University of Alberta

Resurrection Ferns: Resiliency, Art, and Meaning
Constructs Among Survivors of Trauma or Difficult Life Events

by

Ayalah Aylyn

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F E R N   (Funk & Wagnall's dictionary, 1976):

any of a widely distributed class (Filicineae) of plants that bear no flowers or seeds, having roots, stems, and large feathery fronds and reproducing by means of asexual spores growing in sacs on the underside or edges of the fronds

Fearn (ult) = root meaning feather

Greek pteron feather, or wing

Examining Committee

Dr. Amy Kaler, Sociology

Dr. Sara Dorow, Sociology

Dr. Derek Truscott, Educational Psychology

Dr. Naomi Krogman, Rural Economy

Dr. Linda Kreitzer, Social Work, University of Calgary

DEDICATIONS:

For the Angels in my life who are no longer living:

Everywhere I look, if I look without bitterness, there are individuals, like angels who comfort me in very significant ways. There is Dr. Alex Majetko, professor-emeritus of the Sociology department at the University of Alberta, who died in 1999. He became my friend at the university and he told me during WWII, that the Nazis sent him as a young teenager to a forced labour camp in Poland. He said that what helped him survive was his Catholic faith and the presence of a guardian angel who was always with him....and for Dr. Sharon Rosenberg, who with her courage, creativity and commitment, built bridges, not walls…

For Dr. Fred Binding, mentor and friend with whom I could always be myself....
For Cece, who believed me...and believed in me...when no one else would...
For Scott Dowdall, one of the comet people, who always made me laugh!
<div align="center">*****</div>
And for those angels in my life, still living...

From the past:
For my grade 4 teacher who lovingly taught me to finish everything I started...
For my grade 7 teacher who taught me that through my experience I could reach out to others, for suffering wears a global face…
For MC: shining light in the darkness of my youth...

For Dr. Margaret Lynne, who believed in me, who taught me that no one has the corner on the truth and who has yet to acknowledge the profound transformation she made in my life...
For all my parental substitutes, but most especially to G, B & family who taught me that there was life beyond the barracks.
<div align="center">*****</div>
In the present:
 To Mark, beloved husband:
        Protective warrior-philosopher, friend and lover:
        No birdsong
        No Poem
        No Undying Promise
        Just home....
        Rooted in the heart of Our Tree...

P.S.   Fiona loves Shrek.. ..For Isabel, Ed & family, guardian angels to several furry and feathered friends.

DEDICATIONS:
For those who experienced Child Abuse, Trauma or War:

by Ayalah Aylyn

Walking Shoes

In loving   acknowledgement...
Of   those of you....
with dreams of terror and haunted nights
Who...

Arise
Into...the Days
Touching your loved ones
Created, creating, re-creating...
In silence....

Anonymous. Anonymous.
You   Walk.. You Walk...
Unknown. Unknown.
You Know. You Know.
Body-genitalia-mind-divinity knowing..
Yet...

You walk in the NOW Life
NOT BEFORE Walking-Death Life
NOR WAILING-WOUNDOLOGY-Healing-Guru-Path-
 life...

You Walk
As Hidden Ones
Yet Present.
Quiet and Just
heroes, angels, saints...

you walk
to self-found divinity
to inner-transcendence
Replenished and replenishing...
others (who walk this walk)

nirvana in the world
in your walking shoes…

Abstract

The phenomenon of resilient recovery from traumatic events has been postulated from a multitude of several different theoretical orientations. The current thesis study contributes to what Glen Richardson (2002) described as the linkage between the theoretical traditions of positive psychology and the 3rd wave of resiliency research. More specifically, this study supports the linkage between resiliency and the spiritual/interpersonal experience of human beings, through the multi-modalities of both narrative and art.

One of the most intriguing aspect of this thesis study is that 63 per cent of the 27 respondents (who had experienced either traumatic or difficult life events), attributed their resiliency to their belief systems of immortality. Furthermore, such issues of immortality appeared to be connected in some way with what participants in this study described as "spirituality." Of the remaining 10 participants, three believed that the human spirit returned to God and did not recycle and the remaining 7 participants attributed their resiliency to other aspects such as personal strength, closeness to nature, social action, creativity, camaraderie with others and so on.

Finally, in the narrative tradition, this author kept personal thesis journal notes to herself as she encountered the various participants in this study. A selection of such thesis notes are interspersed in between participants' self-defined resilient stories. Such interwoven narratives form what narrative researcher Laurel Richardson (1997) discussed as the "collective story," in which the voices of those who have been disenfranchised can be both heard and honoured.

Preface

       In the beginning of this thesis appears the poem "Walking Shoes" which I wrote during the spring of 2000 and then dedicated to survivors of child abuse, trauma or war. However, the inspiration for this poem also speaks to my own resilient recovery from repeated and extreme childhood abuse, and it acknowledges those individuals I have met who have also resiliently recovered, but whose stories have remained anonymous.

       My current thesis study with 27 participants explores aspects of resiliency among those who have experienced trauma and those who have experienced more normative life events. In describing how to connect sociological writing and poetry to the narrative writing of lived experience, Laurel Richardson (1992) stated that in writing about the "other" we can "rewrite the self." Therefore, representing the sociological as poetry is one way of "experiencing the self as a sociological knower/constructor" (p. 136). In a similar vein, this thesis study begins with the poem "Walking Shoes" and ends with reference to that poem.

       Throughout the thesis, I explore aspects of how we as human beings attempt to overcome our own intersubjective oppression. However, even in qualitative studies, both the researcher and participants censor their words. In quantitative research one assumes that one is completely left out of the research, although such an assumption is largely a fallacy. In qualitative research, the question then becomes how much of oneself to put in? In qualitative narrative research, Laurel Richardson (2000) stated that the self is always present and even in narrative research "we repress parts of ourselves, too" (p. 930). From the postmodern perspective however, Richardson stressed that this is not problematic as such qualitative endeavours, in effect, allow us to "tell and re-tell the stories" (p. 930), of ourselves and our participants.

       Despite Richardson's defence of narrative study, I am still left with the question of how one writes others' stories of resiliency through trauma while at the same time interweaving one's own story as one single thread in the ragged underside of a combined tapestry of many stories. I am now an adult, well into middle age with an enriched

personal and professional life. In contemplating this thesis study however, I was torn between the academic language I have learned and the language of my heart. How, I initially asked could I adequately express the voices of my thesis participants? Ultimately, I decided that what I could bring to the narrative interview, was my honest experience. I therefore told participants beforehand that I too was a resilient person who had experienced trauma. I also told them that during the interview I would only be listening to their stories but not sharing my experiences. I assured them that they would be able to read my own story later, when this thesis was finally completed.

So in the end, there became several voices: my voice as reflected in my thesis journal entries; the voices of my 27 thesis participants as reflected in their narratives; and the voices of my committee members during the process of this study. It has been a wondrous challenge, and it has been something I have wanted to do my entire life. In fact, during the writing of this thesis, I have been continually reminded of a dance I once saw... an old dance and a medieval one. The partners hold only one of each other's hands very gently upraised and they dance side by side only occasionally moving one foot ahead and then ever so gently turning until the palms of their hands touch one another's, but their bodies never do. I think we are like this; all of us who are human -- and I think those who have experienced trauma have a particular dance and a synchronicity that draws us to one another.

From the perspective of narrative inquiry, Jean Clandinin & Michael Connelly (2000) asserted that the qualitative researcher's own narrative of experience, is "central to narrative inquiry" and that we the inquirers "tell remembered stories of ourselves from earlier times as well as more current stories..." (pp. 54-60). This thesis study then would not be complete without my own story of how it is I came to conceptualize resiliency in human beings...

I refer firstly then to my own experience of several years as a psychologist, living and working in the central arctic and remote regions of Canada's north. During this time and indeed throughout much of my life, I have encountered many individuals (as either clients or friends), who appeared to be "resilient" despite having experienced severely

traumatized backgrounds. Indeed, throughout my life, I have been continually impressed by the courageous lives of such men and women, who (despite existential struggles), have still been able to "transform" their experiences into caring interactions with others who have also suffered. Such an observation on my part directly challenges the "deficit-vulnerability" model of the traditional mental health paradigm (Grossman & Moore, 1994; Grossman, Cook, Kepkep & Koenen, 1999; Rutter, 1985), in which survivors of trauma have been viewed as "damaged."

Why, I have asked myself always, has there been such a negative bias toward survivors of trauma? This is a question I have asked myself not only from a professional viewpoint, but also from a personal one, for I myself am resilient despite having experienced childhood abuse of an extreme and repetitive nature. Such a negative bias toward survivors of trauma was clearly articulated to me as a child by mental health professionals. Initially I was *not* believed about the abuse "because I was doing so well" back then, but when they were confronted with medical evidence of the abuse, I was informed that I must be "in denial because I was doing so well." Subsequently such professionals then re-traumatized me by insisting that I verbalize my abuse experiences over and over again. Why was my resilience silenced back then? Why were such "professionals" unable to see that I was warmly buttressed by the support systems of beloved teachers; friends, and parental substitutes and that my young eyes were focused on my educational aspirations, my spirituality, and on my life in the present? Why were they so blind to the fact that I, having developed resiliency from surviving such a difficult past, could now face anything that might confront me in my future?

One does not develop resiliency all on one's own; there are existential struggles along the way, and the support of others is paramount. Indeed, out of the many supportive people I managed to find in my life, two stand out in particular. One was my South African grade seven teacher, who first spoke to me when I was 12-years-old about how he had suffered under Apartheid. His words, that I remember to this day, had the effect of lifting me up and out of myself so that I began to realize that my pain and suffering were *not* unique. For the first time in my life I saw myself as part of the whole

human experience and that I could use my experience to help others who had also suffered. The second person was a young woman physician whose husband was killed by a drunk driver, leaving her to raise her three children on her own while she put herself through medical school. At the time, I was an adolescent living in a group home and angry at the whole world. Yet, I still recall the day this young woman doctor handed me a copy of Viktor Frankl's (1959) book *Man's Search for Meaning*, and said "You can be part of the problem or part of the solution."

It is not an exaggeration to say that that book changed my life. Reading about Viktor Frankl, who was a Jewish psychiatrist incarcerated at Auschwitz during WWII, I felt humbled in my own life. Although I had been through a great deal, here was someone who had been through a great deal more, and yet had transformed his experiences into helping others. Indeed when Frankl was released from the camps, he went on to form a branch of existential psychology called "logotherapy," or the "will to meaning." His philosophy became my "will to meaning" that not only enhanced my own resiliency but helped me to enhance the resiliency of my clients and of others I met along the way.

Moreover, since the qualitative part of this thesis work required that I keep a personal journal, I have included some of my own reflections with other "resilient ones" that I encountered during the several years I spent living and working as a psychologist with both Dene and Inuit peoples in Canada's far northern regions. One of these individuals was a native medicine man who invited me to participate in a ceremonial sweat lodge. I found I was unable to do so, because as soon as the overwhelming heat from the rocks permeated my nostrils, I bolted from the tent and huddled outside draped in my Inuit parka. Afterwards, when the ceremony was completed, the medicine man approached me. I then apologized profusely for my hasty departure, and explained to him that I am claustrophic due to my abusive childhood. Slowly smiling, he looked at me. Then, reaching out, he touched the shoulder flaps on my Inuit parka, spreading them outwards like two great fans.

"I do not see a damaged child in front of me" he said "I see a spiritual one with wings that have enabled her to fly."

On another occasion, I am speaking with the Inuit medicine woman who adopted me during the years I lived in the Canadian Arctic. I am speaking to her of my occasional difficulties in reconciling my peaceful life as an adult with my difficult life as a child. She listens carefully and then gathers up five oddly-shaped stones from the arctic tundra beneath our feet. Grasping my hands warmly, she places the stones into my outstretched fingers and tells me that it is customary for Inuit to take stones from one place to another location where people have died because of their culture. We then speak of Auschwitz and I know that I must journey there with the stones that she has given me.

During the writing of this thesis, I take the stones in my knapsack throughout Europe to France, Holland, Germany, and then to Auschwitz in Poland. I spend three days in Auschwitz and during that time I place each of the stones on the five designated gas chamber sites. With each stone that I place, I recite the Jewish prayer for the dead. When the last stone is placed on the last chamber site, I feel the remaining emotional pain from those childhood years ebb slowly away. As my own emotional pain dissipates, I am suddenly aware that there were people just like me who died here at Auschwitz. Indeed, some of these individuals may have also been oppressed in their homes during childhood, but then additionally, they were also structurally oppressed under National Socialism. These were individuals, like myself, talking with friends one day, being herded into trucks and onto trains the next, and then being gassed and then burned. Such individuals, despite their resilient spirits, never had a chance to either transform or transcend their traumas….

By the time I leave Auschwitz, I have two feelings…one of immense sorrow for the lost potentiality of those other resilient spirits…and the other of immense gratitude for my wondrous life. I then release myself from my unanswered questions and from the claustrophobia that has always plagued me. And, during that release, I discover that my resiliency, no longer silenced, has become wings that have enabled me to fly….

My resolve to continually embrace the "synchronicity" in my thesis work between myself and those who participate in it, grows stronger. This is a fluid, moving, qualitative journey of my spirit and theirs, sharing the synchronicity, the narrative knowing, and the sacred resilient spaces of the human heart. Finally, "Resurrection Ferns: Resiliency, Art, and Meaning Constructs Among Survivors of Trauma or Difficult Life Events" is the cumulation of not only my own resilient flight but the flight of those who shared their stories with me.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

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Alan, brother spirit sprite who came back into my life at just the right moment. And, Eleanor, fellow journeyist in childhood resiliency.

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Countless friends and hidden saints, among them, Dr. Alexandra KinKaide, Ian Soles Doreen Wicks, Laura Rinas, Elizabeth & Gord, Shelley Reichelt and so many more…

Table Of Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PTSD   (Post traumatic Stress Disorder, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the
            American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p. 427-429)

KHTP   (Kinetic-house-tree-person drawings (K-H-T-P):
            An Interpretive manual, Burns, 1987)

HTP   (House-Tree-Person H-T-P technique. A quantitative and qualitative
            scoring Manual. Clinical Psychology monographs, 1948)

DSM-IIIR   (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric
            Association, 1987)

DSM-IV   (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric
            Association, 1994)

CPSD   (Complex Post traumatic Stress Disorder, Judith Herman's 1992a)

PDS   (Post traumatic stress scale, Edna Foa's , 1995). Adapted for non-
            traumatized and traumatized populations, A. Aylyn, 2000)

PTGI   (Post traumatic Growth Inventory Scale, Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996)

PANAS   (Positive and Negative Affect Scale, Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988)

INTRODUCTION

Internal meaning systems are shattered when individuals experience traumatic events and encounter what Robert Jay Lifton (1979) defined as "death-related or extreme situations" (p. 6). Indeed it was Lifton who articulated such "shattering" in the phrase the "broken connection" or the state of vulnerability that results when one has experienced trauma. Feminist psychiatrist Judith Herman (1992a) expanded this "broken connection" further when she criticized the current psychiatric communities diagnosis of post-traumatic-stress-disorder [PTSD] in the *Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-IV)* (1994) for excluding "systems of meaning." Several research studies have ascertained (Herman, 1992 a & b; van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995) that when individuals experience PTSD, their ability to verbalize such experiences is impaired. Furthermore, many trauma theorists agree that creative art modalities (such as drawing pictures of the traumatic event rather than speaking of it) aid survivors of trauma in recovering from their difficult experiences.

In this dissertation, I intend to explore the intricacies of how meaning is construed by participants who have experienced trauma as well as participants who have experienced more normative life difficulties. Since healing from trauma is a multifaceted process, such an examination will help researchers, clinicians, and survivors of trauma to understand the process of how such individuals heal from trauma. To this end, I intend to expand the current definition of resiliency and to assert that for full resilient recovery to occur, a traumatized individual must be able to re-connect the "broken connection" state that Lifton described.

I therefore propose to explore using multiple modes of inquiry, how self-defined resilient people make sense of their experiences of trauma and/or life's difficulties. Moreover, in a similar manner, I also assert that resiliency is characterized by what Viktor Frankl (1959) described in his logotherapeutic analysis of the individual's "will to

meaning" which involves a process of intersubjective agency where traumatized individuals begin to comprehend the "larger reason" for their suffering.

A synthesis of several different theoretical approaches to understanding the concept of both trauma and resilient recovery from traumatic events is provided in the literature review. Such theories cross different disciplines most notably social psychology and sociology, and seem to be based around a theoretical research continuum juxtaposed between whether researchers assume that resiliency is the result of inner personal agency or whether it is due to external structural supports. Despite differences in research approaches, most current theorists support research examinations that are multi-modal in design.

The phenomena of resiliency have been defined as biological, psychological, and social processes that appear to promote successful adaptation over an individual's life, and that involves both making meaning in interaction with the outer world as well as maintaining internal equilibrium (Luthar & Zeigler, 1991). Different theoretical approaches to how resiliency is measured have also included that resilient recovery from traumatic events is enhanced from the social support of others (Cohen, Hettler & Park, 1997; Pierce, Lucky, Sarason & Sarason, 1997, and others), that it is linked to those resilient individuals who are able to engage in self-understanding and reflection (Higgins, 1994; Beardslee, 1989; Schissel, 1993 and others) and that it is particularly manifested when such self-reflective insights are funnelled into either social or artistic action. (Herman, 1992 a & b; O'Connell-Higgins,1994 and others).

To sum up, although most theorists agree that recovery from trauma is a function of both internal agency and external structure, and although some attention has been given to the fact that the "meaning" one attaches to their experience seems to be key, little attention has been given to the narrative and subjective experiences of those who have actually experienced both life's difficulties and trauma. In particular, the intricacies of how such meaning is interpreted by the survivor (including aspects of

immortality/death themes which have sometimes been perceived as a sense of "spirituality" within survivor's experiences) have largely been ignored. Finally although some attention has been given to the fact that "drawing" one's experiences seems to aid survivors of trauma who are unable to "speak" their truth, little attention has been given to the process of combining both the narrative subjective experiences of those who have suffered in conjunction with a simultaneous examination of how survivors themselves interpret their own drawing experiences.

It appears therefore that with the many different theoretical perspectives concerning trauma and resiliency, it is necessary to summarize such perspectives into coherent themes. To that end, in the literature review I have synthesized the various viewpoints into some common genres as listed below:

1) definitions of resiliency and how resilient individuals perceive their resiliency.

2) the nature and duration of the trauma and the several different environmental and interpersonal factors that contributed to how individuals maintained their resiliency through experiences of trauma and/or life's difficulties.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Therefore the purpose of this research is to explore how self-defined resilient people make sense of their experiences of trauma and/of life's difficulties, using multiple modes of inquiry.

FORMAT   OF   DISSERTATION

This thesis is divided into 9 Main Sections, listed as:

Section I: Culture, Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress

Section II: Resiliency: Historical and Current Theoretical Applications

Section III: Resiliency and Meaning

Section IV: Resiliency and Art

Section V: Methodology and Research Design

Section VI: Results: The Participants

Section VII: Results: Narratives and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants:
                        Resiliency & Immortality

                     First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels.
                     Second Thematic Section: The Human Spirit continues…
                     Third Thematic Section: The Human Spirit Returns to God
                     Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity
                     & Commitment

Section VIII: Discussion, Conclusion and Implications for Research

Section IX: Appendix

In discussing the importance of evocative representations of qualitative narrative work such as poetic representation, metaphor, and ethnography, Laurel Richardson (2000) recommended writing a "layered text" (p. 942). In such a text, authors intersperse their own experience in between sections of the thesis (such as in between participants' narratives.) To that end, interspersed between each of my thesis sections are personal thesis journal entries in which I have described my reactions to the research and/or shared some aspects of my own personal experience. I have also drawn heavily on analogies to "ferns as a metaphor" but have also included other stories that also reminded me of some aspect of participants' interviews. To that end, I invite you to read my thesis journal entry: "Of Ferns and Resiliency."

Thesis Journal Entry: Of Ferns and Resiliency

As a child growing up in one of Canada's northern provinces, I experienced allergies when confronted with odiferous flowers. It is not surprising then that I became drawn to ferns, and became particularly drawn to a type of large umbrella-shaped fern called bracken. These ferns would often grow in clumps to form a canopy of umbrellas. I would lie serenely hidden under their protective fronds, feeling perfectly safe, while the blue sky and clouds above spoke to me of greater possibilities.

*****

Later as an adult, residing in the Canadian Arctic, I would often see what appeared to be tiny ferns growing in conjunction with the arctic wildflowers. Upon closer examination, I found that they did not exactly look like ferns but were somewhere between a moss and a fern. I learned later that these were fern allies.

*****

During the course of this thesis study, I spoke to Robert Dixon, a horticulturalist at the Muttart conservatory in Edmonton, Alberta. I explained to him that I wanted to link the resiliency of ferns as analogous to the resiliency of people. He enthusiastically expressed that the linkage was a strong one. He told me that ferns and fern allies have been around for 350 million years and were originally the dominant land plants. I learned also that there are more than 10,000 kinds of ferns found around the world, from the tropics to the Arctic Circle.

In describing the persevering nature of ferns, Robert explained that even after a forest fire "a symbol of rebirth is a fiddlehead fern leaf coming up...so much so that in Christianity it's used as the bishop's crozier, as a symbol of resurrection..." (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 3.)[1]

The symbol of renewal and resiliency through the analogy of ferns and resilient people will therefore permeate this thesis.

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
SECTION I: CULTURE, TRAUMA AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

a) Defining Trauma and Resiliency:

Both trauma and resiliency have their own history. In order to comprehend why it is that some individuals resiliently recover from traumatic events, we must first find a proper definition for what "trauma" really is. Researchers Blake, Albano, and Keane (1992), attempted to define "types" of trauma in a review of 20 years of psychological abstracts dealing with traumatic events. They reported that over 30 per cent of such articles defined trauma in the experience of war, while over 12 per cent defined trauma within the experience of sexual abuse in adulthood; and over 14 per cent within the experience of childhood abuse (including childhood sexual abuse).

b) History of Trauma, Traumatic Neurosis and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Originally Kardiner & Spiegel (1947) described traumatic conditions as "shell shock" in their analysis of the psychological changes that appear to have occurred in WWI veterans. From that time on the term "traumatic neurosis" has also been used by other researchers (Niederland, 1968) to describe the phenomenon of the apparent long-term psychological effects of civilians who survived concentration camp imprisonments under Nazi Germany and Japan, during WWII.

Historically it is psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton (1967) who is credited with bringing forth the aspect of trauma and post-traumatic stress in his work with survivors of Hiroshima. Lifton described the traumatic responses of individuals who encountered "death-related or extreme situations" (p. 6), as the "broken connection," or the state of vulnerability or symptomology that is now defined in the current psychiatric nomenclature as post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). [2] Traditionally, the American Psychiatric Association in its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-IIIR, 1987) defined the experience of traumatic events and resulting post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as occurring because the "person has experienced an event that is outside

the range of usual human experience and that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone" (p.250). Judith Herman (1992b) further criticized such wording with its PTSD focus on the individual experiencing an event that is "outside the range of usual human experience"(DSM-IIIR p.250). Indeed Herman argued that survivors' reactions to prolonged abuse are well *within* rather than *outside* the realm of human experience and should also include not only survivors of structural trauma (such as war or concentration camp survivors) but also "survivors of domestic battering, childhood physical or sexual abuse, and organized sexual exploitation" (p.121).

Currently the *DSM-IV* (summarized and paraphrased) defined PTSD as occurring because:

> 1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others.
>
> 2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.
>   (pp. 427-428).

However, the current *DSM-IV*'s "meaning systems" of survivors is not addressed for post-traumatic stress issues, an omission criticized by feminist researcher and psychiatrist Judith Herman (1992b.) Paramount to Herman's definition is the aspect that survivors of prolonged totalitarian systems (whether oppressed by structural, sexual and/or domestic systems) experience significant alterations in their intrinsic "systems of meaning." (See Herman's [1992a] Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Scale, Appendix I). Additionally van der Kolk & Fisler (1995) asserted that key to understanding the phenomena of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is to understand that the "memory flashbacks" that often accompany PTSD occur at predominately an emotional and sensory level. Moreover, victims are often left speechless and/or are unable to articulate precisely what they are feeling and thinking.

My definition of trauma however, originates from Judith Herman's (1992a) Complex Post traumatic Stress Disorder (summarized and paraphrased):

> 1) A history of subjection to totalitarian control over a prolonged period (months to years.) Examples include hostages, prisoners of war, concentration-camp survivors, and survivors of some religious cults. Examples also include those subjected to totalitarian systems in sexual and domestic life, including survivors of domestic battering, childhood physical or sexual abuse and organized sexual exploitation. (Herman, 1992a).

However I would also include Edna Foa's (1995) post-traumatic stress scale (PDS) categorization of serious accident/natural disaster, and life-threatening illness as traumatic. I am then in agreement with Herman's (1992a) expanded definitions that include:

> 2 to 7: Alterations in affect regulation; consciousness, self perception, perception of perpetrator, relations with others, and systems of meaning.

For the purpose of this thesis study however, I refer specifically to Herman's description of "alterations in systems of meaning" in which she states that a loss of sustaining faith and a sense of hopelessness and despair is also experienced[2]. Alternatively, as key to this study, my definition of resiliency therefore encompasses those individuals who have undergone the above traumas or difficulties in life, but who remain in the process of incorporating their traumatic experiences into meaningful lived experience. Such meaningful lived experience or a sense of meaning, I assert can manifest itself in creative responses to immortality/death fears (See Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Sheldon & Hamilton, (1990) and "Theories on Terror Management.") Such meaning can also manifest itself in the utilization of aspects of creativity, camaraderie and social justice issues and/or spiritual or religious pursuits. Such clear articulation is noted in Jennifer Pals' (2006) study of the narratives of middle-aged women who experienced trauma and in Tedeschi & Calhoun's (1996) studies that examined post traumatic growth[3].

c) Summary of Section I

In this section I have articulated more current definitions of trauma (DSM-IV—1994) as well as briefly discussed the types of traumatic events (Blake, Albano & Keane, 1992). I then added Edna Foa's (1995) definitions of trauma that include categorizations of serious accident/natural disaster and life-threatening events as well as Judith Herman's (1992a) complex post-traumatic stress scale that includes domestic and structural aspects of abuse. I proposed to expand Judith Herman's complex post-traumatic stress disorder, by focusing on the "systems of meaning" aspect for this thesis study.

It is important at this point that we now examine historical and current definitions of resiliency in order to understand how the process of resilient recovery from traumatic events are connected. We will shortly turn our attention to Section II: A Review of the Literature of Resiliency: Historical and current theoretical applications. However, I would first like you to turn to my thesis journal entry to discover what Robert Dixon, horticulturalist has to say about the analogy of ferns with resilient people.

Thesis Journal Entry: The Analogy of Ferns with Resilient People

Why are ferns a good analogy to make with resilient people? When I first suggested the analogy to Robert Dixon, horticulturalist, he greeted it with enthusiasm. He explained that the two major divisions in the plant kingdom are between flowering plants and non-flowering plants. Ferns are non-flowering plants and have large fronds. Fern allies have smaller fronds which, according to Robert, probably evolved that way because they hold moisture better than the larger-fronded ferns.

In drawing an analogy that connected ferns and fern allies to resilient people, I offered the suggestion that generally, most people view flowers as being more attractive than ferns. By the same token, I observe that it is precisely because they do not bloom that ferns are not considered as attractive as their flowering neighbours. In the same vein, I suggest that there is an inherent societal bias that suggests that only people raised in sunny positive environments can flower...

However, I learned further in my discussions with Robert Dixon that the fern equivalents of seeds or "spores" (which grow on the underside of the fern leaf), allow many fern species to not only reproduce but to make clones of themselves when reproduction is not possible. Similarly, I suggest that resilient people are like ferns, in the sense that they may not flower, but they blossom in their own unique way. Perhaps such resilient ones, like ferns, have their own inner "spores" of hidden strength which may not be readily apparent to others.

In terms of the adaptability of ferns to many different kinds of environments, I draw the analogy that as ferns continually evolve-- resilient people evolve, as many different species of ferns are difficult to classify--so too are resilient people difficult to classify, as ferns are often used as healing plants--likewise resilient people from traumatized backgrounds sometimes become healers and work in the helping professions. And, as most ferns grow best in shade -- people become resilient precisely because of

their experiences in non-nurturing environments. I suggest that such resilient ones become adaptable and seek out other places in which to flourish.

Robert Dixon agreed with my analogies of ferns to resilient people, stating that ferns are so adaptable that "many ferns are up in trees hanging off the branches...growing in the crotches of trees...on sandy banks but generally on the north side of the rock instead of in the full sun...and so on..." (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, pp. 5-6.)

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To extrapolate further on this analogy of the adaptability of resilient people, it is necessary that we first turn to definitions of culture, trauma and resiliency, found in Section II: Resiliency: Historical and Current General Theoretical Applications.

*SECTION II: RESILIENCY: HISTORICAL AND CURRENT
GENERAL THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS*

a) Culture, Trauma, and Resiliency

Systems of meaning, culture, and trauma are interconnected. Indeed Alexander McFarlane & Lars Weisaeth (1996) & Alexander McFarlane & Bessel van der Kolk (1996) asserted that it is through cultural and symbolic rituals that human beings are able to endure the anxiety that arises from the uncertainty of life. Moreover, Janoff-Bulman (1992), and McFarlane & van der Kolk (1996) argued that western culture's focus on the "self-sufficient individual" who is in control of his or her destiny, leaves no place for those who have been victimized by trauma. Indeed, John Wilson, Ken Smith, and Suzanne Johnson (1985), argued that the severe stigmatization of survivors of trauma within western culture places the victim of a life-threatening event in an unwinnable quandary. Not to speak of the traumatic event is culturally sanctioned but to speak of one's victimization is to encourage ostracism from the larger society. Moreover, Lerner's (1997) just world hypothesis outlined the parameters of such ostracism in that to acknowledge a vulnerable person's traumatization from outside forces is to violate the non-traumatized person's assumption that they are in control and their world is safe.

Such a viewpoint, McFarlane & van der Kolk (1996) asserted, is in direct opposition to eastern religions and cultures, such as Buddhism which asserts that the very act of living produces suffering and that those who suffer are not responsible for it. Indeed McFarlene et al (1996) further stated that the current (1994) American Psychiatric Association (APA) psychiatric definition of individuals who are suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was a step forward in that it at least acknowledged the suffering of survivors of trauma.

b) Definitions and Various Theories of Resiliency

In an examination of the literature on resiliency, it becomes fairly obvious that part of the problem with studies that measure interpersonal growth in survivors of trauma

is the varied definitions of the concept of resiliency. For instance, in an exhaustive review of definitions pertaining to the term "resiliency" authors Luthar & Zeigler (1991) contended that the term was primarily used to describe such "resiliency" in childhood. To summarize, (Luthar and Zigler) noted that most researchers view resiliency as a biological, psychological, and social process that appears to promote successful adaptation over an individual's life. Central to most researchers' definition of resiliency is the notion of strength in the face of adversity (Rutter, 1990; 1985), finding meaning in some outcome of the trauma (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Taylor, 1983), and making use of meaning in interaction with the outer world. More currently, although definitions of what constitutes resiliency are not definitively precise, Green, Galambos, & Youjung (2006) agreed with Masten (1994) that in general, resiliency is viewed as an ability to both maintain one's competence despite difficulties, and to overcome traumas successfully. Moreover, many researchers, such as Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000), have argued for a greater emphasis on aspects of positive psychology, such as is indicated in the study of resiliency.

c) Resiliency, Self-Reflection and Meaning

Theoretical approaches to defining self-reflection and meaning as an aspect of resilency are well-based in the sociological tradition of symbolic interactionism as in Peggy Thoits (1994) study of the inner agency of homeless adults. Other theorists writing from the symbolic interactionist perspective state that individuals derive a sense of purpose and meaning from interaction or comaraderie with others (Sarbin 1986; & Thoits 1983, 1986). However the actual meanings expressed by individuals within these interactions have for the most part been ignored in subsequent resiliency studies.

Self-understanding and resiliency appear to be paired. For instance, Orenstein (1999) & Janoff-Bulman (1992) noted that in community samples of aging Holocaust victims, researchers found a remarkable degree of psychological well being and resilience and that survivors are not suffering from chronic forms of psychopathology as suggested

by earlier clinical reports. These authors cite resilient Holocaust survivors, particularly in non-clinical populations (Wilson, Harel & Kahana, 1988; Danieli & Yaeli, 1985).

d) Resiliency Within the Framework of Developmental Psychology

Issues of self-understanding and resiliency also appear to be paired within the developmental psychological literature. Indeed Masten, Best & Garmezy (1990) noted that studies of children in high risk situations who managed well were the precursor to studies of both resiliency and developmental psychology (Anthony, 1974, Garmezy, 1974, 1985; Masten, 1994; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 1979, 1993).

To illustrate, Beardslee (1989) found a connection between self-understanding and resiliency in a study of civil rights workers, as well as with childhood cancer survivors, and adolescents with parents with affective disorders. Moreover, Schissel (1993) in an examination of adult children of alcoholics found that such adult children had developed greater ability in managing stress in adulthood than many of their peers. For instance, Fergusson & Lynskey (1996) argued that not all children who have experienced childhood abuse develop psychopathology in adulthood and that such an observation on their part is not uncommon. Likewise, Anthony (1974; 1984) asserted that many adults who were abused as children do not become abusers themselves and, significantly make exceptional parents.

Vaillant (2002), in a longitudinal study of adults who had experienced abuse as children, and Gina O'Connell-Higgins (1994) noted that aspects of altruism combined with compassion existed in resilient adults who had experienced abuse, and such adults possessed these qualities even in the absence of social supports. As well, O'Connell-Higgins, who experienced childhood abuse herself, found that such adults functioned extremely well in the present and that many were involved in the helping professions and committed to social activism. Finally, Masten & Reed, (2002) and O'Connell-Higgins (1994) stated that studies of resilience highlight the importance of approaching this area of research from a multi-faceted perspective and Higgins criticized prior studies of resiliency which focused only on trait psychology aspects in resilient adults.

e) Resiliency as Buffer: Social Support

In terms of actions and camaraderie with others who have suffered, many resiliency theorists have asserted that those individuals who both engaged in actions in the world and had an inner self-understanding of their own behaviour fared the best in life and did not continue the cycle of abuse (Herman 1992b; Kaufman and Zigler, 1987). This then begs the question of what exactly are the buffers that promote resiliency among survivors of trauma? Janoff-Bulman (1992) asserted that such buffers are partly due to interpersonal agency and partly due to environmental interactions through a process of "taking action rather than giving up (in which) survivors can get constructive feedback about the possibilities of a benevolent, meaningful world and a worthy, effective self" (p. 142). From a social support perspective, McFarlane & van Der Kolk (1996) cite Ernest Becker's (1973) work on the sense of social belonging as a buffering against "death anxiety" and they support Janoff-Bulman's (1992) assertions that external validation about the reality of a traumatic experience in a safe and supportive context is a vital aspect of preventing and treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Empirical literature supporting what is currently known as the stress-buffering social support model of resiliency has received extensive validation (Lawrence Cohen, Tanya Hettler, & Crystal L. Park, 1997; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Charles Holahan, Rudolf Moos, & Lisa Bonin, 1997). Indeed, in terms of social support, growth, and personal trauma, McFarlane & van Der Kolk (1996) stated that although first hand experience with trauma may lead to personal suffering, that later self-reflection may act as an incentive that is manifested in social or artistic action. Finally, authors Alexander McFarlane & Rachel Yehuda (1996) argued that an examination of the greater social network that incorporates the meaning aspect of trauma has received little research attention.

f) Resiliency and Positive Psychology Research

In terms of the phenomena of resiliency and positive psychology research, Glen Richardson (2002) stated that such inquiry emerges "as intriguing areas of inquiry that

explore personal and interpersonal gifts and strengths that can be accessed to growth through adversity" (p. 308). Indeed, Richardson provided an insightful review of what he terms "the three waves of resiliency." To summarize, he stated that the first wave of resiliency inquiry was in response to the question of why did some children of high risk situations not succumb to destructive behaviours in adulthood? Thus, the first wave is defined as a time when theorists focused on the developmental assets and protective factors of resiliency. The second wave of resiliency research, Richardson asserted, focused on the process of coping with adversity in a positive manner that utilized the resilient qualities of the individuals studied.

Finally, Glen Richardson defined the third wave of resiliency research as multi-faceted in that it accounts for the combination of environment as well as the spiritual and interpersonal experience of human beings. Wolf, Keane, Kaloupek, Mora & Winde (1993) in their study of positive coping mechanisms among Vietnam veterans found that those who fared the best were able to cognitively reframe their experiences in a meaningful way. Interestingly, resiliency theorists Tedeschi & Calhoun's (1996) post-traumatic growth inventory scale (PTGI) found that the three areas of change among resilient survivors of trauma were self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and a renewed philosophy of life. In fact, these authors noted that the very process of requesting help from others (during such crisis times) enabled one's social network to be positively strengthened.

For Green & Wilson's (1985) study among mental health practitioners as to what conditions practitioners thought contributed to resiliency, "over half of the participants (55%) stated that spirituality/religion was of central importance to people during stressful or disruptive events", (p. 80). Indeed, other theorists such as O'Connell-Higgins (1994) stressed that resilience was a complex, dynamic biopsychosocial/spiritual process and a multi-faceted phenomenon that occurs over the course of one's life span.

Significantly, a number of studies in the area of positive psychology have asserted that such "positive affect" encourages creative thinking and problem solving (Isen,

Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987; Isen & Geva, 1987; Isen, Johnson, Mertz, & Robinson, 1987) while Susan Folkman (1997), cited empirical evidence for the function of positive affect. Furthermore, Barbara Fredrickson (2005) found in her studies that resilient individuals were able to both recognize the effects of stressful situations and to experience positive outcomes during difficult events. Such a dual repertoire of accessing both negative and positive affect relates to their "broaden and build theory"(p.120), that examines how those who thrive during times of stress "broaden" their coping repertoire through cognitive appraisals and self-monitoring of negative affect. Similarly, Jennifer Pals (2006) study of middle aged women who had overcome difficult life experiences, found that those women who were able to articulate coherently positive resolution in their narratives continually strengthened their resiliency throughout their lives.

More recently, Michael Ungar (2004) proposed what he termed as a postmodern, constructionist approach to resiliency studies in which resilient self-definition is the final result of successful negotiations between individuals and their environments. Ungar then criticized prior ecological models which define resiliency in "health despite adversity" dichotomous terms, without acknowledging that resiliency can contain multiple meanings. Signficantly, Ungar recommended that multi-faceted studies that examine resiliency through phenomenological modalities (through the use of qualitative and narrative studies) should be encouraged and that such studies in this area are few.

g) *Summary of Section II: Resiliency: Historical and Current Theoretical Applications*

This section has provided an overview of the specific research concentrations of the resiliency literature. To review, we learned in this study that culture, trauma and resiliency are related at both structural and interpersonal levels; we also reviewed definitions and various theories of resiliency, and noted that those individuals who are able to engage in self-reflection and meaning appear to be resilient. We noted also that other theorists have located resiliency within the framework of developmental

psychology, while other theorists stress the buffering effects of social supports in enhancing resiliency. More recently, we have learned that resiliency has been strongly linked in the area of positive psychology research. Promeniently, Glen Richardson (2002) defined the recent focus as the third wave of resiliency research that is multi-faceted and complex in that it accounts for the combination of both environment and the spiritual and interpersonal experience of human beings. In particular we note that the aspect of resiliency and the spiritual/interpersonal experience of human beings has only recently been deemed as important and we will explore this aspect in the next section. To review then, my current theory of resiliency focuses on a resiliency definition that expands on what Herman (1992a) described as "systems" of meaning within the general framework of positive psychology. And to reiterate, the general purpose of this thesis study is to explore how self-defined resilient people make sense of their experiences of trauma and/of life's difficulties, using multiple modes of inquiry.

In order to expand on the intricacies of how a sense of meaning is derived from those who have gone through trauma and/or difficult life events, particularly in the area of narrative, it is necessary to focus on resiliency, meaning and existential psychology. First, however, I would like to tell you in my thesis journal entry, of a fern ally called "The Resurrection Plant."

Thesis Journal Entry: Fern ally: the Resurrection Plant

Robert Dixon, horticulturalist, tells the story of a young black man from South Africa, who once consulted him because he wanted to know the name of a plant that his grandmother pinned to her window drapes, a plant that she called "Love and Sunshine," (for the purposes of illustration, we will call this young man Clarence.) Apparently when Clarence was a boy in South Africa, his grandmother had pinned a fern ally to the drapes in her house, although she did not know herself what kind of plant it was. In general, Clarence explained to Robert, this plant thrived quite well on the drapes. However when his grandmother would open the drapes to let the sunshine into the house, the plant would withdraw and curl into itself. As a child, Clarence would ask his grandmother "What's it living on?", because he said, when the plant was *not* exposed to the sun, it "would often unfurl and become green and there was no method of support, no method of uptake of moisture, so it looked magical..." (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 12.)

During our interview, Robert Dixon explained to me that this plant, a fern ally is the most resilient of all. It is known by its common name as the "Resurrection Plant, the Robe of Jericho, or Siempre Viva (meaning Everlasting), or by its scientific name selaginella lepidophylla. What made this particular fern ally so unique, Robert said, is that "it actually will blow around, the roots will die away, it will blow around like the Tumbleweed, and if it lands in a puddle, or it rains, it will turn green, grow again, and then when it turns dry, it will curl up again..." (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 12.)

Robert Dixon then further explained that in Clarence's case that his grandmother's resurrection plant was thriving on the humidity in the house without apparently needing soil or water...(See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 12.)

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We now turn to Section III: Resiliency and Meaning.

SECTION III: RESILIENCY AND MEANING
a) Resiliency & Existential Philosophy

It is within the theoretical traditions of existential philosophy with a view toward resiliency and meaning in which I locate this dissertation. To that end, the following theorists provide the insights which were integral to this analysis and from which themes of "making-meaning" will be drawn from the participants interviewed in this study. Such a "making-meaning" through traumatic or difficult life events will therefore infuse both this entire analysis and, conclusions drawn from such an analysis.

To that end, the importance of meaning, symbol, and immortality are important to our understanding of both trauma and resilient recovery. Lifton's (1967) discussion of the phenomenon of the "broken connection" as manifested from a loss of meaning and Viktor Frankl's (1959) work in existential logotherapy are excellent examples of the process involved in re-symbolizing or remaking sense of one's life after surviving traumatic events.

To review, Frankl's work arose out of existential philosophy, developed in the 1920s in Vienna, Austria. However Frankl's particular contribution in the area of existential psychology was his premise of "logotherapy" or "will to meaning' which developed out of his experiences in a concentration camp, during WWII. From such experiences, Frankl (1959) stressed that even when humans are constrained by biological, psychological, or sociological conditions, and, even when all external choices are taken away, an individual "always retains the freedom to choose his attitude toward [such conditions] them." (p.3). Pertinent to this theory are Frankl's observations of others who also survived the camps. He noted that those who survived the best psychologically were individuals who were able to derive meaning from one of three sources -- "by creating a work or doing a deed; by experiencing something or encountering someone; and finally by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering" (p.133).

b) Resiliency & the Trauma Survivor's Search for Meaning

Interdisciplinary research in phenomenology from the perspectives of both sociology and psychology has more recently acknowledged the importance of such "existential meaning constructs" in life narratives. Indeed from the perspective of sociology, a number of theorists (Schutz 1972, Husserl, in Craib 1992; & Robert Prus, 1996) asserted that individuals are active reflective agents who construct their lives, through what Shutz described as "meaning contexts" (p.99), within the shared community or "lifeworld" in which they reside.

For those who have experienced trauma, the search for meaning as well as therapeutic exposure to the traumatic event has been repeatedly linked in the history of the resiliency literature. For instance, authors Grossman & Moore (1994), Anthony (1987 a & b), Murphy & Moriarity (1976), Rutter (1985) and Rutter & Quinton (1984), have challenged the deficit-vulnerability model that views survivors of trauma as victims and instead have argued for the need for models that account for the various aspects that honour resilient individuals who have survived trauma.

How traumatized individuals themselves interpret traumatic events brings us to the question of where do we as human beings derive our meaning constructs as motivations to transform and transcend even the worst experiences of trauma? In a partial answer to this question, from the perspective of psychology, recent research shows that finding personal "meaning" in the midst or aftermath of trauma can lead to a new, more positive philosophy of life (Herman, 1992b; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Taylor, 1989, 1983; Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998).

Researchers such as Leonard Pearlin (1989); Pearlin & Aneshensel (1986); Pearlin & Schooler (1978); and Robin Simon (1997), affirmed that both recording the life narratives and/or role identities of individuals' meaning search, and combining it with the serious life stressors that individuals endure is vital and has not been well covered from the sociological traditions.

Several studies have ascertained that it is the trauma survivor's search for meaning that is involved in processing and eventually overcoming the negative effects of the traumatic experiences (Hendin & Hass, 1984; Herman, 1992b; Tedeschi, Park & Calhoun, 1998; Ursano, Wheatley, Carlson, & Rahe, 1987). Additionally, Herman, (1992b) asserted that "many survivors will transform their experience into creative pursuit or determined social action--embracing a survivor mission as part of their recovery process" (p. 207). Similarly, sociologist Lillian Rubin, in her 1996 book *The Transcendent Child* echoed the assertion that a "survivor mission" is part of the recovery process and criticizes psychological theory in general for not focusing on the "larger social milieu" when assessing resilient recovery from trauma.

Indeed, such constructs point to the fact that the search for purpose and meaning in life is a primary human motivation (Frankl, 1959; Antonovsky, 1987; Janoff-Bulman, 1992).   Additionally, Tedeschi, Park, and Calhoun (1998) and Lam and Grossman (1997) further highlighted the need for combined studies in both quantitative and qualitative data that examines whether "existential meaning sense growth" is possible after trauma and if so what determines such "hardiness" of such individuals who, over time appear to both transform and then transcend their traumatic experiences. Moreover, even earlier studies such as Block & Block (1980) argued for increased longitudinal studies that examined "ego resiliency," while Finkel & Jacobson (1977) stated that certain individuals had the ability to transform and transcend their own trauma "through some cognitive restructuring mechanism" (p. 5).

As early as 24 years ago, Lazarus & Folkman (1984), in discussing meaning through trauma, suggested that coping is largely determined by the meaning that people give to their experiences. Additionally, in terms of meaning and successful adjustment, Roxane Silver & Camille Wortman (1980) stressed that the question of *how* people evaluate life crisis has not received adequate attention from other researchers. To date, some research attention has been given to individual's narrative perceptions toward such

traumatic events, but such research is far from complete. (Tedeschi, Park & Calhoun, 1998; Lam & Grossman, 1997; O'Connell-Higgins, 1994).

For some people, traumatic experiences become the incentive for evaluating and then transforming one's life in a positive manner (Ursano et al, 1995, 1987.)   For instance, researchers such as Shelly Taylor (1983) contended that cancer patients who were able to find something positive in their illness were the least distressed by the disease. As well, from a therapeutic perspective that compared treatment efficacy modalities, Stuart Turner; Alexander McFarlane & Bessel van der Kolk (1996) observed that successful therapies were those in which patients were supported by their therapists in terms of incorporating a combination of "positive meaning making" within the patient's own sense of spirituality.

Both cognitive adaptation and meaning through trauma are stressed in researcher Taylor's (1983) premise that when individuals experience threatening events they "resiliently adapt" until they return to a more normal level of psychological functioning. Moreover, Taylor asserted, such resilient adaptation, is built around themes of restoring self esteem, searching for the meaning in the experience, and gaining mastery over the event in particular and over one's life in general.

In his review of Dunn's (1994) study with women, Glen Richardson (2002) stated that such spiritual measures included purpose of life, locus of control, religiousness/belief in a higher power, creativity, humour, and affect. Optimism and strength appear to be prevalent in the narratives of the resilient, particularly in multi-faceted studies that examined individual's resiliency from physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual perspectives (Carver & Scheier, 2002; O'Connell-Higgins, 1994; Seligman, 1992, 1998, Snyder, 2000 & Snyder & Lorez, 2002; Werner & Smith, 1992, 2001).

c) *Resiliency, Narrative and Spirituality*

Laurel Richardson (2000) discussed the importance of narrative in sociological research stating that "because people can narrativize their own lives, the possiblities of understanding other people's lives as also biographically organized arises" (p. 32.) She

further stated that "social and generational cohesion, as well as social change, depend upon this ability to empathize with the life stories of others" and that the process of telling the story creates and supports a social world that is sociologically significant..."

Furthermore, other researchers, such as Elizabeth Bromley (2005), discussed the importance of person-centered research and narrative-based studies of resiliency. Moreover, the positive effects in voicing one's experience through narrative constructs and spirituality has been noted in a number of studies dealing with individuals who have been traumatized such as William's & Banyard's (1999) study of trauma and memory, and, in Janice Goodman's (2004) and Brune et al's (2002) narrative studies with traumatized refugees. Additionally, recent research indicates that some kind of religious or spiritual experience that is articulated in one's life has a positive effect on health (Taylor, Kemeney, Reed, Bower & Gruneweld, 2000) and that such "spiritual narratives" benefit even those individuals with terminal illnesses, (Nakashima and Canda, 2005).

Researchers, such as Emmons,Cheung & Tehrani (1998) and Csikszentmihalyi, (1990) have generally been involved in the positive psychology movement and have found connections between participants in their studies articulating meaning from their experiences as being related to aspects of their perceived notions of "spirituality." Moreover, in a further discussion of spirituality, resilience and narrative, Angell, Dennis, & Dumain (1998) in a study that examined helping children come to terms with parental death, argued that spirituality was a kind of resilience in which clients could derive strength through speaking the truth of their own resilient narratives. Finally, in discussing the differences between spirituality, faith and religion, these authors stated that spirituality referred to meaning, faith to the capacity to utilize hope for the future, and religion as the more tangible aspect of such faith and spirituality. Gina O'Connell-Higgins (1994) stated that faith in her study of resilient survivors was based on their belief in their ability to both overcome obstacles and endure human relationships. Significantly, both creativity and faith played an important part in the lives of the resilient, and Higgins asserted that they provide a "meaning-making" conviction for

survivors of trauma. Higgins further asserted that "resilience is not a collection of traits but a process that builds on itself over time" and that the "resilient see themselves as people who have continually and self-consciously worked on growing" (p. 4).

d) Resiliency as Positive Illusion

Are notions of spirituality and existential meaning merely illusions that survivors of difficult events utilize as survival mechanisms? Researcher Taylor (1983) asserted in her work with cancer patients that such "psychological illusions" appeared to benefit such patients because it enabled them to "make sense" of the cancer. She further stressed that such patients tend to fare better than those who were unable to envision such illusions, and that such illusions are essential to normal cognitive functioning. Notably, Taylor & Brown (1988) argued that individuals with high self-esteem who foster "positive illusions" in belief systems about their work, their relationships with others, and their ability to engage in creative endeavours tended to fare better in terms of mental health issues. As well, Shlomo Breznitz (1983) also discussed the importance of illusion for mental health. In discussing aspects of illusion and reality in psychological thought, Breznitz contradicted traditional dominant views of mental health that accurate perception of reality is a hallmark of mental health. I contend therefore that such meaning-making as suggested by the authors above support "resilient" psychological constructs suggested in (Frankl 1959) who argued that perceptions of meaning are central to recovery from traumatic events.

e) Summary of Section III: Resiliency and Meaning

This section has explored on a more indepth basis the intricracies of how resiliency and meaning are construed. I began with the linkages between resiliency and existential philosophy. I discussed Lifton's "broken connection" description of post traumatic stress survivors and referred to Frankl's work in logotherapy or "will to meaning." I discussed interdisciplinary research in phenomenology from the perspectives of both sociology and psychology and posed the question of how do

traumatized individuals themselves interpret and bring meaning to their life experiences? I also noted that several studies have ascertained that it is the trauma survivor's search for meaning that is involved in overcoming the negative affects of the traumatic experiences (Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun 1998; Herman, 1992b; and others).

I then referred to the fact that academic attention to "positive meaning making" within the survivor's own sense of spirituality resilience and narrative has also been largely ignored (Turner, McFarlane & van der Kolk, 1996; Angell, Dennis & Dumain (1998.) I also explored the importance of positive illusions (such as creative endeavours that utilize symbol and meaning), endeavours that are sometimes articulated as "spirituality" among survivors of trauma (Taylor, Kemeney, Reed, Bower & Gruneweld, 2000.)

I have also articulated that the survivor's search for meaning is manifested in other areas. Gina O'Connell-Higgins (1994) stated the "resilient see themselves as people who have continually and self-consciously worked on growing" (p. 4). Such an expressed desire for existential growth relates to Herman's (1992b) assertion that "many survivors will transform their experience into creative pursuit or determined social action—embracing a survivor mission as part of their recovery process" (p. 207).

Since aspects of both symbol and meaning appear to be important when one is recovering from trauma, I review Janoff-Bulman's (1992) work on the symbolic aspect of trauma. Indeed, Bulman (1992) asserted that when confronted with life-threatening situations, the individual's symbolic inner world disintegrates. Moreover, I assert that since our symbolic world is the way in which individuals overcompensate for their "fear of death" and attain a sense of immortality, (See Becker 1993; Pyszczynski, et al., 1990 and "Theories of Terror Management"), the post-traumatic stress response of some survivors of trauma is due to the loss of such connection and symbolization. Could it be that such inner loss might possibly be re-connected through conceptions of one's re-awakened sense of "meaning or purpose" which has sometimes been articulated as "spirituality" by trauma survivors? Could it also be that the "symbolic" utilization of

creative activities such as that encountered during the art process, might possibly re-connect this lost symbolization as well?   For instance, Benard (2004) pointed to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) research that suggested a linkage between creativity and mental health among those who have overcome traumatic experiences.

In order to explore these queries further, we move onto Section IV: Resiliency and Art, but first, I invite you to examine my thesis journal entry: "Of Art, Trauma, amd Resiliency in Process Artwork."

Thesis Journal Entry: Of Art, Trauma and Resiliency in Process Artwork

　　　　In both my private practice as a psychologist working with survivors of trauma and in my theoretical research into art and trauma, I am continually impressed by the non-verbal ways in which individuals communicate their experience.

　　　　I recall a book written some time ago that dealt with the Protestant Reformation in England during the late 1500s to mid 1600s. In the book there was a passage that discussed how items of "popery" or "Catholicism" were destroyed everywhere and art and images of God, of Jesus, and of the saints were deemed to be idols. At that time there was a very famous religious artist who sculpted and painted such items and refused to stop doing so. For his efforts, he was incarcerated and tortured until his hands were completely mangled. Only when his oppressors were certain that he would never be able to sculpt, draw, paint or create again did they free him. And, once freed, he continued to create, only this time his artistic work was even more beautiful than before…

<p align="center">*****</p>

The first picture, drawn by author in her early 20's

The second picture drawn by author in her late 30's

　　　　We now turn to Section IV: Resiliency and Art.

SECTION IV: RESILIENCY AND ART
a) Resiliency, Meaning Constructs & Art

In the last section we discussed how individuals who experience trauma often lose their ability to symbolize and that such a loss of the symbolization process sometimes manifests itself in post-traumatic stress responses. I also asserted that lost symbolization, can be reconnected through the "symbolic" utilization of creative activities such as that encountered during the art process. It follows therefore that the utilization of art as a symbol of resiliency and as a research modality is, an excellent way to learn about the process of resiliency. Furthermore, it is an added tool through which one can learn more about individual "meaning constructs through trauma." Researchers Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi (2002) pointed out that the utilization of creative endeavours allow for participants to experience "flow" in the process of total engagement of the creative act. They asserted further that such a "flow" allows one to detach oneself from current problems, thus providing a "buffer against adversity."

One is then drawn to the question of how to render visible human experience, and in particular human experience with trauma, in a manner that is also sensitive to the subjective "meaning" experiences of survivors of trauma? Too often quantitative-focused analyses of trauma are not sensitive to cross-cultural, gender and/or other concerns (such as categorizing the various symptoms that define post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] as in the current *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association,* [1994] the *DSM-IV*). One is then drawn to the following question: how is it possible to render visible both the qualitative and narrative responses of the individual who is the subject of the analyses?

To answer in part, Janoff-Bulman (1992) in her work with trauma survivors stated that visual imagery is often regarded as the most important part of a traumatic memory and is typically associated with very powerful emotions. Additionally, art theorists Ullman & Brothers (1988) contended that when individuals' "meaning symbols are

shattered" (p. 3) that post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is often the result. Other researchers who work in the area of resiliency such as O'Connell-Higgins, (1994), and Wolin & Wolin, (1993) stressed that both imagination and creativity play a crucial role in the lives of the resilient in terms of overcoming trauma. Moreover, those who work with abuse survivors such as Backos & Pagon, (1999), and Herman, (1992 a & b) stressed that ongoing trauma tends to be "encoded visually," and therefore such needs are best "voiced" within creative arts modalities, such as the use of art as therapy, a view that is also voiced by those who work with refugees, (Golub, 1989; Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 1999; Cohen, 1996; van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1991).

Significantly, Herman (1992 a & b) in her discussion of the needs of abuse survivors to "voice" their own experience, argued that "creating pictures may represent the most effective initial approach to these indelible images " (p.177). Finally, Laub & Podell (1995) asserted further that such artistic images of the traumatized work to counteract the "powerful [political, sociological, and psychological] forces that promote the suppression, repression and denial of [traumatic] events" (p. 998).

b) Resiliency and Art

To better illuminate the history of how art and trauma have come to be linked, I point to the fact that although art has always been a part of the human condition, the use of drawings as systematic methodology for understanding people is relatively recent. Such attention to art and trauma came to mainstream attention after WWI when drawings were used as methodology to aid war veterans suffering from what is now known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but was then termed "shellshock" (Kardiner & Spiegel, 1947).

The early decades of North America saw an embrace of positivist over phenomenological psychology which focused largely on quantitative personality testing in its approaches to the study of individuals. By the mid-1930s, however (and partly influenced by the more phenomenological approaches to personality prevalent in Europe), a greater appreciation of the importance of qualitative approaches to personality

emerged. Although such qualitative approaches were still psychoanalytic in application, the interpretation of drawings as a "a method for investigating fantasies" (Morgan and Murray, 1935; Murray, 1951, 1943) gained momentum.

During this time period, other drawing-related analysis developed and became codified: the Bender's (1938) visual motor Gestalt test (in Bender 1962), Goodenough's (1926) "draw a man" test, and Karen Machover's (1949) "draw-a-person" test (DAP). Finally, Buck's (1948) and Buck & Hammer's (1969) house-tree-person (HTP) drawing modalities, later became codified into the projective testing nomenclature and were used widely particularly in conjunction with standardized personality tests, and specifically with children, (no doubt due to the HTP's universal applicability to human experience).

As early as the 1950s, Baumgarten & Tramer (1952) compared drawings from 200 Serbian children who had experienced war but were living in a Swiss refugee camp, during WWII, and then compared the drawings to American children who had not experienced war. Victor Barnouw (1969) asserted, that his examination of the house-tree-person (HTP) drawings of students from India, Japan, and the United States, provided a "highly promising technique" for studies in the field of culture and personality, while more recently, Goff-Jones (1997) used art therapy with a community of survivors. Furthermore, Kalmanowitz & Lloyd (1999) used art with refugees in the former Yugoslavia, and Soutter (1994) conducted a comparative study of HTP drawings with children from Ireland and Oman. Moreover, HTP drawing analysis has also been applied to older adults, although on a less frequent basis, (Rymer, 1987).

In terms of early analysis of projective drawings, Hammer & Piotrowski (1953) found significant reliability in the rating of the degree of hostility in the HTP drawings of 400 children. For aspects of validity in house-tree-person HTP drawings, Jolles (1952, 1953) analysis of the HTP's of over 2,500 children found some support for the theory that one projects their life experiences onto such projective drawings, particularly in the "draw the person" aspect of HTP. On a separate note, in terms of the reliability and validity of projective testing, (of which the HTP is only one example), Albee and Hamlin

(1950b) judged personality adjustment from drawings of a global method and by means of a rating scale and found positive indications of reliability. However, during the history of the evolution of projective drawings, it became apparent that greater intersubjective client material was enhanced when such drawings had the aspect of *movement* in their composition. Initially, changes such as the kinetic family drawing (KFD), which instructed participants to draw pictures of their family engaging in some kind of action or activity, provided rich interpersonal information on family dynamics and has been further analyzed for computer variables in fairly extensive research (O'Brien & Patton, 1974; Burns, 1982; Knoff & Prout, 1985). More recently, Burns (1987) added a kinetic or action component to Buck's more standardized non-movement HTP. For instance, in Burns (1987) movement kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP), participants were asked to illustrate a person, a house, and a tree engaging in some kind of action.

Finally, from a research perspective using projective art[4], Bolander (1977) stressed that the open-ended nature of many of the projective art procedures appeared to elicit rich detail and originality of response on the part of the subject. Historically, Frank (1939, 1948, in Bolander 1977), stressed a kind of "temporal validity" where longitudinal studies, life history and projective art could be recorded over time.

c) Summary of Section IV: Resiliency and Art

In this section I have examined the work of a number of therapists who haved stressed that since ongoing trauma tends to be "encoded visually" that such needs are best "voiced" within creative arts modalities (Cohen, 1996; van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1991.) To review, Laub & Podell (1995) contended that such artistic images of the traumatized work to counteract the "powerful [political, sociological and psychological] forces that promote the suppression, repression and denial of [traumatic] events."

I have further noted that since engaging in some kind of action appears to assist survivors of trauma, it then makes sense that Burns (1987) movement-oriented KHTP would be the best projective art modality in which to assist those who have experienced

such events. Additionally, I also refer to art therapy's traditional emphasis on the creative process of client experience over projective art's therapeutic interpretation of client drawings. It therefore would make sense that using such art methodologies might aid thesis participants in an expression of their resiliency through such a creative process.

To review, within the framework of a qualitative study that also combines some psychometric features, I assert that both narrative and art are excellent research modalities to more fully understand how individuals use resiliency and derive meaning from their difficult or traumatic life experiences. It is to Section V: Methodology, that we now turn to in order to determine how such a multimodal examination will be conducted.

SECTION V: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN
 a) Introduction to Methodology & Research Design

Throughout the literature review, it becomes apparent that the process of narrative and human interaction is closely tied to human experience. Indeed, Laurel Richardson (1997) stated that narrative endeavours within sociological research are absolutely essential in the understanding of such human experiences. In a similar vein, Kenneth Plummer (2001), asserted that a person's narrative stories in interaction with society are always bound up with history and environment and that many social science disciplines (such as sociology, psychology and anthropology) have expanded in their collective disciplines to focus more thoroughly on the importance of life stories and narratives. Moreover, in terms of interviewer/interviewee collaboration, both Plummer (2001) Atkinson (1998) & Spradley (1979) stressed the importance of the interviewer being familiar with the interviewee's social world and for both of them to work in conjunction with one another in the telling of the life story.

Equally important, from the perspective of resiliency and art, Herman (1992 a & b) in her discussion of the needs of abuse survivors to "voice" their own experience, argued that "creating pictures may represent the most effective initial approach to these indelible images" (p.177). Furthermore, Laub & Podell (1995) asserted that such artistic images of the traumatized work to counteract the "powerful [political, sociological, and psychological] forces that promote the suppression, repression and denial of [traumatic] events" (p. 998).

To answer in part, Janoff-Bulman (1992) in her work with trauma survivors stated that visual imagery is often regarded as the most important part of a traumatic memory and is typically associated with very powerful emotions. Additionally, art theorists Ullman & Brothers (1988) contended that when individuals' "meaning symbols are shattered" (p. 3) that post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is often the result. Other researchers who work in the area of resiliency such as O'Connell-Higgins (1994), and

Wolin & Wolin (1993) stressed that both imagination and creativity play a crucial role in the lives of the resilient in terms of overcoming trauma. Moreover, those who work with abuse survivors such as Backos & Pagon (1999), and Herman (1992 a & b) stressed that ongoing trauma tends to be "encoded visually," and therefore such needs are best "voiced" within creative arts modalities, such as the use of art as therapy, a view that is also voiced by those who work with refugees (Golub, 1989, Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 1999, Cohen, 1996 and van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1991).

Within the exploratory multi-modal context of this thesis study therefore, I intend to explore the intricacies of how meaning is construed by resilient participants in the study. I further intend to expand both definitional and theoretical aspects of the study of resiliency in a manner that combines narrative and art modalities. I also assert that for full resilient recovery to occur, a traumatized individual must be able to re-connect the "broken connection" state that Lifton (1979) described. In this study I suggest that one of the modalities of such "reconnection" is through the "symbolic" utilization of creative activities such as that encountered during the art process. (See Appendix I)

Similarly, Viktor Frankl (1961) described in his theory of logotherapy, the process whereby a traumatized individual discovers their "will to meaning" and hence comprehends a "larger reason" for their suffering. Such comprehension is another characterization of how resilient individuals are able to bring "purpose and meaning" to their difficult life experiences. Additionally, I contend that issues of immortality are connected in some way with what trauma survivors have sometimes referred to in their narratives as "spirituality" in which individuals overcompensate for their "fear of death" and attain a sense of immortality. (See Becker 1993, Pyszczynski et al., 1990 and "Theories on Terror Management.") To that end, I assert that a fear of death and conceptions of "spirituality" in trauma survivor's narratives are one way that individuals compensate for such death anxiety, while art is another modality in which individuals compensate for such mortality fears.

The question for me then became, how was I to enhance such resilient survivor dialogue in the context of this thesis study? To review, most theorists agree that recovery from trauma is a function of both internal agency and external structure. Furthermore, although some attention has been given to the fact that the "meaning" people attach to their experience seems to be key, little attention has been given to the narrative and subjective experiences of those who have actually experienced the trauma. In particular, the intricacies of how such meaning is interpreted by the survivor have largely been ignored.

Finally, although some attention has been given to the fact that "drawing" their experiences seems to aid survivors of trauma who are unable to "speak" their truth, little attention has been given to the process of combining both the narrative subjective experiences of those who have suffered with a simultaneous examination of how survivors themselves interpret their own drawing experiences.

b) Research Design

To reiterate, the purpose of this research is to explore how self-defined resilient people make sense of their experiences of trauma and/or life's difficulties, using multiple modes of inquiry. In order to accomplish this task, the following will be examined:

1) definitions of resiliency and how resilient individuals perceive their resiliency.

2) the nature and duration of the trauma and several different environmental and interpersonal factors that contributed to how the individuals maintained their resiliency through their experiences with trauma and/or life's difficulties.

This doctoral study primarily incorporates a qualitative research design. However, for the purpose of categorizing the description of different types of traumas and /or life's difficulties experienced by participants, I found it useful to use Edna Foa's (1995) post-traumatic stress scale (PDS). Foa's PDS offered a checklist of types of traumas that may result in post-traumatic stress. I adapted Foa's scale according to type, duration and severity of trauma. Additionally, to help me organize further participant's responses

during the qualitative part of the analysis, I found it useful to include psychometric testing such as Tedeschi & Calhoun's (1996) post traumatic growth inventory (PTGI) scale and Watson, Clark & Tellegen (1988) positive and negative affect scale [PANAS].) All of these more quantitatively-based tests however are not included in the Appendices section.

Although I am reluctant to stratify types and reactions to trauma on PDS quantitative scales, the prevailing literature does point to the effect that repeated abuse is indicative of greater traumatization (Bernat, Ronfeldt, Calhoun, & Arias, 1998, Cloitre, Scarvalone, & Difede, 1997). Additionally, the literature points to the fact that abuse encountered in childhood tends to be more severe since the personality in childhood is not fully formed (Follette, Polusny, Bechtle & Naugle, 1996; Herman, 1992 a & b; Anderson & Foy, 1993; Briere & Conte, 1993, Briere, 1988; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; & Boudewyn & Liem, 1995). I also calculated the duration and repetitive nature of participant's types of traumas and/or life's difficulties.

When I began this thesis study, I postulated that the trauma sustained by participants in the study who had experienced childhood sexual *and* physical abuse, and encounters in war would manifest in participants' narratives as being experienced as greater trauma, depending on the severity and frequency of such an occurence (Follette et al 1996; Harvey, 1996; Donovan & Padin-Rivera, 1996). I also postulated that an adult who had *not* experienced childhood abuse but had experienced sexual assault and war, would be considered by this researcher, at the same level of severity as someone who had experienced repeated childhood sexual and physical abuse alone. Additionally, I have used modalities from both Lifton's (1967) definition of the "broken connection" and Viktor Frankl's (1959) logotherapy to develop a research study that also included aspects of "reconnecting the symbol" through the narrative part of the interview (which includes questions pertaining to meaning) and through the art and projective art processes of the qualitative interviews. (See Appendix I and Methodology section.)

To my knowledge, in no systematic way in either the sociological or psychological literature has there been an effort to examine simultaneously in a single multi-modal qualitative study, the following research methodologies:

a) the utilization of art and narrative modalities among survivors of childhood abuse, trauma and war (as defined by Foa's PDS Scale), and another group of individuals who did not appear to have suffered such severe abuse or trauma (and who had experienced more normative difficulties in life, such as the death of a beloved grandparent, for instance.)

To expand further, I define resiliency as encapsulated within individuals who express the greatest "meaning and/or interpersonal growth through trauma and/or difficult life experiences, and who are in the process of incorporating their experiences into meaningful lived experience."[5]

Additionally, I propose that such a resilient process is manifested in aspects of creativity, comaraderie and social justice issues and/or spiritual/religious pursuits. To be more succinct, resiliency is related to the ability of participants to clearly articulate in a consistent manner their meaningful symbols of narrative, freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, and projective art drawings of kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) in a coherently and similar thematic manner.[6,7]

To that end, I propose that, although social-psychological in nature, this study is also sociological as theoretical approaches to defining self-reflection and meaning as an aspect of resiliency are well-based in such sociological traditions of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1981, Plummer, 1995, 1999, 2000). From the symbolic interactionist perspective, individuals derive a sense of purpose and meaning from interaction with others (Sarbin 1986; Thoits, 1983, 1986; and Laurel Richardson, 1992, 1997, 2000). Therefore, the exploration within this thesis study of how participants find a sense of meaning comparing those who have experienced greater trauma and those who have experienced more normative difficulties, fits the sociological genre well.

Indeed, Plummer (2001) asserts that the modern tendency for self-understanding and reflection, speaks to the sociological view of understanding human agency in the context of modernity and that researchers must examine human subjectivity and creativity in the context of how individuals actively respond to difficult structural constraints within their environments.

In terms of combined studies using qualitative (but with some attention to quantitative) methodology Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995) stressed that such an approach is essential particularly with studies measuring post-traumatic growth [and resiliency]. Furthermore, these authors point to Guba and Lincoln's (1989) definitions of "trustworthiness" in that combined methodologies allow an "exploration of the individual's own understanding of his or her experience, but within a set of procedures that permits some evaluation of the validity or 'trustworthiness' of the data" (p.219).

Moreover, Schwandt (2000) argued that qualitative field work speaks to the tradition of phenomenological sociology [and psychology.] Schwandt stated that such fieldwork engenders an intuitive empathy and active involvement in the process of understanding narrative from the perspective of one's subjects. As a result of such involvement, there must be a continuing process of "critical self-inquiry" which likewise involves a "thorough analysis of the entire research process itself, " thereby establishing the "validity of accounts of social phenomena" (p. 9).

In a similar manner, Clandinin & Connelly (2000) spoke to the importance of participants' narratives, stating that it is vital in terms of understanding in an indepth manner, the "general construct of continuity in individuals' lives" (p. 3). Clandinin & Connelly (2000) & Laurel Richardson (1992, 1997, and 2000) also described how narrative inquirers and researchers are continually needing to negotiate relationships between themselves and participants.

Following these traditions therefore, the focus of this study examined the life histories of participants during the narrative portion of the interview. Such interviewing

focused on participants' meaningful interpretations of their experiences of trauma and/or life's difficulties. In addition, the coding of the narrative and art analysis followed a manner similar to what Anselm Strauss (1987) described in which sequential analysis of qualitative methodology allows for a reflection back upon the data concerning the subjects' interpretation as well as the researcher's interpretation of such material. Strauss defined the initial stages of such analysis as a form of coding for in subjective analysis. Consequently, this researcher wrote ongoing reflective notes to herself following the narrative and/or art interviews of subjects, (see thesis journal notes that preface each section.) I likewise used similar ethnomethodological coding as defined by Strauss and I continually reflected upon my interpretation of a participant's narrative to the participants themselves to ensure accurate interpretation of such narratives. Such a process is similar to "mixed genre" methodology that Laurel Richardson (1997) recommended for narrative research. Finally, throughout this process, I utilized methodology similar to Strauss' "Methods of Agreement and Difference" to examine what is common and different across such cases. These commonalities and differences were then summarized in visual tables utilizing such methods as the Nominal Group Table technique (Rappaport, 1977), in which thesis participants' responses are summarized into recurring themes.

Significantly, the qualitative part of this study, (as encapsulated in the narrative interviews, freestyle art drawings of the human spirit and the movement-oriented Kinetic-House-Tree-Person (KHTP) projective art analysis, was continually compared with other narratives and art work of participants in order to draw out similar themes of how resiliency was both defined and maintained. I employed similar methodology to what ethnographer James Spradley (1979) described as "domain analysis" in which all qualitative data (from researcher's notes and subjects' responses) were linked to broader integrating themes. Such an ongoing process enabled new ideas and formulations concerning resiliency to be constructed.

In summary then, these different methodologies were used in order to evaluate where such different methods diverge and converge in terms of measuring degrees of trauma and subsequent responses to such trauma and/or life's difficulties.

c) Methodology

For the purpose of this study, subjects were drawn firstly from three groups: university classroom students, passive recruitees at the university, immigrants and/or refugees (from the community at large.) For each of these groups the following format was used:

A) Classroom student population: For this group, the Research Statement, was read out by this researcher in two undergraduate Sociology classes that comprised about 500 students. From this group, 274 students filled out the demographic portion of the questionnaires, and of this number, 66 stated that they would be willing to participate further in a study that examined resiliency. These 66 persons were then stratified according to different ages, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and whether or not they perceived their experiences as being of a traumatic nature or of more normative life difficulties. Such stratification provided a greater cross section of individuals and from this number; 16 individuals (who were under 30 years of age), were drawn randomly.

B) Passive recruitment of individuals from the University of Alberta. Passive recruitees were recruited through advertising with the first four paragraphs of the Research Statement, printed on posters that listed this researcher's private practice number, and were posted around campus. For this first group, once contact was made with me, the Demographic Questionnaire was administered and potential thesis participants were then asked to check off the bottom part of the Research Statement as to whether or not they have experienced trauma and/or life's difficulties. Dr. Baha Abu-Laban, director of the Prairie Centre, University of Alberta, provided me with possible contacts for immigrant/refugee populations. However, shortly after I began this phase of the recruitment, Sept 11/01 occurred and some of my refugee contacts were understandably reluctant to participate. Therefore, the immigrant sample populations were largely drawn

from additional posters displayed around the city of Edmonton as well as at the university.

 For this second group of passive recruitees, 11 were eventually chosen. In response to such poster samples, 39 individuals called this researcher's private practice number wanting to participate. Because the purpose of this research was to measure how participants construct meaning through either traumatic or difficult experiences, several participants from the most widely dispersed backgrounds were stratified first according to age—those from 30 to 49 and those over 50 years of age. From this second group, Emily, who was 48-years-old at the time I interviewed her, and Giselle who was 45-years-of-age were drawn. These two individuals were from out of province and heard about the study from friends within Edmonton who had seen the poster displays around the city and/or at the University.

 Additionally, Kristi, 51-years-old, and Chloe, who was 52-years-old, saw the poster advertisements and requested to be in the study. Leslie who was 34-years-of-age; and Julie, who was 50-years-old, also heard of the study via the poster advertisements and word of mouth and asked to participate. Likewise, Harold and Charron, respectively 54-and 45-years-old, also heard of the study through word-of-mouth contacts, as did 34 - year old Anwar. Additionally, since one of the original participants from the student sample (who was the only Moslem student in the group), dropped out of the study, I contacted members of religious organizations with the posters and asked them to display them or to (via word of mouth) inform their respective communities about the study taking place. In this manner, Aisha who was 28 years of age and the only Muslim in the group, heard about the study from her respective neighbour (who heard about it from her religious leader.)

d) The Interviews:

 The first sample of 16 thesis participants (randomly drawn from two undergraduate student classes) was contacted by this researcher by phone over one weekend to explain to them further about what the study entailed. For the second sample

of passive recruitees, 39 individuals from this group contacted the researcher by phone at her private practice number. Such individuals had heard about the study either through posters displayed throughout the university and/or city, or from religious leaders, friends, or via word of mouth. This researcher likewise stratified this group according to age, randomly choosing those who were over 30, over 40, and over 50-years-of- age. Of this number, 11 were eventually drawn, bringing our total number of thesis participants to 27 individuals.

The remaining thesis participants then met with me for a face-to-face interview so that I could determine their psychological readiness for such a study. At this point I met with participants in private clinic rooms at the University of Alberta and instructed them that if at any point they wanted to end and/or censor any part of the interview, they were welcome to do so. Additionally, the individuals were told that they could avail themselves of free counselling at the University should they choose to do so. Within one week after the interviews this researcher called participants to determine the following: if they needed to avail themselves of counseling, if they had any questions or concerns with respect to the study; how often they wished to be called; whether or not they would like to see a therapist and to consult the subject concerning the ongoing nature of the research study.

For each of the 27 thesis participants chosen, a three hour interview was conducted. The first hour of the interview involved the narrative taped interview; the second hour consisted of the artwork interview, and the third hour, the psychometric testing was conducted. Additionally, the following methodology and interview format in descending order, was utilized:

1) the narrative taped interview
2) the freestyle art drawing of the human spirit
3) the Kinetic-House-Tree-Person (KHTP) projective drawings
4) Psychometric testing (post-traumatic stress diagnostic [PDS Scale], the post traumatic growth inventory [PTGI], and the positive and negative affect scale [PANAS].)

From the different theoretical perspectives concerning trauma and resiliency, I synthesized the various viewpoints into common genres and from such genres I then extracted research questions for the Narrative Interview portion. The purpose of the research is to explore how self-defined resilient people make sense of their experiences of trauma and/or life's difficulties, using multiple modes of inquiry. To review, the purpose of the research is also to investigate the nature and duration of the trauma and the several different environmental and interpersonal factors that contributed to how the individuals maintained their resiliency through their experiences with trauma and/or life's difficulties.

The Narrative Interview

The taped interviews lasted 1 to 1.5 hours and followed a directed question format although participants were allowed to talk at length on any other issue that they felt contributed to their resiliency. Moreover, the thematic research questions posed during the narratives were derived from the review of the literature on resiliency and were related to the following theme/s, as reviewed above:

1) What is your definition of resiliency?
2) Why do you see yourself as resilient?
3) What type of trauma and/or life's difficulties did you overcome?
4) How did you get through your trauma and/or life's difficulties?
5) What are your feelings toward death and/or immortality?
6) Would you share your trauma and/or life's difficulties with others?
7) What gives your life meaning and/or gives you the ability to go on?
8) Do you feel you are creative? If so, what creative aspects do you feel you used in being resilient?

Freestyle Art Drawings of the Human Spirit

The freestyle art drawing of the human spirit emphasized the creative process of client experience over the therapeutic interpretation of client drawing prevalent in projective art analysis. Therefore, during the questions pertaining to the freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, I asked the participant to draw a picture of their human spirit

in any way they envisioned. Participants were then asked what art medium and paper they wanted to use, having a choice of pastels/coloured pencils/lead pencils and an assortment of plain and coloured paper as well as sketching paper. I then left the room for 30 minutes to one hour so as not to influence their drawing. When they had completed their drawing, I returned and had them explain what the drawing meant to them in terms of their human spirit.

Projective Art: Kinetic-House-Tree-Person Drawings

Qualitative sociological research views individuals as active human agents who interact in the social world, (Plummer, 2001 & Blumer, 1979). Therefore, it makes sense that such "active human agents" (who visualize themselves in action), parallel in a similar vein, the process of art participants who, while engaging in projective art, also have the opportunity to portray themselves in action. I assert that creative activities focused on such action, may better help researchers understand the process of how individuals engage in resilient action. In the literature review, we also discussed how individuals who experience trauma often lose their ability to symbolize. During that review, I also asserted that lost symbolization can be reconnected through creative activities such as art, that portray a person as an active agent in creative processes. It follows then that the utilization of art as a symbol of resiliency and as a research modality is an excellent way to learn about the process of resiliency.

Moreover, during the history of the evolution of projective drawings, in the literature review it was noted that when drawings had aspects of movement in their composition then greater intersubjective client material was enhanced. Such enhancement appeared to promote higher self-efficacy among clients involved in the drawing process. As a result, Burns (1987) introduced the *movement- oriented* kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) drawings, where participants were asked to illustrate a person, a house, and a tree engaging in some kind of action. Such a movement-oriented KHTP allowed for greater interpersonal information on family dynamics and interpersonal

action (O'Brien & Patton, 1974; Burns, 1982; and Knoff & Prout, 1985). With such an addition to the more standardized *non-movement oriented* house-tree-person [HTP]), Burns compensated for the fact that traditional non-movement oriented house-tree-person (HTP) paradigms tend to project static drawings that do not tap into both aspects of "action and meaning" in the individual's inner world.

Burns then extrapolated on the movement-oriented KHTP from the perspective of Maslowian theory where human beings are viewed in totality. Such a theory is focused less on the psychopathological focus of psychoanalytic interpretations of the more traditional non-movement HTP and instead is focused more on normalcy and growth in the pictoral aspects of HTP. Indeed Maslowian interpretations of the traditional HTP focused instead on the narratives that draw-ers developed concerning themselves, their interactions with other human beings, as well as their environment (Maslow 1954, 1962, in Burns, 1987). It follows therefore, that a Maslowian perspective toward the interpretation of KHTP provides a greater appreciation for the resilient aspect of human beings.

Furthermore, Burns (1987) recommended that something might be gained from viewing the house, the tree, and the person in action on the same piece of paper. For thesis participants, therefore, I utilized his instructions of "Draw a house, a tree and a whole person on this piece of paper with some kind of action. Try to draw a whole person, not a cartoon or stick figure."

From Burn's assertions as listed above, I therefore conducted a KHTP in which I combined both questions from Burns movement-oriented KHTP which is based on Maslowian ideology and the more traditional non-movement oriented HTP, which is based on Freudian psychoanalytic theory. In further descriptions of such methodology I used the acronym KHTP.

e) Analysis of Qualitative Data

On a general basis then, the foci of the analysis examined repeated themes that were brought up by participants in both the qualitative and quantitative data. Such

themes examined symbolization throughout the narrative and art analysis. Repeatedly, the qualitative part of this study, as encapsulated in the narrative interviews and art and projective art analysis, was continually compared (in terms of thematic similarities) both within each participants work, and thematic similarities with other participants' narratives and artwork. To give an example of recurring themes within each participant narrative, I also recorded the length of time that each participant spent on each of the eight questions posed during the narrative.[8]

Such commonalities and differences were then either mentioned during the narrative final summaries and/or placed in visual tables utilizing such methods as the Nominal Group Table technique in which thesis participants responses are summarized into recurring themes. Such coding follows to some extent qualitative methodologies similar to what both Anselm Strauss (1987) and James Spradley (1979) recommended. In conjunction with qualitative methodological coding, the personal taped narratives of individuals who participated in this study were transcribed verbatim and this researcher's interpretations of participants' narratives were then confirmed or disconfirmed.

The second taped interview was initiated in order to check the accuracy of the researcher's perceptions with that of participants. This was to guard against what Clandinin & Connelly (2000) stated as the "co-optation of voice" on the part of the researcher speaking "for" the participants. Clandinin then stated that "one of the poignant moments in narrative inquiry is always the moment when research texts are shared with participants" (p.128).

I reviewed Laurel Richardson's (1997) emphasis on the five sociologically significant ways to analyze narrative studies. She listed these as the everyday, the autobiographical, the biographical, the cultural, and, most importantly for this thesis study, the collective story (p.236). In discussing such "evocative forms" of narrative (of which poetry is one that is mentioned at the beginning and end of this thesis), Richardson recommended a combination of "mixed genres" when engaging in narrative explorations (p.236). From the postmodernist perspective, such a methodological exploration process

recognizes the many different levels of interpretation when analyzing the process of narrative. Finally, after the first and second drafts of this thesis were completed, this researcher met with those participants who chose to do so, to look over the final interview analysis (and to check it for accuracy) before the thesis was completed.

f) Bias in Research Design

A discussion of bias is important for any proposed thesis study. On a general basis, it is quite possible that because my thesis research was focused on "purpose and meaning contexts through trauma and/or life's difficulties," that I could have influenced participants (however indirectly, and particularly during the narrative portion of the interviewing) to portray themselves as more "resilient" than they may in fact be. In terms of such a potential for bias, I argue that during the standard psychiatric and/or psychological interviewing of subjects, therapists are primarily trained to look for "pathology" in individuals. Such training may indeed engender a greater negative response from subjects because of the focus of such standard interviewing practices. Conversely, the current proposed research may indeed have evoked a more "resilient" response from subjects. However, it is precisely such resilient responses that, I argue, directly challenge the deficit-vulnerability paradigms applied to survivors of trauma in traditional mental health practice. Moreover, I argue that this study makes visible (through the engagement of both narrative and art work, the personal meaning constructs that account for how participants conceptualize their resiliency in overcoming their various traumas and/or life's difficulties. Finally, cultural factors concerning trauma may have also been an issue. For instance, I was concerned with Islamic prohibition against drawing images of God or Allah. Therefore I broke with standardization for Muslim participant Aisha by showing her (prior to her interview) the other participants' freestyle art drawings of the human spirit. On the other hand, I assert that projective methods used such as house, tree, person analysis, may be less linked to culture than other measures of personality. Indeed, Burns (1987) recommended the utilization of projective art methods to individuals for whom English is a second language.

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And now, I invite you to read my thesis journal entry "The Versatility of Ferns and Resilient People."

Thesis Journal Entry: The Versatility of Ferns & Resilient People

In discussing the different types of ferns and drawing an analogy between such ferns and the different types of resilient people, Robert Dixon, horticulturalist, mentioned that many ferns will use their environment for protection. For instance, he said that ferns often find rock crevices to grow in, where there is more warmth and moisture and that many ferns have developed waxy coatings to protect them from drying winds and cold. Such environmental-seeking protection, Dixon explained, "resembled people who have had problems, they will often seek out others for protection, but there will generally be someone to whom they can shelter behind...somebody that is aware that this soul needs nurturing.."(See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 9.)

When I asked Robert to compare the root system of ferns with that of resilient people he stated that because ferns are a forced-floor plant they will send out their roots everywhere in order to take advantage of any possible opportunity. He stated also that "people can be like that in that they hide their light under a bush...and keep to themselves [until]...the right opportunity...and then they can come into their own..." (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 9.)

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We now turn to Section VI: Results: Summary of the Thesis Participants.

SECTION VI: RESULTS:

Summary of the Thesis Participants

Our lives and the lives of others who touch us are never fixed in linear or physical time. Those who have influenced and impacted our lives continually touch us. Indeed, it is not necessary for those that we love to be physically before us in order to feel their deep and abiding presence. Moreover, Laurel Richardson (1997) stated that people experience and interpret their lives in relationship to time and that they make sense of their lives through narrative interactions. I assert also that it is through such narrative interactions with others that both time and space are suspended, particularly in the influences between participants and researcher that evolve from the qualitative interview. Qualitative researchers Clandinin & Connelly (2000) also spoke to such interconnections stating that narrative and participants' lives intertwine continuously in a way that is "aimed at understanding and making meaning of experience…" (p. 80).

I write from an existential-philosophical and logotherapeutic viewpoint that views a sense of meaning and a higher reason for suffering as key attributes to overcoming trauma and/or life's difficulties. From such a perspective, during the process of writing this thesis, I identified participants generally as metaphorically resembling ferns in terms of their resiliency. Specifically, however, I also identified each participant with a label that I felt represented their own metaphorical and symbolization process. To that end, this researcher identified to some extent with most of the 27 thesis participants in this study. To aid in this process of identification, I took a picture of each participant (with the exception of one person who did not want her photograph taken). In recording each of their narratives (and subsequent interviews and revisions of those narratives) I would refer again and again to the photographs whenever I needed to recapture the essence of their stories and to remind myself of their unique individuality.

To review, the purpose of this thesis research is to explore how self-defined resilient people make sense of their experiences of trauma and/or life's difficulties, using

multiple modes of inquiry. To that end, in the literature review, I synthesized the various viewpoints into some common genres as listed below:

1) definitions of resiliency and how resilient individuals perceive their resiliency

2) the nature and duration of the trauma and the several different environmental and interpersonal factors that contributed to how the individuals maintained their resiliency through their experiences with trauma and/or life's difficulties.

In my use of ferns as an analogy for resilient people, I refer to Robert Dixon, who (in discussing the root system of ferns) explained that although ferns do not have deep roots, they do have massive mats of root which operate like runners under the surface of the soil. Such roots, however tenuous, send out searching tendrils, seeking moisture and nutrition in order to grow and evolve. In a similar vein, many participants in this study, had not experienced the strong "rootedness" of either societal stability or stable attachment to others. Yet, such participants still managed to send out their own "roots," tendrils, or feelings in seeking nourishment and moisture to feed their desire to be resilient.

In both qualitative and narrative research, the researcher is continually moving between the textual material and one's interpretation of it. In fact, throughout the narrative process, the researcher is continually revising one's own interpretation as one interacts with participants' stories. As a result, it is not always possible to structure studies according to standard thesis format (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Richardson, 1992, 1997, 2000). For instance, for this thesis study, what I found surprising in the analysis of these narratives was the time that participants spent on narrative question 5: "What are your feelings toward death and/or immortality?" Significantly, over 63%, or 17 of 27 respondents asserted that their resiliency was sustained in personal belief systems that the human spirit lived on in some form after death. Of the remaining ten, three thesis participants believed that the soul returns to God after death and the

remaining seven participants related other factors as sustaining their resiliency (for instance, aspects of death and/or immortality beliefs were not mentioned at all, or were not the main source of emphasis for how participants' resiliency was maintained).

It is also important to note that in response to narrative question 1, "What is your definition of resiliency?" participants often gave general definitions; but it was only in their narratives and/or art work that *how* they maintained such resiliency in their own lives became evident. Indeed such narratives and/or artwork, seemed to offer explanations for the bedrock and supporting structure that allowed their resiliency to flourish and to be maintained.

The researcher made this observation after noting that many participants spent a great deal of their narrative expounding on the death and/or immortality question, often in ways that were not fully conscious to the participants until the end of the 1st interview; and/or became more fully articulated in the 2nd interview, when I sought to clarify what they had meant. To explain further, such a focus on death and/or immortality themes were often described as "guardian angels" looking over participant's lives and/or were articulated in reincarnation themes in which participants stated that the injustices in their lives would eventually be resolved in subsequent lives they would lead after their demise in their current life. Such belief systems were often expressed at length during the art interviews of their KHTP and/or freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, rather than just in the narrative life story history of why participants felt they were resilient.

Due to the diversity of responses, governing participants' definitions of resiliency and the underlying belief systems that sustained participant's resiliency, I have divided such narratives into four thematic sections. To that end, I have mentioned all participants within these four sections but have chosen only a few narratives within those sections as best illustrating the thematic context of that section. They are as follows:

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants:
Resiliency & Immortality

First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels

In order to illustrate how such resiliency definitions and underlying factors for such resiliency were recaptured in participants narratives, I illustrate, the first section of nine thesis participants who espoused immortality beliefs as manifested in guardian angels or spiritual beings as being the sustaining factor in their own resiliency. (See First Thematic Section in text.)

I invite you to meet Aisha (The Power: Universal and Personal), who dealt with war and the culture shock of leaving Lebanon to marry a husband in Canada, whom she barely knew. During her narrative, Aisha discussed her belief that those who die become "guardian angel types who look after us on earth." I invite you also to meet Truc Mai, (Seashell) who experienced grief in reaction to the death of her grandmother in Vietnam, but whose Buddhist beliefs, and belief in her grandmother's spirit watching over her, helped her deal with the subsequent loss of her own culture.

Let me introduce you to Julie (Guardian Angel), who also spoke of how a "Guardian Angel" helped her survive childhood sexual abuse. There was Potiki (Mother of Creation), who encountered repeated physical and sexual abuse as well as poverty in childhood and adulthood. Additionally, in adulthood Potiki dealt with the homicide of her sister-in-law, by her brother, who then committed suicide. She was also ex-communicated by the Roman Catholic church because of her lesbianism. Potiki found her spirituality in incorporating aspects of her aboriginal heritage, or the Mother of Creation, in her belief systems.

I invite you also to meet Jasmine (Sister Spirit), who found a renewed belief in God and in "guardian angels" while witnessing her younger sister's recovery from a chronic life-threatening illness. And, there was Taylor (Lionness), who experienced childhood physical abuse at the hands of her alcoholic mother, and who incorporated aboriginal beliefs in spirits who are reincarnated.

I invite you, who are the reader, to also meet Leslie (Guardian Spirits and Galaxies) who stated that guardian spirits from other galaxies revealed to her a world

beyond her childhood abuse. I invite you also to meet Siu Fey (And Her Butterfly),an impoverished Chinese foreign student whose father died the night before she was to take an examination to win a scholarship to study at the University of Alberta. Siu Fey, who was only able to study one page of her textbook before the examination began. Siu Fey who stated that a butterfly appeared right before the examination began and who discovered that the examination question was based on the one page that she had studied.

Let me introduce you to Giselle (Of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood) who stated that what sustained her was the "appearance of an Old Crone" who comforted her during experiences of severe sexual and physical abuse in childhood. Throughout her narrative she discussed how she managed to nurture herself, sheltering if you will, like a tiny fern in the crevices of the rocky childhood environment that she experienced.

Section VII: Second Thematic Section: The Human Spirit continues...

In the next section, eight participants described Immortality beliefs (that the human spirit continues on in some form undefined after death) as an underlying factor in their resiliency. (See Second Thematic section in text.)

I invite you to meet Catherine (Chinese Fighting Fish and Immortality), who experienced stranger-related childhood sexual abuse and Sally (Mandala: Self and Others), who dealt with divorce and the stresses of being a single mother in the far north. As well, there was Patricia (Starlight), who discussed the difficulty of growing up with an alcoholic father, and Chloe (And her Woozle), who described a childhood of brutal poverty where incidents of physical and emotional abuse were common.

Let me introduce to you, Amy (Thunderbird Unleashed), who experienced childhood physical abuse in her parental home; and Payton (Of Waterfalls, Tears and Spirit) who also had childhood experiences which encompassed both physical and verbal abuse from her father. I introduce you also to Emily (Spiralling Spirit),who spent much of her adult life living in a cult-like environment in an isolated northern location, and,

Kristi (Spirals and Runes), who grew up in poverty in a fundamentalist Christian sect and later survived two Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombings in England.

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants:
Third Thematic Section: Resiliency & Immortality: The Human Spirit returns to God

In this section, three participants attributed their resiliency to their belief system that the human spirit returned to and remained with God after death as an underlying factor in resiliency. (See Third Thematic Section in text.)

I invite you to meet Kelly (Flower in the Thorns), who grew up in a fundamentalist Christian sect in childhood and who experienced childhood sexual abuse from a non-family member, and was given a rape drug in adulthood. As well, there was Neo (Different Parts of Self), who stated that the greatest issue for him was attempting to reconcile his homosexuality with his fundamentalist Christian faith. And there was Kate (Rainbow Gifts and Open Arms), who found a connection between spirituality and religion in her renewed Catholic faith and who chose to reside in a convent in order to heal from anorexia.

Section VII: Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity,
Commitment

Finally, there were seven participants who had Other beliefs in terms of what supported their resiliency. Due to the diversity of responses, all of these participants' experiences were summarized firstly and then five participants were discussed in depth. (See Fourth Thematic Section in text.)

Let me introduce Victoria (Warrior Woman), who experienced war and childhood sexual abuse, and who most clearly reminded me of the "Staghorn Fern" when she stressed how much she wanted to make her mark on the world. I would also like you to meet Anna (Spirit of the Wind), who dealt with her father's shooting accident, survived a tornado, and overcame the death of her close friend. There was Khamsin (Atoms of the Heart), who experienced physical and emotional abuse in childhood.

Additionally, there was Ben (Of Mountains and Cubes), who experienced childhood sexual abuse from a non-family member, childhood physical abuse at the hands of family members, and, when he was 12-years-of- age, the sudden death of his father; and Anwar (Running Free), who experienced severe childhood physical abuse from his mother while growing up in Syria.

Finally, there was Harold (House of the Poet), and Charron (Flowering Tree), who taught me a great deal about the importance of creativity and resiliency. This couple educated me as to the differing perceptions of how North Americans view trauma in comparison to how trauma is viewed in other countries. Harold and Charron, who both survived war, serious accident, and natural disasters were puzzled as to why I would consider what they had gone through as traumatic. In fact, they informed me that their Buddhist philosophy stressed that there was "plenty of living to be done in between the bombings."

<div align="center">*****</div>

We will shortly move onto Section VII for thesis participants who espoused immortality beliefs as manifested in guardian angels and/or spiritual beings as being the sustaining factor in their own resiliency. However, I would first like to share with you my thesis journal entry: "Buddhist Temple and the Butterfly."

Thesis Journal Entry: Buddhist Temple/Butterfly

On occasion, I sometimes attend a Buddhist temple with my elder Vietnamese neighbour who suffered through the war in Vietnam. We get along quite well although she speaks no English, nor I, Vietnamese. When I am at her temple, I listen to the Buddhist monk who says: "Be thankful to your ancestors no matter how cruel they may have been. For if they had not been here, you would not be here to correct the damage they may have wrought. Through your own life, you can change an inheritance of cruelty and abuse to one of kindness and love."

At the temple I hear the story of a young Vietnamese girl who fled with her mother to Canada after the fall of Vietnam in 1975. Her father, left behind, was murdered by the Khmer Rouge. Twenty-five years later, the young girl, now a middle-aged-woman, returns to Vietnam, to try and find out how her father died. She stays amongst relatives for several weeks, but despite all her efforts she never finds out anything about the death of her father. She mourns, for the absence of him in her life has continually haunted her. Finally, a few days before she is to leave to return to Canada, she finds herself sitting in her aunt's garden.

She closes her eyes, and offers up, in prayer and meditation, her sense of loss to the silence of her absent father. A soft touch flickers on her head and then her hands. There is a butterfly before her! It hovers, gently alighting upon her outstretched arms, and then, just as gently, it flutters away…

She releases herself to her answer.

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We now turn to Section VII: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants: First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels.

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants
First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels

Aisha (The Power: Universal and Personal)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art	*Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Truc Mai (Seashell)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art	*Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Julie (Guardian Angel)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art	*Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants
First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels

Potiki (Mother of Creation)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Jasmine (Sister Spirit)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Taylor (Lionness)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants
First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels

Leslie (Guardian Spirits and Galaxies)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*
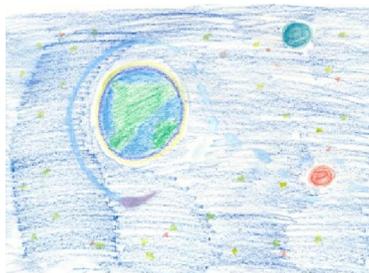
Siu Fey (And Her Butterfly)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Giselle (Of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants:

First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels

      In this section, there were nine participants who in response to the question concerning death and/or immortality, espoused a belief in guardian angels as being the sustaining factor in their resiliency. Of these nine participants, three purported to have actually seen such spiritual beings: from Leslie (Guardian Spirits & Galaxies), who experienced childhood physical abuse, to Siu Fey (And Her Butterfly), who experienced the sudden death of her father, to Giselle (Of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood), who experienced childhood physical and sexual abuse. These three will be discussed more in depth following the summary of the remaining six participants who also mentioned "spiritual beings," although they did not actually say that they "visualized them."

      Aisha, 28 (the Power: Universal & Personal), experienced war, a serious accident, and the combined stress of adjusting to a new country away from her family in a marriage to a man she barely knew. She stated that, in general, resiliency occurs:

> …because when we're open, we get to be stronger…it's like freedom
> almost…and the freedom gives me this power to overcome because of everybody
> out there…supporting each other (see Aisha, Second Interview, pp. 27-28.)

When asked about her feelings toward death and/or immortality, Aisha, who is Muslim, stated that her own resiliency evolved from her religious practice when she expanded such belief systems beyond the Koran. When she did so, Aisha stressed that she became open to other philosophies as well as into a belief system of synchronicity in that "the whole universe has power, and it connects with us." Aisha also stated that she felt that human beings who have died become souls watching over other human beings on earth. (See Aisha, KHTP & freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

      For Truc Mai, 18 (Seashell), who experienced cultural loss at the death of her Vietnamese grandmother, her definition of resiliency was directly related to her Buddhist reincarnation beliefs. Indeed when asked about her death and/or immortality beliefs,

Truc Mai stated that she believed in "guardian angels" as manifested by her grandmother's spirit…a grandmother who still watches over both her and her family. She described this specifically as:

> …a cycle, like it keeps on repeating and stuff like that and to get out of that…I guess you can…it's not really heaven, but it's something similar to that with Buddhism and it's kind of just like free from all the pain and the hurt of life, so…so I know that she's somewhere good now …(speaking of grandmother who died in Vietnam; Truc Mai, first interview, p. 1 and see Truc Mai, KHTP, and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Julie, 50, (Guardian Angel) experienced childhood sexual abuse and sexual and physical abuse in her teens. Additionally in adulthood, she also dealt with her husband who became transgendered during their relationship. She stated that her definition of resiliency in general was:

> …the ability to keep going on no matter what comes along in life and to find purpose and meaning in those events that occur and instead of …I really try hard to look at everything as this is the way it's meant to be…so what's the lesson in this for me? (See Julie, First Interview, p.1.)

Julie stressed that she has been able to maintain resiliency by incorporating reincarnation themes into her narrative in the sense that "I believe our souls are here to learn the lessons that we contracted to learn before we came and that if we don't learn them, then we are reincarnated back to…until we finally meet God." For her freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, Julie drew an angel. (See Julie, First Interview, p. 6, KHTP and freestyle art drawing in text.)

Potiki, 41, (Mother of Creation), described her resiliency as a rebellious strength. Such a strength, she said, enabled her to survive childhood growing up in a South American city where she experienced extreme poverty, childhood physical and sexual abuse, and torture. Potiki discussed the trauma of the murder of her sister-in-law by Potiki's brother, and his subsequent suicide as well as Potiki's ex-communication by the Catholic church on account of her lesbianism. When I questioned Potiki about her

feelings concerning death and/or immortality, she stressed that her resiliency was strongly related to her creativity as a painter and her attendance at an all woman spiritual retreat. Furthermore, in her freestyle drawing of her human spirit, Potiki described the purple and yellow light energy drawn from her hands as symbolizing her own energy. She stated that the light also represented the eternal energy of the Mother of Creation, reaching out to others, while her long braid, represented her "umbilical cord" connection to the eternity of "the lifeforce, to the Mother…to the universe…" (See Potiki, First Interview, p. 13; KHTP, and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Jasmine, 22, (Sister Spirit), witnessed the life-threatening illness of her younger sister. She described resiliency in general as being:

> …able to take a lot…and then, deal with it…because I can take a really stressful situation that's kind of bad sometimes…and I can just chug it to the back of my head and go on with life…(See Jasmine, First Interview, p. 1.)

When asked about her feelings toward death and/or immortality, Jasmine stated that her resiliency manifested itself in spiritual belief systems that evolved as a result of experiencing her sister's illness and recovery. Indeed throughout her narrative, Jasmine talked about how her sister resiliently faced her ensuing death. Jasmine stated that witnessing her sister's experience moved her from a position of agnosticism to one of a belief in both God and in guardian angels. Indeed Jasmine stressed that her belief in angels evolved from her sister's disclosure that an angel came to her when she was dying, (See Jasmine, KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Taylor (Lioness), 19, grew up with an alcoholic mother. She stated that her definition of resiliency in general was the "…strength and the ability to go on…after…after anything…(See Taylor, First Interview, p. 1.) Furthermore, Taylor described her resiliency as being partly due to her belief in the immortality of spirits. She then related that a baby girl who died shortly after being born to her grandmother ended up "coming back as [Taylor's mother]," (SeeTaylor, First Interview, pp. 4-5, Taylor KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

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We will shortly move onto a more indepth analysis of the narratives of Leslie (Guardian Spirits & Galaxies), Siu Fey (And her Butterfly), and Giselle (Of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood), who, in response to the question concerning death and/or immortality described visitations from such guardian and/or spiritual beings as upholding their resiliency. First, however I would like to share with you my arctic meadow in my thesis journal entry.

Thesis Journal Entry: Arctic Meadow

None of the injustices in my life, particularly in my childhood, ever really silenced, nor distorted, nor moulded my voice. I just waited quietly like the resurrection fern, in a dormant state, longing for the day when I would finally be free. My resiliency was always there, like a tiny flower or fern ally under the arctic snow, waiting for the right time in which to bloom. I first became aware of that waiting spot within myself during a period of abuse when I was 8-years-old. During the abuse experience, I remember feeling as if I were sliding down a covered slide and when I reached the bottom of the slide I slid out into a beautiful, sunlit summer meadow.

I recall that first time standing in that luminous meadow of my mind. There were no trees to hold me in, just tall, tall rocks, tiny flowers, ferns, mosses, and grasses. And, as far as the eye could see expansive and beautiful open spaces appeared before me. And, there was a Presence there...a light-filled Being who acknowledged my suffering. This Being spoke to my heart telling me that if I loved myself and others and did not become bitter, that when I became an adult, my life would be full of light and love....

*****

I am 31-years-of-age and, having finished my Masters Degree in Psychology I am venturing to the Canadian Arctic for the first time for a job interview. I am in a bush plane, flying far above the treeline, farther and farther north over arctic tundra. It is late August and the sun is beginning to dip over the horizon. Suddenly I get the strangest feeling of deja-vu and I gaze out my bush plane to the ground below. And what do I see? I see my meadow--the same luminous place of my heart, with rocks, tiny flowers, ferns, grasses, and not even trees to hold me in....

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We now turn to the stories of Leslie, (Guardian Spirits and Galaxies), Siu Fey (And Her Butterfly); and, Giselle (Of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood.)

First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels

Leslie (Guardian Spirits and Galaxies)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art
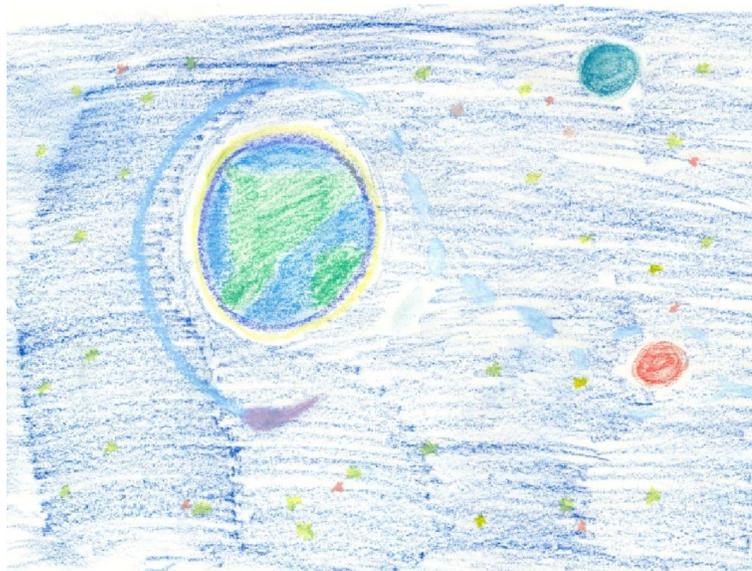
Kinetic-House-Tree-Person

Leslie: Guardian Spirits and Galaxies
Narrative and Art Analysis

Leslie is a 34-year-old married Metis female who is employed full time outside of the home as a skilled worker. In terms of describing the event(s) that still bothers her the most she stated that she thinks occasionally both about the sexual abuse by a "friend of the family" and the physical and mental abuse by her father in childhood. She also added that as a teenager she was sexually assaulted more than once by the same group of boys but that she rarely thinks of those events.

Leslie (Guardian Spirits and Galaxies), defined resiliency in general as having an "optimistic point of view" despite "going through hard times and still coming out ahead." She stated further that she has always been able to "just let things roll off my back…I don't let too many things bother me…" She attributed the maintenance of that resiliency to the visitations of guardian angels when she was a pre-school child. In her narrative she described one of these spirits as appearing in a blue fuzzy shape that "kind of reached out…as if to touch me" and said that she wanted to go with the spirits "through the galaxies as spirits." However she added that she was afraid to leave her mother behind as her stepfather might blame her mother for Leslie's absence and resume beating her mother. (See Leslie, First Interview, pp. 4-5, KHTP, and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

During the First Interview, I asked Leslie further about the nature of her "angelic visitation":

I: Were they comforting or scary?

L: I didn't know what to make of them. I was startled.

I: And how old were you at this time?

L: I just knew where I was living and I know that was before I was in grade 1. I started grade 1 when I was 5 and so I could have been like 3 or 4…I think I was…I remember, like one of them, they kind of reached out…as if to touch

me…and part of me wanted to go, wanted to touch but then I was afraid that (sighs)…I wasn't afraid but I just thought that, I'd end up, I don't know why I thought this, I must have seen it on television…but I just thought we'd end up going through the galaxies as spirits (laughs)…

I: And you wanted to stay in your human form?

L: Well, I didn't really want to stay because I was already going through stuff… …as much as I wanted to-to touch or communicate with them, I was afraid for my mom if I did go into their realm, that my dad would get back from out of town. My mom would get in trouble for me not being there.

I: did your dad used to beat your mom too?

L: Yes. And uh, so I went to hide from them (the spiritual beings) in the living room by the speakers. And then it took a couple of minutes but they reappeared, they just came sauntering along, (See Leslie, First Interview, p. 8.)

Throughout all of Leslie's narratives, her resiliency and her self-described sense of spirituality seem to emanate from these "angelic" visitations that occurred in her childhood. During the first interview, Leslie described how important the "visitation" was to her life because it offered "me a way out." She also added that after the second "angel" visitation she became afraid and the visits ceased. However, she added that when she got older she "thought about why they had come more and it gave me a sense of hope." She added that she never forgot why the "angels" came in the first place and states that she believes the "angels" will come back for her when she is old and senile. Furthermore, she stressed that in terms of the human spirit living on after death that she "couldn't see an end to it." (See Leslie, First Interview, p. 9.)

Leslie also stated that her current sense of resiliency and spirituality is based on what was "expressed" to her by the angelic visitations when she was a child. "What I envisioned was just beautiful…like I could see the earth as this planet, there in the galaxy and us just whisps of clouds going through it." She described this feeling as one of "no

weight, just freedom" and added that she believes in a positive force that is "something out there that's greater than we are" (See Leslie, First Interview, pp. 4-5.)

During additions to the second interview analysis of the first interview transcript, Leslie added the following:

> L: In talking about death and immmortality and feelings of weightlessness and freedom, peace yes, but it was nice; death, it didn't occur to me that we were dead, because we were spirits moving through the galaxy…and about the spirits approaching me when …I'm not going to die in a car accident or anything tragic…I'm just going to pass away…and then I'll be with them when they approach me somewhere…so what I'm trying to say is the first part…but they will approach me. …I may be lying there on a hospital bed or maybe at home and I'll be there one moment and hopefully (Brian) will be in the room with me but if not…I guess I'm going to see those spirits and I don't know I guess I'll be going with them but I'll be reluctant to…part of me…if (Brian) is still around because I would like to die with (Brian) (laughs) in some natural way…I can't have it all. I don't know how it's going to happen…I sense I'll see them again…(See Leslie, Second Interview, pp. 25-26.)

During the first interview, Leslie stated further that her sense of spirituality and her belief in guardian angels has helped her throughout her life and enabled her to not only survive, but transform her abuse into meaningful lived experience. She stated that the example that her mother and stepfather gave her in childhood enabled her to see how *not* to raise a child. Moreover, when I asked Leslie if she felt it was important to share her difficulties and/or traumas with others who had suffered she stated that aside from telling her story to one friend before me, she has not found a need to see a counsellor about her problems.

Leslie's freestyle art drawing of the human spirit most clearly reflected her philosophy of "guardian angel beings" and her feelings concerning death and/or "immortality." As a researcher I was struck most by the "integrated nature" of this drawing in which Leslie describes "everything in the picture as coming together to form one." The interconnectedness of Leslie's life is noted throughout her narrative and drawings, (See Leslie, First Interview, p. 11.)

During the kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) analysis Leslie referred continually to each item in the KHTP as being both "nurturing and interactive" and expressed that her strong relationship with Brian is reflected throughout the narrative and KHTP drawing. She further stated that as a couple "we've come together but our journeys were unique…and we seem unique when we are together." (See Leslie, Second Interview, p. 15.)

First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels

Siu Fey (And Her Butterfly)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art

Kinetic-House-Tree-Person

Siu Fey And Her Butterfly
Narrative and Art Analysis

Siu Fey is a 20-year-old Chinese female from Hong Kong who is a full- time student. She stated she has "no religion" although she did acknowledge growing up Buddhist. Siu Fey grew up in poverty in Hong Kong and remarked that because her parental home was on the side of a hill, that when it rained a mudslide would often run through the basement of her home

During the narrative interview, Siu Fey, described her childhood as "very hard" socioeconomically. Her father, a construction worker, supported not only his immediate family but about 30 members of the extended family. About five years prior to this thesis study, Siu Fey's father fell from some scaffolding and suffered irreversible brain damage. He died the day before Siu Fey's major exam, the exam that would allow her to win a scholarship to study at a foreign university.

In desperation, Siu Fey opened her Chinese literature textbook and randomly studied only one page for 15 minutes. She stated that she was writing the exam in a Buddhist school and she was sitting by a window, but the school was not surrounded by flowers or vegetables or triees. Shortly before the exam began, she closed her eyes and prayed, and suddenly…

> …Somehow there's a butterfly...right in front of me! This was just right before the exam started... just one or two minutes..the butterfly came in front of me and when the exam started, the butterfly was gone. I didn't know what happened...(Siu Fey, First Interview, p. 14.)

She then stated "the exam question of the answer was exactly on that page!" Consequently, Siu Fey won her scholarship and came to study at the University of Alberta. During the 1st interview, Siu Fey stressed that her general definition of resiliency was "…the ability that you can get well, you can recover from something that's really bad in your life and um…I see it as a positive force in your life." (See Siu Fey, First Interview, p.1.)

Siu Fey also stressed that her own resiliency was highly related to her death and/or immortality beliefs as manifested by the appearance of a butterfly as symbolic of her father's spirit who continually watches over her. She then stated that her version of immortality was a belief in "fairies" who function like guardian angels, "a kind of free spirit that can maybe come into the Earth again and help people." For instance she mentioned that she "does not want to cycle anymore" when I posed the questions to her concerning death and immortality. Throughout the first interview, Siu Fey continued to describe her spirituality in terms of Buddhist imagery although she stated she is not a practicing Buddhist. (See Siu Fey, First Interview; pp. 13-14, Siu Fey KHTP, and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

In Siu Fey's subsequent freestyle art drawing of her human spirit she featured an abstract-looking drawing of a butterfly which she stated represented both the good and bad sides of her personality. (See Siu Fey KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)   However, Siu Fey's belief systems concerning death, immortality and a belief in "guardian angels who watch over us" are reflected most clearly in her KHTP drawing which reveals two native males sitting inside a tent made of logs. They are also seated on cut logs by a table made of a cut log. On the table are eating and drinking implements. A fire that is fueled by logs, is warming the two men. Indeed, Siu Fey's KHTP was perhaps the most revealing concerning her feelings towards her father's death and his continued influence in her life. I found it "culturally interesting" that for Siu Fey's KHTP, she drew a native teepee with two native males inside, warming themselves by a fire. She stated she saw such a display in an Alberta museum and was impressed by the self-sufficiency portrayed in the museum display.

During both the first and second interviews, I noticed that Siu Fey had mentioned the aspect of transformation 17 times. Such wording was particularly focused on the various roles that the tree (and/or parts of it) played. They are listed as follows:

(Please note SF = Siu Fey):

P. 22 (1)   SF impressed by teepee house she saw in museum in Calgary re: dead tree transformed

P. 22 (2)   SF stated doesn't want picture to be sad because of dead tree; therefore put people in picture to make it happy

       (3)   SF stated tree stands out most…people safe and warm

       (4)   SF also stated tree dead but "leaves something to earth"

P.25 (5)   SF stated tree still alive

       6)   SF stated trees continuing energy

       (7)   SF stated tree happy to continue in another form

P. 28 (8)   SF like to be these tree parts

       (9)   Tree = most energy

P.29 (10) My question re: dependency in tree parts
SF stated not anymore

       (11)   SF re: tree part: dying aspect
SF people = some dying aspects

P. 30 (12) My question of aspects of living in tree parts?
SF stated yes
My question of aspects of living in people?
SF stated yes
My questions of aspects of supporting in teepee, tree, people:

P. 31 (13)   I asked SF if tree parts look to her like male or female
SF stated tree parts definitely male

P. 32 (14) SF stated like tree parts to be male and liked tree parts to be with two people

       (15)   SF stated tree parts make her think of dad and good spirit he passed on even when died (See Siu Fey, First Interview, KHTP Drawing, pages listed above.)

From quotes 12 to 15, Siu Fey made the connection on her own that the tree did in fact represent her father and his continuing influence in her life. She stated in (12) that

there were aspects of living in the tree parts, people, and aspects of supporting in the teepee, tree and people. When I asked her if everything was interconnected, she agreed. In (13) she stated that the tree parts were definitely male. I commented during the second interview that it was at this point that Siu Fey began "clicking in." She laughed in agreement.

I then responded that "you talked of the tree that had died." Siu Fey responded that (14) she "likes the tree parts to be male and likes tree parts to be with two people." I commented that "you said you liked to think that the tree parts are comforting the people. And then you went like this [a surprised gesture], you looked surprised and you said that (15) the tree parts made you think of your dad and the good spirit he passed on even when he died." Moreover, at this point Siu Fey made the final connection that the tree parts did in fact symbolize her father's death and his continuing presence in her life (See Siu Fey, First Interview; pp. 32-33.)

First Thematic Section: Guardian Angels

Giselle (Of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art

Kinetic-House-Tree-Person

Giselle: Of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood
Narrative and Art Analysis

Giselle is a 45-year-old married white woman with a Master's Degree. She works in another province outside Alberta in a full-time professional position as a minister of a moderate Protestant Christian church. Despite the physical, emotional and sexual abuses from her childhood, Giselle appeared to have transformed such experiences into both self-esteem for herself and in loving interaction with others who have also suffered. During the first interview, Giselle defined resiliency, in general as:

> …the ability…not only to survive trauma, but to make meaning and take learning from that trauma in such a way, that a person can actually …use the experience or what they learned from the experience to their benefit to enrich their life and to …fulfill their life ['s]…ambitions and goals…it's not only just the making meaning part, it's the action and the living part…(See Giselle, First Interview, p.3.)

Moreover, even as a young child, Giselle asserted that her own particular resiliency was related to the way she was able to "image in a positive manner." Her discussion of the old woman who first came to her as an angel is particularly moving. She cried openly when discussing her image of the divine when she stated "because for me the old woman is God. It is the sacred of life at its most essential…that which gives the person the ability to survive, (See Giselle, First Interview, p.7.) She described such an image in more detail:

> G: Okay. The healing part occurred a lot in …I do not have language for this. So, my best… way to talk about it is…having visions from the time…when I was quite young…5, 4…I have vivid memories of an …old woman first coming to me…in the times of greatest pain and agony, during my abuse, there she would be…this old woman…wrinkled face…and I just called her the old woman. Um, and her face was…one of my pictures that I still recall is a very stern face, and later in conversing with her and journalling, I got…I realized that that was anger. Incredible intense anger that this should not happen. And, I got the message. That's…I just remember her as a stern person as a child. As an adult, I got…this was anger, big anger! And, that she taught me how to leave…I really believe ……to leave psychologically so that

I just wasn't there…and so it would make it easier for me to forget…so, the time I was referring to a little while ago…after the particularly bad rape where I know that I was hurt…and I …the pain was so extreme that I thought I was dying. I have a very vivid vision—memory of being …of her carrying me to a cave with a pool of water…a great big pool of water, like a jacuzzi and putting me in the water and singing to me and it's so vivid [tears in eyes] and it's still elicits this incredible awe…

G: And…it also coincided. I'm..I'm remembering it coincided with me discovering books about the Crone. And, it was…I think those books that helped me…too…when I read the book called the Crone, I thought I know…I know this…why am I so…feeling so strongly attached to the Crone…as an image of the divine and so thrilled to learn the stories and the history of this image of the holy…I have been a feminist for 10 years, so I've been reading feminist theology and reclaiming the goddess and taking Christ out of this male image so that all of that was in my history too. And, part of my healing, as I look back, I think…that was part of my healing…the choice to become a feminist Christian. But, just to stick with the story I was telling you about the-Crone is that I...she was always there and she was the one who helped me survive…and she came back when I started to heal…

G: I had to cut off my memory of her because she was linked to the abuse and so I had that period of searching in my late teens and all through my twenties, there's something missing in my life and I don't know what it is. And I went into the church and I knew that I needed…that spirituality was what I wanted to teach. I knew I was a teacher but I knew that spirituality, not religion, [laughs]…was what I was …what I was called to do. And, the only way I could see to do that was in the context of my religious background…which again, was a very healing thing in the end although it caused lots of trauma, [laughs]. (See Giselle, First Interview, pp. 4-6.)

Giselle continued to talk movingly throughout the first interview about the fact that she felt she lost the image of the "old woman" or "Crone" in her adolescence because "to have remembered her would have meant that I would have remembered my abuse." It is poignant to note that when she could not remember this "image of God" in her teens, she became suicidal. (See Giselle, First Interview, p.8.)

When I asked Giselle during the first interview, what her feelings were toward death and/or immortality, she stressed that she managed to build resilient self-esteem for

herself when she transformed her earlier childhood punitively-presented Christian belief systems to "the experience of the holy" through her positive association with sincere Christian camp experiences. During the second interview, Giselle related how her "experience of the holy" then evolved into her current belief systems of what she termed both "feminist and eclectic Christianity." Interestingly enough, Giselle commented during both interviews about the importance in her own spiritual growth of separating the "spiritual" from the "religious" (an aspect that this researcher has also noted in her interviews with other thesis participants who were negatively affected by punitive applications of religious dogma at some point in their lives.) Moreover, Giselle added during the 1st interview, that she believed in reincarnation and that she initially chose a career in music as she found it to be a "very spiritual thing." However she stated that at some point in university she realized that it was not music she wanted to teach but how music affected her, and that this realization eventually led her into the ministry. (See Giselle, First Interview, p.10.)

During both interviews, Giselle talked about the one aunt in her family who both supported and believed Giselle about her childhood abuse. She then stated how her own experiences evolved from an awareness and transformation of her own personal suffering to an ever expanding more global awareness of the commonality of human suffering. Such an awareness, Giselle stated, became dramatically clear to her when she became involved with missionary work in South America. She stated that the manner in which the people there suffered under political oppression allowed her to connect her own experience of "domestic trauma" to the larger context of "political trauma." Morever she stated that she strongly identified with the South American people, who talked about Christ as "saviour." Throughout both narratives Giselle's sense of what she terms "spiritual community" is paramount. She stressed strongly that "one of Jesus' greatest gifts was creating communities that existed after he left. (See Giselle, First Interview, pp.11-12.)

Indeed, Giselle's freestyle art drawing of the human spirit as well as her kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP), are completely congruent with her narrative. She pictured herself (in the freestyle art drawing) as a tree/woman in the wilderness, in the trunk of the tree, and in the roots bleeding into the ground. She described the many symbols of nature within the drawing. She further stated that the images she drew in such drawings are in a sense "significant religious symbols" that she was not aware of until she was introduced to native healing circles. Additionally, Giselle stated that the blood emanating from the roots of the tree represented that "it's easy to forget the suffering but it's the roots of what gives me meaning and helps me to never take for granted…life." Throughout her freestyle drawing she described the interconnectedness" of everything in life. Paramount to the meaning contained in her drawing is the river upon which the tree/woman is standing which she described as "the underground well from which we nourish ourselves." (See Giselle, First Interview, freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, pp.14-15.)

Giselle stated further that her experience of nature and in particular, cedar trees have been "profoundly nourishing" to her all her life. She added that she felt she lived in the mountains many lifetimes ago. During the first interview, she talked further about her views on reincarnation:

> G: So I imagined I lived on the west coast too for a time. In other lifetimes but cedars are old and ancient and they remind me of how old we are…and I believe in reincarnation so I think the cedars and the mountains remind me of times past…and I think one of the other visions I had…one of the most profound visions I had in my healing process at one point where I couldn't handle the pain [crying]. I thought I can't live with this pain. I had a vision of fire and….of my therapist standing in the fiery furnace…in a huge fire calling me in. And I shouting to her "I will burn up. I will die!" And uh, when I walked into that flame, no as I stood there longing to walk into the flame, but terrified to do so, four faces emerged to me [crying]. And they were women who had…I just knew they were women who'd been burned in the burning times and they were all me and they were calling and saying "we've waited …we've waited for you to come, so come and all will be well"

I: And you did…

G: [sniffs] Yeah, I did…and uh, I think the underground river experience was another time, where um, the earth called and it said "you're going to make it, it's okay" [crying] (See Giselle, First Interview, p.26)

Furthermore, Giselle's KHTP drawing clearly represented all that she described in both her narratives and in her freestyle art drawing of the human spirit. I noted during the first interview that the KHTP featured a village with many houses in the valley. Additionally, during the first Interview of the KHTP analysis, Giselle stated that the solitary person on the mountaintop is a woman in her 40s wearing flowing white robes.   She stated further that the person is a "priestess" who is well, happy, and celebrating while "standing strong." She stated further that the "priestess" inspired her and reminded her of the "interconnections." At the conclusion of the first interview, Giselle stressed that the person reminded her of herself and her own interconnections. (See Giselle, First Interview, KHTP drawing, pp.27-43.)

Finally, I noted during the first interview that Giselle mentioned that one branch on the large tree on the small mountaintop (in the KHTP drawing) had died 50 years ago. When I asked her during the second interview, if the dead branch represented her childhood (since she was 45-years-of-age and therefore close to the age of the tree branch that died); Giselle agreed strongly that my interpretation was correct. She further stated that the woman/tree drawing in the freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, represented her in the present and that the KHTP tree symbolized the availability of the universal tree of life to everyone. (See Giselle, Second Interview, KHTP, p. 26.)

At the conclusion of the first interview when I asked Giselle to sum up her life. She stated that now that she's in her forties, she has "meaning and purpose" in her life that she did not have before. Significantly, she stressed that the healing will be ongoing and that she would always remember her past. However she concluded that " we don't live in the past. You remember to the future…" (See Giselle, First Interview, p.43.)

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We will shortly turn to the Second Thematic Section: Resiliency & Immortality: The Human Spirit continues. Before we do so however, I invite you to read my thesis journal entry: "Ferns, Resiliency and Immortality."

Thesis Journal Entry: Ferns, Resiliency and Immortality

During my conversations with Robert Dixon, horticulturalist, he stressed that even in a desert oasis, ferns can be found:

> R:...And you can take samples of the air in the upper stratosphere and there is no amount, no spot on this earth where there is not fern spores floating around waiting to take advantage...and ...if there is an oasis or a small spring, in the centre of the Sahara Desert...

> A:...they will find it...

> R:...they will find it...and you will find in the (desert) oasis, there will be a fern, there will be a palm tree, there will be something. But if there is just the tiniest bit of water, a fern will take advantage of it...

> A: so, quite conceivably, a resurrection fern could be growing in an oasis, the oasis dries up for over 20 years and then somehow or another a spring comes up there and it comes back up...

> R...and it comes right back

> (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 14.)

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We now turn to the Second Thematic Section: The Human Spirit continues…

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants
Second Thematic Section: The Human Spirit continues...

Catherine (Chinese Fighting Fish and Immortality)
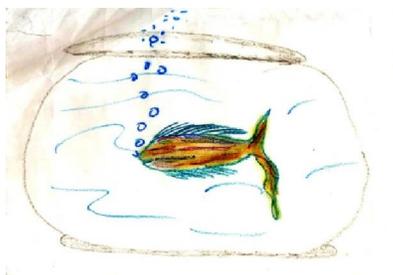
Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Sally: Mandela: Self and Others)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Patricia (Starlight)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*
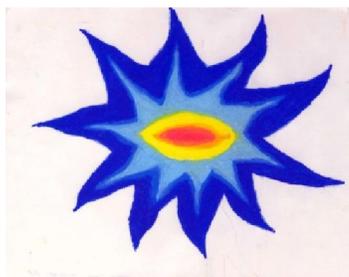
Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants
Second Thematic Section: The Human Spirit continues...

Chloe (And Her Woozle)
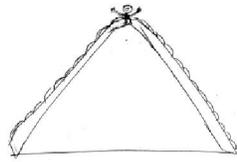
Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Amy (Thunderbird Unleashed)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Payton (Of Waterfalls, Tears and Spirit)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants:
Second Thematic Section: Resiliency & Immortality: The Human Spirit continues...

In this section, there were eight participants who in response to the question concerning death and/or immortality, defined their resiliency in immortality beliefs that the human spirit continued on in some form undefined after death. For this section, two participants, Emily (Spiralling Spirit), and Kristi (Spirals and Runes) are discussed in a more in-depth basis following the summary of the remaining six participants.

Catherine (Chinese Fighting Fish and Immortality), 23, experienced repeated childhood sexual abuse as well as sexual harassment in adulthood. She stated that her general definition of resiliency is related to the idea of "resistance" against the difficult times one experiences in one's life. She also stated that although she was raised Catholic, she believed the meaning and purpose as portrayed in her reincarnation beliefs are the key that enabled her to be resilient. When I asked Catherine during the second interview, to clarify further how she saw her reincarnation beliefs as allowing her to be resilient she stated that although she believed in formal reincarnation that she also believed the human spirit continually evolved throughout one's life:

> …I believe that people –are re-born throughout their life. Like, I was sexually abused and that I was re-born and then my parents divorced and I was re-born…you know, my mom's second divorce from (my stepdad) and I was re-born, …I became stronger and I evolved and to me I see that as re-born. (See Catherine, Second Interview, p.22 KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Sally (Mandala: Self and Others), 32, grew up as a single mother in a northern matriarchal-based environment. Her general definition of resiliency is "like a reed, bending and not being inflexible." (See Sally, First Interview, p.1.) Sally described why she sees herself as resilient:

> …the more you are successfully able to go through things, it gives you confidence to go through other things…you just push forward…don't think it's going to get to you…" (See Sally, First Interview, p.1.)

She attributed much of her resiliency to her belief system of the interconnectedness of everyone and everything, as exemplified by the immortality/reincarnation belief systems of Krisnamurti. She described this as:

> …we're all energy…we're all connected…and that nothing will ever take that connection away and perhaps I might go from this life, but you know maybe there will be another life, another place, another sphere that we will be reconnected…but, our spirits will never be disconnected…so I've always believed that…(See Sally, First Interview, p.9, Sally KHTP, and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

> Patricia (Starlight), 33, had a difficult childhood growing up with an alcoholic

father. Her general definition of resiliency is:

> …well I think part of the definition, definitely is strength. I think that to be resilient, you have to be strong and um and have hope—hope's a big one too…Hope for your future and…that things will get better…and I think the two of those together, make a person resilient…(See Patricia, First Interview, pp. 17-18.)

Patricia also stressed that although she was raised culturally Jewish, she has Hindu/Buddhist belief systems on immortality/reincarnation. Patricia described both her belief systems as enabling her to grow in resiliency. She stated that she sees both the good and bad events within her life as challenges that have aided her in this process:

> …I kind of like the idea that the Hindus have it and I think with Buddhists, it's the same idea…I don't believe in God…I think there has to be something bigger…and more than us. I think it would be arrogant to think that we're so bloody important [laughs] cuz we're not…I mean we are…but there's a bigger picture that so many people don't even grasp…for the most part…I think meaning to me, a lot of it is helping others…what do I mean to other people…(See Patricia, First Interview, pp. 17-18, KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

> Chloe (And Her Woozle), 52, grew up in childhood poverty and witnessed

physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Her general definition of resiliency is:

> Resiliency to me is the ability to bounce back from any type of trauma. It seems to have no limit on the type of trauma. My experience is that I bounce back a lot.

> Or, maybe not quite bounced, but survived certain events and lived to talk about it and still laugh about these things…(See Chloe, First Interview, p.1.)

Chloe was raised Catholic but views herself now as an agnostic Christian. Reincarnation themes predominant her belief systems of evolving spiritual changes and resiliency. She stated during the 1st interview that her present belief systems take the form of a "spiritual higher power," and that she reads Sylvia Browne's books about "how we are and our souls [are here] …to perfect ourselves, or to be closer to God, but that we are just journeyists who come back into our lives, into life…to just correct things… " (See Chloe, First Interview, pp. 21-23, KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Amy (Spirit Bird Unleashed), 23, grew up in an atmosphere of emotional neglect and physical abuse. Her general definition of resiliency is "something along the lines of "kind of just surviving, I guess…not only surviving but surpassing and moving on…"(See Amy, First Interview, pp.1-2.) However, she also stated that her experience of childhood abuse enabled her to "look at things from other perspectives" and gave her an "accurate instinct on people." She described her resiliency as being related to her belief systems of death and/or immortality but stated that such belief systems were an abstract concept for her, expressed only in the belief that the soul lives on after death. (See Amy, First Interview, p. 6, KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Payton (Of Waterfalls, Tears and Spirits) 22, experienced physical and emotional abuse in childhood and witnessed the same kinds of abuse of her drug-dealing father toward her mother. Her general definition of resiliency is "the ability to get on with life despite everything that's happening around you." (See Payton, First Interview, p.1.) Throughout both narratives she discussed her resiliency as being encompassed in spiritual growth as she moved from her fundamentalist Christian belief system to a more encompassing spirituality that stressed both native and reincarnation belief systems. (See Payton, KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

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We will shortly move onto a more in depth analysis of the narratives of Emily (Spiralling Spirit), and Kristi (Spirals and Runes) whose stories best illustrate participants' belief systems that the human spirit continues on in some undefined form undefined form after death, as the foundation of their resiliency. Before we do so however, I would like to tell you of the Hummingbird and the Healing Lodge in my thesis journal entry.

Thesis Journal Entry: Hummingbird: Healing Lodge

Shortly after my 2nd interview with Siu Fey in March, 2002, I am asked by a colleague in the Northwest Territories to work as an onsite psychologist for a six-week period in the wilderness, some distance away from the small northern city of Yellowknife, NWT. My job entails working with survivors of trauma and with facilitators, some of whom are medicine people. On the day I arrive in Yellowknife, on impulse, I buy a hummingbird candle. I do not know why I buy it. I have never felt any kind of special affinity with birds in general and/or hummingbirds in particular.

A few weeks later, a medicine woman who occasionally works at the camp (and who does not know my personal history), reads native cards for me. I am asked to shuffle several large cards and turn one over. I do so, and the card I turn over is a hummingbird. The medicine woman smiles warmly and states:

> Ah, the hummingbird…the hummingbird is our most resilient of totems. It must live close to its heart or it will die. It can move simultaneously forward and backward through time. It is small, but it's spirit is very large...

She then shuffles the cards again, and I draw the next one. It shows a person sitting in a quiet place inside a cave. She continues:

> This card represents sacred spaces and sacred places. If the hummingbird lives in a cage it will die. But, if it is trapped, it withdraws to its sacred internal space within, becomes very still there, and it waits. It waits for the time when it is finally free. And, when that time has come, it flies outward and onward until it finds an external sacred place in which to rest...

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We now turn to the stories of Emily (Spiralling Spirit), and Kristi (Spirals and Runes.)

Second Thematic Section: The Human Spirit continues...

Emily (Spiralling Spirit)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art
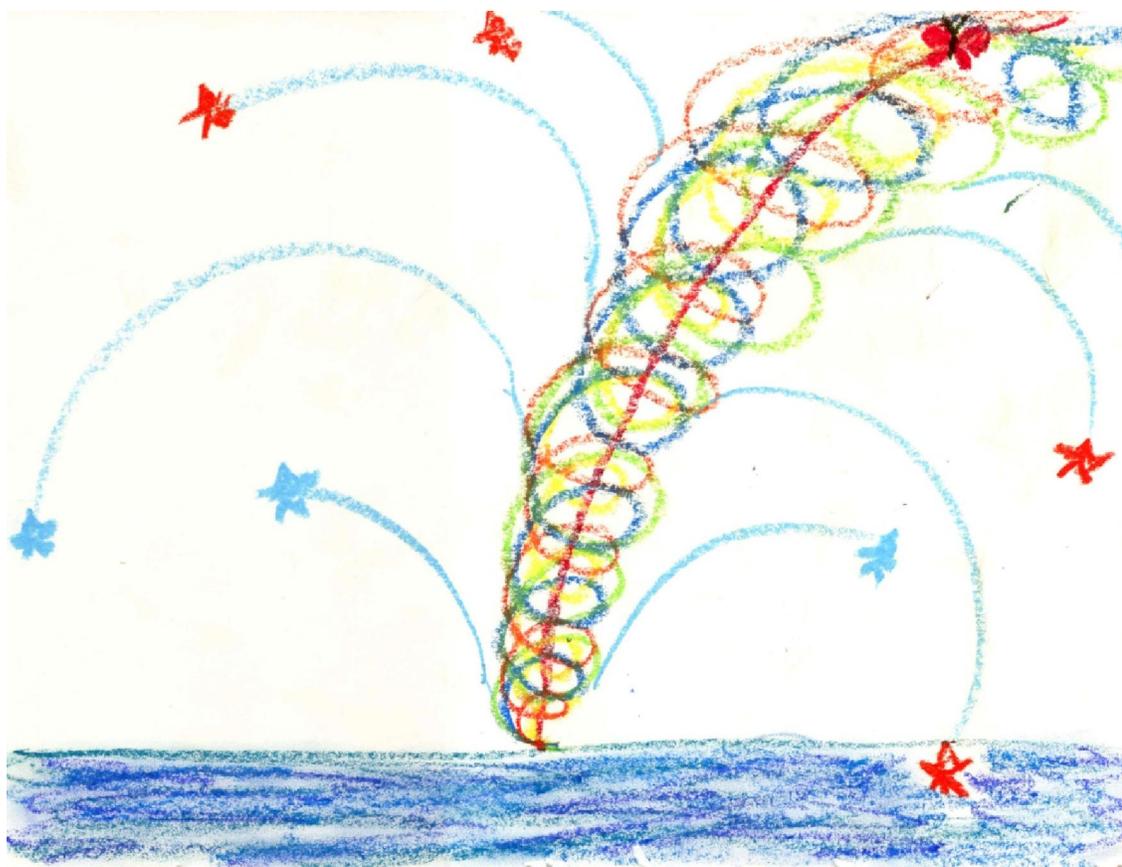
Emily: Spiralling Spirit
Narrative and Art Analysis

Emily is a white female 48-year-old married full-time student who works part time in a professional capacity as a therapist. She lives in another province outside Alberta and has an advanced university degree. Emily spent much of her young adult life isolated in a northern cult-like environment, trapped in an abusive marriage where she was sexually, emotionally, physically, and financially abused. She wrote further that such experiences "also affected the lives of my 3 children and so there were a number of years that we had to deal with the fallout even after leaving.

Emily described resiliency in general as:

> …being able to overcome difficulties that you've encountered in your life… in sort of a positive healthy way, so it's a process, it isn't something that just sort of happens at one time…sometimes it might take a number of years to develop resiliency because I think it builds on itself, that as you overcome certain things and look at life in a more healthy way than that …then you become more resilient to other things as well…(See Emily, First Interview, p.1.)

Despite the many years of abuse that she experienced in the cult, she was also able to talk about some of her experiences in a positive light, such as her exposure to northern aboriginal culture, the wilderness, the occasional person they assisted at the commune and the healthy foods they were able to eat. During even the most difficult periods, Emily's strength of spirit shone through, as when she "convinced" her abusive husband that she had been "talked into staying," while simultaneously strategizing as to how she would leave him (See Emily, First Interview, p. 9.)

After finally escaping her abusive situation Emily, along with her children moved to a city and resided in a women's shelter. She described how the importance of women's narratives at the shelter contributed to her resiliency:

>…I found it really traumatic to be in the women's shelter the first couple of days because I just wanted peace and quiet. And, there was so much stuff going on and all these kids running around and I really didn't need that. But after a couple of days, I discovered that it was pretty neat. After the kids went to bed at night, the women would sit in there and we'd tell our stories and we'd watch movies and I think think I probably slept 2 or 3 hours a night there but I never felt tired….(See Emily, First Interview, p. 22.)

During the art analysis interview, Emily did not participate in a kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) as she had prior knowledge of this particular projective art technique. However, Emily's freestyle art drawing of the human spirit featured a multi-coloured spiral that slanted to the right upper corner of the page. It appeared to arise out of a blue ground. Emanating from the spiral are several multi- coloured stars and at the top of the spiral is a butterfly. During the instructions concerning the freestyle art drawing, Emily stated that she did not know what she would draw when I left the room. She then described the process:

>…It was a very interesting experience because when you left, I didn't have a clue what I was going to do. And then I just sort of started drawing these sort of expanding loops that went off to the right hand side so…and it sort of just evolved out of there… The blue ones and then the orange ones and I didn't…there wasn't really any reason for the different colours other then I just wanted to change colours…um, they're supposed to be little stars at the end…and I sort of visualize this as…I'm shooting out hope…to people…(See Emily, First Interview, and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, pp. 35-36.)

Emily stated that she drew the orange spiral first, then the yellow, blue, green spirals. She stated that she started with her core and then her "spirit expanded over time" as represented by the spirals. She stated that the spirals direction toward the upper right side of the page "seemed a more positive direction to go" and that the stars in her picture represented "little stars of hope."

During this First Interview, Emily stated that the butterfly represented her "positive" energy. She described her butterfly further:

> …That's the very last thing that I drew. So after I drew these shooting stars of hope, then I wanted to draw the base. So, to me this is like the ocean when it's calm…it's a beautiful calm ocean, no turmoil. And then I thought, well, it needed something else, I thought. So, I thought I needed to make this [red] line here this sort of core part, this inner sense of me. And, I'm a butterfly…I've transformed from whatever I was before…(See Emily, First Interview, p. 36.)

In terms of her feelings towards death and/or immortality, Emily repeatedly stated that the various experiences in her life, both good and bad, were part of her resiliency in terms of "the spiritual process" that helped her grow. During both interviews, Emily stressed that although she knows that people physically die, she doesn't think that people "totally die. I think there is a part of us that goes on and I don't know where we go to. And I don't know what form it takes. But, the universe is a big place and I think we go onto something…" (See Emily, First Interview, p. 12.)

Second Thematic Section: The Human Spirit continues...

Kristi (Spirals and Runes)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art

Kinetic-House-Tree-Person

Kristi: Spirals and Runes
Narrative and Art Analysis

Kristi is a 51-year-old divorced white female who is employed full-time outside the home in a professional capacity. During the first interview, Kristi talked at length about the two bombings she survived at Harrod's department store in England, the first one when she was a retail worker there in 1973, the next one in 1983, when she was shopping with her mother and sister-in-law while visiting England from Canada. She spoke both times about her feelings of premonition beforehand, and how she narrowly escaped injury during the second bombing. She also talked with emotion about a young woman her own age, who had been killed by the second bombing and how she experienced survivor guilt as a result of surviving this incident.

Kristi described resiliency in general as:

> …I think that I'm a resilient person…because I have a deep rooted love of life…and I see a tremendous amount of beauty in the world and fun, that makes it worth living for …no matter how dark things in life can be, I've always found that I'm easily cheered by a call from a friend or sunshine coming out…something like that…things in nature and I also think it's something that my father taught me to be aware of as a child. I don't know if that's a definition of resiliency but it's what it means to me…(See Kristi, First Interview, p.1.)

When I asked Kristi, during the first interview, if she felt she had an optimistic outlook no matter what happened in her life she stated that instead she sees herself as a "realist" but pointed out:

> …I always believe that there's a point of hope and I guess I'm just so bloody minded that even if there isn't a point of hope, I figure I'd like to put a spoke in a few people's wheels like…it's like if the truck's going to roll over me…I might as well take out a few tires or something like that…(See Kristi, First Interview, p. 1.)

Later on in the course of the first interview, Kristi expanded on her notion of resiliency, when she discussed how her difficulties in life made her grow and gave her greater empathy toward others:

> …So, when you realize that there's been growth and you've grown from it… your perspective is broader, that you are strong enough to survive some of these things and stand on your own and get through it and still find joy and beauty in life, then you know that you are resilient and that knowledge feeds into that loop which is resiliency, I think. (See Kristi, First Interview, p. 19.)

When I asked Kristi during the first interview, about her feelings toward death and/or immortality she stated that her underlying resiliency is related to her spiritual belief systems which have changed since she was a child. She stated that currently she also believed the spirit lives on although she does not have any definite views on reincarnation. (See Kristi, First Interview, p.10.) She stated that "Germanic traditions of druidism and ancient ways of knowing" have aided her in her resiliency. Central to this belief system she said is a fundamental belief in reciprocity and the cycle of life. She described this as:

> …Those things, plus I gradually, I came to see…it was interesting. In a sociological sense, it's interesting thinking about things like the collective consciousness and stuff like that. And, as our understanding of genetics is advanced too, it's really from psychology and sociology, of how to accept it…it's not as clear cut as they might once have liked to think…that whether we like it or not, it's a genetic inheritance. There's also a social inheritance and that meets the combination of which leads to us being born with particular cognitive patterns and both physical and cognitive predispositions and the amazing thing about the whole sort of [Teutonic] druid system … is that they knew it…(See Kristi, First Interview, p. 22.)

She stated that death and immortality relate to reincarnation, in that she believes that the "spirit lives on, " but she also added: "I think we're a lot stronger than we really are while we're in our spirit form and we agree to do things that we would never do if we remembered what it was really like here [laughs]." (See Kristi, First Interview, pp. 22-23.)

Kristi defined her philosophy as "one step forward in every generation," and she described having accomplished this in the positive relationship she currently has with her own daughter. She stated further that life was like a journey of one big adventure whose

purpose is to put the emotional and mental aspects of her being back into her centre. She described this process as "putting the spheres back together" and states that this is represented by the rune sign of "butterfly." (See Kristi, First Interview, p. 11.)

Kristi saw her human spirit in her freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, as the "core thing with many layers always changing" and that the swirl emanated from the centre of her being. She said the blue lines represent the sky on a sunny, wonderful day and that, "the sky evolves….and I thought well the essence of the spirit. The spirit has like this really hard core to it and so the red is the core…" Kristi stressed further that the core represented a "sort of essence [of] movement in change…that it had the inner strength to it…"(See Kristi, First Interview and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, p. 12.)

Kristi also expressed that the first rune sign embedded in the swirl of her freestyle art drawing of the human spirit represented the tribe and the teaching and knowledge that is passed on, while the second rune symbol represented the human spirit. She discussed this further:

> …There's …actually three rune signs embedded in this. The one at the top is the sign which stands for movement and movement through life and partnership with the life force of the entire being and it also happens to be my personal rune. The one that I drew for myself right and this represents it. And at the bottom there's … last three runes is the one that I told you about, it's like the shape of a butterfly which is the new beginning…the end and the beginning of the cycle, which is like the life and death thing. And-and the two that are behind that are…the one which represents tribe or genetics... well they both do. One represents the tribe from which we [inaudible] teaching and knowledge which is passed on. And the other represents [ing] which is spirit…or the essence of yourself or what there is inside to work with…and they come together towards the end of the rune cycle and so there they are…like at the base of this is what comes to somebody's spirit when they come into the world…(See Kristi, First Interview, p. 27.)

Finally, Kristi's kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) drawing featured a Victorian house with a woman sitting in a relaxed manner, outside on the porch with her cat. She drew a number of tall trees to the right of the picture that she described as energized,

alive, and continuous. The trees are also described as having the most energy and as sheltering the house and the person. Indeed when I asked her what the trees made her think of she stated that they reminded her of "the continuity of life…the cycle of life and the endurance of love." (See Kristi, First Interview and KHTP drawing, p. 14.)

<div align="center">*****</div>

We will shortly move onto the Third Thematic Section: The Human Spirit Returns to God. However, I would first like to tell you of hummingbird coincidences in my thesis journal entry.

Thesis Journal Entry: Of Hummingbird "Coincidences"

My husband's family are wildlife refuge people in rural New Brunswick and I decide to fly from Edmonton to Toronto and to take the train from Toronto to New Brunswick to visit them. Lynne, the woman physician who transformed my life in my teens, lives in a small town about an hour and a half outside of Toronto. Although I still visit her there occasionally when I travel to Toronto, on this occasion we had not planned to meet.

It is Wednesday, August 23, 2006 and I am standing at the Toronto Union train station on the platform that will take me to New Brunswick. As I am about to board the train, Lynne suddenly comes out of another platform and almost collides with me. We are both utterly shocked but we embrace and share a few kind words.

I smile all the way on the 24 hour trip to New Brunswick because of that "chance" encounter. When I finally do arrive at my parents-in-law, I am exhausted but happy. I quietly make myself some tea and sit on their back porch that looks out onto a branch of the St. John River. There are hummingbird feeders on the porch. I watch the hummingbirds for a while from my lawn chair and then return to reading my book. While reading, I am thinking both of what the Dene medicine woman said to me of my "hummingbird spirit" a number of years ago and of the "coincidence" of seeing Lynne.

Lost in my thoughts, I become aware of a buzzing noise extremely close to me. I look up and at "arms length" away from me is a hummingbird directly in front of my line of vision, flapping steadily and staring into my eyes. It does not move away for the longest time and I am so moved by its presence that I reach out to touch it...it then flies off to the feeder and I sit there transfixed...

Several days later, again in rural New Brunswick, I visit a friend who was married for many years to a man from South America. She lives in a house with a large front porch farther down the river bank and quite a distance from my in-laws home. We are sharing our life experiences of resiliency over a pot of tea. She has a pit bull and a pet

raccoon but no bird feeders of any kind. She goes into her house to renew the pot of tea and her animals follow her. I am sitting, quietly contemplating the synchronicity of "coincidences." Suddenly, another hummingbird appears, an arm's length away, flapping steadily and staring directly at me...

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We now turn to the Third Thematic Section: The Human Spirit Returns to God.

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants
Third Thematic Section: The Human Spirit returns to God

Kelly (Flowers in the Thorns)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Neo (Different Parts of Self)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Kate (Rainbow Gifts and Open Arms)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants:
Third Thematic Section: The Human Spirit Returns to God.

In this section there were three participants who, in response to the question concerning death and/or immortality, stated that the human spirit returned to and remained with God after death as an underlying factor in their own resiliency. Of these three participants, only Kate will be discussed on a more in depth basis following the summary of Kelly and Neo's stories.

Kelly (Flower in the Thorns), 23, experienced sexual abuse as a child, the death of her mother when she was a teenager and the fact that she may have been given a rape drug as a young person. During the first interview, Kelly defined resiliency in general as "I guess it's just …when things happen to people, how well they bounce back and are able to keep on coping with the rest of their life." (See Kelly, First Interview, p.1.) When I asked Kelly why she saw herself as resilient, she stated that she saw herself as resilient most of the time: "because I consider myself to be pretty stubborn and I know what I want and I usually go after it. I don't let the little problems get in the way." (See Kelly, First Interview, p.1.)

Kelly attributed her underlying resiliency in part to her belief in what happens when a person dies: "it is like God taking the battery out of the clock and when Jesus comes back, God puts the battery back in and the person's breath, soul or emotional/heart part is what goes back to heaven." (See Kelly, First Interview, p. 12, KHTP and freestyle drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Neo (Different Parts of Self) 19, described himself as a gay protestant Christian. In terms of the general resiliency definition, Neo described his resiliency as:

> I think it's like how you can... how you can like overcome... anything that comes around in your life and you realize that… I guess in talking about things to like my best friends and stuff and seeing their reactions like whoa ... you know, how could you done that ... like one of my friends he told me he would have killed himself if he'd gone through the same stuff. (See Neo, First Interview, p.1.)

When I asked Neo to explain how he feels about issues related to death and/or immortality, he stated that his faith has helped him be resilient. He did admit however, that he felt God loved him but that his fundamentalist religion was conflictual for him because it views homosexuality as a sin. (See Neo KHTP, and freestyle drawing of the human spirit in text.)

We will soon turn to Kate, who best exemplified the belief system that resiliency is related to one's belief that the human spirit returned to and remained with God after death as an underlying factor in resiliency, but first I would like to tell you the story of "Ishi" in my thesis journal entry.

Thesis Journal Entry: Ishi

Author Theodora Kroeber (1961) tells the story of Ishi: In Two Worlds. Ishi was the last and only member of the Yahi Indian tribe in California to escape the massacre of his people by the white man. In the early 1900s, on the brink of starvation, he finally wandered into the white man's civilization. Eventually he ended up as a permanent resident of a museum in California. Ishi worked amiably with the curators and visitors at the museum. However, he would also spend a great deal of his time at nearby hospitals singing aboriginal healing songs to the appreciative patients there. Apparently, Ishi never displayed any bitterness for what he had experienced...instead he chose to use his experiences to help others.

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We now turn to the narrative of Kate (Rainbow Gifts and Open Arms.)

Third Thematic Section: The Human Spirit returns to God

Kate (Rainbow Gifts and Open Arms)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art

Kinetic-House-Tree-Person

Kate: Rainbow Gifts and Open Arms
Narrative and Art Analysis

Kate is a 19-year-old single white Catholic female university student. During her narrative, Kate discussed how she recovered from a life-threatening eating disorder. Kate described resiliency in general as:

> …I think I would define resiliency as overcoming... well, not so much overcoming something as getting through um, say bouncing back almost, like going through something that's difficult and how you still survive through that... how you still continue living…(See Kate, First Interview, pp. 1-2.)

When I asked Kate what her feelings were concerning death and/or immortality, she stated that it was primarily her Catholic faith that allowed her to be resilient and to heal from her anorexia. During the 2nd interview when we discussed the difference between spirituality and religion, Kate clearly indicated to me that she saw no such division:

> Kate: I guess a couple of things that stuck out for me, was the part, spirituality versus religion, and I guess for me, I-I don't draw a distinction in that. I feel that … I guess for me I'm Catholic and I'm involved in a religion and I guess I see how, I have interpreted it…as rules and how I have, cuz I know in my journey, in the past I have interpreted it…religion as making, being hard on myself and trying to be …but I think …I guess I don't feel that it was the religion that did it, it was me…being hard on myself, because I really feel that spirituality and religion go hand in hand.
>
> I: Okay, so it's the same thing for you? I've made it a distinction, but that's my thing.
>
> Kate: I think …as people the distinction happens. Like, you know, I pretend to make it into the laws but … I think that's where it was me talking about being really hard on myself and
>
> I: That was your interpretation of your religion whereas later on… when you went through this transformation you realized the true essence of your religion then?
>
> Kate: Uh-hmm. Yes. That's a better way to put it... (See Kate, Second Interview, pp. 4-5.)

Finally, during our second interview discussion of her process of "spiritual awakening," Kate described such a process as being indicative of her resiliency but as a gradual process, like "growing up" rather than a "sudden awareness" of her spirituality. During both the first and second interviews, Kate also discussed that although she was raised Catholic, the experience was not real to her until she had to deal with her eating disorder and chose a spiritual rather than a medical focus in order to resolve it:

> Kate: …it just felt inside for me that just going to hospital might make my body healthy but that wasn't... I don't know, I didn't think using, having antidepressant drugs are just... getting my body better wasn't going to be any good because I knew that that wasn't what the problem was…(See Kate, First Interview, pp.1-2.)

When I subsequently asked Kate how commonality of experience was a factor in her recovery and spirituality she stated she knew how important it was to share the experiences of growth with others. Kate then related that, rather than hospitalization, she chose instead to move into a convent for four months. This decision provided camaraderie in that the nuns as well as the members of her 12-step group gave her a "sense of community." Kate stated that through this process [of living at the convent] she gained her weight back and knows that now she is healthy. However, she further stressed that she no longer weighs herself and that that decision was also "part of my journey of letting go of knowing." Again, Kate stressed that the biggest cause of her disease was the spiritual and emotional aspect. (See Kate, First Interview, pp. 6-7.)

Kate described both her freestyle artwork of the human spirit and her KHTP drawing. Her rainbow pouring into her outstretched arms in her freestyle drawing, was described by Kate as "the spirit pouring down on [me]," the bird-like characters represent the people who have helped her and that "inside of her is a lot of colour." (See Kate, First Interview, p. 5.) Moreover, her narrative comments throughout her kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) drawing reflect this spiritual growth as she discussed her transformation from the "distant, lonely" house with "no lights coming from within" (and that reminded her of people who close themselves off), to the young girl standing inside the unseen house who "seems at peace." (See Kate, First Interview, pp. 6-8.)

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       We will shortly turn to the Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity, Commitment. However, I would first like to tell you in my thesis journal entry how I earned the Inuit name of "Qubilaratuq Ubliak."

Thesis Journal Entry: Qubilaratuq Ubliak

I recall my first six months in the fly-in community in the central Arctic where I resided for the next four years in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During that first year I had been able to assist during incidences of profound tragedy in the community and thus had made connections with a number of individuals there. I had not however, told anyone of seeing my arctic meadow from the plane when I first arrived. It was only some months later that I told the Inuit medicine woman (who later adopted me) about my meadow, the one in my mind from when I was a child...and the subsequent meadow that I saw from the arctic plane. When I told her, her smile was as broad as the sun.

"Well, she replied casually, "we Inuit, we see visions like that all the time." She then smiled and told me that the Inuit had finally "changed" my nickname.

I replied "what do you mean changed? Changed to what?"

"Well when you first came here you made us so dizzy...you were like a bee buzzing round and round a flower, you never stopped moving, so we called you *Kablainait tamakyak okalikti Aopak!*"

"And, what does that mean?" I asked.

She said "it means the crazy white chatterbox redhead"

"Oh dear, I said "And what is it now?"

"Qubilaratuq Ubliak"

"And what does that mean?"

She said "it means shining star."

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We now turn to the Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity, Commitment.

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants
Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity, Commitment

Victoria (Warrior Woman)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Anna (Spirit of the Wind)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Khamsin (Atoms of the Heart)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*
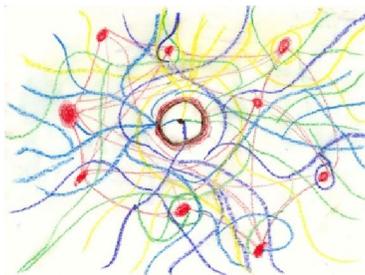
Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants
Third Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity, Commitment

Ben (Of Mountains and Cubes)
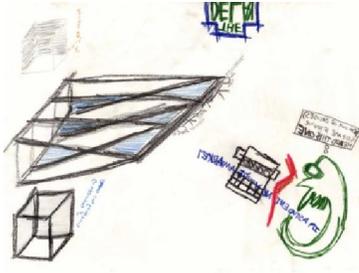
Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*

Anwar (Running Free)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Kinetic-House-Tree-Person*
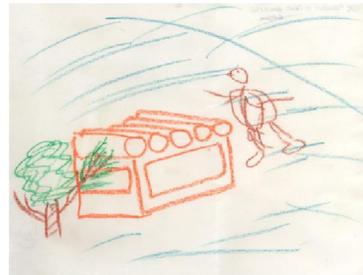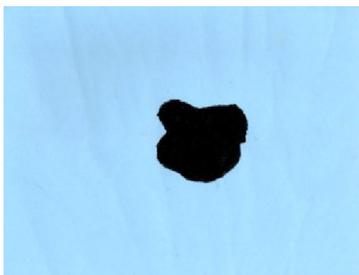
Harold (House of the Poet)   *Charron (Flowering Tree)*

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art   *Human Spirit: Freestyle*

Section VII: Results: Narrative and Art Analysis of Thesis Participants:

Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity, Commitment

The following seven participants have been grouped together because other factors (besides death and/or immortality belief systems) were predominately stressed as being related to their resiliency. For the purposes of this section, due to the variety of responses, Ben and Anwar will be discussed in summary as will the five other thesis participants. Due to the diversity of responses however, Victoria, Khamsim, Anna, Charron and Harold will be discussed on a more indepth basis following the summary.

Victoria, (Warrior Woman), 18, experienced both war and childhood sexual abuse. Her general definition of resiliency was "…I guess I think being resilient is not letting, let's just call it thing "A" bother you to the point where you can't function anymore…" (See Victoria, First Interview, pp.1-2.)

When I subsequently asked Victoria why she saw herself as resilient she said:

> I have, I know for myself I have certain goals in my life that I want to meet and just the competitive nature in me doesn't allow me to let things bother me to the point where I'm not going to... I think I'm pretty resilient in that sense, that I just kind of, not ignore things but I'll just put them in the back until I have what I call time to think about it…I think I deal with things in sort of short little sections of when I have downtime…and I plan everything… and I need to be organized… I do compartmentalize in my life…(See Victoria, First Interview; pp. 1-2.)

Victoria stated that her Sikh religion encouraged her to be both strong and protective and that this primarily aided her in her resiliency. (See Victoria, First Interview, p. 7, KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Anna (Spirit of the Wind), 19, experienced her father's shooting accident and the death of a close friend. Her general definition of resiliency was:

> …OK, I think resiliency is someone's ability to be able to go on normally after something has happened…to me…I think it's more of a sense of realization how lucky you are that it wasn't you (who died)…and being able to move past…your own feelings and kind of go on with things. (See Anna. First Interview, pp.1-2.)

In terms of why she sees herself as resilient, Anna stated that "…I really confront everything I find, I don't try and bottle it up, I just get it all out and deal with it right then. (See Anna, First Interview, pp. 1-2.)

For Anna, her resiliency is related to her greater connection to nature such as manifested in the wind. She further stated that since her friend's death she does not think of her own eventual mortality as "being scary anymore." During the narrative she spoke of how her friend's spirit is represented in "wind symbols" and that when she feels the wind, she thinks of him, and feels at peace. (See Anna, KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Khamsin (Atoms of the Heart), 22, experienced childhood emotional and physical abuse. During the first interview, Khamsin stated that he felt he was resilient because he possessed the following: "…the ability to adapt to and to respond in a positive manner to those difficulties and/or problems that can strike at any time and you have no control over…" When I asked Khamsin why he saw himself as resilient he stated, "…sometimes I have a detached view about it…" (See Khamsin, First Interview, p.1.)

Khamsin stated that he is an atheist, and credited his resiliency with both his devotion to the rationality of science, and his rich fantasy life. He represented this connection in terms of his freestyle drawing of the human spirit in which his drawings appear to be a series of atom-like structures circling around a central atom. (See Khamsin, KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Ben, (Of Mountains and Cubes), 21, experienced the death of his father when he was 13-years-old. During the first interview, Ben described his resiliency in general as:

> …Just the ability to…look past like all the damage done by your torment or whatever…you're resilient against. I guess you can reduce it to just sickness, like having a cold [inaudible] and your body like is experienced and knows what to expect…(See Ben, First Interview, p.1.)

Furthermore, when I asked Ben why he saw himself as resilient he stated:

…I used to think that I was all hard done by…that I had all this kinda bad stuff that happened to me in my life…I don't really now how to say how I did it, per se. You just cope [inaudible]… (See Ben, First Interview, p. 2.)

He described himself as an atheist, and credited his resiliency with his devotion to his music, and how his relationships with others such as his girlfriend, provide him with the social support linked to his resiliency, (See Ben, KHTP and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit in text.)

Anwar (Running Free), 34, grew up in Syria where he experienced physical and emotional abuse as a child, as well as imprisonment and torture. During the first interview I noted Anwar's confusion between the word "resistant" and the word "resiliency," and I therefore asked Anwar if he thought that the word resiliency meant resistance. During both the first and second interviews, Anwar stated that for him resiliency and resistance were intertwined. He explained this further:

A: Yes,…well…I think every human being has resistant spirit inside.

I: Resilient?

A: Yeah. Resilient. And … I mean, many times I thought about suicide. Even now I'm thinking sometimes of suicide, it's so hard. It's…I mean the pressure of life, but why we don't suicide, I mean …everybody has maybe some hopes, this hope that creates resistance, that creates something that we are going to resist…we are going to fight. We still…we want to stand against…the problem in life…when we face tremendous pressure …that and something that destroys our personality and destroy our reasons for life, well I think any human being has this resistance inside and …how much, this balance between the pressure of the life, outside life and resistance…when it becomes more that depends also on the person, the individual…and his life, his family, his relationship. Well, sometimes it break and he will make suicide and he will commit suicide …

I: So you're saying everyone's got a breaking point for things that happen?

A: Yes. Yes.

(See Anwar, First Interview, pp. 1-2.)

Anwar described himself as an atheist and credits his resiliency primarily to his political and social activism.

Finally, Harold (House of the Poet), 54, and Charron (Flowering Tree), 45, are married to each other. Both have experienced a serious accident, natural disaster, and war. Both believe that their combined resiliency is related to aspects of personality, intelligence, faith and family, and their devotion to their daughter, Greta.

During both the pre-and first interviews, a different format was utilized since Harold and Charron expressed that they wanted to be interviewed together. During the first interview, when I asked them what their separate general definitions of resiliency were, they stated:

> H: I see that as inner strength…or an ability to face life as it comes…
>
> I: Okay. And what about you [Charron]…your definition of resiliency is…
>
> C: For me resiliency is that you know, for me to do things in spite of you know there are blockades or barriers.
>
> H: Letting things go…I-I try to…I try not to cling to things around me…probably this is one of the things that helped us uh to face courageously, the life you know, that was coming in the midst of the war… House and homes were bombed so many times and we lost everything. Uh, we lost our homes, our savings so many times. And, every time this happened, that did not crush us completely, because we were able to let go of what we had….
> (See Harold and Charron, First Interview, pp.1-2.)

Both Charron and Harold stressed that it was their creativity that primarily aided in their resiliency. For Harold, the creativity was manifested in his poetry and for Charron, her creativity was manifested in their home.

*****

Before I move onto the in depth narratives of five of these seven thesis participants who have other beliefs (besides the soul continuing on after death as the underlying factor in resiliency), I would like to tell you in my thesis journal of the staghorn fern.

Thesis Journal Entry: The Staghorn Fern

The Staghorn Fern, Robert Dixon, explained to me, is a particular fern that grows off by itself, high above the forest floor. Through this process, such a fern thus avoids competition with other ferns and plants so that "it will grow out there by itself...claiming [the] sun and moisture [for] its own." (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 16.)

And, in drawing an analogy between resilient people who resemble the Staghorn fern, Robert asserted "...alot of times people that have been under stress, are loners... they can't abide competition, they want to be off by themselves." (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 16.)

<div align="center">*****</div>

We move now to thesis participant Victoria (Warrior Woman) who reminded this researcher of the staghorn fern...

Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity, Commitment

Victoria (Warrior Woman)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art

Kinetic-House-Tree-Person

Victoria: Warrior Woman
Narrative and Art Analysis

Victoria is an 18-year-old single East Indian Sikh female university student. During her interview, Victoria came across as a Staghorn fern, dynamic and self-motivated, and a true "warrior woman" despite the fact that she experienced both war and childhood sexual abuse. She described her adaptivity throughout her narrative, talking about how she puts things "in the back" until she has "time to think about it" through a process she describes as "compartmentali(zing) her life." (See Victoria, First Interview, pp. 4-5).

Throughout her first interview, in describing her childhood sexual abuse experiences, Victoria asserted that she externally attributed responsibility for the abuse on the offender, and not herself. Furthermore, she appeared to show compassion and maturity for the offender's family, stating that even as a young child in India she knew that if she told on the offender he might have "ended up shot in a ditch somewhere." She did acknowledge however that the sexual abuse could have been a factor in her sexuality at 15-years-of-age. (See Victoria, First Interview, p. 4.)

In her narrative, Victoria stressed growing up in two cultures and stated that her Sikh religion has affected her in terms of encouraging her to be strong, protective, and resilient. In terms of death and immortality, she stressed the "morality focus" of her faith and stated that "whether an individual was good or bad ultimately decided where they would end up in the afterlife." She stated she was undecided as to what happens in the afterlife but felt that one lived only one lifetime. (See Victoria, First Interview, p.7.)

Additionally, Victoria stated that she learned her self motivation from her parents and that she is willing to share her experience with others in terms of listening to those who have been through similar circumstances. Furthermore, she talked about how she is dealing with the death of her friend through "keeping positive images of him in my head." (See Victoria, First Interview, p. 7.)

Victoria's freestyle drawing of the human spirit clearly reflects her "warrior persona" as well as her desire for perfection. She discussed the black in the semicircle of the picture as representing her "containment" while the picture in general represented "anger and boldness." (See Victoria, Second Interview, pp.12-13, and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit.)

When I discussed whether or not the black in the picture represented the containment and social restraints that society places on us so that we are not totally able to "be the flame that we are," Victoria totally agreed. I then asked her during the second interview about her comment about needing the lines to "not be smudged" in her freestyle picture. I asked further if this represented her desire to have things really ordered in her life. Victoria stated that although she likes to be in control she also likes to leave some things to chance as it "adds kind of flavor." (See Victoria, Second Interview, pp.12-13 and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit.)

Throughout her narrative, Victoria expressed her desire to "make my mark on the world." Such comments reminded me of Victoria's persona as the staghorn fern that Robert Dixon described as being "out there by itself...claiming [the] sun and moisture [for] its own." (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 16.)

*****

I now invite you to hear the thesis journal entry entitled "Atoms of the Universe."

Thesis Journal Entry: Atoms of the Universe

Paul Zundel's (1970) play "The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds" tells the story of two teenage girls who are being raised by a chaotic, alcoholic single mother. One of the daughters is negatively affected by her environment, but the other one, Tillie, turns to science instead and her interest heightens her self esteem and enables her not to become bitter because of her abusive background. At one point in the play, Tillie enters a science contest, and with the help of her science teacher conducts an experiment using gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds. Tillie describes her sense of wonder as she works on her experiment:

> In front of my eyes, one part of the world was becoming another. Atoms exploding...atom after atom breaking down into something new...It would go on for millions of years...(p. xi).

> ......And this small part of me was then a whisper of the earth. When there was life, perhaps this part of me got lost in a fern that was crushed and covered until it was coal. And then it was a diamond millions of years later...it must have been a diamond as beautiful as the star from which it first had come....(pp. 1-2).

During the course of the play, Tillie wins first prize at the science fair, only to come home and find that her mother is drunk and has killed her pet rabbit. Tillie takes only a moment to sob over her rabbit as her mother announces how much she hates the world. Tillie pauses and looks at the sky filled with stars and her voice continues:

> …For one thing, the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds has made me curious about the sun and the stars, for the universe itself must be like a world of great atoms and I want to know more about it. But most important, I suppose, my experiment has made me feel important--every atom in me, in everybody, has come from the sun--from places beyond our dreams. The atoms of our hands, the atoms of our hearts...

> Atom. *Atom.* What a beautiful word....(pp.108-109).

*****

We turn now to the narratives of thesis participant Khamsin (Atoms of the Heart) who found resiliency through both fantasy and the rationality of science.

Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity, Commitment

Khamsin (Atoms of the Heart)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art
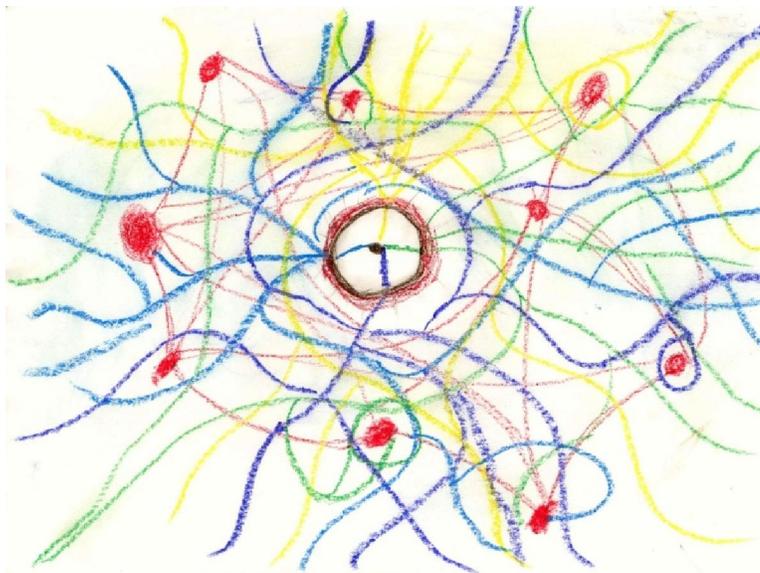
Kinetic-House-Tree-Person

Khamsin: Atoms of the Heart
Narrative and Art Analysis

Khamsin is a 22-year-old white male university student who lives in a common-law relationship. He stated he has no religion. Khamsin's story is one of a young man in transition from his abusive adoptive home to his current home where he lives with his girlfriend and her mother. During his narrative, I sensed his sadness at losing both his biological parents before he was 5-years-old. Furthermore, it appeared from Khamsin's description that the emotional abuse was far worse than the physical abuse from his aunt and uncle (who adopted him after the death of his parents.)

During the first interview, Khamsin discussed how the rationality of science, and his rich fantasy life (as manifested through his interest in computer games) helped him to become resilient. In fact, this researcher found his freestyle art drawing of the human spirit to be intriguing. Khamsin's drawing appeared to be a series of atom-like structures circling around a central atom. Moreover, I found it interesting that he stated that the black dot at the centre represents "me or what's been compressed into me." Furthermore, he stated that the "black circle surrounding the wall between myself and whatever I wish to represent" was a lot bigger in childhood because he had to keep more people out, as it was not safe for him to be himself. He stated that in the present, this circle surrounding his black spot is shrinking and that the more it shrinks, the more he feels he can be himself. This description of "shrinking" seems particularly relevant as he spoke about his relationship with his girlfriend and her mother. He stressed that he can be himself when he is with them, and that this too has aided him in his resiliency. (See Khamsin, First Interview, pp. 9-11, and freestyle art drawing of the human spirit.)

Indeed, Khamsin's assertion of his present self- identity is in direct contrast to the "carefully crafted self" that he presented to his aunt and uncle. During his narrative, he asserted also that such a "façade" was necessary in order to protect himself emotionally

from them. During the first interview narrative and with particular reference to the freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, Khamsin also stated that he sometimes feels like an "observer outside the circle."(See Khamsin, First Interview, p.11).

During the first interview, in describing his kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) Khamsin stated that there was no sun in the picture and the tree was dying. (See Khamsin, First Interview, p. 32, and KHTP drawing). During the second interview analysis of the first interview KHTP drawing, I asked Khamsin if the person in the picture whom he identified as himself carrying dead wood represented symbolically the waste of his adopted parents' negativity that Khamsin was carrying around. Khamsin laughed at my observation and stated, " I suppose in a way it could be." (See Khamsin, Second Interview, p. 41).

During the second interview, when I stated that I thought the cut-down tree might represent his childhood with his adoptive parents, Khamsin agreed that that was an "interesting idea." I then referred to the fact that during the first interview, he had stated the house was not a place he would like to be and that the house "has its own set of feelings." (See Khamsin, First Interview, p. 34.) He described his drawing further:

> …this picture does have aspects of reality to it in that it was linked to an event that actually happened. And a lot of what you're saying is the key to what I was feeling at the time…(See Khamsin, Second Interview, p. 41.)

<div align="center">*****</div>

And now, I invite you to hear my thesis journal entry of how I discovered "Awe."

Thesis Journal Entry: Awe

During the time I resided in the arctic, I recall the very day I began to comprehend opera...

...I am flying in a small plane from one arctic community in the east to my home arctic community in the west. I am the only passenger in a small four-seater plane. It is late August and the sun is beginning to dip in the west. The terrain we are flying over appears to be large canyons and deep valleys...and rocks...endless rocks. I am restless and am tired of listening to my country and western cassette tapes on my walkman. The pilot gives me a Pavorotti tape and a wink. I am not impressed with the wink and I have never liked opera. I put the tape in the cassette and Pavorotti's voice fills the void in the plane. As his voice rises in crescendo, I glance out of the window of the plane and see the shadow of the plane as it passes over tundra. I become aware of the dipping sunset on the red clay rocks and then....I see a herd of musk-ox galloping toward the sunset. I become aware that they have always been there. It is both the present and it is 10,000 years before. And…I find that I am crying while Pavorotti sings.   My gratitude and my tears fill the void in the plane. I become still, very still...my own short lifespan in such utter vastness, timelessness and awe...

*****

To this day, whenever I hear opera I feel the plane, and I see those muskox galloping toward the sunset. Timelessness and awe return...and I become very, very still.

*****

And so we turn to the narrative of thesis participant Anna (Spirit of the Wind), who found the wind when she lost her friend....

Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity, Commitment

Anna (Spirit of the Wind)

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art

Kinetic-House-Tree-Person
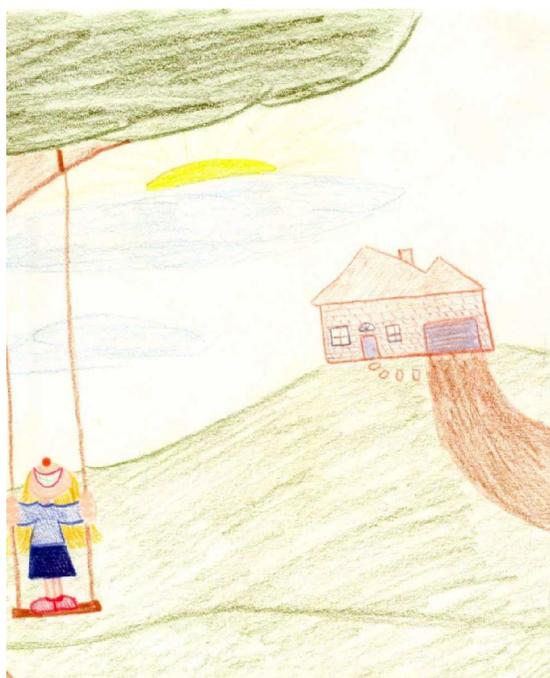
Anna: Spirit of the Wind
Narrative and Art Analysis

Anna is a 19-year-old single white female university student who stated she has no religion. As an 8-year-old child, Anna experienced her father's shooting accident and at that time, her perception of death was that "when you die the world never stops…and that used to scare me a lot." (See Anna, First Interview, p. 5.) Anna stated that her sense of immortality and her strength of spirit is reflected in her freestyle art drawing of the human spirit when she described the spherical yellow ball with the female sign imprinted on it as representing the soul that can "rise above everything else." She described this as "like a soul sign, it's like just powerful and bright and just like out there." She described the earth in the picture as "…it's like the pain and suffering and all that is just well, here on earth and then the soul can rise above that and outside of you it can take you away from all that." (See Anna, First Interview, pp. 18-19, freestyle art drawing of the human spirit).

Anna further stated that for her, resiliency is expressed in her greater connection to nature and that the wind symbolized the spirit of her friend David who died. She stated that she does not think of death as being "scary anymore" and does not think of her friend as "just gone," but rather sees him as "kind of like the wind." She spoke further during her first interview, remarking that even on the day of David's death and his funeral, a few days later it was "really, really windy." She said that this factor "just kind of like caught in my throat." She then stated that David's family planted a tree in his honour and "David's tree…like it's always blowing and stuff." It is evident that Anna has moved past the place of death frightening her and her earlier childhood feelings of death "being the world goes on and you don't." When I ask her later in this initial interview whether the wind still makes her sad, she replied, "I don't feel sadder when I think about [it], its …just life." (See Anna, First Interview, pp. 13-14.) Anna's visualization of wind as now being "just life" as well as both comforting and buffeting is

reflected in her freestyle art drawing of the human spirit where the blue shades of sky represent wind, while the black shades of sky represent "the conflict" that is not associated with wind. In fact, the wind is described in a comforting way in her kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) drawing, in which a young girl is swinging (one close to Anna's age when she experienced both her father's shooting and later a tornado [also a wind symbol!].) She described this picture as being a "windy day" with the young girl swinging with the "wind on her face" and that such a feeling makes her happy. (See Anna, First Interview, KHTP drawing, pp. 19-22.)

*****

I now invite you to read my thesis journal entry: "Ferns and Social Support."

Thesis Journal Entry: Ferns and Social Support

In drawing analogies between the social support of ferns and the social support among survivors of trauma, Robert Dixon, horticulturalist, stated the following:

> Well, there's people that basically sit quiet for a long time, and then when there's an opportunity to shine, can excel and move into the limelight. And, it's a classic thing in a forest when a forest giant, falls, and there's another patch of sunlight, and then the actual fallen tree itself is returning to the soil...ferns are the first colonizers, they will move into that spot, whether it's the myriad of spores that are just endemic in the air or in the soil or whether it's the runners from ferns that it's landed on, they are the first colonizers and they help break down that tree into other nutrients that the rest can use. (See Robert Dixon Interview, p.17.)

And, he concluded, "there are people that they can spend many, many years... in the shadows, waiting for an opportunity and when it presents itself they're able to move into [the limelight],...they've had years of practice..." (See Robert Dixon Interview, p.17.)

*****

Now we turn to Harold and Charron, and explore their narratives in more depth. For this couple (as well as for participants Ben and Anwar who were mentioned only in the Fourth Thematic section summary), social support and social activism appear to be linked to their resiliency.

Fourth Thematic Section: Resiliency: Camaraderie, Creativity, Commitment

Human Spirit: Freestyle Art

Harold (House of the Poet)
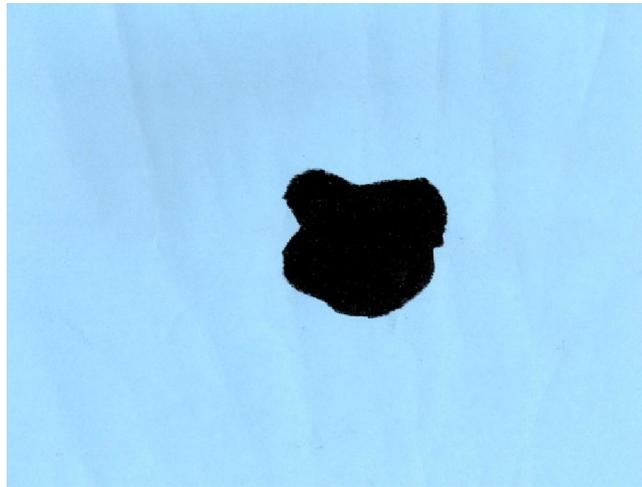
Charron: Flowering Tree

Harold: The House of the Poet
Narrative and Art Analysis

Harold is a 54-year-old Asian male who is married to Charron. He has a doctoral degree and is employed part-time in a professional capacity. Harold's apparent competence in dealing with the stresses of a serious accident, natural disaster, and life/living in a military combat or war zone appears to be related to aspects of personality, intelligence and to his faith as a Protestant minister.

Charron: Flowering Tree
Narrative and Art Analysis

Charron is a 45-year-old Asian female who is married to Harold. She works full-time outside the home in a service capacity and she holds a Master's Degree. Charron's apparent competence in dealing with the stresses of a serious accident, natural disaster, and lifeliving in a military combat or war zone appears to be related to aspects of personality, intelligence, faith, and family. Charron stressed throughout both narratives that she receives strength from her relationship with Harold and her family life with their daughter, Greta.

During their combined interviews, a different format was utilized, since this couple expressed that they wanted to be interviewed together. During the first interview, both Harold and Charron expressed their resiliency as evolving from many sources, but in particular from their family closeness. They talked admiringly of Greta's adaptability, showing this researcher pictures of their daughter planting flowers among the various bombed out buildings of their village. Harold also spoke of continuously training his young daughter to walk through the darkness, carrying a small lantern. Significantly, Harold stressed that nowhere was Greta's resiliency more evident than in the way she faced her cancer courageously after they had come to Canada and she had to endure several rounds of radiation therapy. (See Harold and Charron, First Interview, p. 5.) Indeed, when discussing their combined academic backgrounds, Charron stated that her

faith in God is a quiet one and that she is a person who silently pray[s] and that "deep faith makes me strong." (See Harold and Charron, First Interview, p. 8.)

Additionally, Harold stated that he believes in an "absent God" and that people must be motivated to change things for themselves but that he does acknowledge a "mysterious power that protects." Harold stressed further that one of the highlights of his life was having his poetry banned by the Sri Lankan government. During the first interview when I questioned Harold and Charron about their attitudes towards death and immortality, Charron replied that for her, dead is dead and that she is not concerned about what happens after one's death. Harold, on the other hand stated that he did not entirely agree with Charron's version of what happens after death, that he is more Buddhist in his thinking and believes in the "lost soul theory." Harold then expanded on his belief system and says he does believe that "dead is dead" but stated that "beyond that, I don't know." (See Harold and Charron, First Interview, p. 11.)

During the first interview, I asked Charron and Harold how important it was for them to share with others who have gone through similar experiences. Harold stated that he felt it was important as it increased one's understanding and ability to empathize with others. Harold then talked of his openness about death and that it makes him less selfish and of how his daughter Greta's bravery in going through her experience of cancer strengthened him:

> …So, …your openness to death is also important because …it makes you less selfish in essence, less greedy… you know there was…a couple of years ago, I had this fear of…death because of my responsibility toward my daughter…but after she went through the harrowing experience of cancer, and frequently thereafter, I realized that my daughter has got enough strength to stand on her own…Yeah, I think you know, her bravery has made me to be a little braver, particularly when it comes to death… (See Harold and Charron, First Interview, p. 13.)

In confronting the fear of death, Harold further stated that he often counselled people in Sri Lanka on the difference between exaggerated and real fears. He stressed

strongly that there must be a balanced view toward every situation that may occur, even during wartime. Harold stressed that the Buddhist philosophy of his home country had taught him that "there was plenty of living to be done in between the bombings."

During both interviews, Harold commented on the Tamil saying of "the tools in the house of the poet will also sing," stating that the saying represented the resiliency of his entire family. Throughout the interviews, Harold stressed that his resiliency is contained in his poetry which strengthens his spirit. Charron stated that her human spirit and resiliency derives from her work both outside the home (where she works in a care-giving capacity), and within the home with her family.

During the first interview, Harold and Charron chose not to participate in the kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) projective art analysis, preferring instead to draw their respective freestyle drawing of the human spirit. Charron drew a flowering tree which she stated represented the creativity in her home and family life. Harold however drew a black rock. When he had finished his freestyle drawing, I found myself beginning to think if it was a black rock that it must signify depression. However I soon changed my analysis when Harold explained that the rock signified strength and that the nothingness inside meant a "cleansing or releasing" that enabled him to lovingly interact with others. This factor was further reinforced in his poem, "Uncut Stone" with particular reference to the lines that stated "An uncut stone am I, with bone. Strong to stand stranded…unsold even in eternity." (See Harold & Charron, First Interview, p. 14, and Harold and Charron, freestyle art drawings of the human spirit.)

Finally, throughout all interviews both Charron and Harold expressed the importance of living in the present and being able to let go of things around them, something they learned from enduring war. Harold stressed that his poem "Best is Present," reflects his belief:

> … I now realize, it is neither the past triumph, nor
>   Still to be born, but the real present that matters
>   By pulling myself together
>   Expelling all greed and delusion

Silently I learn to live in the present,
To enjoy the moment that is current.

(See Harold, First Interview, pp. 26-27.)

*****

I now would like to tell you about "Journeying with Others " in my thesis journal entry.

Thesis Journal Entry: Journeying with Others:

I am working late at my office at the university during the winter of 2006. I am utterly discouraged with yet another thesis revision. I am drawn to the quandaries of how one discusses resiliency in oneself and that of others, how one extrapolates from the personal to the general, and how one discusses oneself without sounding like a "wailing woundologist?" Most importantly, how can resiliency be measured in a qualitative narrative way that truly captures the human spirit? A tall order and a mammoth task and I am beginning to doubt that I can complete it.

It is late at night and utterly quiet. I hear a noise and open my office door. I am struck by the back of a tall, slender black woman whom I see further down the hallway. It is her hair that strikes me. It falls to her waist in a luminous halo, thick dark braided coils interlaced with blonde streaks. I move toward her as if to touch her rich locks. She hears me coming and turns and smiles. Her smile too is luminous, her eyes warm and inviting. I tell her that her hair is beautiful and we begin a conversation.

She appears to be in her mid-20s, but she tells me that she is in her mid-30s and that she has four children. She tells me that she spent many years in a refugee camp in the Sudan and that she is grateful to feel safe in Canada and to be working as a cleaner. I sense her deep intelligence and wisdom as we continue to speak. I tell her of my research into resiliency and her eyes light up as she listens. She tells me that it is her faith that got her and her children through the camps in the Sudan. I tell her that I think she should consider going to university at some point and she says she will consider it. I memorize her name and tell her I will be in touch. However, despite my best efforts, I am unable to find her anywhere in the university again. But the conversation, the sharing, and her story, encourage me to continue my study...

*****

And, as the thesis work finally draws to a close, I continue to marvel at the resiliency of people that I encounter on my own journey. I meet a young medical student from Somalia, who had to leave her studies there when civil war broke out. She tells me with quiet dignity that she watched her women friends being raped and killed in front of her. Through her tears she says that one of her friends while dying, told her "you go on, you live for us and we will live in you." She confirms that she honours both Allah and her friends, through active living in the present.

And, on this journey, a young man from Rwanda sits beside me on a bus. We engage in conversation and he tells me that he works for a non-governmental organization in Africa. I do not notice at first that half of his face is burned and that he has artificial arms. He tells me that he is Tutsi and during the Rwandan civil war, he was left for dead in a pit with other bodies. I listen quietly and feel humble in his presence. He then smiles at me and says, "They killed my friends, they killed my family, they burned half my face and took my arms. But, they never got my mind or my heart."

And, as the thesis work is completed, I travel out of province for several months, back to the locations where the worst of my childhood abuses occurred. I find as I journey there, sometimes by myself, and sometimes with beloved friends, that these locations no longer have the power to hurt me anymore. Indeed, I experience a passing sadness from what could have been and is not, yet there is no regret. Instead, I see new people in these locations now, people who are laughing and enjoying life in its brief unfolding moment.

And, as that present moment unfolds before us all, I find myself laughing in the exquisiteness of "now."

*****

I invite you to turn to my thesis journal entry: Of Ferns, Resiliency and "Hidden Angels."

Thesis Journal Entry: Of Ferns, Resiliency and Hidden Angels

In the beginning of the thesis I noted Jean Clandinin & Michael Connelly's (2000) assertion that two factors come to play in narrative research: one is the researcher's own narrative of experience, and the other is that researchers move simultaneously backwards and forward through time, telling "remembered stories of ourselves from earlier times as well as more current stories..." (pp. 54-60). Narrative inquiry then is an interaction between both researcher and participant, reminiscent of a medieval dance where one partner gently turns toward the other, palms of the hand merging with one another, yet bodies remaining apart. Those who have experienced trauma, I believe, possess a synchronous dance that draws us to one another.

I return again to my original personal question of why has there been such a negative bias toward survivors of trauma, particularly on the part of mental health professionals? And, I return again to one of the answers provided to me by the native medicine man when I fled from the ceremonial sweat lodge due to my childhood claustrophobia. In answer to my flight, he reached out, touching the shoulder flaps on my Inuit parka, spreading them outwards like two great fans.

"I do not see a damaged child in front of me" he said "I see a spiritual one with wings that have enabled her to fly."

I recall my own journey with the stones chosen for me from the Inuit medicine woman who adopted me. I recall taking those stones to Auschwitz, and through my journey and transformation there, I released myself from my unanswered questions and from the claustrophobia that had plagued me since childhood. And, I recall from that release, that my resiliency became wings that enabled me to fly. Similarly, the thesis journey, between myself and those who participated in the study, evolved into another transformation of spirit. Through the active listening to participants' own stories of resiliency and transformation, I found my wings expanding into yet another transcendency of spirit--a synchronicity, if you will, in our journeyed flight together.

Fern: from Fearn (ult) = root meaning feather.

Greek pteron feather, or wing (Funk & Wagnall's, 1976.)

As a child, under the protective fronds of the large ferns called bracken, I hid from the world. Yet, there were individuals who embraced me with their protective fronds during those difficult early years. Not until middle age, during the writing of this thesis, did I come to realize that these individuals were the external manifestations of the hidden angel in my hidden meadow. Indeed, directly because of such "hidden angels," I have been able to emerge from beneath the internal hidden bracken of my heart, above, into the external sunlight of my new world. Significantly, I am reminded at this juncture of Richardson's (1997) assertion that "writing stories "about the researcher's self and the participants in the study "can evoke deeper parts of the Self, heal wounds, enhance the sense of self--or even alter one's sense of identity." (p. 932).

And, I am reminded again of my conversations with Robert Dixon who stressed that when the dinosaurs were around they fed on ferns, yet the dinosaurs are now extinct, and the ferns have survived. I see myself as fern: the dinosaurs, those offenders of my childhood, are now gone. Yet I remain. In a similar vein, Robert Dixon states that when he thinks of resilience, he thinks of "people that can come into their own. And, then under adversity will curl back, hide their light under a bushel, sit and wait... and when the circumstances change, they move and they evolve... "(See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 15.)

It is not surprising to me then, to recall that in childhood I clung to the large frond bracken ferns whereas now in mature adulthood, it is the smaller, more resilient resurrection fern ally that I prefer. Robert Dixon tells me that the resurrection plant is also his favourite because of the fact that it remains dormant for years, but then, " it lands in a puddle, it lands in an oasis, or it has a good rain, and it just hunkers down, sends out roots, turns green, and continues on..." In fact, near the end of our interview, Dixon added delightedly, "you know, it's sort of like thumbing your nose at the rest of the

world...I'm a resurrection plant, and who the hell are you!" (See Robert Dixon Interview, Muttart Conservatory, 2007, p. 15.)

Of all Robert's quotes, the one above is my favourite for it speaks to my childhood, and to the stories I have heard from others who experienced trauma. It speaks to those of us who were viewed as "damaged children or adults" and who were told that it was unlikely that we would ever transform or transcend our traumas. To such criticism, I respond delightedly, "We are the resurrection plants, who the hell are you to say that we are not!?"

The Dene medicine woman at the healing lodge in the Northwest Territories told me that my animal totem was the resilient hummingbird who lives close to its heart, moving simultaneously backwards and forward through time. She informed me that if the hummingbird lives in a cage it will die, but if it becomes trapped something else occurs:

> ...it withdraws to its sacred internal space within, becomes very still there, and it waits. It waits for the time when it is finally free. And when that time has come, it flies outward and onward until it finds an external sacred place in which to rest...

In the process of taking the train from Toronto to New Brunswick where my husband's parents live, I unexpectedly ran into Lynne, the woman physician who transformed my life in my teens. A few days after arriving in New Brunswick, I met two hummingbirds on two separate occasions alighting in front of me, so close that if I reached out, I could have touched them. And I know, *I know* ... that the internal sacred places of my heart now dwell in harmony with the external sacred places in the world. Inner and outer, no longer hidden and no longer separated. And, in the sacred synchronicity of that combined dwelling place, I rest in the stillness of light and love...

*SECTION   VIII: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS
              FOR   RESEARCH*

Discussion

My doctoral dissertation "Resurrection Ferns: Resiliency, Art, and Meaning
Constructs Among Survivors of Trauma or Difficult Life events" involved an
interdisciplinary investigation that explored how self-defined resilient people make sense
of their experiences of trauma and/or life's difficulties, using multiple modes of inquiry.
In order to investigate such an exploration, I also examined:

1) definitions of resiliency and how resilient individuals perceive their resiliency.

2) the nature and duration of the trauma and the several different environmental
   and interpersonal factors that contributed to how individuals maintained their
   resiliency through experiences of trauma and/or life's difficulties.

Plummer (2001) in discussing narrative qualitative methodology suggested that
such research should be undertaken in three ways—one, -- to take a story and to
challenge some overly general theory; two-- to illustrate or illuminate some wider theory;
and three—to expand further on an existing theory (p. 159).   In this thesis study, I have
utilized all three aspects of narrative, through challenging the 'damage-deficit' modality
of human suffering and challenging and expanding on a 'resilient' modality of human
response to such suffering. Indeed, Rappaport (1997a) in his discussion of the
'transcendent individual' supports "the particularities of individualized experiences…not
eclipsed by generalization," so often seen in social science research (Rappaport, 1997:
29)

Furthermore, Plummer (2001) criticized how in traditional social science research
it was only the voice of the expert who spoke on behalf the subject being studied while
the voice of the subject was rarely, if ever, heard. My thesis work allowed participants to

speak in their voices, and such filtering was done with their approval, and my own background of traumatization paralleled many of those who participated in the study.

In drawing analogies between participants in this study and the versatility of ferns, I note Robert Dixon's description of how ferns, while lacking deep roots, still manage to create massive mats of shallow roots which operate like runners under the surface of the soil. The root system of ferns remains hidden until such time that they are able to find nutrition or moisture to support their growth upwards toward the surface and the sun (See Robert Dixon in text.) In the same vein, I assert that the participants in this study were also versatile, many creating their own space and remaining hidden until such time that they too were able find support systems to nourish them toward resilient growth. In such hidden places, many participants created rich inner worlds interwoven with aspects of fantasy, creativity, and/or spirituality, awaiting the time when their own tendril-like roots could finally emerge to the surface to make contact with supportive others. Throughout their narratives, such inner weaving and outward reaching were continually reaffirmed by the resilient participants in this study.

Additionally, it was within the theoretical traditions of existentialist philosophy with a view toward resiliency and meaning in which I located this dissertation. To that end, existential theories such as Viktor Frankl's (1959) focus on the making of meaning through trauma, provided the insights which were integral to this analysis. For the purposes of this study therefore, I defined resiliency as encapsulated within individuals who expressed the greatest "meaning and/or interpersonal growth through their experiences of trauma and/or life's difficulties," and who were able to clearly articulate such resiliency in their meaningful symbols of narrative and art in a coherent and similar thematic manner. Additionally, I also proposed that such resilient process would be manifested in aspects of creativity, camaraderie, and social justice issues and/or spiritual/religious pursuits. (See Methodology section.)

Unique to the findings of this thesis study was the fact that participants responded to the question concerning their feelings toward death and/or immortality as being

strongly related to their resiliency. To reiterate, 17 of the 27 respondents attributed their resiliency to a belief that the soul lives on in some form after death. Of the remaining ten, three of the participants believed that the soul returned to God after death. The remaining seven participants related other factors to their resiliency, factors such as personal strength, closeness to nature, social action, camaraderie with others, and so on.

General definitions of resiliency were articulated by participants and all of the definitions supported the literature. Participants defined resiliency as a strengthening and adaptive process where one develops a kind of immunity over time. Others defined resiliency as the ability to use one's experiences as a positive force, to help others. As well, many individuals defined resiliency as encompassing aspects of strength, hope, optimism humour. However, in terms of general definitions of resiliency, only two participants defined resiliency as being related to religious, spiritual or hope aspects. Conversely, in participants' narratives and/or artwork, in terms of how resiliency was maintained, purpose and meaning appeared foremost in their stories. For many participants such purpose and meaning were described in reincarnation/immortality motifs in which life's experiences were seen as learning challenges that one needed to overcome in one's lifetime. Other participants also felt that purpose and meaning were important, but found such existential growth through their creative processes and/or through interconnectedness to others.

Additionally, their definitions and explanations appeared to support aspects of the resiliency literature. To reiterate, I refer again to the participants' narratives and to the four thematic sections that described how participants maintained such resiliency. Those sections encompassed the following: immortality beliefs as manifested in guardian angels or spiritual beings; immortality beliefs that the human spirit continues on in some undefined form after death; beliefs that the human spirit returns to and remains with God after death; or other beliefs not connected with immortality motifs.

In fact, Emily (Spiralling Spirit) stressed the "buffering" definition of resiliency when she stated that it was an ability that "builds on itself, that as you overcome certain things…then you become more resilient to other things as well." (See Emily First Interview, p. 1.) Additionally, Giselle (of Goddess, Nature, Roots & Blood) captured how resiliency was maintained when she discussed the ability of the resilient to "take learning from that trauma in such a way, that a person can…use the experience … to enrich their life." In fact, Giselle stressed that "it's not only just the making meaning part it's the action and living part." (See Giselle, First Interview, p. 3.) Finally, Charron (Flowering Tree) and Harold (House of the Poet), both of whom experienced war, primarily defined resiliency as the ability to "let go" of traumatic events. They described this most succinctly when they stated the following: "we lost our homes, our savings so many times. And, every time this happened, that did not crush us completely, because we were able to let go of what we had…." (See Charron and Harold, First Interview, pp. 1-2.)

Throughout the interviews, participants appeared to have moved past aspects of self-pity, focusing on their present lives and envisioning how they could use experiences to help others and/or to contribute to the greater humanity. I identified to some extent with all the thesis participants in this study, but I was particularly drawn to those participants who believed that the human spirit lived on after death in some undefined form and who stressed that they had maintained resiliency by focusing on their joy in the present. Indeed Giselle (of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood) described this most succinctly when she stated "we don't live in the past. You remember to the future…" (See Giselle in text.)

To that extent I identified mostly with those participants whose immortality beliefs were manifested in guardian angels and/or spiritual beings who watched over and sustained their resiliency. For instance, Leslie (Guardian Spirits and Galaxies), Julie (Guardian Angel), and Giselle (of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood) spoke of how guardian angels helped them survive childhood physical and/or sexual abuse. I identified

also with Potiki (Mother of Creation) who, in her freestyle picture of the human spirit portrayed herself, tall and undefeated, standing on top of a skull representing her abuse as a child and an adult. I also identified with Jasmine (Sister Spirit) who found a renewed belief in God and in "guardian angels" while witnessing her younger sister's recovery from a chronic life-threatening illness. Furthermore, Jasmine possessed such a remarkable sense of humour that I found it hard to concentrate on the interview, since it was repeatedly punctuated by gales of laughter on both our parts. In summary, I identified strongly with these participants and was quite moved by their insistence that guardian spirits continually watch over all of us.

However, I also identified strongly with Kate (Rainbow Gifts and Open Arms) who taught me that one could be both "spiritual and religious." I identified with the philosophy of Charron and Harold about finding joy in the present, with Harold's political poetry, and with both Anwar (Running Free) and Harold's commitment to social justice issues.   I also identified with Anna and her story of the wind, and with Sally (Mandala: Self and Others), who grew up in the Northwest Territories. Both of these individuals reminded me of the beautiful and wild places in the Canadian Arctic, where (from the hidden places of my arctic meadow) my own sense of healing and spirituality first began to emerge.

At times, it was difficult to capture the essence of how the 27 participants in this study articulated their sense of meaning and purpose as the bedrock upon which their resiliency was based. To give an example, Harold articulated how his resiliency was nourished through both his poetry and political activism, yet he also described his immortality beliefs as being similar to Buddhist reincarnation beliefs. However, since immortality did not appear to be the predominant theme of his resiliency, (i.e. he did not go on at length about immortality motifs in his narrative nor indicate such motifs in his artwork), I placed him in the Other category. Such categorization occurred for a few other participants as well. For instance, in the Third Thematic Section: Resiliency & Immortality: The Human Spirit returns to God, three participants believed that the

human spirit returned to and remained with God after death, but did not recycle. Therefore I was in a quandary of whether or not such belief systems constituted immortality, and since I could not decide whether or not they did, I placed them into a separate section. However, I resolved these various conundrums by maintaining the practice of only placing participants' narratives in the immortality sections if this had been the predominant theme of their narrative and artwork in terms of the maintenance of their own resiliency.

At this juncture, it is important to mention that as a psychologist, I was originally educated in the "damage-deficit" modality of human suffering. Such a bias may have manifested itself when I initially postulated that thesis participants who had experienced childhood sexual *and* physical abuse and encounters in war would articulate greater trauma in their narratives. I took this position because other theorists, (Follette et al., 1996; Harvey 1996; and Donovan, Padin-Rivera, Dowd & Blake 1996) stressed that the severity and frequency of traumatic experiences often resulted in greater feelings of victimization among trauma survivors.

Initially, I also proposed that an adult who had *not* experienced childhood abuse but had experienced sexual assault and war, would be considered to have the same level of severity as someone who had experienced repeated childhood sexual and physical abuse alone. Furthermore, at first I felt compelled to divide those participants who were suffering from post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in one category while placing those who did not have PTSD in another category. At this point, one of my committee members queried my tendency to categorize and stated "does that mean that those without PTSD suffered less?" This comment hit me with startling clarity as I realized that what really mattered in this thesis was *how* participants both saw and interpreted their life experiences (irrespective of whether or not they had PTSD), and *not* my need to categorize them accordingly.

There were also some participants that I did not identify with strongly. To reiterate, I defined resiliency as related to the ability of participants to articulate between

their meaningful symbols of narrative, freestyle art drawing of the human spirit, and the kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) drawings in a coherent and similar thematic manner. However, in the narrative of 19-year-old Neo (Different Parts of Self), I found a great deal of inconsistency between both his narrative and art modalities. For instance, Neo's freestyle art drawing of the human spirit revealed interconnecting circles with spider webs in the corner, while his KHTP shows a disaster scene where a female figure exits the house after a tree has crashed through the roof of the house, creating a fire.   Such conflictual drawings appear to be directly at odds with his narrative in which he claimed he was resilient and happy in his life. Consequently, during his narratives Neo expressed widely divergent viewpoints. On the one hand he claimed that his friends viewed him as resilient; on the other hand he discussed the negativity he received from society, his family, and his church concerning his homosexuality. I noticed the dichotomy further when Neo first identified the person in his KHTP drawing as a young woman escaping a house fire and disaster scene, but in a latter narrative, he re-defined the KHTP fire as a "purifying fire" where the tree represented Jesus' sacrifice for him.

In retrospect however, in discussing Neo's inconsistency between both narrative and art modalities, I noted my own bias in assuming that this participant did not appear to be resilient. At this juncture, I then had to remind myself of Benard's (2004) research suggestion that another area of resiliency study should focus on the fact that even if people "falsely believe" they are resilient (independent of any researcher's criteria of what constitutes resiliency) that they still tend to cope better in life than people who do not think that they are resilient. Indeed the importance of positive illusions when one is recovering from trauma has been mentioned by others (Taylor, Kemeney, Reed, Bower & Gruneweld, 2000). As well, aspects of illusion, symbol and meaning appear to be important to survivors. Significantly, I return to Werner & Smith (2001) and O'Connell-Higgins (1994) studies of middle-aged adults who experienced trauma as children and had a difficult time in adolescence. However, they had sorted themselves out by the time they became middle-aged adults.

Despite the fact that some of the artwork of participants appeared to indicate trauma and conflict, I argue that such existential struggles are not necessarily a completely negative event. It is, I contend, *how* such self-defined resilient participants in this study *perceived* their life experiences that is key to this analysis. Indeed, I assert further that the articulated narratives of survivors of either traumatic and/or difficult life experiences should form a key part of any analysis on the part of researchers in the area of trauma and resiliency.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

My thesis research "Resurrection Ferns: Resiliency, Art and Meaning Constructs Among Survivors of Trauma or Difficult Life Events" contributes to what Glen Richardson (2002) described as the linkage between the theoretical traditions of positive psychology and the third wave of resiliency research. More specifically, I support the linkage between resiliency and the spiritual/interpersonal experience of human beings. I am therefore in agreement with theorists such as Michael Ungar (2004) who stated that multi-faceted studies that examine resiliency through the use of qualitative and narrative studies are crucial.

To expand further, findings from this thesis study point to the high percentage of participants who spoke of how spirituality had aided them in their resiliency. Additionally, during their difficult narratives, participants often appeared overcome with emotion, yet did not appear to express bitterness toward anything that had happened to them. I contend that it has never been effectively explained why some survivors of trauma have post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) while others do not. To my mind this points most clearly to the fact that perhaps such aspects of integrating a "larger reason" (sometimes described as aspects of "spirituality") may indeed buffer one from developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or in turn minimize the effects of PTSD among survivors of trauma. Perhaps then, it follows that any expanded definition of "resiliency"

should include this aspect of spirituality, such as Tedeschi & Calhoun's (1996) attempt to articulate such spiritual change in their post-traumatic-growth-inventory (PTGI) scale.

To review, Lifton (1979; 1993b) asserted that one's sense of continuity during times of trauma is shattered and results in a "broken connection" between one's own identity and in terms of connectedness to others. I argue that it is only through a process of reconnectedness to one's self and others that such issues are resolved and through that process, a transformation of self and/or symbolic immortality is ensured. To that end, I assert that a "meaning search of symbol reformulation" is necessary to counteract what Liftonian theory refers to as the individual's "failed enactment" in order for the individual to overcome the blockages that occur as a result of PTSD.

I also contend that in this thesis study, the linkage between the art in this study and the personal narratives is part of the "symbol reformulation" process that seems necessary when one is recovering from trauma. For instance, in terms of the symbolic aspect of trauma, Janoff-Bulman (1992) asserted that when confronted with life-threatening situations, the individual's symbolic inner world disintegrates. Furthermore, our symbolic world is the way in which individuals overcompensate for their "fear of death" and attain a sense of immortality. (See Becker 1993, and Pyszczynski et al.,1990 and "Theories on Terror Management.") I likewise assert that such issues of immortality are connected in some way with what participants in this study described as "spirituality." I assert also that such conceptions of "spirituality" in trauma survivor's narratives or other symbolic forms such as art or poetry are perhaps some of the ways in which individuals compensate for such a fear of death.

To expand further, the trauma survivors' search for meaning was both a recurring and prevalent theme in this interdisciplinary thesis study and part of this sense of meaning appeared to be enhanced through creative modalities such as art. Indeed authors Cohen (1996), van der Kolk, in McFarlane & Weisaeth (1996), and others who work with trauma survivors stress that ongoing trauma tends to be "encoded visually," and that such

needs are best "voiced" within creative art modalities. In terms of future studies I stress that continued research into the visual encoding aspect of the ability of trauma survivors to transcend their trauma should be undertaken. In particular, this researcher would like to investigate further how the utilization of various creative art modalities seem to enable traumatized survivors to re-formulate their symbolization process and to recover from some of the more "pathological" effects of trauma. (See Appendix)

Resiliency: Evolving Theoretical Models

Finally, as a direct result of this study (which included several years of interdisciplinary research) this researcher addresses what van der Kolk and others articulated, that traumatized individuals are often better able to express their experience through art even when unable to speak or write about such experiences (Cohen, 1996; van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1991; Herman 1992 a&b; and Laub & Podell, 1995). To reiterate, from the clinical perspective, I contend that for individuals who have experienced repeated trauma and have sought therapy within the therapeutic milieu, that existential meaning is attained through symbolic and/or meaningful activities. Such activities could include anything from music, to dance, to creative writing, to a "sense of spirituality" and so on. However, I chose throughout this thesis study two creative modalities—the narrative interviews, and art (through the utilization of freestyle art drawings of the human spirit and through the kinetic-house-tree-person (KHTP) projective art analysis.) Such modalities in future studies, I contend could help counteract aspects of what Lifton referred to as the resulting "failed enactment" on the part of persons suffering from post-traumatic stress.

Such a search for purpose and meaning in one's life experiences, however, does not only occur in the therapeutic setting. Beyond my clinical work with survivors of repeated trauma, I have also over the years, encountered individuals who have managed to transcend their abusive pasts through their own existential meaning quests, *without* the use of therapy. However, my personal observation has been that some form of existential meaning process must be a factor in order to transform and transcend one's experience

with trauma. Indeed, it has been my observation that for such individuals, creative endeavours have played a significant role in such recovery. Additionally, the question of whether existential meaning quests take the form of a heightened spirituality (either within or without established religious systems) should also be the focus of future study.

Finally, from my own perspective, I believe such creative endeavours used by survivors to give meaning and then to overcome their trauma's and/or life's difficulties relate to what Viktor Frankl (1959, 1961) discussed as creating or doing a deed, dedication to someone or something else, and/or the attitude one takes toward suffering. Such a threefold process, I assert, results in what Lifton termed as a kind of "symbolic immortality" in which individuals use agency and find a larger reason for their suffering. Having thus found such meaning in their lives through active engagement in "spiritual and/or creative pursuits," the individuals are then able through their own unique pattern, to transform and transcend their difficult and/or traumatic experiences in life.

Indeed, Plummer (2001) points out that historically, the dominant forms of auto/biography were of those in power. However in what he terms "the slow democratization of society", eventually formally marginal voices "speak not just of themselves but of and for 'others' in the world", so that the experiences of "self become more of a collective exploration than just a private one." (pg. 90)

From the perspective of the women's collectives and feminists, Plummer noted that a greater number of researchers are using their personal voices as research to expand the meaning of the collective voice to what he calls "political practice' which gives voice to those who have been marginalized and whose voices have not been heard. Indeed, Plummer points to the examples of womens' 'consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s in which women found commonalities in their narrative experiences of physical and sexual abuse. Such commonalities of womens' experiences then lead to the politicization of women's oppression and eventual social transformation in the public sector, (Sara Evans 1980; Lara, 1998).

Resiliency: The "Collective Story"

When I first began formal thesis research into the phenomena of resiliency among survivors of trauma and/or life's difficulties, what I had *not* expected was that in the process of both keeping a thesis journal and in interviewing participants, that I too would evolve and change. During the literature review, I found a sense of kinship in discovering Gina O'Connell-Higgin's (1994) academic study into resilient adults. Her format of interspersing her own resilient journey of overcoming childhood abuse between the resilient stories of the participants in her study, gave me courage to follow a similar format of writing in my own doctoral study. This process did not come easily for me as I remained concerned that the research would not be considered "academic" enough, or worse still, that my personal experiences would be viewed as "wailing woundology."

During this thesis journey, I overcame my initial sense of hesitancy in wanting to keep my personal perceptions private, tucked away safely like the angel in my hidden meadow. Instead, in the process of releasing such a personal part of my life's journey, what I began to realize was *why* I have not needed to hide in my inner meadow for many years. With startling clarity, I realized that my present life is filled with consistently safe and nurturing individuals, individuals who have taken the place of the hidden angel in my hidden meadow. Indeed, through such loving interactions with others, I have discovered the source of my own profound sense of resiliency and empowerment. Such an existential sense of my own resilient process quite surprised me, for my background had been one of "quantitative bias" where I presupposed that all notions of "Self" could be excised from the research at hand. However, in reading such postmodern, narrative researchers as Laurel Richardson, (1992, 1997, 2000), I discovered a milieu in which to express my study from both personal and academic perspectives. So, in a sense both perspectives became part of the whole story of resiliency, my story, my participants' stories...our stories...the collective story...

In discussing her own interactions with a poor unwed mother from America's south, Laurel Richardson (1992) stated that listening to her participant's narrative had

affected her as follows: "a transformative effect on deeper, more spiritual parts of myself" (p. 134). Throughout this process Richardson stated that both the poet within her and the sociologist became integrated. Moreover, Richardson went on in 1997 to describe how such a narrative process evolved into the realization of "That's my story. I am not alone" (p. 33).

Narrative stories, asserted Plummer (2001), have now "become a worldwide phenomenon" that speaks to the self and group awareness where there is a shift from the dominant voices of those in power "to a language of resistance" (p.95-96) from those who have not had power in society. And, from such collective stories, Plummer asserts, global changes happen in society, not only in terms of people finding further meaning and coherence in their lives but that such unity of several life stories heard collectively "can ultimately be used to illustrate the workings of a wider community or whole society" (p.95-96).

From such widespread use of narrative, emerge what Bennett states in Plummer as the "need for reform and change." On a more global basis, Plummer states that telling one's story is a part of human culture and that "Often the call to stories is a moral call (Coles, 1989; Plummer, 2000). In short, life stories can bridge cultural history with personal biography. What matters to people keeps getting told in their stories of their life and the fact that "such research has a fundamentally democratizing thrust to it: each person has a life and a story to tell." (p.242).

From a larger perspective that encompasses both myself and the thesis participants in this study, I refer to Laurel Richardson (1997) who in discussing the "collective story," stated that the voices of those who have been disenfranchised can be both heard and honoured through narrative. It follows then, that the voices of resilient persons who have transformed difficult or traumatic lives, have not been heard...and it is well over time that they be heard. Aware of this factor throughout this thesis study, I was mindful of my own descriptions of participants' life experiences. Instead, in honour of our collective stories I chose to interpret such traumatic and/or difficult events as the

resilient life experiences of persons who (as Carver 1998 described) are "thrivers," rather than use the more pathologically loaded labels of "victims" or "survivors."

Sociologically grounded narrative, Laurel Richardson (1997) asserted can "galvanize the previously disenfranchised to engage in both social action and eventually social transformation through the telling of the collective story" (pp. 34-35.) I agree with her. After the long process of this thesis research, I want to read more stories of resilient persons. And, I want to know their real names, as during this thesis study many participants expressed that they wanted their own names used, but I had to agree to use pseudonyms in order to meet university ethical requirements. Conversely, I want to read such narratives in academic journals, from a perspective of individual's own articulations of transformation and transcendence, whether they be researchers, clinicians and/or participants. And, I want to hear about how such narrative interactions between such individuals both affected and transformed them on their respective life's journeys.

Indeed, such a positive focus on human resiliency relates to Martin Seligman in Snyder & Lopez (2005)'s focus on *Positive Psychology, Positive Prevention and Positive Therapy* who point to the recent wave of positive psychology research which focuses on human strengths that act as buffers against mental illness, utilizing a process of teaching traumatized clients to focus on "self-reinforcing positive psychological messages" with a focus on "learned optimism" that builds on human strengths and resiliency. During such a process, Seligman stressed that clinicians who work with traumatized persons should see them as individuals who are "decision-makers"(p.5) actively involved in their healing process in collaboration with their therapists.

Indeed, in the process of utilizing positive psychology with clients, Csikszentmihalyi, (1993), in Snyder & Lopez (2005) states that narration is another strategy as the "telling of one's story… allows individuals to make sense of what otherwise seems chaotic, and allows traumatized persons to view their lives with a sense of agency rather than victimhood …are all powerfully positive." (p.7)

Resiliency: A Final Look

Research into the area of resiliency among those who have experienced life's difficulties or traumas must always be done with the framework of not minimizing the suffering of those who have been victimized. By the same token, just as it is unrealistic for researchers and clinicians to perceive resilient survivors from the "damage-deficit" model, so too is it unrealistic to portray "the resilient as saints," a caution that Gina O'Connell-Higgins (1994) warned researchers about in her study. Higgins stated further that the resilient "are marked only by the same human foibles that characterize any healthy person." (p. 21).

I also argue that the focus should continue to be on what researchers can learn from those resilient ones who have transformed and transcended such suffering. Notably, I am in agreement with Bonnie Benard (2004) in citing Werner and Smith's 2001 notion of "self-righting tendencies" in their study of children from traumatic backgrounds who moved toward normal adult development throughout their lives. I am in further agreement that such "self-righting tendencies" are normative aspects of what motivates all of us through our life's difficulties or our traumas.

Significantly, as mentioned previously, theorists such as Benard (2004) in citing (Watson & Ecken, 2003) noted that although the trend towards studying resiliency in human beings is fairly recent, that "research suggests instead that human beings are biologically prepared to develop these strengths and to use them for survival." Additionally, Benard also pointed to Csikszentmihalyi's research that suggested a linkage between creativity and mental health among those who have overcome traumatic experiences. Moreover, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) stated that such a creative flow has been found useful "by psychologists who study happiness, life satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation, by sociologists who see in [flow] the opposite of anomie and alienation, and by anthropologists who are interested in the phenomena of collective effervescence and rituals" (p. 5).

In conclusion then, what really matters is how our own human stories of resiliency can both resonate and enrich our personal and academic lives. And, in the process of such synchronous sharing and in our journeyed flight together, we may discover our resilient spirits becoming wings that enable us to fly.

Conclusion: Thesis Journal Entries

In discussing the importance of evocative form in qualitative writing, Laurel Richardson (2000) stated that poetry is a "practical and powerful method for analyzing social worlds." She also agreed with Tedlock (1983) when he stated that individual "speech is closer to poetry than it is to sociological prose" (p. 933). Additionally, Plummer points to other theorists (Mair, 1989, Satyamurti, 1988; and Travisano, 1999) who have likewise used the narrative technique of poetry in encapsulating the human experience.

Thesis Journal Entry: Of Wingedness: Hidden Heroes, Angels and Saints

During this thesis study I noted that at least three thesis participants spoke of actually seeing "guardian angels" who guided them on their life's journeys, while still six others professed a belief in such spiritual beings. I am reminded of one such participant, Giselle (Of Goddess, Nature, Roots and Blood) who experienced repeated severe childhood sexual and physical abuse within the family, and who spoke of a vision of an old woman "spirit" who came to her in childhood and helped her to endure her experiences. (See Giselle in text.)

In hearing of such "beings," I am reminded of the traditional Jewish Legend of the "lamed vavniks" or "Jewish saints." In this legend, it is believed that in each generation a secret number of saints or angels both walk the earth and uplift the justice within the world. Because such saints or angels are "hidden" one never knows when one might encounter one of these spiritual beings. During the journey of my own life, I have encountered many. And… I have always known who they were. They are those people who reached out to me at crucial moments in my life --from chance encounters with

kindly strangers, to my parental substitutes, my mentors, my husband and his family, my friends and colleagues, and finally the thesis participants in the study. I return again to my poem, dedicated to all of you, written at the beginning of the thesis:

> You Walk
> as Hidden Ones
> Yet Present
> Quiet and Just
> heroes, angels, saints..
> replenished and replenishing others (who walk this walk)
> nirvana in the world
> in your walking shoes... .

Thesis Journal Entry: Nirvana in the World in My Walking Shoes

And, I examine my own pictures, the first one (a facsimile drawn from a similar one from my early 20s) which featured a child reaching out to what appears to be an adult angel-like being of light. In this picture, the child is struggling to emerge from the dark claws that threaten to engulf her.

The second picture drawn in my late 30s featured an adult woman standing tall reaching toward the light which surrounds her. Her left hand is pointing away from remembrances of past childhood abuses; her right hand is outstretched toward the light. In the bottom left hand corner are the dogmatic types who hold reductionistic attitudes toward those who have experienced trauma.

The last more recent picture reveals my recovery from a serious surgical event. I am standing as a grown woman, holding the Torah scrolls to indicate my transformation at Auschwitz. I am looking back to what remains of the intraveneous pole in my hospital room. The distance between myself and the hospital room is portrayed in dark colours which symbolize death.

Here, in my own life, I walk without bitterness, replenished and replenishing others who walk this walk…transforming and transcending…nirvana in the world in my walking shoes..

Endnotes

Note: all thesis participants are pseudonyms

(1) Dixon, Robert (2007.) Interview with horticulturalist of Muttart Conservatory. Researcher Ayalah Aylyn. Edmonton, Alberta.

(2) what Lifton referred to as the "broken connection."

(3) Furthermore, the extent of how strong a participant's resiliency is manifested will be indicated in the thesis study by participants who are clearly able to clearly articulate their self-proclaimed resiliency through symbols of narrative, and art, in a coherently and similar thematic manner.

4) Over time, the traditional psychological use of projective art as therapy evolved into the art therapy profession in the 1960s. Art therapy, developed from Edith Kramer's (1953 as cited in Wadeson, 1980, 1987). Such work was based on the premise that the role of art therapists should focus on emphasizing the creative aspect of the art experience, rather than only on the therapeutic insight gained from the art. From the work of art therapists other theorists such as Rhyne (1971) introduced art activities into other areas (such as experiential group therapy), which allowed for greater creativity and qualitative experiences for clients engaged in the art process.

5) See Appendix.

(6) To give an obvious example, were a participant to describe in their narrative that they were happily resilient; yet in their projective artwork they continually describe the images as reflecting unhappy depressive states, I would question the ability of the participant to clearly articulate whether or not they were as resilient as they claimed. Furthermore, should their psychometic testing (see Appendix I & II) indicate depressive ideology, I would also question the consistency of the resilient state that the participant articulated during the narrative interviews.

(7) Such clear articulation is noted in Jennifer Pals (2006) study of the narratives of middle-aged women who had experienced trauma as well as in Calhoun & Tedeschi's (1998) studies that examined post traumatic growth.

(8) For instance, question #5 concerning death and/or immortality engendered the greatest amount of time spent by many of the participants

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Appendix

Fig. a): Description of Lifton's Evolution of Psychoformative Approaches to Understanding Traumatic Stress Syndrome (Lifton (1993): From Hiroshima to the Nazi doctors:

Numerical Flow Chart
(Aylyn)

1. Life/death paradigm and symbolization of self:

2. The concept of being a survivor:

3. The human connectedness of survivors.

3a)   Vulnerability to stress and dissociation.

4. Posttraumatic stress disorder as a normal reaction in extreme stress.

5. Survivor guilt and self-condemnation,

5a. Failed enactment during trauma and self image.

6. Emotional vitality and fragmentation in the self.

7. Psychic numbing: Discontinuity in the self.

8. The search for meaning: Paradigmatic forms of self-experience.

9. The moral dilemmas of trauma.

10. Transformation of the self.

Appendix   Fig. B   Lifton: Psychoformative Flow Chart
L = Lifton

Fig. B:

K (1) Death Anxiety   L (2) Survival   L (3) Vulnerability

                     as achievement

(Initial relief)   Dissociation/Splitting

L (4) PTSD/Normal reaction

L (5) Failed enactment a) Survival guilt and self
condemnation "psychological guilt"

L (7) Psychic numbing (see Fig C Therapeutic and/or
non-therapeutic intervention (existential meaning constructs)

L (8) Search for Meaning: Proximate levels: Struggling Issues:
Connection vs. Separation/ Movement vs. Statis/ Integration vs. Disintegration/
Integrity vs. Disintegrity

Ultimate level: Struggling issues: Larger: Human Connectedness

L (9) Moral dimensions of Trauma:
Lifton: Survivors "right" to symptoms within trauma
and therapeutic support to this right

L (10)   Transformation of Self: dialectic nature of survivor
                    numbed

and/or insight = special forms "illumination" that
survivors possess over non- survivors/symbolic immortality
(See Aylyn Fig C Intuitive/Creativity stage)

Appendix   Fig. C: Enhancing Personal Resiliency among Trauma
                Survivors: Symbol Reformulation Model

L = Lifton
A = Aylyn
(adapted by Aylyn from Lifton [1993]: From Hiroshima to the
Nazi doctors: the evolution of Psychoformative Approaches
To Understanding Traumatic Stress syndromes, *see Appendices*)

Fig. C
L (1) Death Anxiety   L (2) Survival   L (3) Vulnerability
                          as achievement

                          Dissociation/Splitting
                          (Initial relief)

A (4)   Therapy aspect

A (5) Therapy   (6) Existential Meaning
                      (attained through symbolic/meaningful
                      therapeutic activities(i.e., art as therapy)

                      (7) Recovery from chronic effects
                           of trauma (PTSD)

                      (8)   Transformation & heightened self-esteem
                            through creativity & self-appreciation of
                            survivor intuitiveness (INSIGHT) and/or
                            aspects of symbolic immortality
                                 (See L(10) Lifton)

                                  AND/OR

A (5a) No Therapy   Developed through own creative
                                  endeavours(i.e. Frankl: such as creating work or
                                  doing a deed, experiencing and/or encountering\
                                  someone else and/or attitude toward suffering
                                  and/or Lifton re: symbolic immortality; from
                                  children; works; influences; spiritual
                                  transcendence)

AND/OR

A (5b) No Therapy   No Existential MeaningSearch   No recovery from
                      and/or creative endeavours   chronic effects
                      (psychic shutdown)   of trauma (PTSD)