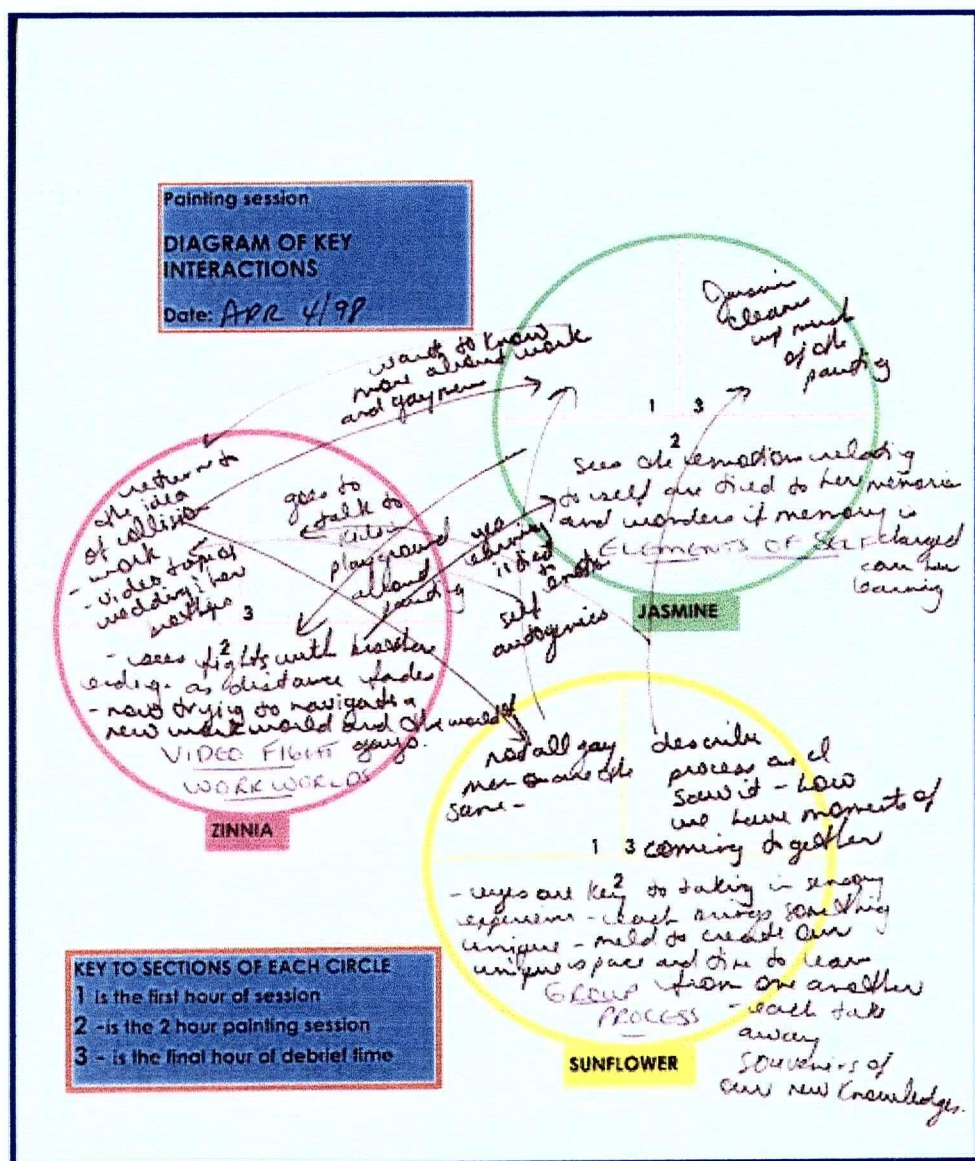


Figure 110: Key Interactions Diagram, April 4/98

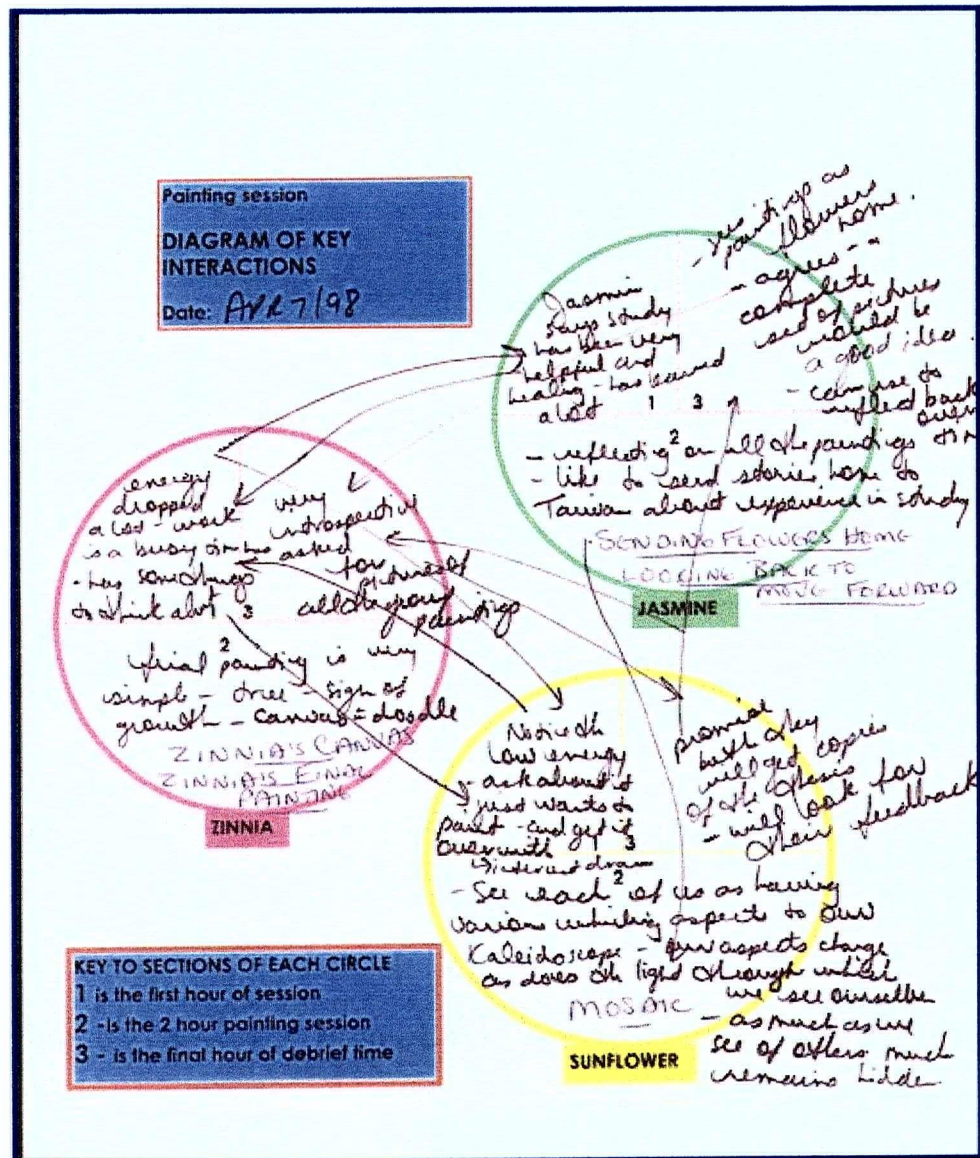


Figure 111: Key Interactions Diagram, April 7/98



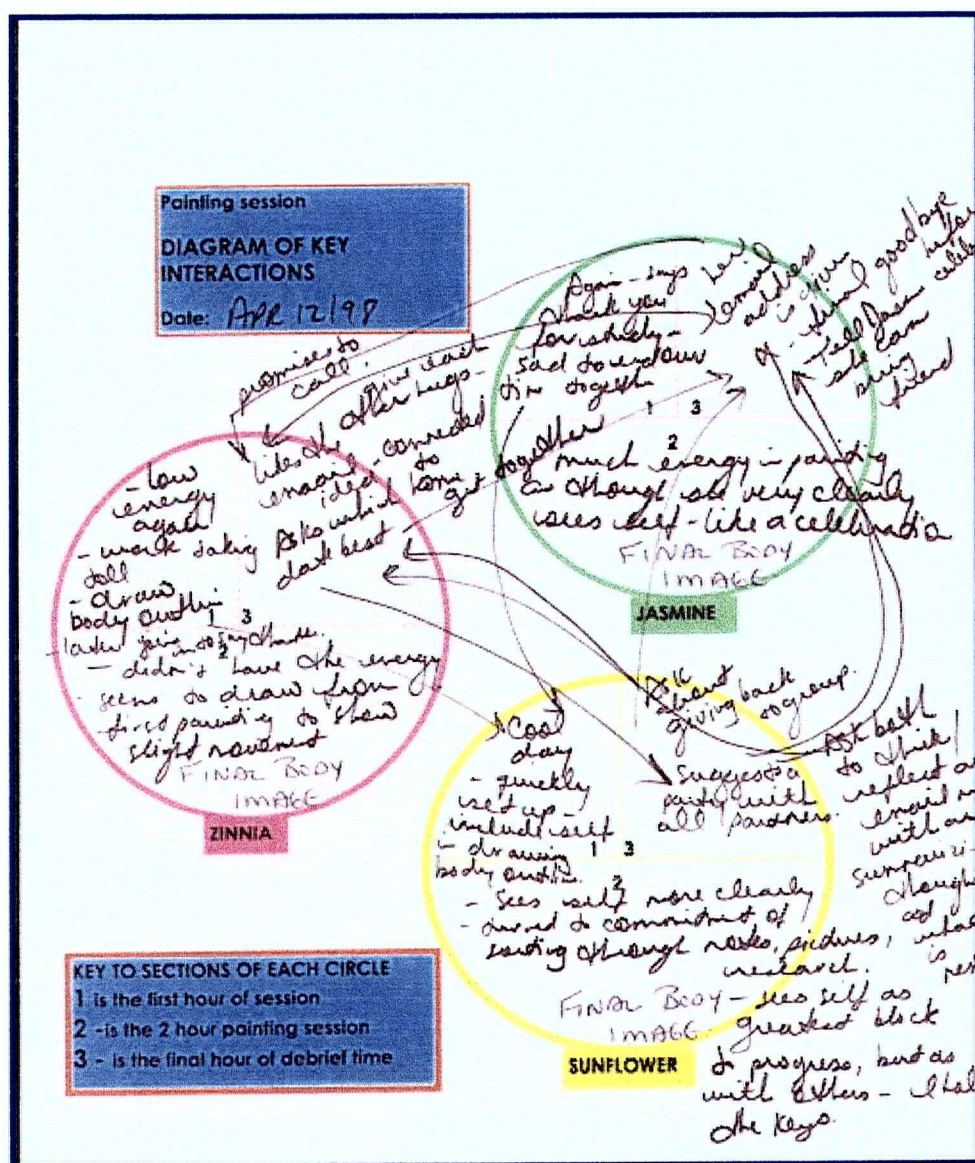


Figure 112: Key Interactions Diagram, April 12/98

Now that you have taken a quick tour of some of what happened through my reflections upon the study, I would like to mark on paper a few notations about my reflections upon the writing process. This chapter will, then, be completely summarized.



### Reflections On the Writing Process

The basic premise for the way I approach my writing is to do it for me. I am not writing, particularly for the Academy. I am writing to make known what I have observed and witnessed. I am writing this study as I felt it, experienced it - and how it influenced me. This study is very much about me. It is also very much about two extraordinary people who allowed me into their lives in some very profound and trusting ways. I write this for them as well.

I write this with very much my full voice present. And unlike some people in this world who demand that certain groups shut up (and this was in the Academy!) so that others can be heard. I have never been one to say that we have to shut people down for others to be heard. We must be able to share the space - or make the space bigger for all voices to be heard and not coddled by judgment and condescension.

The structure of how this writing was going to take shape has gone through several evolutions until the present one fell out, almost as though by accident. It seemed to be the most comfortable one without, necessarily some sort of logical flow to it. The literature review was an important section to highlight some of the thought which supports where I hoped to go with this study and, so, appears near the beginning. The actual study results were put in - so that real voices and pictures could be seen as they appeared as they occurred. The placement of the study chapter appears near the middle of all the chapters within this thesis as though both halves - the "objective" literature and my "subjective" reflections support the two participants without, hopefully taking away the legitimacy of their voices.

My reflections and "interpretations" (they remain loose and tentative and by no means are meant to be definitive - I leave that to the lens of your own experiences to make up your own mind). Chapter Seven, which preceded this one, is meant to be a loose collection of possible ways of looking at what was presented within the study. Nothing more. There are as many ways

of viewing this material as their are people to view it. That makes me something of a relativist in my stance, particularly with regard to raising and experiencing other people's voices. Just like Mezirow (1981), I am an interpretivist as well, in that I believe that each person has their own version of the "truth" of how are worlds are constructed - and we are the people who create our own worlds. This thesis and my own paintings are glimpses into how I construct mine. I hope there are some places within this paper which resonate for you, the reader, or make an inscription upon your own world in a simple, yet profound way. My experience of these two people who journeyed with me in this study - I experienced in just such a way, as I feel they experienced who I was. Lastly, I hope you, the reader, have been able to reflect upon your own life as you continue through this paper. If you have had to pause, reflect - even put down this paper at times to think back upon your own experiences then the journey has been worth it for us, the participants, who live down here among these pages.

### Summary

This chapter carried out the highly personal nature aspects of this paper by placing my life review, and my reflections with regard to preparing and carrying out this study. I began my life review from my earliest days right through to the present in the hopes that you will be better understand who carried out this study and whose voice is carried within these pages.

I, then, walked through the various steps, trials, and pitfalls - and successes - that occurred through the study through until the writing of the final paper. The paper is meant to be highly descriptive and personal, in the hopes of being able to engage you, the reader, on a very personal level with your own life and transitions which you may have passed through. Above all, I have done my best to keep the writing simple and straight forward in order for anyone who reads this to understand what occurred as a result of my study. The Academy, per se, was a secondary consideration. My focus has been only to reflect, inform, and illustrate the experiences

of two ordinary people, with extraordinary skills, insights, and human agency to shine through on to canvas their most heartfelt and honest representations of their lives as they face the major transitions within their lives.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER GARDENING EFFORTS**

#### Introduction

*How do “social strangers” come to understand the meaning of their “identities- in-transition” during the experience of reflection during an eight week painting workshop?*

The purpose of this study was to explore and chronicle the experiences recent immigrants had of culture shock as uncovered through the creative process. Central to the narrative was that concerning one’s cultural identity as it found itself, suddenly and traumatically, in flux. As a type of backdrop to the relating of these experiences I underwent participation within the study to make sense of my own shifts as a result of the sudden and unique change in my own circumstances.

This final chapter briefly states some of my thoughts on some potential effects my study can have in the areas of theory and practice of educating for diversity and acculturation. Drawing from the themes raised in the previous chapter I will describe how these can be considered when designing or implementing educational interventions. Also, the methodology that I used while proceeding through this study will be included in the discussion. I will end this brief implication section with areas for further study, including those areas I wish to continue to explore in more complex and in depth research.

#### For Theory

The underlying belief structure that I worked with was that the people within this study were normal functioning people caught in extraordinary circumstances. Because of this I was not looking at “fixing” a particular problem in some prescriptive manner. Our

understanding of “normal” is that it is fixed by some tacit standard which we all must adhere to or be subject to labeling as being deficient in some way. I feel that this is, in part, why immigrants are often targeted as being a threat to this society - because they are perceived as not acting “normally” when taken into account with this society. Yet, I saw Zinnia and Jasmine as acting in no other way than “normally” functioning. A difficulty with multicultural research, as in other forms of educational, and psychological research is that researchers tend to try and quantify everything - what better to quantify than change. The belief is that if we, as researchers, can “objectively” measure movement in an accurate manner we could then prescribe and anticipate what to expect as people experience culture shock. However, I feel that culture shock is something that can only be very broadly prescribed and not narrowed in any meaningful way. Nor do I see the focus on narrowing the experience of culture shock as serving any meaningful end because of the highly individual and personal nature of the phenomena.

Just as art therapists suggest, people who seek to get the most from therapeutic and educational interventions have to decide in their own terms what they wish to achieve. To have the therapist or facilitator suggest or tell the person what to expect is another form of oppression when a person, going through a culture shock, already feels overwhelmed and oppressed.

Writing about anti-racism, multiculturalism, or diversity seems to be more abstract not becoming as grounded in concrete practicality as it could be (Ross-Gordon, 1991). This study has remained completely concrete and practical for the participants. All of the participants were able to take away concrete experiences and thoughts of how to navigate the circumstances within which we found ourselves. The ability to reflect, discuss and further reflect our experiences in a defined space and time allowed us to bring our immediate concrete problems or issues to the group to work through. Often the

three of us found that if one had a situation, the others could identify with it. In this way we saw ourselves as not only seeking help in dealing with concerns but we were able to give back to the group for their help. We worked through issues of differences in gender, in work worlds, even worked through a resume and cover letter for one participant for a job she had applied to.

The research incorporated a more inter- and multi-disciplinary approach to culture shock and multicultural issues. Research seems to be of a more theoretical discipline approach when what seems to be needed is a number of systems working at the same time (Pedersen, 1997).

Culture shock and multicultural counselling research seems to focus on the symptoms that have arisen within a particular person and not how the person experiences their interaction with the broader environment (Yoshikawa, 1988; Zapf, 1991). In this study, there were "symptoms" alluded to, however, the focus was on discussing, reflecting and through imagery describing the nature of Zinnia's and Jasmine's interactions with their broader worlds and some of the issues that they raised. We did not focus on their frustration, anger, sadness, relief, or happiness directly, although these were indirectly affected by our working through their experiences. We were more interested in each other's experiences and the meaning that these held for us. The multicultural literature highlights the dangers and pitfalls of an educator or therapist being culturally encapsulated by trying to remain outside the learner's or counsellor's realm of experience in some artificial way. By becoming an indispensable traveller on this journey the group takes requires - no - demands a high degree of honest, emotive, self-disclosure. This level has to be to the same degree that you are requiring the learners or counsellors to undertake. To disclose to a lesser degree is a mark of inequity; of requiring more of others than of yourself. And to disclose will undoubtedly reveal one's

cultural boundedness. But once this is held up, just as with the members of the group generally that cultural binding can be loosened to allow more room for divergent aspects of diverse cultural experience to become enmeshed within our own sense of our worlds. We, as therapists and educators, must dare to be open and upfront with our learning within a group such as this. To be anything less, presents the adult educator and/or therapist as part of the hegemonic oppression this type of group is trying to identify with and navigate. Mezirow describes “emancipatory learning” as learning which allows us to develop a more inclusive worldview. Multicultural counselling literature refers to the “multicultural” person whereby they stop being a person of predominantly one culture but person which contains a mosaic of cultures with no one worldview taking precedent over the others. Could this be the roots of a “colour-blind” society? Do I dare to dream that such a thing one day can be possible? As long as we have a preponderance to “judge” others because of cultural attributes, I am not sure.

In theoretical terms, perhaps, we were not interested in drawing definitive and predictive maps of how behaviour would occur in the future for similar groups of people. I would do the same thing. I would work with the person(s) as I found them and have them guide me as they saw and experienced with their senses. It is a different realm I worked within - the sensual, the emotive, the intuitive, and the experiential - as opposed to the “objective”, abstract world of theory. What theory seems to do is divorce the softer, amorphous side of a person in a reductionistic way that precludes the most important dynamics a person has in dealing with culture shock, diversity, and multiculturalism - their sense of human agency.

### For Practice

Implications of my study for practice is first and foremost the ability to understand and sympathize with where the person is when they begin working with the therapist or the educator. As a therapist or educator there can be a danger of ascribing a deficiency to the person because of a perceived symptom. The problem is that there could be many reasons for the so-called "deficiency" and that the source for this "inadequacy" can and will shift over time as the person sorts through the various dimensions which have highlighted the situation. Because a learner or client, whether within an educational or counselling context, arrives to participate in some sort of intervention there is a strong tendency to look at the observable sources of "difference" and believe the issues arise from that uniqueness. For example, if I, as a gay man, seek counselling there is a perception among many professionals that the source of my "problem" stems from my gayness...and not because I may have lost someone close to me - in the instance of grief counselling. Or if a Black person arrives in an antiracism course that they want to understand their Blackness. There may be many reasons...perhaps that person has married a White or Hispanic person and want to better understand the dynamics of anti-racism in that context. Rather than assume the obvious or "extraordinary", my experiences within this study have dramatically shown to me that often the source of issues or "problems" may come from hidden and "ordinary" reasons. Although culture shock was a heightening factor for Zinnia and Jasmine to feel the emotions they did, culture shock on its own was not the most important notion foremost in their minds. Rather than try and be prescriptive, I found with both Zinnia and Jasmine that they, through some deep penetration, arrive at the answers to that which they sought on their own and in their own terms. When Jasmine was looking to me for the answers, there was a feeling initially that I should tell her what she wanted to hear but then I



thought that perhaps I would let her down by not telling her what she wanted to hear. I feel I was totally honest with her when I said that I did not have the answers, but that she had the freedom to find the answers for herself. Zinnia and I would help her where we could as she would help me as we worked with Zinnia on some of the issues she faced.

The element of relying more upon the expression of art as opposed to talk within our workshops was, at first, felt to be a restrictive approach because there was not the reliance upon "talk-therapy" or "directive teaching" where answers would flow and people would listen. This was all for them to experience. As we progressed the periods of relaxation and visualization were a great way for the group to focus upon the identified issue. Interestingly, the relaxation periods also helped to energize the group, while also allowing them to block out "the larger world" and "migrate" to our unique space and time. The paintings seemed to take an inverted U shape, with the early paintings being restrained to the middle paintings being more free to a more restrained art as the workshops were drawing to a close. The expression through art allowed people from very varied backgrounds to communicate to others their worlds in a manner that was highly relevant, emotive and full of passion and meaning.

In the introduction of food and refreshments, I suppose, has become something of a signature of sorts for me. A philosophy is the "breaking of bread" with others to create a sense of community. Something that has been a throw-back to my rural roots.

Confidentiality is a high priority for me as well because of the sensitive and highly personal issues the group potentially can, and do raise. With the sense of privacy is also required the high degree of remaining non-judgmental to what may be raised. Because of the variety of backgrounds people emanate from there may be times when the educator or therapist may feel uncomfortable with issues. I found that it is best to voice

these discomforts and paint how you feel and then use the painting as a type of “foil” between your feelings and the background that has raised the discomfort. Otherwise just go with what is presented - including those issues which may be facing the educator or therapist and is relevant to the group’s discussion.

#### For Further Study

Within this study I used the process as defined by art making. Paintings were used to allow for the opening of communications among people from disparate cultures. Culture within this study was broadly defined to include not only the more “traditional” notions of culture, but also those personal attributes which hold culture-like attributes like gender, religion, sexuality, age, and so on.

What would bear a much deeper probing and exploration would be other forms of identity “discontinuity” or upheaval similar to that experienced by people crossing cultures. These sorts of transitions would include the meaning of the experience attached to a person who had been a healthy, productive working person who becomes severely disabled and potentially side-lined by society. What sort of identity shift occurs? What meaning(s) does the person attribute to the experience of becoming profoundly disabled?

Another situation, which will become more important as the baby boom generation continues to advance toward retirement and beyond, is what sort of identity shift occurs when someone moves from being employed within an occupation to becoming retired from the workforce? What meaning is attributed by the person entering retirement? What are the issues and experiences as a person, newly retired, interacts with the larger society in a newly socially constructed definition of “elderly”?

A transition which has not had a great deal of coverage from a more emotive, intuitive, concrete perspective is the experience of “coming out” or disclosing one’s

homosexuality for the first time, or “coming out” repeatedly as one finds themselves moving through various new social environments? Does someone who comes out repeatedly become more inclusive and open as a result? What about those people who have assumed a straight lifestyle for all of their lives - and then after a marriage and raising children come out as gay/lesbian? What happens to one’s identity as they come out for the first time versus repeatedly over a period of time? What are the sorts of meaning that are attached to these experiences?

What happens when a person, previously considering themselves as being “White” or “Black” discovers that they have a substantial family background in an ethnic and cultural background other than what they had presupposed? What meaning do they ascribe to the new information? What emotions or involved? What new knowledge is created by the person as a result of the new information? What learning dynamics are involved in each of these cultural and identity shifts?

Related to process is the continued exploration of the utility and efficacy of using art to inform, to teach, and to learn. Art therapy is predominantly used in environments involving children and in a “medical” model of working with symptoms as opposed to causes such as environmental interactions. In this study symptoms were indirect and tacitly dealt with while the environmental interactions of each of the people was directly explored. There was no “medical” sense of “fixing” a deficiency.

Further exploration of the art process needs to be explored. Alternate art processes such as those found within theatre, sculpture, music, etc. need to be explored as fully as possible to allow personal expression, discovery, and growth to occur.

Lastly, the environment of non-formal education milieus need to be further explored with regard to better understanding cultural and identity shifts. This is because

the educational institutions, run and financed by the state are there, predominantly, to reinforce the status quo rather than to allow for individual growth to occur. As long as institutions do not promote an inclusivity of all people regardless of their background, beliefs, and values these institutions only “permit” growth to a particular point. The act of “permission” implies an authority which controls. Control often can be connected with various degrees of oppression. Community settings provide for a greater openness and freedom for the people involved to shape the process, and therefore the outcome. This study had no set outcome save that which the participants felt was most important. There was a loose structure, but this was open to be shaped however the time, the people and the process felt it was best.

My future study and research will explore many of the above issues and processes. Various art forms will be incorporated to explore the “power” of each. Some or all of the above identity and cultural transitions will be examined on their own merits as stand alone experiences. Observers of what transpires will be able to draw their own conclusions about the experiences described in the contemplated research for themselves. I see my role as being one with the experience and reporting on it; leaving the task of drawing conclusions to the reader, just as I have done with this study. As you close the cover and set this back up on the shelf consider where we started with this study and where this research leaves off. Reflect on what you have found out about the people within these covers, but more importantly what effect and meaning the whole experience has left you with.

Remember, we are all people on this earth. None of us are better or worse than one another. Just different. We each have the experience of our identities within specific environments, which often change. Sometimes we need help, at other times we wish to be alone. But always we wish to be love, respected, accepted and understood. One can

only learn and experience this learning how to accept all flowers within the large garden  
we live in as part of one garden we all need to be a part of.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

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