MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

| DISCLAIMER | i |
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| PREFACE | iii — vii |

1 INTRODUCTION
   1.1 The Issues 1 – 2
   1.2 The Journey 3 – 17

2 PERSONAL BACKGROUND TO THE ISSUES 18 – 30
   2.1 Dreams and Vietnamese Childhood 18 – 21
   2.2 Western Therapy and My Vietnamese Experience 21 – 27
   2.3 Community Service and Community development: My Work Experiences 27 – 30

3 DREAMS AND CULTURES: PATH NOT TAKEN 31 – 63
   3.1 Mainstream Interpretations 31 – 32
   3.2 Dreams: Cultural Interpretations 32 – 36
   3.3 Influence on Dream Interpretations 36 – 41
   3.4 My Own Collection of dreams 41 – 61
   3.5 My Experience with Dream Therapy 61 – 62
   3.6 Conclusion 62 – 63

4 MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT I: NEW DIRECTION AND PROJECT ACTION 64 – 81
   4.1 Community Politics 64 – 66
   4.2 Project 1: The Christmas Drop-in 66 – 70
   4.3 Project 2: The Home and Community Care (HACC) Multilingual Pamphlets 70 – 79
   4.4 Project 3: English for Senior Migrants 79 –
   4.5 Project 4: Work Experience program 79 – 80
   4.6 Project 5: Work Placement program 80 – 81

5 REFLECTION: CULTURAL CONDITIONING AND LEARNING MODES 82 – 92
   5.1 Culture 82 –
   5.2 Language 82 – 84
   5.3 Learning Modes 84 – 89
   5.4. The MRC: Staff, Clients and Cultural Conditioning 89 – 91
5.5 Personal development

6 MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT II:
TRAINING FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE TEST
6.1 The Trainer
6.2 Training Modes and material
6.3 Test Components
6.4 Test evaluation
6.5 Questionnaire
6.6 Reflection on Success:
  What is Critical Thinking in Non-Critical Cultures?
6.7 Recommendations
6.8 Comprehensive Data

7 MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT III: JOB
APPLICATION SERVICE AND TRAINING FOR JOB INTERVIEWS
7.1 Job Application Service
7.2 Training for job Interviews

8 CLOSING THOUGHTS
8.1 The Issues
8.2 Personal Growth
8.3 Dreams and Cultures
8.4 Multicultural Community Development I:
  A New Direction and Project Action
8.5 Reflection: Cultural Conditioning and Learning Modes
8.6 Multicultural Community Development II:
  Training for the Administrative Service Test
8.7 Multicultural community Development III:
  Job Application Service and Training for Job Interviews
8.8 Conclusion

APPENDIX

I  Rosa
II  Racism in Eastern Europe
III Ba
IV Two Chinese
V  A Lesbian’s Nightmares
VI Work is Health
VII Hai and Bell
VIII Cultural Revolution
IX  Baby Lan  206 – 209
X   Emotionally Immature Migrants  210 – 211
XI  Nho  212 – 216
XII AMEP  217 – 218

BIBLIOGRAPHY  219 – 226
DISCLAIMER

This thesis is original work submitted to the University of Western Sydney — Hawkesbury for the degree of Master of Science (Social Ecology).

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Abstract

From the viewpoint of a migrant and of my work in the role of Coordinator of a Migrant Resource Centre, I have been concerned about migrants’ experience of their acceptance and well-being in Australian society, particularly:

- the unconscious processes reflected in dreams and communication patterns;
- the provision of services intended to be of help in settlement; and
- the relationship between the unconscious processes and the provision of services.

Collaborating with clients, colleagues who share similar interests and concerns, people with special skills and cultural knowledge, and some Management Committee members of the Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan Inc., I have investigated the multicultural unconscious, government policies and guidelines related to services to recent arrivals and people of non-English-speaking backgrounds, measures to address gaps in services for appropriate improvement.

My research approach has been naturalistic with a strong emphasis on my personal reflections and case studies of people and projects within my experience.

The report contains 8 chapters including: Introduction, Personal Background to the Issue, Dreams and Cultures and Multicultural Community Development. There is an appendix of 12 parts providing supporting evidence.
Preface

This thesis is subjective because it is written from real pain — pain that is the result of not being heard and of belonging to the voiceless and often invisible minorities.

In my country of origin, colonialism has not only created war for several thousand years, but it has also forced me to migrate; it has dominated my education, my consciousness and my dreams. I was angry when I reviewed literature on the interpretations of dreams in non-mainstream cultures: the majority of authors come from dominant, if not colonialist, cultures. Through personal contact with ethnic and minority students, I have discovered that NESB researchers often have to write to please their mainstream academic supervisors. Many of them have told me the pain they had to endure when they wrote their theses, but they did them the way they were told because they needed the degree — a passport to employment and participation.

I am even angrier when I attend lectures, seminars and workshops on cultural and/or multicultural community work given by people recognised as experts in the field earning large incomes on studying impoverished peoples in the third world, or expressing nostalgic feelings about the past while ignoring high mortality rate and death by childbirth. For example, one professional known for her extensive experience in working with NESB new arrivals accused me of "unprofessional behaviour" when I spent $1,700 to help a client obtain criminal compensation (justice) for the result of arson caused by racism, while she happily accepted gifts from people on Social Security benefits without giving them anything in return. Another showed Renaissance paintings to illustrate a 'wonderful sense of community'. She cited examples of communities and cultures, saying that "Aboriginal cultures are wonderful because Aboriginal peoples had real community. Nepalese women who are married do not even know that they are, because in their community, private lives are made public." By implication marriages are arranged by the community. She showed colour slides to illustrate multiculturalism: "African women walk gracefully with heavy weight on their heads". Although the speaker was a feminist, she did not criticise other cultures; oppression of women in non-mainstream cultures somehow becomes tolerable, if not desirable, because it belongs to minority cultures. I felt like shouting obscenities, for I felt the pain of being raped, the pain of being oppressed, the pain of being displayed but not heard, the pain of being possessed, spiritual pain, physical pain and emotional pain. I feel ashamed that I took part in this voyeuristic activity.

What experts on community work like those two mentioned above eloquently theorised and visually displayed as cohesive, was merely their inability to take into
account grassroots experience: most, if not all, indigenous people prefer to sleep in comfortable beds instead of on dirt floors; most, if not all, prefer to have dry and clean shelter, hygienic and convenient. During the drought, pelicans went to the restaurants to eat left-overs. In the winter, field mice come into houses to avoid the cold and to look for food. The Nepalese women who are married without knowing that they are, are raped by their husbands. Pain is universally felt; only its threshold is determined by culture (conditioning); in all societies, the poor have higher tolerance for pain than the rich. Female circumcision is detested by women who sustain the unnecessary injury. According to Alice Walker, the African American writer, women who carry weight on their heads have to walk straight in order not to break their necks, but they often sustain fractured skulls. None of those details was mentioned by the above mainstream experts who misappropriated minority cultures.

Experts in community work who made their fame by addressing the needs of the disadvantaged by ‘consultation with the communities’ do not know or are unwilling to admit that their process excludes grassroots participation. The most disadvantaged for whom social justice is invented are invariably people who lack confidence, courage, and most importantly, freedom and time to spare. They are wives who are frequently, if not regularly, battered or raped; they are migrants who do not speak English; all are included in official data only to be ignored.

Then, to prove their theory, experts neatly write up theses and papers, omitting incidental but pertinent, original and relevant details which are not directly related to their hypothesis. I do not wish to write such a thesis which has inflicted pain in people like my co-workers and me.

It is written with real hope because hope is life; hope has helped people survive unthinkable conditions such as the Aboriginal Reserves, the concentration camps, the killing fields, and more. It is therefore written in a hope for change. It even dares to hope for measurable success in helping people find employment to terminate long-term unemployment. It is written to record and celebrate victory over joblessness and isolation. It is a tale of a constructed modern multicultural therapeutic community in which friendship was developed across cultures among people with mental illness, volunteers and service providers to overcome psychiatric disabilities.

It is subjective but it has not been written alone. It has been written in collaboration with the voiceless and the oppressed who are fearful of their husbands, community leaders, government policy makers, ordinary public servants or even academic researchers.
It is personal because it has been written on behalf of people who are suffering, such as doctors with qualifications which, under the most powerful union pressure — the AMA — the Government refuses to recognise. It has been written on behalf of literate people who feel too intimidated to write their own in English; they lack literacy confidence because they have been denigrated since their arrival in Australia.

It is personal because it has been written from my data collected from primary sources. I have taken the utmost care not to betray my collaborators, by checking and rechecking with them my interpretation of their messages. On the other hand, as a victim and a representative of other victims, I have decided not to seek our oppressors’ permission and/or collaboration in order to maintain my own employment and to spare my co-learners further pain.

It has therefore been written with passion because it is about real people whose blood still surges in their veins with feeling, hope, fear, ideal, conviction and commitment; it is a document of real lives which should matter to everyone.

It is exciting because it documents a process to facilitate change in order to improve social conditions, which was unthinkable to those who had given up hope for employment, professional identity, self-respect and social status.

But, like most people dominated by colonialism, I started the thesis linearly with interpretations of dreams in non-mainstream cultures, supposing that there were different but equally valid interpretations in other cultures. I raised many issues and intended to explore them in the linear, conventional way. Soon after I collected dreams from Croatians, Vietnamese, Chinese and mainstream Australians, all but one who suffered from nightmares reported that their conditions became aggravated by my ‘assistance’. Those who reported no adverse effects were people free of nightmares and who needed no assistance anyway. I decided to discontinue this selfish path in order not to become like other NESB thesis writers before me. Thus I redirected my intellectual pursuit.

Other factors also emerged: my interest in dreams derived from my desire to understand the human conscious, unconscious and their relationship; my research environment (the MRC) led to changed priorities; and I discovered alternative means to observe the human conscious and unconscious and their relationship — prejudice displayed by people with mental illness when they refused treatment or forgot to take medication and off guard racist remarks by staff who were selected for their knowledge in EEO, correct speech and tolerance of other cultures.
To understand my clients — co-learners — I needed to be in their shoes without identifying with them; I needed to appreciate their passion, their joy and their pain. I carefully guessed their needs, provided what I considered appropriate responses, analysed their reactions and found culturally appropriate tools to evaluate my actions (projects) in the context of their cultures and conditioning (the Administrative Service Test Training). I set up projects to respond to needs articulated by clients (English for Senior Migrants). Instead of having a hypothesis and proving its validity, I responded spontaneously to needs or set up projects to respond to them systematically. Then I invited participation and improved them according to client feedback. I always follow the principle: I am paid to serve. Providing appropriate services to clients becomes my goal. Protecting their interest and my job are my strategy. Projects were validated by participation, participants, results, feedback and further funding.

Community work is about setting up projects and delivering services in the moment of greatest need to take full advantage of their momentum.

This thesis therefore documents a successful process (my process) of responding to community needs in Canberra where new arrivals are immediately settled in the community. The Settlement Branch of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs provided direct client service during most of the research period, and the Senior Social Worker still directly trains and controls welfare workers who deliver services to new arrivals. Similar settlement services are found only in Tasmania. It documents evaluation procedures unique not only to this process but also to each project within the process. It is not a model ready for universal application, but an innovative concept to be adopted and developed for local conditions and people involved. Thus personal attributes and shortcomings play important roles in the successes and failures of the projects.

Because the thesis is not conventional, evidence is not systematically recorded according to the order in the introductory chapter; instead, I address most issues as required by the occasion. I record them in their natural order. Working with the community is working with the unpredictable to facilitate and accommodate change. Community research is therefore an attempt to discern, understand and follow an order in what appears to be a chaos. Community workers have to negotiate conflict, to draw benefit from the dynamic of the organisation and to avoid panic. I identified the global picture of my work, discerned patterns within each project and found links between one project and another, one pattern and another, which provide their cohesion and meaning.
With each project, I take the reader interested in community work on a cultural journey filled with adventures, joy, apprehension, comprehension, frustration, despair, fear, anger and the full range of human emotions. I can make one promise: the trip will not be dull.

My intention as a tour guide is to acquaint the reader with cultural differences. My hope is to enable the reader to distinguish between individuals within the same culture and to promote social change for improvement. I also hope to empower the courageous reader to condemn out-dated cultural practices for a more cohesive society in cultural diversity.

Writing this thesis I felt that I was speaking in unison with my co-learners, sometimes more eloquently, sometimes more clumsily, because I have not yet fully understood and appreciated their cultures, because their language is more poetic than mine, because they are more sentimental than I and because I cannot be they. But I feel that they are with me in every meaning I tried to express. My success is their success, their failure is my failure. We share hopes, dreams and realities.

If the thesis is an eccentric document, then it is a collective eccentricity; all its participants feel proud of being recognised, of being taken seriously, of making a difference. I feel as they feel that, after reading this thesis, academic researchers will question their previous paths. Even if they have no courage or ability to change, the impact of this thesis will somehow remain.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE ISSUES

1.1.1 Dreams and Cultures

How many migrants have shared my experience: dreaming about their home country only to wake up feeling alienated from reality? For how long does that state last? What are the landscapes of their dreams? How do their dreams reconcile with reality, their reality? Do dream symbols change with migration? Do they change with education? Are dreams important to the acceptance of reality? Can dreams be controlled? How are dreams interpreted in different cultures? Are there dream analyses other than the Freudian-Jungian ones? How widely applicable are their models? If existing models are readily applicable, how can they be used to help non-Judaico-Christians who come from different cultures and speak no English?

1.1.2 Western Therapies and Non-English-speaking-background (NESB) Clients

How effective are Western therapies through interpreters for clients who do not speak English? How much communication is lost through interpretation? To what degree do therapists impose their views on clients? What risks do therapists impose when taking over the management of someone whose language they do not speak and whose culture they can only guess? How many think that people of 'non-English-speaking cultures'\(^1\) (NESC) are the same or similar? What does NESB or NESC mean to therapists? What does it mean to people for whom and by whom the terms have been invented? How does the relationship between therapist and client translate into cultures which dictate that personal service must be voluntary? How do therapists/counsellors terminate their service to people who consider therapy a friendship? What service can therapists/counsellors provide to people who are used to relying on the extended family for support and advice? What service can therapists/counsellors provide to lonely and isolated members of extended families? How can the concept of therapy and counselling be introduced to people who come from societies without such services? Are symptoms of crisis universal? If not, how do we know that a recent arrival is in crisis if we do not speak his or her language or understand his or her culture? Does crisis intervention practised on Asians, who are used to

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obeying authorities, hinder the understanding of democratic process in migrants who come from non-democratic countries? Do therapists and counsellors cause harm to people by treating them as if they were in crisis while they are not in crisis? How does crisis intervention work for Asian recent arrivals?

1.1.3 Multiculturalism: implications

What does multiculturalism mean to Australians? Are all communities multicultural? If they are not, how can they be transformed? What are the roles of community workers and therapists in promoting multiculturalism? What are their roles in helping them understand Australian democracy? What meaning does the word 'help' convey to workers and clients? Is it related to power? Do 'helping' professionals understand their democratic rights and respect those of their clients? Should social therapy facilitate the understanding of relationships between the citizen and the state, individuals and society, freedom and responsibility? Does multiculturalism undermine loyalty to the state, community, culture etc.? Does it undermine the sovereignty of the state or is it the best tool for global peace and justice? As there are over one hundred and fifty cultures in Australia, some being adversaries of one another such as Judaism and Islam, how can multiculturalism be practised? Or are there some mediating cultures which would serve to neutralise adverse forces? Can cultures be divided into groups for classification and practical purposes? What is the difference between 'ethnic' and 'multicultural'? Should the ECC and FECCA change their names to become Multicultural Communities Council and Federation of Multicultural Communities Councils in Australia? However, as Australia is a multicultural country, would those associations become redundant and meaningless? Does fearing the loss of power make community leaders cling to the past or does failure to understand Australian society make ethnic community leaders retain those outdated institutions? Do they really want Australia to be a multicultural country?

1.1.4 Community Services and Community Development

Is community development just a new jargon or an innovative approach to social therapy? Has development destroyed community as described in A Fate Worse Than Debt? Is the term community development intended to reconcile economic growth with humanity?

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Has social welfare undermined family and community support? If so, to what extent has it created as many problems as it has solved?

1.2 The Journey

Just before I was ten, I wet myself while sharing a narrow divan with my father’s male friend who spent the night with my family in our makeshift accommodation. The man was also my teacher who considered me lazy and stupid because I had been unable to understand his instruction. A year later I failed to control my bowel on the way home from the market. Although I kept those incidents totally secret, I could not be sure that others were not aware of them. I felt inferior and inadequate. At 19 I started to study Western philosophy, sitting next to a former Marie Curie student passionately in love with French existentialism. Philosophy gave us the opportunity to discuss subjects considered forbidden in previous years. We would argue with our teachers, defending our ‘progressive’ social and moral concepts. We became intimate friends as she learnt Vietnamese literature from me and I learnt French literature from her. Both of us came from poor families while studying in schools reserved for the wealthiest and the brightest. Freedom and material luxury were out of our reach in reality but our dreams were filled with foreign scenes and foreign luxuries. Our interest in dream interpretation came naturally. At first we interpreted our dreams according to astrology as described in I-ching. Eventually our intellectual adventure discovered Freud’s interpretation of dreams about water. Toilet facilities in Vietnam were a serious problem at night, when a poisonous snake such as a cobra might be on the way to the ‘toilet’. Everyone experienced water dreams when the bladder felt uncomfortable but it was too dark to empty it safely. Freud’s interpretation of dreams was a personal liberation for me: I did not have to feel responsible for the shameful incidents because psychology was independent of rationality. I admired Western understanding of the unconscious and the scientific explanation for every problem no matter how insignificant and private it might be. In school, psychology and neurology — anything to do with feelings and the mind — fascinated me.

Being taller and bulkier than the average, I was considered ugly and undesirable by my own family, other parents and my peers. I did not do well in subjects considered feminine such as sewing, cooking, biology and

3 The official French High School for girls in Saigon funded by the French Government.
5 One of the five Chinese classics.
literature. Instead, I quickly excelled in geometry, physics, chemistry and logic. While other girls enjoyed an entourage of male admirers, I helped peers, both male and female, solve mathematical problems. I had many temporary followers among those who needed immediate assistance to pass or upgrade their marks. Other parents used me to show off their daughters' beauty, attractiveness and virtue. Making friends was always of the utmost importance to me. I would do anything for a friend, even failing exams to remain in the same class. Yet I had no friends, only rivals. Rationally I accepted my failure to concentrate on reforming culture and tradition. I rejected Confucianism and Vietnamese values to endorse individual freedom. During my teenage years, I turned to forbidden books, such as *Bonjour Tristesse*, *Un Certain Sourire*, and *Dans Un Mois, Dans Un Air*, and I watched romantic movies to imagine a Vietnamese sexual revolution, individual freedom, and democracy.

Nevertheless I remained profoundly Vietnamese, hating Western colonialism, only to be imprisoned by the Vietnamese government at the age of twenty-two. Leaving prison and solitary confinement I vowed to give up my personal life for social justice but I fell in love with an American diplomat. Shortly after my marriage, I discovered that my husband's peers and other intellectuals in Saigon considered me one of the most attractive women of my generation. I began to understand the negative impact of my family upbringing on my self-confidence. Wanting their children to excel, my parents constantly told my sisters and me to improve our grades and conduct; they constantly compared us unfavourably with our peers.

My disillusion with Western culture did not begin until 1966 when I was told by a Dr Parker in Washington D.C. that I might not be able to have another child because the contraceptive Ortho Novum II had caused serious hormone dysfunction in me. Then Dr Wilkes, a thyroid specialist, told me that my thyroid was hyperactive, and that oral contraceptives caused thyroid hyperactivity. Through reading I learnt that blood clots were also a major side-effect which the medical and pharmaceutical professions had conveniently ignored in order to promote the sale of Ortho Novum II.

This contraceptive was discontinued a few years later, but my thyroid never returned to normal despite the fact that I had discontinued the use of oral contraceptives. With determination and the assistance of alternative

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By Francoise Sagan, the French teenage author who failed first-year literature at the university, dropped out to write daring novellas advocating group sex. Her works instantly became best-sellers in the 1950s.
therapies and therapists, I was able to conceive again four years later in Canada, on the way to Australia to immigrate. My pregnancy was easy and enjoyable. I studied mathematics until I went to the hospital.

The maternity ward was so full that the nursing sisters compared it to Pitt Street. The obstetrician had one patient every half an hour, starting from early morning. There was only one theatre, yet he refused to give orders to take me to Sydney by air ambulance. Instead, he ordered the nursing staff to rupture my membrane while waiting for the theatre. They forgot to give me an enema. I was given an empty oxygen mask. I felt that the baby was struggling for life in my womb and asked my husband to call for the doctor or the head nurse. She acknowledged the defective gas mask and replaced it with a functional one; nothing else was done for three hours. During this interminable and painful waiting period, suddenly someone remembered to give me an enema. I was ordered to empty my bowels in the toilet, but agonising pain paralysed me. Again I suffered the humiliation of not being able to perform the most basic human function.

Even though I was fluent in English and had an above-average knowledge of medicine, physiology and anatomy, I was denied the opportunity to be heard by the very people for whose services I paid dearly (I was not covered by any Australian insurance as a new arrival and Medibank had not been introduced).

I regained consciousness to find that I was being given a blood transfusion and that my baby’s foot was bruised. I had high and periodic fever for ten days. In and out of consciousness I asked to be transferred to a more sophisticated hospital. My request was repeatedly rejected. Instead my blood and urine samples were sent to my doctor’s pathologist friend for analysis. On the eleventh day, I was told I had parasites in my bladder. I asked the obstetrician for its cause, as he said that the disease was rare among people who lived in China, Egypt and Vietnam. But I had not been to any of those places since the birth of my first child. My blood and urine had been thoroughly tested by many American medical institutions including Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles; none had found any parasites. The obstetrician reassured me that his academic friend used more sophisticated techniques and had better investigative skills. I left the hospital after twelve days, weighing 41kg, 11kg under my normal weight, not including the weight gained during pregnancy. I was barely able to walk and continued to bleed heavily. Five weeks later, I haemorrhaged in the evening. Lying in a pool of blood, I asked my husband to contact the doctor and take me to the
hospital. The obstetrician insisted that I see him in his surgery the next day instead. On the way to the surgery, blood was still gushing out of me. But he ordered me to take hormone tablets while waiting for a curette in the hospital. Recovering from the haemorrhage, I asked for a referral to a specialist in tropical medicine because I felt I was unable to bond with my baby as I was not sure whether I would transmit parasites to her. Although he knew nothing about parasites, he insisted that it was safe for me to breastfeed my baby despite the heavy dose of antibiotics to treat my urinary-tract infection.

My child was vomiting much too frequently. I asked for help but I was told that everything was normal: 'All babies do that. They eventually grow out of it'. I said that my first baby had not vomited but I was told he was unusual. The baby could not gain weight and would become startled by the slightest sound, even breathing. Her vomiting became worse. She could retain no food. I begged the obstetrician for a referral. He sent her to a paediatrician in Sydney. The man looked at her briefly and said: 'She deposits...' and prescribed one pint of tranquilliser. After the first dose, my child became unconscious. I poured the entire bottle down the kitchen sink. I read Dr Spock to find that my baby suffered from hypertonia, and that tranquillisers were the usual treatment. As I was determined not to use tranquillisers on my baby again, I sought help from many until a friend told me about Dr Grunseit, one of the three Australian founders of the Physicians for Social Responsibility. I approached Dr Grunseit without a referral. He diagnosed hypertonia and prescribed a series of exercises. My baby was able to function normally after one month. Her foot took four months to regain normal colour. I was unable to control my bladder and bowel properly. I persisted until I obtained a referral to a professor of tropical medicine. The man thanked me for trying to help him with specimens to teach his students but said: 'unfortunately you did not come from the parasite zone and you do not have any symptoms'. It took me some time to realise that the professor thought I was mentally ill. It took even longer for me to establish my sound mind. The professor then showed me the obstetrician's letter. No parasite was mentioned. Instead he implied that I insisted on seeing the professor without any reason. At first he doubted my sanity, but luckily he believed me in the end. I was relieved that I never had parasites in my bladder, but was horrified by a malpractice cover-up which could have killed my daughter. I was even more horrified to find that, because my daughter and I fully recovered, there was no case of medical malpractice. In addition, no medical professional was prepared to be my witness although all agreed that their colleague had not acted professionally. Although a witness in a murder case does not have to be a criminologist, a witness in a medical malpractice
suit must be a medical professional.

However, my horror did not end there. I went to the post-natal check-up only to be told by the obstetrician that I still had parasites in my bladder, 'because you're Vietnamese'. I found out that the professor of tropical medicine had reprimanded the obstetrician.

I did not regain full control over my bladder and bowels until a year later. A consultant surgeon put the pieces of my experience puzzle together: in a hurry to save the baby, the obstetrician had punctured my bowels and bladder. I had bled so profusely that, in a panic to stop the bleeding, he had applied too much pressure on the cut resulting in the need for a blood transfusion to replace the lost blood. In the end the wound tissue died and became infected.

For emotional wellbeing, I tried to undergo psychoanalysis. Free association revealed that I hated worms and caterpillars. The analyst could not suggest anything, knowing that I had no problems with sex, but he did not fully accept my explanation either: I had lived in a parasite-infected zone during the time my father was with the Vietminh Government. I seriously questioned Freudian therapy in 1979, after leaving my children in the care of two housemothers — a student who needed money and a Freudian psychotherapist. Never having left my children for such a long time (three weeks), I carefully interviewed many people, but none were really suitable. I asked my children for their opinion. They liked the student they knew, but I was concerned that she was not experienced enough to act in my place for three weeks. Others were too old-fashioned and disciplinarian. My children would rebel within a day or two. Both of them had already managed to reject scripture lessons without my assistance by asking awkward questions until the poor Church of England women asked them not to attend their sessions.

In the end I accepted the offer of a psychotherapist — child psychologist who was also a friend. I had some reservations about the woman: she valued intellect above everything else; she worshipped Freud, A.D. Laing, Hegel, Wagner and the German culture; she was childless. While I saw a possible link between her academic interest and her belief in the master race, I also saw her contribution: my children would find intellectual challenge in her. Being childless she would bring a new dimension to child guidance. Being a therapist and child psychologist, she would be able to guide them appropriately. I was happy when she said she could look after them only two out of the three weeks, so I asked the student to be the other housemother. Because the therapist had a Master's degree, I paid her more for the service.
She and her boyfriend, a philosopher, were to move into my five-bedroom house. They would occupy the master bedroom and the study and my children the rest of the house.

On my return, the student reported to me, with amusement, that my children had decided to take charge and she was to provide them with what they wanted. They got along well once the housemother respected their wishes. But the therapist accused me and them of everything under the sun: 'Your son is under your thumb; he would never be free to look at anyone else as long as you are around because you are a domineering mother. Your children are dishonest, discourteous and violent. They suffer from serious psychosis, they need therapy'.

I thanked the therapist and gave her two presents, a marble ashtray for her smoking boyfriend and an Italian cotton dress for herself. Then I invited them for dinner. 'We will not come if your children are there', she said. 'In that case, you had better not come because my children will always be with me', I said.

My son was over fourteen; my daughter was eight. I had no evidence that they had lied to me because lying was unnecessary; I demanded neither truth nor honesty from anyone. I knew that they could be rude sometimes because, being a lazy parent, I carried out only the minimal duty by making sure that they did no harm to themselves or to others; I did not take the time to correct their manners; I did not even spend time to make sure that they wore uniforms. I firmly believe that parents can give their children only two things: health and education. At times I even doubt the latter as education continually changes.

The therapist's evaluation of my children frightened me, but not her unreasonable request of having dinner with us without their presence. She could have said that to make me think. If she were correct, then my children could be schizophrenic. I observed them for a while. They appeared normal. They were always rational and fully aware of the world around them. However, I could not be sure of my impartial assessment, so I made a survey of opinions among people who knew them well: my neighbour and their teachers.

I approached the maths teacher whose opinion I respected and who had disagreed with me from time to time, the librarian who did not know me well, and the science teacher who did not know me at all. I also asked the maths teacher to ask her colleagues for their opinions about my children. The
conclusion was surprising: my son was collaborative and courteous in school; my daughter was exemplary. Both were honest. There was no suggestion of psychosis.

So, what was wrong? After exhaustive investigation, I found that the therapist was known as being arrogant and racist. Her boyfriend was disliked by his peers for his racism and arrogance as well. Both had serious adjustment problems: she attended a school for the specially gifted and he moved straight from working class to philosophy. Although they knew their academic subjects in depth, they knew little about anything else. But more seriously, they disregarded other people’s knowledge as irrelevant or inferior. I began to observe the danger of linear thinking and research. Since then, mathematics and science have ceased to be the most important and primary disciplines in my view. I began to explore literature, lateral thinking and the connection between the arts and science, and became a writer in 1980. I sold my first short story to *Family Circle* in 1982, and received a general writing grant from the Australian Literature Board in 1984. My interest in writing and the arts as interpretations of the unconscious continued, and I was appointed to the Multicultural Arts Advisory Committee of the Australia Council in 1986.

However, I did not fully appreciate cultures and cultural differences until I reviewed literature on dreams and cultures, and finally observed how Chinese and Vietnamese (Confucians) displayed their disgust towards uneatable animals and insects (caterpillars and worms, for example). I realised the difference between belief systems within Confucian societies: Taoism advocates harmony with nature while Confucianism imposes human order and control, and Buddhism forbids the killing of animals and denies pleasure. The irreconcilable conflict between the major philosophies and their coexistence have resulted in the Confucian strive for equilibrium between the negative and the positive, male and female, good and evil. In Confucian societies, the preservation of, and loyalty to, one’s family are priorities. The nation is treated as one gigantic family in which individuals are but cells to support the complex integrated system evolving over several thousand years. These practices have resulted in the overpopulation of Japan, then Korea, China and Vietnam, leading to accommodation problems. Survival necessitates the preservation of harmony, formal dinner invitations are circulated among potential guests to eliminate conflict during Chinese social gatherings. The desire for harmony often means disregard for truth. It is inconceivable to Westerners how Japanese leaders can be so perfect in their observation of etiquette and protocol and so corrupt at the same time. To understand this, it is necessary to understand the difference between
direct (Western) and indirect (Confucian) cultures.

Besides being indirect, Confucian cultures are lateral and holistic. Death is an integral part of life; dreams present an extension of reality, a message from the Creator. The interpretation of dreams in Confucian cultures is therefore different from that in Western cultures. Therapy as a psychological process independent of moral value and political responsibility is alien to indirect cultures. This thesis aims to examine some understanding of dreams in non-mainstream cultures, in abnormal psychology, and in Western civilisation, employing an action research model as practised in the Social Ecology Centre. The thesis also includes my observation and understanding of Western therapies and therapists from cultural, political and financial perspectives, as well as anecdotes to make up for the serious lack of literature on the subject.

I was appointed Coordinator of the Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan Inc.\(^7\) (MRC) in September 1990. My brief included supervising five full-time and four part-time staff members, administering direct and referral services to recent arrivals and migrants of non-English-speaking backgrounds, and serving the Management Committee comprising five elected, six appointed, and three co-opted members. I looked forward to doing research on dreams, only to be overwhelmed by refugees’ nightmares and their immediate needs: housing, financial assistance, addressing immigration mistakes, rescuing daughters from abuse, if not torture, by cruel parents-in-law. Some realities prove to be harsher than nightmares. Improving realities on the other hand has reduced the frequency and intensity of bad dreams. Separating dream from reality makes little sense even if I could afford the time. I foreshadow my action learning\(^8\) process. My emphasis shifts to holistic practical help, community politics, hidden agendas and the impact of cultural clashes on community services.

Through the Home And Community Care Multilingual Pamphlet Project, I introduced action research to the MRC. Its successful completion generates support from the funding body, the communities concerned and clients. This project enabled me to gain new knowledge of community services and identify outstanding needs to establish appropriate responses such as English

\(^7\) Workplan available on request.

\(^8\) Action Learning was introduced by Professor R.W. Revans as he documented *Plans for Recruitment, Education and Training in the Coal Mining Industry* in October 1943 in Great Britain. Since then, Professor Revans has applied this model successfully in many different environments.
for Senior Migrants, English Pronunciation Class, Multicultural Mothers' Dinners, the Job Application Service, Administrative Service Test Training and Training for Job Interviews

My perception that employment is the best assistance to settlement proves to be correct. The Job Application and Interview Service combined with the Administrative Service Test training has helped about forty people gain employment within 18 months. Cultural conditioning over several generations is more powerful than formal education. Differentiating one culture from another helps me understand Koranic learning, rote learning, critical learning modes and the like to discover that confusion between stereotyping and informed generalisation (survey and statistics) causes confusion between personality disorder and cultural behaviour.

I employed the theory of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner9 to develop alternative interview techniques for non-English-speaking background (NESB) migrants with limited language skills. As my knowledge of cultures increased, I became more aware of cultural difficulties. Many migrants from cultures where modesty is essential for success cannot 'sell' themselves. Employment counsellling is essential to recent arrivals and people who have been out of the work force for a long time. Their training also includes alternatives to verbal expression, such as visual display, flowcharts, graphs... A Brazilian, employing this technique, secures a position at the Professional II level in the three months after his arrival in Australia.

Feedback from participants in the Administrative Service Test (AST) training also shows that this program has helped NESB migrants attain equitable access to the Australian Public Service. It also enables the MRC to document how the test favours migrants with logic and linguistic intelligences and leaves out those with interpersonal intelligence at the point of entry. Howard Gardner's theory further shows that intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences are necessary to multiculturalism, but few people have both.

Those who had scored 280 and over in the AST and those who had been interviewed for jobs felt that they had achieved standard requirements to work in Australia and deduced that their unemployment has been the result of the recession and/or discrimination. On the other hand, I have gained clients' trust to help them realise that not all unsuccessful applications were

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the result of discrimination. To boost their employment opportunities further, I organised the work experience program by assigning participants with specific projects to write references for them accordingly. This project helped the MRC to address effectively the critical labour shortage and convert the boring volunteer scheme, which gave skilled and intelligent people mindless tasks, into an enjoyable venture benefiting everyone involved and removing the 'do-gooders' syndrome.

By the end of the research period, most of those who had been involved in the training program have gained employment in the workforce, some are full-time professional employees such as senior counsellors and computer analysts, while others are working in casual and temporary jobs. All have regained their confidence and dignity. The outstanding achievement to date is a PhD scholarship in nuclear physics for a recent arrival from Bosnia.

In addition to the population of people who come to the MRC for training and other specific assistance, some attend just to be with human beings. Continual wars for decades have left many people with serious emotional and mental problems. The MRC has its share of clients who need therapy, but appropriate therapies are yet to be developed. In the meantime, they just congregate in the kitchen area, talking to themselves and to people who ignore the incomprehensible content of their speech. At first I felt embarrassed by my inability to respond. Then, accepting my inability, I realised that it is a response in itself. I provide food and include them in our activities. Intuitively, I have provided them with a supportive environment. Our relationship has developed to such an extent that I have been able to ask two mentally ill clients records of violence to leave the premises and not to return without having had a shower. To everyone's surprise both have come back washed, shaved and well dressed. Realising that they suffered from a mental illness, they have sought and received treatment. I have naturally turned to community development. Conventional literature review and learning from other people, especially Ba, a Vietnamese client who chose me as his therapist, have helped me to understand my own and other people's prejudices and their reasons, and to improve services.

Despite success, my life remained miserable for the first two years at the MRC. I was not allowed to mention research in the presence of some Management Committee members. I was criticised for behaving badly over the phone, at meetings and with public servants. Research was considered inappropriate for a community organisation. It was regarded as an infringement of clients' rights: research on people without giving the subjects anything back. Most ethnic community leaders had never heard of
action research and therefore were suspicious of it. In desperation, I returned to fiction and poetry writing for creativity and diversion. Consequently, I returned to feminism and political activism. Speaking my traditional language among my traditional peers, I reclaimed myself.

Reflecting on my past experience, I realise that Danish citizens have a greater degree of participation than Australians as Danish society is more cohesive. When I spent four weeks in Copenhagen in 1983 to gain an understanding of Danish society, I found out that, although a member of NATO, Denmark successfully resisted having nuclear weapons on its soil. Our daughter enjoyed a Danish school for the disadvantaged — a welcome change from the schools she had attended in Australia, where she had continually suffered serious racial abuse and discrimination. The Danish Peace Movement met every year to demonstrate for peace. I was told that 'there was no need to remind people because they know exactly when the demonstration takes place'. Australian political movements need to remind their participants constantly regarding peace demonstrations.

We spent our summer vacation in Denmark with a German couple. Both are architects. We visited the school of 800 students from disadvantaged families (families with one unemployed parent) in Solrod. Looking at the building made of wood and glass, the German architect told me that they were not allowed to build schools with easily inflammable material: 'In Germany, schools must be made of concrete so that the students cannot set fire to the building. It's against the law to use wood'.

Suddenly I realised that my children's school in Australia looked like a prison and that Australian schools suffered a high incidence of arson. What impressed me immensely was the Danish school's quiet atmosphere and its orderliness. I could not imagine an Australian school of a similar size not littered and/or vandalised by students. The Danish teacher told me in English that they had built the first school on the same grounds and of the same material but it was burnt down right away. The government decided to build exactly the same again despite the risk of being burned down again.

Visitors from Sweden, Japan and other parts of the world flocked to the school as Danish education started to overtake Swedish education. The school took children from kindergarten to high school. Young children were allowed to operate electrical appliances such as sewing machines and electric drills, and to bake bread; they were left to their own resources to educate themselves. Teachers were around acting as guides rather than
instructors. A creative playground was also attached to the building. Children attended this school by bicycle. No-one worried about children's safety. One Danish mother said her child had been lost for three days. I was terrified. 'You must have been worried sick'. 'No, not at all', was her matter-of-fact response. 'How did your child survive, I pursued the subject, thinking of missing persons in Australia. The mother explained to me: 'Danes feed people who are lost, particularly children. My son came home afterwards. He had a good adventure'.

My experience certainly supported her claim. We lost our way once, so we stopped and asked a stranger. Instead of showing us the way, he drove his car to lead us to where we wanted to go. The tourist pamphlets advised people to make reservations in advance, but reminded visitors that they should ask private homes for accommodation if they failed to make reservations and all hotels and hostels were solidly booked.

Across the street from our holiday cottage was a day-care centre for small children; it was open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. I discovered this place by accident although I had seen children riding bicycles to and from it every day. I assumed they were also holiday visitors. No child ever cried in that day-care centre during those four weeks. Once I saw a child crying in a supermarket. Immediately some adult looked after the child.

From the school we learnt about a recent project to convert a war theatre into accommodation for people on low incomes. The Mayor convened a meeting of tenants-to-be and asked them to plan their own accommodation—they designed their unique habitat which has attracted visitors from all over the world. The concept was based on the standard family of three; therefore each unit had two bedrooms. Between each two units there was an extra room to accommodate expansion and contraction. Whenever a family had an extra member, the spare room was used. Each unit also had a garden, so that every family could grow their own flowers and vegetables if they wished. A common room with kitchen and dining facilities was assigned to every block of fifteen or sixteen units for communal life, where outgoing people would regularly gather to organise social events. They would share the cooking and cleaning. In addition, there was also a common laundry room with washing machines and driers... Everything was designed to encourage human interaction. Those who preferred to be alone would be left undisturbed. Those who needed a friend would be welcomed by the group.

The kitchenette attached to each unit was small; there was no laundry room in each unit. Instead there were common facilities where people would
incidentally meet and chat. Small companies have adopted this concept for effective management.

Danish people appear to have a greater degree of understanding of themselves and of others than Australians. In 1983, the Danish legislature passed a law to ensure that no-one has to suffer unemployment for more than two years; communities have the responsibility to find jobs for the unemployed. On the other hand, Danes who were laid off would receive 80 per cent of their most recent income. People could leave their jobs for two years and return to the same position.

At first it seemed an extravagant piece of legislation because such a system would be very expensive to support. My experience during that summer showed that Denmark was a much poorer society than Australia. Although the government spent a large portion of the national budget to generate employment, it did not spend money on the Queen or other extravagances. Danish people often drive old cars. Danish priorities are different from American and Australian ones! Most important of all, Danes do not expect their Queen to be above reproach; I was told that she had not been a virgin at marriage and that virginity was not a consideration. I was also told by officers from the Danish version of CES that Confucian people had no problems integrating in Danish society whereas Turkish, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian people did, not because of their racial differences, which were often considered exotically attractive, but because of their refusal to participate in ‘Danish’ activities such as camping and dancing involving both sexes. It appears that Australia can learn from the Danish experience.

To explore and understand the difficulties caused by cultural and personality differences, I let people use my skills as their natural resources. This form of community development enables me to observe myself as a research object to understand meanings which had been totally obscured. I understand how language is a means of communication as well as a barrier considering that 25 per cent of the Australian population speak English as a second language and practically all Australians communicate in English as a second language at one time or another.

Working with clients helps me realise the importance of empirical evidence and the academic tendency to ignore it. My clients complained about other service providers and helped me understand their perception: ‘The Human Rights Commission is a waste of time. They send leaflets to tell us they help
us fight racism, but when we go to see them, they say they have to stay neutral. It's up to us to provide evidence of racism; they are there to conciliate. How can we provide evidence. They are paid to do the job; they should go to those racists and gather the evidence themselves. Clients see the government as being too soft on criminals whereas innocent, reasonable people are disadvantaged. They could not see any reason for some people to be against the execution of Dod (a child killer)\(^\text{10}\) who said he would kill again for the thrill if he were released and he chose the death penalty so that he would not commit further crime. Many of my Jewish friends were also horrified when Noam Chomsky defended the right of a French philosopher to deny the existence of the holocaust. Being married to a Dunera Boy\(^\text{11}\), I interviewed the German cook of my husband's grandmother, Anna, who had refused to perform the Hitler salute and had to leave her Jewish employer. Later on she saved my husband's grandmother when his grandmother was released from the concentration camp, hungry and homeless. Anna had neither tertiary education nor political conviction. I thought of my some radical peers who refused personal assistance to 'reactionaries' while I walked through the Museum of the Holocaust in Jerusalem and read about the people who have saved Jews. It was then that I realised wisdom does not require sophistication, political ideology, great intellect or extraordinary intelligence. It appears to be the ability to maintain a balance between human interest and nature, and when necessary, to put humanity before personal safety or group interest. I have tried to follow Anna's example and retain the best in my native culture: Taoist philosophy of striving for the equilibrium between good and evil, the negative and the positive, and to avoid extremes.

Gradually I have realised that my radical politics of the past caused social paralysis by confusing stereotyping with generalisation. Like my peers, I believed that disadvantaged minorities could do no wrong, that the oppressed were virtuous. We confused defending people's rights with defending their wrongdoing; we advocated the return to out-of-date practices. Our confusing the rights of Aboriginal peoples and NESB migrants with the virtue of their practices has hindered our ability to help promote social justice for all, as we created a harmful positive stereotyping — that all minority practices are desirable.

\(^{10}\) ITN News from England: an American convicted of murdering three children by hanging, chose death by hanging — the exact method he had used on the children, 6 January 1993.

\(^{11}\) Cyril Pearl, *The Dunera Scandal*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1983.
Community services in a multicultural society are necessarily varied and
different because people come from a diversity of cultural backgrounds.
Because of the serious lack of written material on the subject and because
Australia is a rapidly changing society, it is necessary that the research come
from people and sources not as yet documented.

Most people who are happy in their own cultures do not wish to emigrate.
Thus refugees and migrants have brought along much apprehension and fear
in addition to other national and cultural prejudices such as suspicion of
peoples who share their national borders and of individuals in the same
communities who do not share their religion or heritage. The multicultural
unconscious is therefore negative. As new communities are being created,
new fears and suspicion are being added to the negative multicultural
unconscious. Antagonism between groups with different political ideologies
and difficulty in getting along with one’s neighbours and others from
different cultures increase with multicultural complexity. Community
development in a multicultural society which is constantly being shaped and
reshaped by migration cannot afford to ignore this negative unconscious.
Management committee members from different cultures are no exception.
Members of MRC Management Committees must be made aware of their
own negative unconscious to link multicultural heritage with indigenous and
other cultures.
2 PERSONAL BACKGROUND TO THE ISSUES

2.1 Dreams and my Vietnamese Childhood

I spent much of my childhood in Vietnamese villages with people who had neither French education nor personal contact with 'Western civilisation'. Every day they would talk about their dreams as they took a rest. As their dreams were interpreted by more experienced family members, their hopes and fears would rise and fall. Those who had bad dreams would be advised to improve their conduct by being more charitable to the poor, offering something to the gods, asking their ancestors' souls for protection or, in rare cases, reconcile with the souls of those whose deaths might have been caused by them. These people believed that their misfortune would be much reduced, if not removed altogether, because they had asked for forgiveness from the gods and protection from their ancestral souls. The souls of people who died in injustice, particularly those of virgin women who committed suicide, are believed to be especially powerful and sacred. After seeking help, people's behaviour would be temporarily modified: women would treat their daughters-in-law better, landlords would stop harassing sharecroppers for one day, employers would reduce their servants' loads...

In some extreme cases, 'crazy' people would roam about, unable to distinguish reality from fantasy. As a child, I used to be afraid of a woman who regularly came to my grandmother's yard, talking to herself, doing what seemed to be imaginary house chores. She never harmed anyone; no-one ever harmed her either. People steered clear of her, not knowing what to do. It was difficult to tell whether she was happy or sad.

Occasionally some men and women listening to the spirits' voices would wear outrageous garments, dance, hold hands and even touch one another. They would play roles totally unconnected to their real positions in society; they would say rude words or make vulgar gestures. Sometimes they would even tear off their clothes. Adults who came to watch their 'performance' would say that they were seized by bad spirits, and were therefore unable to observe moral codes and social convention. During their trance, some would cross the gender boundary, saying that they actually belonged to the opposite sex and courting with members of their own sex. But no-one even thought of arresting them. After a few hours or sometimes much longer, they would appear to have had enough and behave 'normally' again. As a child I felt fascinated and scared by their behaviour. I did not know what it meant until I was an adult and understood the words they had said as sexual
terms and their gestures as flirtation normally incompatible with convention.

Many people came from far away to seek my grandfather’s help because they had heard, from their relatives and friends, about his ability and humanity as a medicine man. He always consulted the whole family of a patient; perceptions of family members were carefully considered. Because of the lack of public transport, when a patient was too ill to appear in person, a family member would come and describe the patient’s symptoms in detail. All physical illnesses were also treated as emotional problems, and the ritual of healing was a collaborative effort by the entire family. Patients and their families were of primary concern. I do not remember that he ever failed, although a few of those who sought his assistance eventually died. However, their family’s trust in my grandfather helped them accept death as unavoidable and part of the life cycle.

Believing in Western civilisation and its self-proclaimed superiority my mother discarded all those village practices as backward and superstitious. For many decades, nightmares denied her sufficient sleep; in the middle of the night or during a day nap, she would suddenly wake up, saying that she was seized by a bong de (which is the Vietnamese term for ‘shadow’). During the seizure she could hear and see people around her but felt totally helpless, unable to call for help because she felt paralysed by a heavy weight on her chest. She believed that her condition was caused by her weak heart, so she took plenty of rest between her home duties. The condition disappeared some time ago, and my mother’s heart is in perfect shape many decades later. Only recently did I learn that my mother’s nightmares suit the classical definition of nightmare in psychoanalysis. It seems remarkable that she was always able to function as a wife and mother, unlike the women in Freud’s stories, perhaps because she believes that dreams are just mental rubbish.

Unlike many Vietnamese who treated dreams as messages from dead relatives or their own lives in previous incarnations when they could not relate any part of their dreams to their day-to-day life, my mother hardly ever talked about her dreams. On rare occasions she would mention her own interpretations of her haunting nightmares, for example: ‘I must have been a beggar in some previous incarnation’. My father, on the other hand, is highly superstitious; he would never undertake any major project without consulting a fortune teller. Also, being superstitious and practical, he has always refused to register bad dreams. Instead, he would remember having dreamt that so and so had died (often his adversaries) or that he saw a huge fire or a big coffin (quăn tuế in Northern Vietnamese; quán means

19
mandarin, therefore promotion, and 金 means money) which would mean imminent promotion, financial gain or both. If neither eventuated, then he would interpret it as a general good luck symbol. My father believes he is a lucky man protected by the soul of his suicidal sister.

Because the majority of Vietnamese practice three religions (belief systems) simultaneously, most people seek the help of fortune tellers for the interpretation of their dreams while some with considerable knowledge in I-ching\textsuperscript{12} interpret their own and others'. They are often highly skilled interpreters offering free services to relatives and friends.

For centuries Vietnamese have interpreted dreams to gain popularity and status. Since righteous kings were believed to be sent from Heaven and bad ones to be eliminated, in difficult times emperors would resort to faking dreams of power to indicate they were indeed chosen by God. Concubines would wrest power from principal wives by manipulating fortune tellers or faking dreams of being the mother of the future hero... In 1945, the Ho Chi Minh Government forbade fortune telling as a paid service.

When I attended writing workshops in New York I was asked why there was no colour in my writing. This presented so strong a challenge to me that I decided to analyse other people's work to find their relationships with the environment. I learnt that Graham Greene kept a dream diary and, when he experienced writers' block, he often used one of his dreams without altering a single detail. My best friend experienced nightmares frequently. Talking to her made me realise that my dreams were all grey like the pencil and paper on which I used to work out mathematical solutions. Some psychologist friends suggested that I repress my dreams. Studying Vietnamese culture and dreams, I reconstructed dreams to write 'Nightmare' in brilliant colour depicting sunrise and sunset in the landscape of the main character's dreams.\textsuperscript{13} Since 1985, I have consciously added colour to my writing. And since then I have remembered more dreams and more details in them. Although I was never disturbed by my dreams, I felt a new relaxation in understanding them and their symbols.

My latest complex dream in full colour has revealed to me a new dimension. What appears to me totally unimportant in my consciousness is registered by my subconscious to become the landscape of my dream. While I do not

\textsuperscript{12} One of the five Chinese Classics.

have a visual memory my mind records landscape like a camera: the plant I saw which appeared in my dream was rejected by my conscious mind. The apparently clear division between the functions of my conscious and unconscious minds needs to be explored in more depth. Understanding other people’s minds may help me understand whether my mother’s success in controlling her own nightmares could have hindered her relationship with my brother. Had she taken time to understand the reasons for her nightmares, she would have been able to pay more attention to his emotional needs as she had so expertly restored his physical wellbeing. I cannot help wondering whether, had there been a competent Vietnamese therapist, my brother would not have had to endure so many years of silence.

2.2 Western Therapies and my Vietnamese Experiences

At six, my brother had a high fever and was diagnosed as having meningitis by a specialist at the Grall Hospital in Saigon. French doctors said that his condition was caused by American nuclear testing in the Pacific. The Americans dismissed the statement as absurd. My brother went into a coma for two months. A team of French specialists saved his life and celebrated his survival with champagne, even though they did not expect my brother to be physically normal again. ‘He could be deaf, blind, or both’. Thousands of other children died of the same illness that year.

He was discharged prematurely because my family ran out of money; my father’s monthly income was not enough to pay for the hospital’s weekly bills. The doctors donated their services, but hospital fees and tests were beyond Vietnamese income. They taught my mother how to care for him.

She followed their instructions to the letter and religiously gave my brother what I was to recognise later as physiotherapy. His vegetable-like limbs eventually thickened. Within six months, my brother became physically normal even though he was a little frail. Refusing all traditional assistance, my mother followed ‘Western’ therapy. As my brother grew older, he seemed to be different from his peers, and doctors said he was expected to be more fragile.

Although he was intelligent, he was unable to remain in school. Consequently he was conscripted. My mother became extremely anxious; he was her first surviving son; having failed to help him escape military service, she was determined to bribe the authorities to keep him away from action. Military doctors discharged him for being mentally ill, but my mother refused to accept the verdict. My family continued to look after him.
physically. They were evacuated from Saigon in 1975 and since then have lived in California.

There my brother was diagnosed as being schizophrenic and a Freudian therapist was assigned to treat him. The therapist attempted to investigate my family's mental health history. Everything went smoothly. My mother who had adopted Western civilisation, initially had no difficulty in cooperating with the therapist. She told him details about my brother's physical and mental health, his hopes, dreams and fears, but my parents went into a rage the moment the therapist asked for an account of their own problems concerning their relationships with each other and with my brother. The therapist was dismissed before he had a chance to explore their sex life and other intimate details. Since then, my brother has been treated by a psychiatrist who asked practically no questions, just handed out tranquillisers, antidepressants and sleeping pills. Again as a Vietnamese, my mother rejected psychiatrists' advice to put my brother in an institution. He is like the 'crazy' woman I knew when I was a child, the one who used to visit my grandmother's yard.

I then realised how cultural differences created difficulty and made therapies impossible. I tried to explain 'Western processes' to my mother, believing that once she understood psychoanalysis, she would be as cooperative as she had always been with other medical professionals. But my mother took it hard; she cried hysterically, saying that I accused her of not doing enough for my brother and my other siblings while she sacrificed her life for her family. My father's reaction was much worse; being a Confucian, he was convinced that I was totally impious and wished me dead. The incident divided my family.

It became clear to me that psychoanalysis would be unsuitable for Confucians because, unlike Socrates who asked questions which led his disciples to discover their own solutions, Confucius answered his disciples' questions even though the answers sometimes implied doubts and further investigation. 'Western' thinking can therefore be seen as the opposite of the Confucian thought process.

Around 1980, five years after the reunification of Vietnam, the Vietnamese economy was so bad that most people were threatened with starvation unless they received assistance from their overseas relatives. I am exceptionally fond of my cousin not only because he was always like a brother to me but also because he was the first male in the clan who regarded me as an equal.
and treated me with respect. As soon as it was possible to send money to Vietnam, I sent a large sum to him and his father. Unfortunately my gesture overcame him — to the extent that he became ill and was unable to sleep for weeks. His wife took him to a hospital where he was diagnosed as being mentally ill as he went into a catatonic state.

His family refused to accept that he was mentally ill. Instead, they insisted that it was a neurological disorder. They asked for my help. I went to my medical friends and asked for all kinds of drugs which might change his condition. His wife and my uncle were convinced that I was the only person who could communicate with him. As I was unable to go to Vietnam, I wrote many letters to him. His wife wrote back saying that, although he responded to nothing, he read my letters. She asked me to write often and I did. The vitamins and drugs were totally wasted. Everything seemed to aggravate his condition. The doctors felt helpless, so they left him alone.

Meanwhile his wife and father went to see a traditional land positioner who consulted the I-ching and told them that the home they lived in was unsuitable and that they should move to another place he selected for them. They did. Life gradually improved for them and for my cousin. After having spent four months in the hospital, he recovered. He is now studying I-ching while teaching mathematics.

He said the doctors did not know what they were doing: ‘I was never crazy although my nerves are weak. I got sick of being patronised, so I took over my own therapy. I meditated according to Yoga teaching. It helped me relax and I was able to sleep again. I am meditating every day’. He told me that his condition was similar to my brother’s and wrote to my parents, suggesting a way to help my brother to stay in touch with reality.

When I visited my family in 1990, my sister told me that my brother, who had not spoken a clear word for years and seemed not to be aware of others, had told my father off: ‘Don’t bully mother’. To my surprise, he talked to my husband although he still ignored me. He made some progress. My cousin must have helped him.

When I was a student at the University of Saigon, my mother’s only first female cousin ’lost her mind’ shortly after her mother’s death and my mother’s second cousin becoming pregnant by a relative by marriage. This

14 Before moving home, constructing a house or burying the dead, Vietnamese often consult land positioners to find a suitable site to avoid offending powerful and mean spirits and becoming ill or incurring serious debt.
'crazy' woman joined a branch of the Security Police and worked with men away from home. She allegedly led a 'loose' life and consequently was frowned upon by relatives, especially female ones. This cousin suddenly withdrew, spent hours in the room with the altar to worship her mother's soul. She would mumble inaudibly and was unaware of people around her; she burnt incense and kowtowed. The clan was extremely worried. 'She could be pregnant', they would whisper their fear, having just barely managed one unwanted pregnancy by sending the woman to a mountain resort in time and mailing out wedding announcements to clan members all over the country. But their worry was soon proven unnecessary; everyone sighed with relief. In the meantime, the woman was ignored. She eventually became 'normal' again. She got married and bore many children. No-one ever even thought of asking her what had gone through her mind during that difficult period just as no-one would dream of confronting a woman who had a phantom marriage despite the non-existence of a husband.

Many of my friends and clients have been victimised by Freudian therapists who sexually abused them in the name of transference and countertransference, and finally discarded them. Two survived the abuse to tell me their stories. My best friend Belle was incapable of looking after herself as the result of a series of bad treatments by general practitioners, psychiatrists, counsellors and therapists. One of my students' depression was overlooked by school counsellors and teachers. Luckily I discovered that she had attempted to slash her wrists and stopped her from further suicide attempts. My visits to psychiatric institutions made me wish I could return to those Vietnamese villages where I had spent my former years. Even though the 'crazy woman' had neither care nor medication, she was free to roam about the village; she needed no permission to enter my grandmother's backyard; she did not need to fear involuntary commitment. Some of my clients, on the other hand, were involuntarily committed. In psychiatric wards, between nightmares, they hoped in vain for someone who would speak their primary language. But no interpreter would ever be provided while the patients were unaware of their entitlement. Backwardness somehow seemed much gentler. Am I a romantic or has civilisation become too inhuman?

I have observed that some therapists fail their clients because they fail to take into account cultural differences. They do not observe the principle that similarity is not sameness and that different people react to the same conditions differently, particularly when different value systems and cultural practices are involved.
Although I have been successful with all the apparently complicated cases which were more or less forced on me, I could not think of myself as a clinical psychologist. I am more interested in cultural influences on the human subconscious and unconscious than in any particular school of psychotherapy. My success with helping a Chinese friend control his nightmares and a child eliminate his hallucinations of monsters led me to watch Jung's dream analysis, *Discovering Psychology* on SBS and to read books such as *Your Child's Dreams*. I decided to study dreams in their cultural contexts.

Remembering the problems I had with setting up my action research project when I was writing my graduation paper for the Graduate Diploma in Social Ecology, I feel tempted to approach my thesis in the conventional way. Being an independent and often lone learner, I can easily devise, distribute, collect and assess a comprehensive questionnaire. But there is no existing material to base the questions on. On the other hand, I have found the questionnaire an unsuitable form of communication with Vietnamese and other clients from Third World countries, especially those without language skills. In addition, since Australia took in a large number of political refugees, the need for culturally appropriate therapies to assist survivors of trauma and torture is undeniable.

My discussions with overseas Chinese friends show that, unlike many of our 'Western' counterparts, my friends and I feel apprehensive about paid social therapies. Health care and education have been traditionally free in ancient China and Vietnam. The difference does not stop there. Traditional Vietnamese therapy is founded on the belief that therapy has to be primarily harmless and the relationship between the healers and the healed must necessarily be built on trust to prevent adverse effect. Freud charged his disciples US $20 an hour which was a great deal of money at the time.

When a harmful drug (poison) is used, the medicine man prescribes an antidote so that the body does not lose its natural balance. Patients who suffer long and serious illnesses are also given special medicine to speed up

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15 See 'Rosa' in Appendix 1.
17 Chinese from China refer to Chinese born outside China as overseas Chinese and often consider them culturally impure. The Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 further divides Chinese into two generations according to social experience: those who grew up before the Revolution and those who grew up during and after it.
18 ABC Television Special Report, August 1990.
their recovery. Food and medicine are treated as integral parts of healthy living. Few Australian general practitioners inform their patients that antibiotics can deplete the human body of vitamin Bs and beneficial bacteria in the intestines, and that people who take antibiotics for a long time should eat yoghurt. It is even more depressing that medical professionals discredit alternative therapists, who manage to help people with terminal cancer, for not using scientific methods.

Some Australians are also confused by the 'fee for service' practice. The student with whom I spent many months when she suffered acute depression and who had been told by her teacher that she should not hope to pass the Higher School Certificate, came to visit me many years later, after having passed the Higher School Certificate. She was an executive secretary. Her words were reassuring: 'I want to thank you for having been the only one who helped me'.

'I am flattered,' I said. 'But many other people also helped you. Your doctor for...'

She interrupted me. 'I have thought a lot about it. I don't know whether she really helped me. I am even less certain that she would if my parents weren't rich. She charged us more than others. But you never charged us anything. Being rich, I couldn't be sure I had any friends except you'.

It is difficult for me to know whether Western civilisation has been colonialist or whether colonialism has become a frequent Western practice. Confrontation and division\textsuperscript{19} are its means, not only in the colonies but also in their home cultures. Vietnamese culture dictates that therapy is to do no harm, while Western cultures dominated by Christianity allow medical treatment to sacrifice life for the advancement of science. In 1985, the Women's Liberation Movement acknowledged racism within itself for the first time at the WLM National Conference in Adelaide. Increasing racism in socialist Europe and the former Soviet Union has proved that socialism is not free of racism either\textsuperscript{20}.

Having spent most of my adult life in the West and read mainly 'Western' literature, I have adopted 'Western' symbols or interpreted symbols in a Western way.

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\textsuperscript{20} See Racism in Eastern Europe in Appendix 2.
2.3 Community Services and Community Development:
My Work Experiences

I define multicultural community services as appropriate and effective responses to individual and community needs in a multicultural society.

Current practices in Australia divide community services into two categories: case work and community development. Case work is concerned with services to individuals; community development is concerned with services to groups. Workers' beliefs and practices differ widely depending on their age, their level of education, their social awareness, their social status, their religious and cultural backgrounds. Mainstream workers remain ambivalent about the meaning of multiculturalism, whether and how to apply principles attached to that philosophy. At the MRC I have received frequent complaints about community workers' racist and/or patronising attitudes. I have also received complaints about workers' lack of appropriate qualifications, knowledge and experience. Most of the people with qualifications in social work I have encountered either hold administrative positions or express their desire to be administrators of social services instead of delivering them. Many ethnic community workers hold no qualifications and have no experience in community work. In 1988 an ethnic community in Victoria employed no community worker with qualifications in social/community work even though there was a considerable number of people with suitable tertiary qualifications in this community. A social worker testified in front of witnesses that his community leaders gave jobs to relatives and intimidated those who 'caused trouble'.

My impression is that, not infrequently, NESB community workers have been selected for their ethnicity rather than their qualifications, relevant knowledge and competence because of the general assumption that NESB people know, if not everything, then more than their native English-speaking counterparts about their native culture and non-mainstream cultures. Mainstream cultures have been classified as Anglo-Celtic by writers such as Antigone Kefala and the multicultural section of the Australia Council since its establishment of the Multicultural Incentive Funding in 1985. On the other hand, it is also generally assumed that the non-English-speaking background is singular and specific, so NESB people are not qualified to work in mainstream organisations until they have gained easily recognisable relevant experience or acquired relevant tertiary qualifications. The term

21 New funding policy of over $1 million per year to address the cultural needs and disadvantage of people of non-English-speaking backgrounds.
'bilingual' has been loosely defined to mean people who speak a second language regardless of their degree of language fluency and/or cultural knowledge. Since there is little distinction between 'multicultural' (being culturally diverse and integrated) and 'ethnic' (being culturally specific and separate) in government guidelines and ethnic communities' perceptions, in practice the two have often been interchanged to suit people in power. By definition, NES cultures range from Sweden to Ethiopia, most of the globe. NESC or NESB is therefore meaningless.

In addition, community workers with qualifications in social work or other related disciplines have ignored or failed to grasp the implication of the constantly and rapidly changing population. They have intentionally or unintentionally mismatched past models based on the British class structure, outdated socialist theories and a relatively static and homogeneous society with multicultural Australia, instead of doing research on population composition to identify genuine needs for appropriate and effective services.

Expedient changes in government policies and the restructuring of the Public Service to suit economic rationalism have caused severe discrepancies in public servants' understanding of their briefs and how to execute them. Instead of being trained to perform new functions, public servants have been resourced by private consultants to disguise old practices in new jargon and cover up their unwillingness or lack of ability to change. Consultants have often been retired public servants or those who left the Public Service with a 'golden handshake'. They have charged the government several thousand dollars a session to rewrite old government manuals or import novelty ones from Great Britain, the US and Canada, and offer questionable regressive services. Grant application guidelines have often called for innovative models but failed to recognise them.

My most recent application for a training grant from the ACT government was rejected because the selection panel failed to understand action research (which has been frequently used by trainers to mean something trendy). A government community service manager complained about my management: 'You should seriously consider employing a casual book keeper instead of an accountant since your organisation manages less than $400,000 per year...'. I protested to this by saying: 'I am not managing $400,000 a year, I am managing a human service organisation involving some 60 volunteers and ten staff members. Volunteers have to be paid travel allowance. You could think this way: with only $400,000 a year, the MRC has managed to teach 100 students, train 132 unemployed migrants, helped 30 find jobs...', but my protest was disregarded. 'It's the same, your
administrative cost is too high compared with other organisations of the same size'. I was called a few weeks later to justify my budget. Depressed, I restated my earlier protest: 'Your manager said I managed $400,000. I am not managing money. The Commonwealth Bank is doing that. I am managing community services'. The response was slightly different this time: 'You just have to explain what you have done as he suggested, then it would be fine'. This was the final answer from a section which had spent a huge sum of money on consultants only to ignore their advice on discerning human services from non-client service organisations.

Community services have therefore been left to individual organisations' interpretation and practice. Heads of community service organisations have mostly been people without relevant qualifications. They have been encouraged but not obliged to attend short training courses organised by bureaucrats with little knowledge of clients' needs and depending on them for 'hard' data to shape government policies, thus forming vicious circles.

My analysis of community work in Australia comes from my immediate experience in tutoring, teaching, running a catering service from home, working in commercial kitchen, being a multicultural arts adviser to the Australia Council, and being the MRC Coordinator. My biases derive from my cultural background, family upbringing, national political mishaps and my extended stays in Vietnam, the US, France, Israel, Denmark, Germany, England, Canada, Italy and Vanuatu. These experiences have led to my somewhat unusually strong convictions and persistent commitment. I believe that I have 'practised' most of what I have 'preached'. I have never been a tourist anywhere, no matter how short my stay might have been. For example, during my brief trip to Tunisia, I was guided by an underground political activist to learn how and when the country was expecting an imminent coup d'état. In addition, I feel at home in most, if not all, democratic countries: Denmark, France, Germany and Canada, and I am a citizen of three countries: Vietnam, the US and Australia. Burdened by nationalities, I hope to understand the meaning of humanity. My perceptions and views are constantly changing according to new knowledge, experience and understanding. Writing this thesis, I am recording but a transitory intellectual position. Learning for me is a continuous dialogue between my negative and positive selves, and between myself and the outside world, to understand myself in the context of the world and to understand the world through my own experience within it and with others in the hope for a more just and equitable society.
The thesis does not aim to provide a theory of social services but is an attempt to explore how effective responses can be implemented according to existing guidelines and budget constraints. It also explores a process of working with people from different cultures, to facilitate participation by individuals from non-participatory cultures and to foster understanding between NESB peoples.

To compensate for the personal and subjective style of research, I include everyone in any project no matter how difficult that may be. Projects are organised according to clients’ requests, funding conditions and my conceptions based on clients’ needs as perceived by myself, staff and/or the Management Committee.

This thesis will document my process of learning new skills, understanding the cultural complexity of the communities I am employed to serve, gathering information on clients’ needs, using my past experience as a resource to address current issues, improving established services and setting up new ones at the Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan Inc. in order to respond to the constantly changing population and its merging needs. The thesis will also document my management of change at the organisational and personal levels. It is therefore natural that I start with dreams and cultures.
3 DREAMS AND CULTURES: PATH NOT TAKEN

3.1 Mainstream interpretation: Freud and Jung

3.1.1 My Own Reaction to Freud's Interpretation

Having been educated in a French system, then in American and Australian institutions, I saw no alternative to 'Western' approaches because I believed in their scientific methods. I admired their elegance and, as a student of mathematics, I have considered Freud's interpretation of dreams the most logical and plausible one as it explains the subconscious and the unconscious by transferring them to the conscious, which I find tangible.

Since my research with Vietnamese students and other cultural groups for my final Graduate Diploma in Social Ecology in 1989, which resulted in my awareness of the political, social and cultural influence on one's behaviour and belief system, I have questioned Freud's premises in particular and 'Western' processes in general. In The Interpretation Of Dreams In Folklore, Freud interpreted excrement as semen in dreams in which one of two men sleeping together dreamt that he saw a woman, followed her, fell in love with her, then defecated all over her, or the couple would find gold, bury it in the ground then defecate over it. It is likely that, believing that homosexual behaviour was abnormal, Freud incorrectly interpreted those dreams. It seems to me that the dreamers feared they might contaminate their female lovers with faeces because they had had anal intercourse with men.

In In Dora's Case, in addition to evidence of Freud's limited contribution caused by his class, background and prejudice, it is clear that his view was also restricted by his ego as he turned against the patient (by calling her Dora, the name of his maid). This behaviour leads me to question Freud's conduct as a therapist (relationship between patient and therapist is that between a master and a servant: is this a chosen race syndrome?) and to wonder about Freudian therapists' attitude to their clients and those of some other 'Western' therapists.

Not perceiving himself as a persecuted man, Jung was much freer than Freud to explore other cultures. However, as he belonged to the dominating race, if not master race, his approach was confrontational when he interpreted the dream of his colleague, who did not trust him, as a pending accident and then instructed his adversary: ‘My dear man, I know you can’t give up mountaineering, but let me implore you not to go alone from now on. When you go, take two guides, and you must promise on your word of honour to follow their directions’. The man laughed and ignored Jung’s warning. He and his young companion fell off the cliff and were killed.\footnote{C. G. Jung, Modern Man In Search Of A Soul, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1933, p. 10.}

A Vietnamese interpreter would refrain from giving out a warning of fatal harm unless he or she wanted the man to die. Instead, his family might be approached so that they could distract him from skiing or accompany him on such trips. Being courteous, the potential victim would stay with them and therefore avoid such a fatal risk. Furthermore, because Confucians live for honour and dignity, relationships are carefully balanced so that dignity and honour are preserved.

Therapies are therefore necessarily indirect; the therapist would tell fables and watch for the client’s reaction. Instead of telling people what to do and what not to do, a Vietnamese would tell the story about a similar, if not identical, situation to the client’s and allude to solutions which might be helpful. The role of the Vietnamese therapist is essentially that of an informed supporter so that if the therapy fails, the dignities of the therapist and client remain intact and therefore their relationship is unchanged.

From a feminist or egalitarian perspective, one can also argue that this Jungian therapy is patronising because the power is not equally shared between the client and the therapist to help the client arrive at his/her own conclusion.

3.2 Dreams: Cultural Interpretations

3.2.1 Hawaii

In Hawaii, an anthropologist told me that *Ethis* an anthropological journal, had published many different interpretations of dreams. I found not only the entire collection of *Ethis* in the library but also a Korean psychologist whose office was a few blocks away. Professor Uichol Kim and his wife
were generous and helpful. They gave me some two hundred pages of their own and others’ research papers. I attended a conference on cultural discrimination. Everywhere I went, everything I did, gave me some new ideas about my thesis. Asian Hawaiians discriminate against one another or feel discriminated against by the undefined Americans. This indicates how people from the same culture can have different perceptions, expectations and dream symbols, depending on their degree of acculturation.

3.2.2 Fiji

Barbara Herr’s research shows how the cultural conflict (between tribal beliefs and Wesleyan Methodist teaching) has resulted in Fijian nightmares. Present chiefs are descendants of powerful cannibals of the past who fought against British colonialists. The chiefs maintain power by establishing and adhering to British values and principles. Fearing they have betrayed their ancestors, Fijian chiefs in the research dream of them. Dreams are considered bad in Fijian culture. Because of their strict religious background, Fijians believe that erotic dreams are induced by the devils, so dreamers cannot enjoy themselves even while their dream occurs. Sexual dreams therefore are often nightmares, as is dreaming of ancestors. And they are endemic.26

It is a pity that Barbara Herr chose to understand Fijian dreams, nightmares and their symbols according to a Freudian interpretation. Although she speaks the language and supplies details, I fail to understand how Fijians would interpret their own dreams. Reports such as this show the need for further work on the same subject by indigenous researchers.

3.2.3 Venezuela

Artificial borders have traumatised urban Guajiro women (indigenous to Venezuela) who have to learn urban procedures so that they can cross the Columbia–Venezuela border and trade their goods. The clash between urban and tribal cultures turned into nightmares which affect even Guajiro women with Western education. 27

3.2.4 Canada

In their paper 'Comparative Studies of Acculturative Stress', the authors established the correlation between migration and stress; the more relevant education and knowledge the immigrant possessed, the less stress he or she would experience. Vietnamese immigrants in Canada suffer higher degrees of stress than their Chinese counterparts because, as new immigrants, they have no available support within their host society, while the Chinese can rely on old Chinese settlers for support and guidance.

Because of political conflict, Vietnamese immigrants in Australia, the US, Germany, France and Canada are deeply divided. Those who left Vietnam before 1975 have been considered communist sympathisers. Consequently, there has not been support for newcomers by old settlers who are often better educated and integrated in their host societies. This could be one of the reasons that there has not been much research on Vietnamese mental health; their nightmares remain largely ignored.

Many people of non-English-speaking backgrounds have been successfully helped by 'Western' psychotherapists, but many others have not been able to get help, not only because of language difficulties but also because their problems are out of therapists' depth.

3.2.5 Morocco

According to Professor Kilborne, Moroccan dream interpretation is a shared experience between the dreamer and the interpreter, as the Moroccans believe that there could be no accurate record of the actual dream, only memory. Professor Kilborne gave two Freudian dreams to nine Moroccan interpreters and recorded their differences. None of the nine men and women interpreters read any sex symbols into the dreams. One of those nine refused to interpret altogether, saying such dreams could not have occurred. None of the interpretations was even remotely related to Freud's interpretations. There was no example of Moroccan dreams and their

29 In this context, the term 'Chinese' means those born outside China.
30 Uichol Kim and J.W. Berry, 29 August — 1 September 1984, 'Acculturation Attitudes of Korean Immigrants in Toronto', selected papers from the Seventh International Conference of the International Association for Cross Cultural Psychology, held at Acapulco, Mexico.
interpretation. The author acknowledged that 'early versions of this paper benefited considerably by the criticism of members of the Department of Social Anthropology, School of Oriental and African Studies (London) and the C.I.R.A.M.E. of the Université de Montreal...'; but the professor did not acknowledge his debt to the Moroccan interpreters he had asked to collaborate. If he had done research with people rather than with people, this would not have happened.

3.2.6 Mehinaku

Gregor's description of dream symbols is delightful: 'A dream of collecting flying ants, for example, suggests the death of kin, since the ants are short-lived, and the clouds of flying insects resemble the rain of tears that accompanies death. Frequently dream symbols have sexual or scatological associations, as in a dream of a vagina that is a symbol for a knife wound, or a dream of a dirty rectum, which suggests burnt manioc bread'. However, the rest of the paper contains statistics on unrelated dream objects and the frequency of their presence in Mehinaku dreams. The author compares those objects and the frequency of their appearance with those of their American counterparts to find that the contents of dreams are similar in both cultures. Considering that those people, although their cultures are different, share the same environment, it is not surprising that they dream more or less about the same thing. It is, however, surprising that the author does not seem to be interested in finding out how the meanings of dream objects differ and what Mehinaku interpretations focus on.

3.2.7 Mexico

In contrast, Barbara Tedlock recorded not only dreams by the Quiche Maya people (an indigenous tribe of Mexico) and their process, but also her own experience as a dream interpreter in their culture. Without comparing the process with some existing 'Western' ones, she documents their own method step by step as if she were native to that culture. She adds the fourth rule — a dream may occasionally represent a wish on the part of the dreamer rather than indicating some actual future event — to the three previously recorded by Bruce and Laughlin, 'three main rules that guide

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individual dreamers in interpreting their dreams: first, the dream may present a reverse image of what will happen in real life; second, it may present a metaphor or metonymic representation of future events; or third, it may be direct representation of future events. Daykeepers (dream interpreters) are chosen among people with specific qualities and trained by other senior daykeepers. Teaching daykeepers are necessarily male. During training periods, both trainers and trainees must abstain from sexual activities. When fully trained, daykeepers can interpret not only meanings of symbols according to different individual status and occupation. They can also interpret messages delivered by their bodies and blood — Quiche Maya dream interpretation includes interpreting pulses and occurrence within the human body — as well as linking dreams into groups for more comprehensive meanings. The respect between researcher and cultural practitioners helps non-mainstream readers like me feel confident that the author understands and presents the dreams in the least biased manner.

3.3 Influences on Vietnamese Dream Interpretations

Vietnam is the first, if not the only, country to have defeated two superpowers, France and the United States. Its first President, Ho Chi Minh, and his Defence Minister, Vo Nguyen Giap, are remembered all over the world not only for their brilliant military strategies but also for their principles. Opposing ideals have resulted in violent conflict, ravaging the country. Many people have suffered. In desperation, they have often turned to religions for divine assistance. One of the poorest nations in the world has become exceptionally rich in religions and beliefs.

3.3.1 Confucianism

Because classical Chinese is extremely complicated, few people are literate. The majority of the Chinese population has never read the Five Classics (Book of Songs, Book of History, Book of Change (I-ching), Book of Righteous and Book of Spring and Autumn) and the Four Great Books (Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Analect of Confucius and Matsu). Confucianism recorded by Confucius and interpreted by his disciples is therefore understood and practised by the intellectual elite only. Many Chinese today have not heard of the abovementioned books.

Because the Confucian nation is considered a giant extended family, the emperor’s duty is to organise his family, govern his country, and defend his

country against foreign invaders. Loyalty to one’s master (emperor) is absolute; when the emperor orders death, the subject must die; when the father orders death, the son must die. When the emperor ceases to be righteous, the righteous subject must kill him and then himself. When the subject fails to defend his master (emperor) he has to kill himself.

Righteous men are governed by two sets of principles: three Cardinal Guides (emperor guides subject, father guides son, husband guides wife) and five Constant Virtues (Benevolence, Righteousness, Propriety, Wisdom and Fidelity as specified in the feudal ethical code)\textsuperscript{34}. Education and virtue go hand in hand.

Until the Ming Dynasty, eight principles were enforced: loyalty to one’s emperor (master), respect to one’s teacher (even if only half a word is learned), piety to one’s father, harmony with one’s siblings, fairness and decency to one’s neighbours, improving one’s character, governing one’s family and keeping peace with neighbouring countries. Righteousness means not entering through the back door; fairness requires not fighting people from behind, not ambushing, and not taking advantage of others. Confucianism left China with President Chang Kai Shek, when Chairman Mao and the Red Army took over.

To be a righteous man is an impossible task. Yet every man has continually tried to attain the highest status (that of being righteous). The Confucian man’s burden is grave.

Although mental illness was experimentally treated by acupuncture and Hua Tuo\textsuperscript{35} already performed lobotomies before Christ, it has been classified as one of four incurable diseases, perhaps because he was executed by the order of the emperor who refused the doctor’s diagnosis of madness and his suggestion of a lobotomy. Traditional Chinese medicine has been kept and refined within families, and handed down from father to son. Those famous for their ability to cure life-threatening illnesses made great fortunes.

\textsuperscript{34} This translation was given to me by Mrs Wang, a Chinese scholar who informed me that people no longer observe these rules in China, but she agrees with me that, unconsciously, they are still governed by them. The Chinese have been known for their loyalty to employers (masters).

\textsuperscript{35} The first Chinese man to have advocated lobotomy as a treatment of mental illness over two thousand years ago according to information given by Ping Wang, Mrs Wang’s son and Chinese doctors, unfortunately they do not remember the exact source.
The Vietnamese desire to be better than the Chinese led to free traditional education and medical consultations. Because there was no social welfare, charity was practised by individuals who regarded their professions as an honour. Although Confucianism is widespread, to the vast majority of Vietnamese refugees it means no more than ancestral worshipping and face-saving at all costs.

3.3.2 Taoism

This religion teaches people to relax and live in harmony with nature. One of its most important axioms is that rarity generates theft. Thus being a Taoist means eating food in season, reflecting, taking life as it comes and writing poetry to celebrate harmony with nature. Laotse\(^{36}\) sees the establishment of civilisation and law and order as the cause of conflict and war. To the vast majority of Vietnamese, Taoism means fear of the unknown (ghosts and spirits), seeking assistance from supernatural powers including well-known animal spirits such as dolphins and tigers, and asking for help from those who claim to have access to sacred beings.

3.3.3 Buddhism

The practice of Buddhism varies from country to country. In Tibet, for example, strong belief in reincarnation has led to a willingness to kill and to be killed. In Sri Lanka, Buddhism has become power, oppression, exploitation of the disadvantaged and superstition\(^{37}\). To achieve a good karma, Buddhists avoid taking life (human and animal), stealing, sexual activities, bad language, meat and alcohol or other stimulant beverages. The most important effect of Buddhism on Vietnamese is that it has given them the ability to accept what has happened no matter how horrific the event might be. To the vast majority, Buddha is no different from Christ or any other god. They go to pagodas and temples to ask for assistance, from improving their profit to rescuing them from debt collectors.

Although neither Buddha, nor Confucius, nor Laotse was God, like Moses, they recorded beliefs and myths accumulated by previous generations.

Buddhists believe that life means suffering, there is no god who governs everything, but human beings are responsible for their own actions. They

\(^{36}\) Tran Trong Kim, *Nho Gia* Vol I, published in Vietnam, reprinted in the USA. This book is compulsory reading to all students of Vietnamese literature.

[Buddhists] were expected to lead a life of restraint and moderation, respecting the rights of others and being dutiful to those around them. Such a restraint and dutiful life was considered not only to be a necessary prerequisite for one’s ultimate religious aim; it was also valued as an end in itself. For example, the Buddha advised his followers to abstain from alcoholic beverages because alcohol indulgence could lead to demonstrable ill-effects such as loss of wealth, proneness to socially embarrassing behaviour, unnecessary quarrels, disrepute, ill-health, and eventual mental derangement. This empirical and pragmatic approach is a prominent feature of the ethical stance of Buddhism.  

Buddhist meditation has been proven to have therapeutic value; it helps reduce oxygen consumption, lower the heart rate, decrease the breathing rate and blood pressure, reduce serum lactic acid levels, and increase skin resistance and changes in blood flow. Meditation also helps people feel detached from pain to the extent that people who suffer from chronic pain can function normally. I met a Buddhist monk who was dying of cancer but exhibited no sign of discomfort, used no drug, and ate only one meal in the middle of the day. Until I was told about his condition, I was unaware that he was ill. In his paper, Padmal de Silva compared the Buddhist meditation technique with Freud’s therapy.

It appears to me that, as a therapist, Buddha made a greater contribution to his culture than Freud to his because Buddhist meditation is freely available to everyone and, as Buddhists must be the masters of their own destinies, there is no fear of dependency on others. As Buddhism is one of three religions simultaneously practised by the majority of Vietnamese, everyone — including some Christians — have found comfort in Buddhism at one time or another when facing death, loss, separation or desperate uncertainty. It took many years, if not decades, for Freudian therapists to publish articles on refugees from Nazi Germany. I have my doubts whether Freud’s theory would have helped them during the escape. I suspect that it might have increased their fear because of its attempt to separate unknown forces (gods and spirits) from human emotions, whereas Buddhism has been a salvation to Vietnamese refugees who left their families and ancestral souls behind. Believing in mastering their own destinies and reincarnation, they tried to survive while accepting death as a temporary relief. Death in injustice would also mean a better next incarnation. Worshipping ancestral souls is the highest Confucian duty, hence people have to survive until replaced by

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the next generation. However, knowing that escape could mean death and therefore leave their duty to their ancestors unfulfilled, Vietnamese would entrust their ancestors' souls to Buddhist temples. Every day, the monks would call the souls of people who died on that date to return to the temple for comfort. Thus souls without caring relatives would not have to wander.

In Buddhist countries and those with three religions like Vietnam, the pagoda is also a temporary refuge for the poor and the destitute. There they need not feel inferior for they take shelter offered by Buddha, an enlightened superior being, and not by ordinary people who happen to be richer. Many have given their children to the pagodas in destitution and retrieved them later. Some of my relatives have survived this way to become professionals.

Of course, one can argue that there is not much difference between Buddhism and Christianity: people have found comfort in praying; human suffering can be more easily removed by myths than by psychoanalysis. On the other hand, one can also argue that the difference between Buddhism and Christianity is the Crusade Wars and colonialism, but I do not wish to deal with this issue. Instead, I would like to focus on the relevance of beliefs in therapies. My friend Belle who had been abused by 'Western' therapists sought refuge in an ashram only to be more terrified by its Buddhist monks' teaching that she was responsible for what had happened; her present incarnation is the effect of her previous one!

3.3.5 Christianity

Represented by Catholicism, Christianity is the latest major addition to Vietnamese culture. It has influenced about 8 per cent of the population. Because of its violent introduction and enforcement, non-Christians have regarded Catholicism (and Christianity in general) as tools of French and Western colonialism. On the other hand, the Vietnamese belief in Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism has been so profound that even Christians are not free of the influence of these three religions. Acknowledging this fact, the Vatican has allowed Vietnamese Catholics to worship their ancestors by denying that Confucianism is a religion.

3.3.6 Cao Dai (High Platform) and Hoa Hao (Peace and Goodness)

Cao Dai was created this century by a wealthy landlord who formed a union against heavy tax imposed by the French government. It was so popular among Southern Vietnamese small land-owners and simple people
that Cao Dai became an armed force to destabilise French colonialism in South Vietnam. It is symbolised by the left eye because the left eye is believed to be the direct window to the soul. Cao Dai worships famous writers and philosophers, and preaches general goodness and harmony.

Hoa Hao was also created this century by a male nurse who stole over-the-counter drugs from a nearby hospital and distributed them to the people in the village of Hoa Hao on a stormy night under an old banyan tree, saying that he had received those miraculous cures directly from Heaven. The people of Hoa Hao worshipped him as God. His religion eventually spread beyond the village boundary as Hoa Hao became an armed force collecting taxes from ordinary villagers. Both forces were wiped out by President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1955, but Cao Dai remains a religion with its headquarters in Tay Ninh.

3.3.7 Other Religions

An engineer educated in France invented Dao Dua. He lived on coconut, preached opposition politics and wielded some power during the 1960s, but he remained unknown outside the Mekong Delta.

A very small number of Vietnamese, specially the Champa minority, have converted to Islam.

Another very small number has converted to Bah'ai.

3.4 My own collection of dreams

After completing the literature review on dreams and cultures, I attempted to set up workshops, join existing ones, and approach clients and friends to collect dreams and their own interpretations. The first workshop (the Dream Network) I set up at the MRC attracted only three participants. Among them, only one, an educational psychologist, was willing to discuss his dream experience. The other two would not disclose their dreams for personal reasons and for fear that they would recur. I then joined the Jungian Dreams workshop organised by a post-graduate student of psychology. Although participants in this workshop were willing to relate their dreams to one another, their interpretations were Jungian and they did not allow me to record them. I then approached the Croatian Community Centre in Cook. The Croatian Community Worker, Branka Vlaicvic, kindly allowed me to work with her clients. Branka was also kind enough to interpret for me. I attended several workshops and collected two dreams, but I felt that my
work was of no benefit to this community. I feared that it might trigger nightmares in some participants or at least hinder Branka's services. During this period Branka told me that, prior to the loss of her child, on approaching delivery time, she had repeatedly dreamed about rotten fish. Some participants found that recalling dreams disturbed them. Thus my research may have caused an adverse affect on participants. I decided to discontinue this approach. Instead, I asked friends and peer workers for their dreams and interpretations. I also recorded my own dreams and different interpretations in different stages with added insight and perception. My dilemma was that most of the time dreams came without interpretations regardless of whether dreamers were educated, or whether they were knowledgeable in dream interpretation and psychology. While they regard dreams as 'shareable' they regarded interpretations of their dreams too private to disclose. I therefore record what I have been permitted to share with the public.

3.4.1 Ha's Dreams

Ha is a young Vietnamese woman married to a high-ranking public servant. Both she and her husband are science graduates. Although her family is financially better off in Australia, in the eyes of the community she comes from an inferior background. With two children, Ha works part-time in order to be a daughter-in-law, wife and mother first.

Ha had recurring dreams that she was about to escape from Vietnam by boat, which was somewhere in the ocean; she had to find her way to the boat by walking in a river, holding her child, then lifting the child higher and higher as the water became deeper and deeper. She was constantly in fear of drowning as she raised the child above her head. The river narrowed to become a tunnel and the water became muddy and dirty. She recognised that the tunnel was in fact a sewer pipe. It was dark. She could not see her way out of the tunnel.

The same dream recurred many times but became less frequent. At first she the dream once every few weeks, then once every three months, then once every six months... She felt less and less disturbed in her dream. Five years later, the tunnel in her dream was open, she could see light, the water was clear and only knee-deep. There was no danger that her child might be drowned. She could carry her child safely in her arms. There were people at the other end of the open tunnel waiting on the dock — strangers, neither friendly nor hostile. She felt calm in her dream. It was not clear in the last dream whether she had gone back to Vietnam and got out again or whether she was escaping from it, but at no stage did she feel she was in danger.

This dream was followed by another dream. Ha was at a party; everyone was Vietnamese, about ten people altogether. A snake bit her shoulder. The others were also all bitten by a snake or snakes; she did not pay attention to the number or the kind of snakes they were. She did not pay attention to
know whether anyone was hurt. It did not matter to her in the dream. She felt undisturbed.

However, Ha woke up feeling extremely anxious. Dreaming of or seeing snakes is regarded in Vietnamese culture as portending evil. On her way to work, Ha kept worrying about her dreams. She was stopped by the police for speeding and was fined. She concluded that the dream was a bad omen. The rest of the day was terrible for her. She was unable to concentrate on her work. She told me about her dream. I asked her to analyse it but she could not, knowing only that anything to do with snakes was bad because snakes are a bad omen. In addition, Vietnamese are as superstitious about having only one shoulder touched as Australians are about walking under a ladder.

Ha asked me to interpret the dreams for her. Reluctantly I suggested that the two dreams were good. The first showed that she had reconciled with her refugee status and that she was now looking at things calmly and objectively. She no longer feared the new environment. Apprehension had become neutrality.

The second one showed her degree of acculturation at the subconscious and unconscious levels; she did not care whether she was bitten by a poisonous snake or not. Her lack of emotion in the dream showed her degree of detachment from the Vietnamese culture: no more worry about the snake symbols. She may also have been influenced by Western culture (calling people who stab others in the back — such as Vietnamese community leaders who used politics to control others like herself for personal gain — ‘a snake’).

I emphasised that it was only my interpretation which would be likely to be wrong, because I knew nothing about her reality and about issues which led to those dreams. They could very well reflect personal issues.

Gradually, over the period of several months, as we became friends and she trusted me, I became a friend of some of her friends. I learnt from gossip about her and her family that Ha was living with her family-in-law. Her father-in-law, a former wealthy Mandarin connected with a royal house at one time or another, considered her beneath his background. While her husband was sympathetic to her, he did nothing to control his parents’ bad behaviour. She was lonely within the family and the community because the community was on her father-in-law’s side, the ruling class.

As the eldest and pious son, her husband sent a large portion of his income ‘home’ to his siblings. This caused the family to live in relative poverty. In addition, Ha also had to share the house with his nephew who treated her like a stranger. To support his family, her husband took on two jobs and worked 18 hours a day. The child was raised by her alone. She often became angry at the child then felt guilty because she knew that the child was innocent and that she should be angry at in-laws and her husband, but tradition displaced expressions of anger. Then she would try to do something to make up with the young child.

The mother-in-law suffered from dementia. She would leave the house and
get lost while Ha was at work. Once the police picked her up somewhere on a highway. Every day was a nightmare for Ha; she went to bed worried about how she could wake up the next morning feeling less tired; she went to work worried whether her mother-in-law would burn the house down or leave it and get lost. Ha said she even hit her mother-in-law out of anger. Then she felt guilty because the mother-in-law was innocent, like a child.

Ha started to have the recurring dreams about the tunnel some time after their child was born. It was a difficult birth and the child had serious problems. However, her dreamt of the snakes only after her father-in-law decided to return home to die and her husband agreed to transfer the mother to a home. Ha refused to talk about her dreams because talking about them would only stimulate more dreams! She had left Vietnam as a teenager but always dreamt that she was escaping from Vietnam with her child. Her life in Australia after marriage became like the dream during which she escaped from Vietnam by boat. Her husband was never in her dream because they were no longer emotionally or physically connected. Gradually she was able to protect the child in her quest for freedom from drowning — her family-in-law. Thus she lifted the child up higher as the river became deeper in her dream.

3.4.2 Culturally Diverse Dream Recollections

This section continues the theme of dreams and cultures, and records individual cases which I have collected during the research period. In keeping with some contributors' wishes, I refrain from making specific comments on dreams and other cases I collected until the conclusion of this chapter, when three and a half years will have passed since my appointment to the MRC. Naturally I expect more changes as time goes on. Incidents will add depth to my understanding.

3.4.3 Marina, born in Fiji

I met Marina before becoming the Coordinator of the MRC, when I was still looking for an organisation and people to do research with. Marina was then the Transact worker. Transact stands for Torture Rehabilitation and Network Service, ACT Inc. It seemed a logical organisation for me to be located in not only for my research in dreams but also because of my persistent interest in dreams and nightmares as tools to examine the unconscious.

Unfortunately the association was of little help to me, except that it offered me the chance to understand Marina better. I am particularly interested in her background. She is much younger than I and comes from a totally different cultural background and experience. Her father is Indian of a low caste (according to her), her mother Dutch. She was born in Fiji but
migrated to Australia as a child.

Marina is gentle, reflective and beautiful. I am also fascinated by her encounter with the ghost of the woman who had killed herself in the house Marina lived in, but she is not afraid of the friendly ghost and feels quite amused by it.

I asked her to record her dreams for me. She said she would, but it took her a long time to collect five. The reason was that she could not recall them properly, although she has often dreamt.

*Dream 1 (12 February)* I am floating in a pool on my back. It is quite peaceful, though there is a lot of activity in the pool.

I am standing on a platform looking down at water (sort of like at the zoo). There are little furry creatures jumping into the water and swimming around. They look like stuffed toys but are alive! There are lots of other people watching them too.

I am back in the pool and overhear a conversation between two people. One is a young woman in a bathing suit with an Aboriginal print on it. She is saying how unfair it is that Aborigines can make up part of the Olympic swimming team just because they're Aboriginal. I started arguing with her saying that special assistance for the time being is the only way a disadvantaged group can catch up. She continues to argue with me. I think that she is now mistaking me for an Aboriginal person.

I don't care and I continue arguing with her.

*Dream 2 (17 October)* I am driving around Canberra with my dad (he lives in Queensland) and we see a carwash done by the scouts outside a service station. He wants me to have my car washed but I refuse, saying I can do it myself. It annoys me how he always talks about cleanliness. We're standing in the queue at the car-wash and one of the scouts takes my car key and tells us to go and take a seat and he'll call me when the car is ready.

My dad and I are sitting in a forest waiting for my car — it is taking a long time. I walk to the office at the service-station and start yelling at them about how I need my car now. (*I'm yelling at a bunch of little kids.*) They seem to take it well, and tell me to go get my car — it is ready. When I find it I discover that they've taken the wheels off and one tyre is flat. My dad reassures me it isn't flat and proceeds to put the wheels back on.
Dream 3 (19 October). I am in a taxi somewhere in Lyneham I think, going home. It pulls up next to a house in O’Connor (the next suburb) where I used to live (in reality). This is my home in this dream. I hop out with lots of bags, and try to reach the front door without getting wet by the sprinkler. This takes a lot of time and I struggle every route I take, the sprinkler is there too!

I somehow reach inside and put my bags/luggage in my room and find my mum cooking lots of food in the kitchen (my parents haven’t even been to this house — they live in Queensland). I start talking to my mum about my wonderful trip to PNG — she somehow is ironing clothes. Now I keep telling her that this old woman called SHANA gave me traditional PNG clothes — would she like to see them. She isn’t interested but I keep talking about it to try and get her interested.

Finally I go to my room and pull out of my bag the clothes I’ve been referring to (I remember this most vividly); the clothes are brilliant blue and pink silk with lots of gold thread (looks more Indian and Middle Eastern than PNG!). I put it on carefully; it’s a long flowing robe type thing; I walk through the house wearing it. It is very exquisite and complicated (weird) specially at the neck — with knots, layers and bits missing — but I know exactly how to wear it as I must have been wearing it before.

Dream 4 (21 October). I am in an office talking to someone who seems to be a counsellor (I’ve never been here before). I am very upset about something and she is asking me questions. While she is talking to me she’s painting. The only colours I can remember are orange and red. I start to become a bit offended that instead of giving me her attention she’s painting!

We get to the end of the interview, and she asks me if I can return on 5 May. (I remember this very clearly.) I have left my bag in the waiting room. I go out to find my bag. It must be afternoon tea time, because there are lots of staff members at the reception counter, picking up biscuits! I break into the queue and ask for my bag. I go back into the room and she’s sticking a huge collage on the wall. There are two young girls helping her to stick the collage on the wall, but bits keep falling down. She (the counsellor) explains that what she has painted is me — she has painted my emotions, feelings, circumstances, and events which are significant. She goes about showing me how each interrelates. It is very orange!

Anyway, I feel much better, with a renewed understanding of myself and
she says I don't need to come back unless I really feel I want to.

*Dream 5 (27 October).* I am in my car, in a car park. I turn on the engine, but it keeps cutting out.

I drive (eventually) to the gate but I don’t need to pay because my name is on a list that a woman operating the gate has in front of her.

Next I am struggling up a hill on my bicycle. I am going to university. A man in front of me is feeding some magpies. I start to get worried — they might attack me because it’s magpie season and I haven’t got a hat. I decide to turn around and not go to uni.

3.4.4 Croatian man, born 19 February 1930

A retired Croatian man regularly attending the English class at the Croatian Community Centre in Belconnen gave me his dream written in Croatian. Because he spoke little English and I spoke no Croatian, our conversation was conducted through an interpreter. I received no permission to interpret the dream.

Strange dream: it was 1964 before the big flood in Zagreb. I and two others dressed in astronaut outfits found ourselves on the moon. As I travelled, I got to a big river which was very full of water and the water was very muddy. I was worried that the earth would be washed away, so I told them to go away from here. We walked in a stooping way over a plank. Suddenly we came across a little brook where we caught the fish by hand, cooked and ate them.

Three days after the dream I found out that we were caught in the flood in Zagreb.

3.4.5 Croatian woman, born 12 September 1936

The woman belonged to the same group. She also gave me her dream written in Croatian. Renata translated both into English for me. Like the man above, she did not allow me to interpret it.

I had the same dreams for twenty years. I would dream the same dreams over and over for two or three nights the whole night. Then I would stop dreaming for a month, then I would dream the same thing again.
I dreamt that I visited Yugoslavia then couldn’t return to Australia; I never knew why I couldn’t return but I never felt sorry that I went for a visit, despite my hard life there without money, clothes or a house, without shoes. I walked around to look for work. I was hungry and I did not know anybody. I always dreamt about the night. Sometimes I would see a little house on the hill and think it was Australia where I came from, where I lived once and it was nice but I couldn’t return because I had no means to. I cried in my dreams. My heart was heavy. The following morning I was nervous because of the dream. That’s why I never visited although my parents and family lived there.

Thirteen years later, I visited Yugoslavia; everything was normal. There was no problem. I stayed there for two and a half months. I never dreamt anything. On my return I thought I would be free of those dreams, but I continued to have the same dreams.

Thank God, since January this year (1991) I haven’t dreamt any more. My health is bad but I have no specific symptoms. I wonder why I dreamt for a long time.

3.4.6 Renata, born in Croatia but raised in Austria

Renata was born in Croatia after World War II. Her father was Jewish Austrian, her mother Catholic Croatian. Her mother participated in the movement against the Nazis; she also saved Renata’s father from the concentration camp. Respecting each other, her parents swapped religions.

Renata dreamt about giving birth six times, since the age of twelve, but always without the physiological detail — just her awareness that she had had a child and that the child came from herself and was part of her. After each time she discovered that someone spiritually close to her had died in reality. The relationship between her and the dead person was symbolised by the relationship between her and the child in the dream. If she did not know the child at all then, in reality, it was someone who felt close to her spiritually although she did not know the person.

Once she dreamt that she had twins; one of them she felt really close to while she felt sorry that she did not feel close to the other. Although she could see the child’s face, she could not remember it, but she remembered the other child’s face so clearly that she could paint it in detail if she were a painter.
She discovered later that at the time of her dream, two people in her extended family had died: her uncle to whom she felt exceptionally close, even closer than her father, and her maternal grandmother, the one who rejected her mother and therefore had nothing to do with her. However, the grandmother had wanted to see her at the time of death.

3.4.7 Tamara, born in Slovenia

Tamara is an ANU academic. Both she and her husband are linguists and mathematicians from Slovenia. They have lived in many parts of the world and speak many different languages including Hindi, Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit. She has collected dreams and interpreted them for me.

In Australia

19 January 1991, Hawkesbury: I am in Ljubljana (Yugoslavia). It is dark, I am in an old house; the house seems familiar to me. There are some people in the house whom I have known previously. The atmosphere is oppressive. Suddenly I feel that there is something wrong with the place and the people. I decide to leave the house. Next, I am walking in a street; it's getting very dark and I become aware that a war has started; there is a war-like atmosphere, despite no visible sign of it. I feel that I have nothing to do with the war and it is better to leave.

Interpretation: the news of the Gulf War must have affected me. (Maybe a premonition of the events in Yugoslavia later in the year?)

26 January 1991, Canberra: It is early in the evening, I am in India, in a big hall with many people. I am sitting in the first row in the very left corner of the hall. An Indian man appears and comes straight to me. When he comes closer, I suddenly recognise that he is the old woman that I know from my previous dreams. The joy of seeing her is beyond words. She knows everything; she knows me better than I know myself and loves me more than anybody else in the world. She is very very old.

Next we are in a small room and she intends to do an operation on my eyes; she will heal my eyes. I concentrate and close my eyes. She doesn't really touch the eyes. Then the operation is over — my sight is somehow changed.

Next I am somewhere at the coast; I can smell the sea. It must be in Europe.
I am very young, maybe about 14 and I feel light. It's a wonderful summer day and I am going to meet my friends — maybe we'll go swimming. I feel very free and light.

*Comment:* The old woman comes to me in different forms. I met her a few times — in my dreams. Previously she was an old Chinese lady; whatever form she takes, I always recognise her immediately. These are my happiest dreams; they always bring joy and lightness. When I wake up I want to return to the dream.

*31 January 1991:* Canberra: I am travelling by ship. It's an extremely bright day with a blue sky; the sun is strong and the colour of the sea is brilliant blue-green. We are approaching an island and I am struck by its beauty. The green colours of the grass and trees are extraordinary. I am overjoyed, I know that I have come to the right place; it seems to be an uninhabited island. I am going to stay there.

*Comment:* Yesterday, before going to sleep, I was thinking if it was the right decision for me to go to Sri Lanka for six months. I think that I received through this dream a reply. Our people say that clear sea waters in the dreams always mean happiness in the future.

*In Sri Lanka*

*23 February 1991:* I am in Canberra, at the MRC. There are many people and I want to meet Uyen. I can't find her. Then I meet X. She tells me that she is not satisfied with my work and that my English is not good enough. It is very unpleasant and I go away from her. I want to find Uyen, I know she will understand me because she is also not a native speaker. Then I am in Yugoslavia, I meet my old friend who has just moved into a new apartment — it is very big; it has many rooms. We sit in their new kitchen and I question the relevance of so much clutter there.

*Comment:* When I woke up, I was very surprised; I thought that I liked X. She was always nice to me. She is not the right person for that kind of work (community development, social work).

And my friends in Yugoslavia — they probably moved into a new flat.

*24 February 1991:* A meeting of film-makers is taking place in Ljubljana. I see Professor Oreshnik there; he is very pleased to meet me — more than I am to see him. He presides over the meeting and talks about contemporary film although he doesn't know much about it. I want to leave.
Comment: Very meaningless. This man had an insignificant role in my life.

3 March 1991: I am in Kathmandu; it is night. I am walking along an old street and it is an extraordinary atmosphere. At the end of the street there is a small shop. I look briefly through the things there and see an old Tibetan manuscript. I want to find my husband Primosh and show it to him. Then I notice little stones of green-blue (turquoise) colour and when I turn one of these stones in my hand I see that it is in the shape of a bird.

I call Primosh who was somewhere near the house and I show him the stones. He seems very happy and says that these stones are a perfect present for Erika [Tamara’s cousin].

Comment: It is very strange; it must be at least the third time that I have returned to Kathmandu in my dreams. And it is always the same — I am there at night and each time I discover something new which I couldn’t see when I was there in reality, 16 years ago.

5 March 1991: I am in a big hall — it appears to be the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. My job is to telephone staff members. Varja is seated on a type of platform and supervising everybody. The job is stupid and I don’t want to do it. I still try to ring one number and to my surprise my brother answers the call.

Comment: It reflects quite clearly how I felt about my job in Yugoslavia.

11 March 1991: I meet Elizabeth and Anne (my Australian friends) in Ljubljana. Elizabeth tells me that her mother used to live on the fifth floor of an apartment house in Ljubljana. Then I see the apartment and inside it there are many trees growing. It’s full of plants and animals.

Then I am buying some medicinal herbs with my mother. There is also my old friend who has a funny hat — very green and strangely shaped.

Comment: Buying medicine for my mother is not a good sign. I hope she is not ill.

13 March 1991: I meet an old friend of mine and we go together to my place — I am staying in a small cottage that has only one room. All over the floor there are heaps of papers: I am writing a ‘résumé’ of my life and feel
very happy about it. Then Primosh comes and I am pleased that he can meet
my old friend.

*Comment:* People say that papers in dreams mean that one is making plans
for the future. I don’t know, at the moment I am not making any plans.

*12 April, 1991:* I am with my cousin Erika (she has the appearance of
somebody else but I cannot tell who). Erika has bought two dresses and
wants to give me one. It is an evening dress, orange, very long. I don’t like it
very much; orange is not my colour and I have never had an evening dress.
This dress is somehow changing and doesn’t look the same; the colour and
the form are constantly changing.

*22 April 1991:* I am very young, about 12 to 14. I am tutoring maths to a
little girl. I am explaining to her systems of equations when I discover on my
table a book that I’d completely forgotten. It was a book that I liked very
much from my childhood. In it is a collection of interesting maths problems.
I give it to the girl.

*Comment:* It’s funny — why do I remember this book? I had completely
forgotten about it. I used it when I was about ten.

*4 May 1991:* I get up at night (in my dream) and go to the bathroom. I see a
coiled snake on the floor. I just look at it and feel very quiet. Then the snake
uncoils and I see that it isn’t a real snake but a sort of lizard. I decide to
return to my bedroom. Then I see on the floor of my bedroom another snake.
I don’t know how to get rid of it and I want to call someone in the next room
for help (I don’t know who the person next door is) but then I decide not to
disturb that person. Then the snake/lizard from the bathroom also comes to
my room. I feel uncomfortable and want to go back to sleep. I feel as if the
snakes are almost human beings, people I know.

*Comment:* There are really many snakes around the house where I stayed in
Sri Lanka. I am never afraid of them. I still have the feeling that I could
almost recognise people in the form of these snakes.

*8 May 1991:* I am in New York with Primosh. He says that we are in
Manhattan and that he likes this part of the city. I agree that we can stay a
few months in the States and I could also visit my friend Vimala there.

*Comment:* The dream can be just a reflection on the letter I got from
Vimala from the States today.
19 May 1991: I am in a foreign country with Primosh. We are walking across a very dangerous bridge. The bridge seems very high. On the first half of the bridge I walk confidently but then there appears a ladder instead of a bridge. The ladder is made of cloth and I can't see it well. Primosh has already crossed it but I am hesitating. Then I suddenly see my body as if I am watching from outside and I watch how it takes a few steps. I discover that the bridge is only about 2m high and not dangerous at all. Primosh is standing next to it waiting for me. I feel calm and at ease again.

Then I see an old friend from Yugoslavia. She has aged a lot and I feel sorry for her.

Comment: I feel that some fear was overcome in this dream but I can't say what fear it was.

10 June 1991: I am travelling with Primosh; we are in Asia but I don't know where we are exactly. It seems that we are in Bangalore (India). We go for a walk but I have great difficulty in coordinating my walking, seeing and hearing. I am not stable on my legs, then I fall down directly into a heap of snow. The snow is much deeper than I thought. Somehow I manage to get out and I notice a bus close by. The bus looks enormous, everything looks so big. I still can't walk properly, and I don't know where we are. Primosh tells me that we are in Bangalore but it seems to me that we are somewhere else. He takes all my bags because I am still not sure about my walking ability. Then I see Shri and her little son who is urinating in a small pool. I try to avoid this pool; it looks dirty. There are many people around me; we are on a beach and people seem again very big.

11 June 1991: I am in a shop that sells musical instruments, in Australia. I want to return a piano that my mother bought for me because it isn't a good one. The salesman offers me a Japanese piano but I know very well that it's no better. I ask if they sell German pianos. He says it is impossible to get one like the one I had in Yugoslavia. In Australia they have only Japanese pianos.

Comment: Before I left for Australia, I had sold my old piano in Yugoslavia. I have never regretted it a single bit. Maybe I simply miss old European culture.

23 June 1991: I am in a little house; it's summer. There are my Russian aunt, my mother and my friend Jumosh. He is talking with my aunt who has
just bought a golden ring. It's late afternoon, a warm summer day. I feel very calm.

24 June 1991: I am in Sri Lanka; it's night. It's wartime; there are many people in the room. It looks like a refugee camp.

Next I am in Trieste, I have just crossed the Yugoslav border. I come to a huge, beautiful building; it looks like a concert hall. There are many dressed-up people walking around. Next, I am again in the street. It's a warm summer. Then I am in a restaurant with Primosh. We order a Japanese dinner. I want to find the toilet and get lost in the building. There are many rooms, corridors and halls. It reminds me of a museum. On a staircase I see a Japanese New Year procession; they have many flowers and ornaments. Many people are watching the procession and I notice that many of them are Japanese. I want to find the restaurant. I see an old waiter, very friendly looking and I know that he can help me find the restaurant.

27 June 1991: I am in the most beautiful garden that I have ever seen. I walk on the path and meet two little elephants and I am overjoyed. I walk on further and see many more little elephants. I also see a giraffe from a distance.

Comment: It was a premonition — exactly two weeks later I really saw two little elephants and many more when I visited an elephant orphanage in Sri Lanka.

13 July 1991: I am in a house at the coast; there is a wall with a window and I climb through the window and jump into the neighbours' house. There are many young people; it seems that they are having a party. They put some cushions on the floor so that I can jump down safely. Then I have to go home; it's late. I remember that I have to take the No. 14 bus to get home. A young woman advises me to take the No. 3 bus but I don't follow her advice and we part.

In Australia again

1 September 1991, Canberra: Primosh, Royce and I are in a big shop. I am dying and I see life leaving my limbs and then I see my dead body on a sofa in the shop. Primosh and Royce are straightening my hands and legs. Next, I am again in the shop, although alive and I have lost my eyesight. I only hear the voices of Primosh and Royce talking about shopping.
Comment: the dream followed a shopping day in Fyshwick. I certainly don't like shopping, especially in Australia.

3 September 1991, Canberra: I am in Mexico and I meet my friends there. Maya is very sick; she's had an operation. Jomosh looks helpless. I am sitting with their little son at the table. He orders chocolate cake. I feel that he needs protection.

Comment: I hope they are all right. They haven't written to me for so long and I was probably worried.

27 September 1991, Canberra: I am in a big library looking for a book. I feel tired and can't find it. I notice a beautifully covered book; it looks almost golden. I want to see what is written on it but the letters are very unclear.

3.4.8 Uyen, born in Vietnam

Dream 1

Background: In July 1990, on the way home from Hawkesbury, I discussed AIDS and homosexual practices with two other course members. They enlightened me on the subject of anal intercourse by saying that they had read something about the G-spot in men which could only be reached via the rectum. The new knowledge did little to change my attitude towards anal intercourse because of my belief that pleasure and joy should exclude pain and that I would sacrifice some pleasure if it caused long-term harm. While the conversation went on I kept wondering whether pleasure could also be perceived differently according to culture.

Dream: That night, I dreamt that a man (whether this man was familiar to me or not was of no consequence to me in the dream) told me he was my husband's lover. 'You have caused too much stress for him because you question everything'. He asked me to leave my husband. In a matter-of-fact way, I told him that I would if I were sure that he could look after my husband's health properly.

Interpretation: At first this dream revealed something special to me: I have always believed that love and freedom are closely related. Because I love someone I should respect that person's freedom. This could mean giving up my intimate relationship. The dream confirmed to me that I am not a hypocrite. Then I wondered whether it could mean that I feared our relationship might end as my husband decided to spend a further three
weeks in Europe alone and whether I would cope better if my husband left me for a man. Assessing the joy and pleasure we had had together in Europe and our present relationship, I am sure that I can rule out the second possibility. Then I realised that the dream had a deeper meaning: I had finally accepted homosexuality at an emotional level, not just intellectually, by supposing that my husband could be homosexual and that I would not feel differently towards him as I felt totally calm in the dream.

My husband is diabetic and until recently has been threatened by impotence. This condition does not affect me; I am far too occupied with intellectual pleasure and emotionally satisfied to be concerned about sex; my husband has often expressed his regret. Therefore the situation in the dream reflects my solution for him, like mathematical solutions I had in the past.

**Dream 2**

*Background:* Two days before I saw my external supervisor about my literature review, I interpreted for a sexual harassment hearing in which the woman clearly needed therapy much more urgently than cold justice. After that I spent time with my friend, a former course member who asked for my help to write her recently deceased life companion's autobiography based on several thousand pages of his manuscript. We spent the whole day together although I thought her friend was no Proust while she was convinced that his thoughts would be beneficial to future generations. Some of his writing reminds me of Furphy’s\(^{39}\), and of the 'Mother and Son' program on the ABC.

My friend had just returned from her first overseas trip, so she told me about her experiences in Singapore, Malaysia, and other countries. She showed me souvenirs she had bought for family members. For lunch we had a tin of curry soup which was a little too salty. Being an international chef, I am fussy about colours and taste, but I ate everything. The soup was pastel with bits of carrot and peas.

During the session on her late companion’s biography, she was preoccupied with the dripping of water from a pot plant. I felt mildly irritated.

*Dream:* That night I dreamt that I had just finished interpreting and was going to be picked up by my husband at the Migrant Resource Centre; then we would drive to Sydney together. It was too late for me to report back to my office, so I walked to a man who had some connection with the office

\(^{39}\) One of Australia’s early writers and leaders in experimental writing.
and asked him to pass on the information.

He would not do it, being too busy eating. Instead he told me I was too strong, as I had been told before. I understood that he implied I bossed people around, so I went to the next counter, where there was a man and a woman, to ask them to pass on the information. On the way, I stopped at a food sculpture demonstration table where a Japanese woman was making cacti out of pasta. One of the two sculptures was all green, fresh, lively and considered special in Vietnam; the other had other colours such as carrot and egg yoke. I took a bite and did not like it.

The two people could not promise they would deliver the message, and I walked away apprehensively. I discovered that I wore a long skirt but no top and therefore I was half naked. I chuckled: it didn’t matter anyway; people cannot cope with me even if I am fully dressed.

**Interpretation:** This was my first descriptive dream. The first part of my dream reflects my anxiety: I had finished an exceptionally difficult interpreting job on sexual harassment and, because I had to go to Sydney with my husband, I was unable to report back to my office the following day. I did ask my client (a high-ranking public servant) who then instructed his secretary to do it for me. Being conscientious I could not be sure that the task would be done when I asked someone else to do it.

I have often been told that I was too strong by the same people who have accused me of not taking initiatives. At first I found this annoying, but I have learned to take it with good humour. The man and the woman in the dream represent the victim of sexual harassment and her husband, who should not have been there at all. The whole process was totally ineffective as seen not only by me but also by the Public Service Union representative and by other panel members. I left the job feeling uneasy because I was not sure that the sexual harassment law has any teeth; even if it has, I am doubtful whether it would benefit Asian women who are more likely to be harassed by their husbands.

Because of the unexpectedly long interpreting session and other mishaps, I was unable to go to the bank and we ran out of money; therefore I was hungry that night even though we were surrounded by restaurants at Bondi Beach. Food sculpture is a dual and mixed symbol reflecting my feelings and thoughts at my friend’s home. I did not value her friend’s writing which seemed male chauvinistic, but I helped her work out a way to promote his thoughts. She is on a diet but she eats cake which I do not like. The rather
thick and salty curry soup was represented by the cactus in pastel colours. The green cactus made of pasta reflected my feelings and thoughts about that plant, which had the same name as the friend who cheated me while I was in prison. Her callous behaviour was incredible, belonging exclusively to the intellectual middle class which had shunned me in the past. Hence I took a bite but I did not like it. The Japanese demonstrator reflected my impression of Singapore in particular and tourism in general: the Japanese set superficial standards.

My half nakedness reflects my concern about the lump I recently found in my breast; it also reflects my newly gained self-acceptance.

9 October 1990

The dream as recorded in my diary: Last night I dreamt of Gaye wearing a white gown that looked like a wedding gown and lying in a strange bed covered with a thin lacy white cloth not long enough to have her body completely covered, but she looked so natural and comfortable. She looked beautiful, serene and pleasant. I was comfortable with her. I could not find Graham anywhere. In the end, Gaye gave me the approval I needed in the most unusual and not at all comprehensible manner. I cannot remember what she had said although I know that she talked. Yet I felt good about my studies and the thesis.

I felt so confident that I left Campbelltown without seeing Graham. There was some confusion somewhere. By the time I remembered that he had not been there it was too late. I had returned to Canberra: three hours’ drive away. I felt absolutely dreadful about the mistake. I woke up and felt thankful that I was in bed and the meeting would not take place until the next day.

15 October 1990

Background of the dream as recorded in my diary: did not sleep very well last night. Also had a very strange dream at about 5 in the morning after waking Klaus (my husband) up from his bad dream. He has had bad dreams a few times lately. I wonder why.

The dream as recorded in my diary: I dreamt that I was in a camp after having been in the Yom Kippur Camp without facilities. It was at an unidentified location in the US. Nothing seemed clear except that I suddenly
remembered my appointment with X (a Management Committee member about whom I had some reservations) at 11 and it was already 5 or 7 minutes past. Then I remembered defensively that she had said she was going to be late and I concluded that it was an 11:15 appointment. On the way back to the office, I caught flies with my cupped hands as I ran. The air was thick with them. The number of times I clapped my cupped hands was 66, then I skipped counting to 99 and the number of flies was somewhere close to a million. By the time I felt tired and ran faster to meet X at 11:15, I stopped catching flies and there were hardly any left.

I woke up feeling as calm as I had felt in the dream despite the action.

February 1991

Dream as recorded in my diary: I dreamt of many different things, mostly conflict. The only bit I was involved in was a dress the girl who came to me in desperation wore. I was unable to help her. It was a blue dress and I was going to make myself one like that — a simple but unusually fitting kind of dress.

May 1991

Background of dream as recorded in my diary: I talked to Ba for hours and found out that he had hepatitis B.

Dream as recorded in my diary: Dreamt that I had to be with someone with hepatitis B who insisted on sharing everything with me.

Ba did insist on sharing everything with me, but only some time after the dream.

23 March 1992

I dreamt that my daughter Pamina was sitting in a chair; her eyes were made up with a delicate green shade, just like one of the shades she had used in her painting backgrounds. She was wearing black. Her clothes were not important. My focus was on her eyes which looked black but with a delicate touch of green, the influence of the eye shadow. There was another girl, also my daughter even though I did not recall having met her. Pamina introduced her to me; she was also Pamina but somehow her name was less pronounced than Pamina's. There was no question that I was immediately drawn to her. She was bending over Pamina (the one with the eye shadow) kissing
Pamina’s forehead and cheeks and stroking Pamina’s hair. I did not pay attention to the second Pamina’s face, just her skinhead with a clumsy asymmetrical crest on it. But I liked everything about that Pamina; I had the impression that she was affectionate and outgoing. The first Pamina (whom I knew) told me that the second Pamina was called Green Eye because of her make-up. The first Pamina smiled. I looked at the second Pamina. As if she understood what was going on in my mind, she peeled off the plastic skull. As she peeled it, I realised that she had long hair, just like the first Pamina’s. She said that she was in a play, looking amused as if to tease me. She pulled another piece of plastic skull off to show that the clumsy crest was in fact a long, folded strand of hair. As I saw that both pieces of skin forming the pink plastic skull had tiny blue veins running all over them, the second Pamina’s hair transformed and looked exactly like the first’s. I woke up remembering how real it was and my feeling calm and happy during the dream.

I told Renata about this dream soon after I woke up, at 7:30, and my interpretation. She agreed with me that I was hoping that Pamina would become outgoing as she is reaching her 21st birthday. I will like the new Pamina no matter what she does. I am pleased with my acceptance of her, particularly after my conversation with her over the phone yesterday when the computer gave me trouble. She was her uncooperative self again — at least that was my perception — and yet I accepted her the way she was.

Having thought about what I could do to help her become confident, I came to the conclusion that I should have a big celebration for her. I wanted to do something unconventional, not only because Pamina is unconventional, but also because I consider a large party which would cost several thousand dollars a waste of money. I would hate it and so would Klaus and the rest of the family, so I asked Klaus to suggest to her that he take her on a trip to Europe or around the world, wherever she wanted to go. He agreed, then complained that he had already decided that this year he was not going to travel because he had spent three months in Europe last year. In addition, he is disgusted with developments in Europe: rampant racism in France and Germany.

In the end I told Pamina about the plan saying that Klaus wanted to give her a trip. She immediately agreed. She was so excited about the trip that she came to visit us for the first time on her own since moving away three months earlier.
Pamina's forehead and cheeks and stroking Pamina's hair. I did not pay attention to the second Pamina's face, just her skinhead with a clumsy asymmetrical crest on it. But I liked everything about that Pamina; I had the impression that she was affectionate and outgoing. The first Pamina (whom I knew) told me that the second Pamina was called Green Eye because of her make-up. The first Pamina smiled. I looked at the second Pamina. As if she understood what was going on in my mind, she peeled off the plastic skull. As she peeled it, I realised that she had long hair, just like the first Pamina's. She said that she was in a play, looking amused as if to tease me. She pulled another piece of plastic skull off to show that the clumsy crest was in fact a long, folded strand of hair. As I saw that both pieces of skin forming the pink plastic skull had tiny blue veins running all over them, the second Pamina's hair transformed and looked exactly like the first's. I woke up remembering how real it was and my feeling calm and happy during the dream.

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In the end I told Pamina about the plan saying that Klaus wanted to give her a trip. She immediately agreed. She was so excited about the trip that she came to visit us for the first time on her own since moving away three months earlier.
She and Klaus discussed the plan and bought the tickets within two days. Klaus was happy because he could see how happy she was; she even talked about staying in California for some time and wanted to spend time with my cousin in Paris whom she had never met.

3.5 My Experience with Dream Therapy

In addition to the above collection of dreams and interpretations, I also recorded cases involving individuals from different cultures who suffered debilitating nightmares and hallucinations.

*Ba.* This client has been seeing me for three years. Recently the ACT Court has appointed me as his guardian according to his request to help him administer his criminal compensation. Ba suffered debilitating nightmares alternating with hallucinations. Medical experts diagnosed him as schizophrenic. My attempt to help him interpret his own dreams aggravated his condition to the extent that he could no longer sleep. Recognising the negative impact of my research I discontinued dream interpretation. Instead, I prepared meals for him and provided support and friendship — a substitute family environment — to reduce his social isolation. This strategy proved effective in reducing his nightmares, hallucination and aggressive behaviour.\(^{40}\)

*Chinese nightmares:* A Chinese man asked me to help him 'stop' his nightmares, but he was reluctant to tell me their content because it was confidential. I suggested that he record them as accurately as possible, then lock the papers away or tear them up if he wished. I also suggested that he treat them as if they were reality, then fight his adversaries in the nightmares and/or rearrange the situation in his nightmares to overcome difficulty. He did and his nightmares became less intense and less frequent, but they did not disappear completely until his mother safely settled in Australia with him. When he moved to live in my home while waiting for government accommodation, he dreamt that he was walking calmly in a Canberra street for the first time.\(^{41}\) He told me that he considers my home as his own.

*Lesbian nightmares:* A lesbian came to me for counselling. As she trusted me, she revealed that, although she had been pack-raped, she did not have recurring nightmares until she was emotionally able to handle them.\(^{42}\) She did not want to interpret or talk about them. She only wanted me to understand her ordeal.

\(^{40}\) See 'Ba' in Appendix 3.

\(^{41}\) See 'Two Chinese' in Appendix 4.

\(^{42}\) See 'Lesbian Nightmares' in Appendix 5.
**Vietnamese nightmares and hallucinations** Two Vietnamese women suffered debilitating nightmares: one was helped by finding employment while the other was convinced that the only help for her was employment.\(^{43}\)

### 3.6 Conclusion

While gathering information on dreams and cultures I saw dream analysis as the best, if not only, means to understand the human unconscious. As I completed my review, I realised that it is ineffective; I also discovered other more effective ways to explore the individual, community or multicultural unconscious, such as the contradiction between people’s action and their speech, between theory and practice, and their off-guard behaviour.

#### 3.6.1 Landscape of Migrants’ Dreams

Migrants keep dreaming about their countries of origin until they feel they belong to their host country. Tamara and two Croatians dreamt about their former countries. Tamara’s dreams appear freer; they contain the landscape of all the places where she has travelled. However, her dreams with more complex implications appear not to be Australian. A Chinese man started dreaming about Australia as soon as he felt settled. Although Ba’s nightmares have included Australia, they have been void of landscape.

#### 3.6.2 Dreams, Cultures and the Multicultural Unconscious

Although the collection of dreams and interpretations is not sufficiently diverse and comprehensive, there is a clear indication that symbols and interpretations vary according to cultures. In cultures where individuals are encouraged to explore and express their emotions, and where society allows the examination and discussion of intimate personal details, people are more willing to record, interpret, or even share their dreams with one another. In cultures where sexual matters are considered unmentionable subjects, people suppress their dreams. In most, if not all, cultures, interpretations of dreams depend on the level of education, training and knowledge.

When Ba is relatively well — free of hallucination — he does not exhibit any racism, but when he was seriously ill — unaware of reality — he attacked Africans and Indians calling them ‘blacks’. Off-guard remarks by workers at the MRC from time to time reveal prejudice against culture,

\(^{43}\) See ‘Work is Health’ in Appendix 6.
ethnicity or even race, but at the conscious level they are all progressive and
free of prejudice — they quality for which they have been selected. Renata,
Tamara, other participants in the research, colleagues from other cultures
and clients have agreed with my observation that, in normal conditions, our
actions are usually consistent with our principles; however, under stress, in
off guard situations, not infrequently we have been surprised by our actions
and reactions.

Some Vietnamese clients seeking assistance from me have told me to ask
the MRC receptionist — the Western lady — to help them instead. At the
unconscious level, Vietnamese still consider themselves inferior to
Westerners. Vietnamese with little or no western education do not recover
from illness completely until they are treated by herbal medicine given by
Vietnamese or Chinese ‘doctors’.44. The outgoing President of the
Vietnamese Community in the ACT said that, like me, he caught himself
thinking that Westerners know better than Vietnamese although both of us
know that we are better educated and informed than the average Australian.

3.6.3 Dream Therapy or Community Development

My attempt to interpret dreams for people who suffered from nightmares
had very limited success (Ha 3.4.1). In the case of Ba and many other
clients, I found that dream interpretation often aggravated their condition.
On the other hand, employment, friendship and acceptance by the general
community have helped many people overcome debilitating nightmares and
physical illness. As the Coordinator of the MRC, I must concentrate on
innovative projects to address unmet community needs. This has neces-
sitated the change of topic of my thesis to Community Development.

44 See ‘Hai’ in Appendix 7.
4. MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT I:  
A NEW DIRECTION AND PROJECT ACTION

My desire to pursue the thesis on interpretations of dreams in non-mainstream cultures was met with my new incongruous reality: my administrative responsibility, the lack of interest in, and understanding of, the thesis subject among migrants and people of non-mainstream cultures. To understand migrants, I must help them improve their situation. To understand their dreams I must understand their reality and their understanding of it. I learnt that migration has rendered many well-functioning professional individuals helpless as their inadequate English and lack of cultural understanding have caused them to perceive Australia as a puzzle of unrelated, if not contradictory, fragments. Assistance to migrants therefore needs to be holistic to help them understand Australia as a society comprising coherent and related parts. Thus it has become necessary for me to change the direction of my research.

Moving from theory to practice has caused some change in the flow of my thoughts. Considering the inconsistency between my life dealing with constant change and crisis at the MRC and the dreams and cultures I have reviewed for my thesis, I realise that a break is unavoidable. This break reflects the dynamics of the MRC environment. To understand migrants' and refugees' needs, I have to understand their expectations, dreams, realities, hopes and fears.

I started to work as the Coordinator of the Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan Inc. in September 1990. Having had the first stage of my thesis (literature review and progression document) approved by my supervisors, hopefully and confidently I entered the community research stage, only to be shocked by the immense workload and the stark reality of community politics.

4.1 Community organisation politics

This chapter aims at helping idealistic people who are interested in community service organisations but have had little or no experience to understand the intricate nature of community work and personal politics so that they can better protect themselves. Three community workers in the Canberra-Queanbeyan region have had breakdowns and are unable to return to the work force. Many more have become too fearful to assert their rights.
The community service providers’ network can be deadly to professionals who believe in competence and principles, because it is made up largely of people without relevant qualifications who rely on their connections with politicians and ambitious public servants who, in turn, rely on them for quick promotions founded on their expertise on ‘grassroots contacts’ which are at best second-hand, at worst imaginary. I left out details concerning my relationship with the Management Committee in the first draft I handed to my supervisors, but they encouraged me to retain some of those details. After long and serious consideration, I decided to disclose the ordeal I have endured in my effort to establish social justice within a community organisation.

As soon as I was appointed Coordinator, while still working under the guidance of the acting Coordinator and the supervision of the Management Committee, I was overwhelmed by the pressure of outstanding tasks and an enormous pile of files on my desk. People asked me over the phone whether the MRC could deliver the Multilingual Home and Community Care (HACC) Pamphlets to them. HACC and multilingual pamphlets meant nothing to me at this stage, so I asked the acting Coordinator about it. He told me that they were not available yet, but assured me that they were on the way. Although this did not mean much to me either, I did not pursue the subject because everyone was frantic about the pending Annual General Meeting which needed a returning officer. I was appointed on 10 September and the election was on the 21st. The previous year’s returning officer had moved to Newcastle and there were more annual elections than returning officers available on the night. Invitations had to be sent out, a venue to be booked, ballots to be designed, and speakers to be organised. Administration had never been my career choice. Not losing files had been my greatest administrative ambition. To eliminate one nightmare I paid $100 to have the filing system set up. This was my first executive decision.

At the AGM food was plentiful, good and inexpensive (I had catered for it). However, I was savagely attacked by a community organisation representative who turned up too late to nominate her friend to stand for the Management Committee election, so she held me responsible.

It was my first lesson in organisation and personal politics. While I was fluent in international and national events, I was virginally ignorant of personal politics which thrived on human services.

The annual general election was over; I realised that while I had gained
information on, and experience in, organising a community service management election, I had had no time to learn the essentials: training staff and running the service. It was too late; the acting Coordinator's employment ended. I felt as though I was learning to swim alone in deep water.

While I saw my job as the second choice, wishing I were the research leader of the Commonwealth AIDS Prevention Education Grant instead, the migrant community saw me as a powerful figure; what I was perceived to have done to an ethnic community leader proved, in their eyes, my arrogance and my betrayal of NESB causes. I was asked to leave a sister organisation although I was a founding member and its very name and membership in the MRC had been my contribution; the core group (two who had failed to secure my job) said that my presence was too intimidating to ordinary NESB women because of my new position.

4.2 Project 1: The Christmas Drop-in

4.2.1 Rationale

Somehow I needed to address this gross injustice. I needed to establish my credibility and restore the reputation of the MRC. Remembering my experience while working for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, and after having consulted Rex Benn, an Australian psychologist, I proposed to organise a Christmas Drop-In for migrants, especially new arrivals and refugees who had survived trauma and torture. It seemed simple and logical.

Rex had told me that he had felt lonely and homesick in Bangkok during Christmas once; Christmas is not a holiday in Thailand. He looked for somewhere to celebrate Christmas. Finally he saw a sign: Christmas dinner at a discount price. Rex entered the place only to find that it was a strip-tease joint.

Rex spoke Thai and was a tourist in Bangkok; yet he felt alienated despite his language skill. Migrants and refugees, particularly those who have suffered torture and trauma, must feel terrible during the day of good will and family reunion.

A migrant woman contemplated suicide on Christmas Day 1989; her own family had accused her of shaming them because she had run away from her violent husband. Christmas intensified loneliness and bitter memories; she talked for hours about how her former husband would make her kneel on the
floor and beat her until her head would bleed. Yet her family believed that she should not have left him, but she should have stayed to avoid bringing shame to them. In Confucianism, face saving is of primary concern.

In her desperate loneliness she also believed that she was bad as she recalled another man having walked out on her on their wedding day. She calmly talked about ending her life, looking at bottles of different pills on the immaculate coffee table.

My presence on that day probably saved her life. It certainly brought her comfort.

I thought of recent arrivals whose neighbours’ Christmas celebration would remind them of family scenes back home and their present loneliness. A Christmas Drop-in at the MRC would serve as a healing occasion and an opportunity to show new lonely arrivals how and where to find friendship.

Community and social workers and teachers welcomed the project as an appropriate and timely response to an outstanding need. Even those who viewed me with suspicion became friendly towards me. Clients saw it as the indication of my care and commitment; I was not just a cold administrator. Thus began our new relationship built on trust and understanding. I was invited to speak about the project. People offered to distribute leaflets and posters.

4.2.2 Organisation

The Management’s response was extraordinary. Comments ranged from ‘what will happen if people who are not poor turn up’, to ‘we must make sure that workers are not exploited’. I presented the idea in October 1990. The Management member who came from a poor third world country was its strongest opponent not because he was a Christian but because he feared it might become a riot; he opposed it to the very end.

Because of this member’s objection, the representative of the core funding body suggested an alternative venue. The Ethnic Communities Council (ECC) representative was its ardent supporter. However, there was never an ideological debate on the issue. It was the first evidence of the immense gap between the MRC Management’s perception of needs and those of clients and Grant-In-Aid (GIA) workers (social welfare workers serving migrants exclusively).
I found an alternative venue for the project and proposed it in November. There was no longer any concern, but the Management only gave tentative approval pending its detailed plan and budget. Believing in its merit GIA workers had gone ahead with its publicity; the most senior worker considered it a Christian gesture.

So I proposed the project again in December. This time I was determined not to take no for an answer, being fully prepared to use this as an excuse to return to the Multicultural AIDS Education Project for which the Social Ecology Centre had just received a grant and I was its nominated Coordinator. I also asked for $100 to buy food and presents and free rent from the Griffin Centre.

After much debate, the Management finally gave in. Dolores (the receptionist) and I frantically organised it together with the help of the Senior Social Worker of DILGEA and the GIA network. Dolores gathered help from volunteers to design posters and pamphlets. I wrote the media release while Dolores’s daughter faxed them to twenty media outlets. The ECC informed me that they would pay rent.

The ABC National Radio contacted me for an interview. ‘Who had the idea?’ I said it was mine. They wanted to know the whole history on air. Having been interviewed intensively for my book, I decided to ask staff whether they would like to be interviewed instead. Since it was going to take place on a Sunday morning, no-one was interested, so I accepted the invitation to be interviewed.

In view of the Management’s strong objections to the Christmas Drop-in, I did not pass on the invitation to them, but I notified the Chairman. To my surprise, I was informed that only Management Committee members could represent the MRC, so I had to contact the ABC and explain the change. It received national media coverage; for the first time, the MRC appeared on television and radio, and in newspapers, free of charge.

Having been alone at Christmas since her divorce many years ago, Dolores immediately devoted her time to the project. Through her contact with business people, she received a substantial donation of toys and food from them.

About forty people attended the Drop-in including a domestic violence victim, a woman beaten up by her husband, a visiting scholar. It was the most depressing day of her life and she would have had no-one to share the
anger and sadness had there been no Christmas Drop-in.

The donation provided more resources than needed, so Dolores and I asked clients to help themselves to the left-overs. We distributed the rest to the nearby Ainslie Village, a refuge and hostel for men and women.

4.2.3 Outcome

Since then the Christmas Drop-in has become not only an annual event but also one of the MRC’s and ECC’s proud projects. Rent has become a non-issue and the MRC has received more money for it than needed. For its second year, 1991, the ACT Chief Minister gave the MRC the use of two government vehicles to transport clients to and from the party, and WIN Television gave the project national publicity. Sixty-five people from different cultures attended and made friends. Thus the MRC has become client-oriented.

The Wayside Chapel in Sydney had organised the same project in 1989. To what extent this has helped the MRC gain reputation is not known, but Dolores, having been the backbone of this event, publicised the project among members of the Greek and Italian communities. They passed the word around that the MRC had changed and that everyone cared. It has come back to Dolores, Renata and me in full cycle.

Since 1991 the Rotary Club has organised Christmas parties with all the trimmings at Ainslie village, and since then the number of drop-ins has steadily increased. In 1993 there were four within walking distance from each other in Civic alone.

This reputation also attracted quality workers. Every advertised vacancy at the MRC has received a large number of qualified applicants despite the low wage and poor working conditions even before the recession became serious. One migrant from Eastern Europe told me that she would rather clean the MRC than work for the public service.

Some old clients who had left, dissatisfied with the MRC service, returned for help. They said they had heard about me from their friends. The Social Welfare Worker told me her experience: she had spent many hours at the MRC before her appointment. There had been only a few clients. The place was depressingly quiet. Another social welfare worker told me that some clients had been chased away: ‘I used to come in early to see clients, but I was told to stop. Most of the staff did nothing. One of them stayed at home.
most of the time to attend to private business and look for a new job'.

Two doctors told me that they had approached the MRC asking for assistance to publicise their newly formed migrants' support group. They were told that if such a service were needed, the MRC would be the one to initiate it and not clients. How could I verify the information? I read the *MRC Annual Report 1989* which had my article on the reading and writing workshops I had organised for my graduation project during the Feminist Books Fortnight's celebration. Suddenly I realised what had happened: my project had been adapted by the MRC to become the pre-employment training program for which the MRC had received several thousand dollars. I was alarmed by the misinterpretation and miscarriage of my concept. This and the new flow of clients required thorough investigation and restructuring of service which led me to assess human resources within the organisation.

4.3 Project 2: The Home and Community Care (HACC) Multilingual Pamphlets

Some months after my appointment, my assistant asked me about the $10,000 grant which the MRC had received some five months earlier from Home and Community Care for preparing pamphlets in ten languages to inform the frail elderly and the young disabled about HACC services. I did not know what HACC meant. I asked the Chairman; he did not know anything about it either. So I searched the neatly organised files and found its meaning and implication. My predecessor was supposed to have started the project. Hence the acting Coordinator had told me that everything was under control.

I presented the outstanding project to the new Management Committee. They suggested that we pretend that the grant had been lost in the mail. It was not possible to do so because we had deposited it, and it was earning interest; therefore I asked the Chairman to give me *carte blanche* and promised I would have the pamphlets ready on time. Everyone on the Committee sighed with relief. I was excited: it was to be the action research model I had dreamt about, and the University of Western Sydney at Hawkesbury had applied to the National Health and Medical Research Council for a Commonwealth AIDS Prevention Education grant.

4.3.1 Planning

A great many existing pamphlets on a wide range of subjects were wasted
both because the language in them was inappropriate and because people were ignorant of their existence. To make these pamphlets a success, I decided to approach the funding body and negotiate for change: instead of sending those pamphlets to professional translators, we would ask the various ethnic communities to prepare their own pamphlets, the cost of which would be funded.

I had already worked out what I imagined to be a perfect community development model for the research on AIDS education and prevention. I intended to test that model for all community development projects at local and national levels. This was the opportunity to test my Multicultural AIDS Education model; however, I needed a research assistant as I had no time to do it myself.

Because there were only six months left, I decided that the research should be divided into three stages: the first was to canvass community groups and convey the concept to my research assistant; I expected this stage to be a difficult challenge: gathering data on a subject which might be considered shameful by some communities would not be an easy task. The second stage was to run workshops with community groups to prepare pamphlets in their language according to content provided by the government. The third stage — typesetting, designing, printing and preparing for their launch — would take two months. Even though there was more work to be done at this stage, there would be no difficulty; therefore I expected a smooth and quick process but allowed two weeks for contingency. Nevertheless, we needed to work to a tight schedule.

I approached the HACC Project Officer with the idea; she was delighted; no-one had proposed to work with the community before. She did not know what action research meant but she said that it sounded good and asked me to explain the process to her so that she would be able to explain to her supervisor. The supervisor was so excited about the project that she offered extra funding for us to do a good job. The whole thing needed to be approved by higher authority although she expected no difficulty. In the meantime I was to go ahead and employ a research assistant. Approval for change and additional funding was immediately granted. The HACC Project Officer promised that she would give me the text in time.

I employed a volunteer who was in desperate need of a job. She had helped the MRC organise the program ‘Our People Our Culture’. To save time, I instructed my assistant step by step. The project started smoothly. I felt proud that I had managed to shift a ‘government position’ within a few days
and I expected the Management Committee to be delighted. However, the Management Committee’s reception was disappointing — a member remarked, ‘jobs for the girls’, while the others kept silent.

As I anticipated problems with the Management while pursuing my hope to work with them as a team, I moved to the next stage with new ideas and a determination to correct the public image and perception of the MRC.

Being an interpreter, I thought of asking the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) for information on priority languages, but immediately realised that TIS would not know which community had the largest number of frail elderly and/or young disabled. To find the number of elderly in each community would be simple; if old age is not a pride, it is not a shame either. However, I anticipated difficulty in obtaining information on young disabled, so I asked my research assistant to contact schools, hospitals and rehabilitation centres for information on them. This proved to be a slow process. Although various places had young disabled clients, my research assistant could not gain sufficient information to make decisions. Finally I asked her to contact the special school for young people with disabilities in Turner. This proved to be the best source of information, and the school was keen to cooperate.

Ten languages were identified: Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Serbian and Vietnamese.

Because the community that had the largest number of frail elderly would not necessarily be the community with the largest number of young disabled, we thought that it might be necessary to prepare two pamphlets in each language: one for the frail elderly and one for the young disabled — twenty in all. In addition, we suspected that the frail elderly might be upset if they were classified as disabled.

However, such a sensitivity exercise was unnecessary because many of the services were for both, and there was no way of knowing the exact figure of young disabled in each community. We used government policies to turn a disadvantage into an advantage: producing pamphlets in ten languages with and for ten communities and sensitising people to the existence and needs of people with disabilities in every community.

The HACC Project Officer kept refining the content of the pamphlets. Each time some extra information was added, and some words were changed.
Belonging to a meritocratic tradition, the Vietnamese tend to disregard what is perceived as inferior or abnormal; therefore disability would be considered shameful to the family and community. Having left Vietnam almost thirty years ago, I was unsure whether attitudes had changed. To verify this point, I approached a Vietnamese community leader. 'Our community is very healthy; all children are born normal', was his reaction. I explained to him that people could become disabled because of car accidents: 'Statistics show a high rate of car accidents among Vietnamese drivers', but I received no response. I could not mention the war either owing to the political conflict it causes in the Vietnamese community.

A Malaysian Chinese told me that his disabled cousin had been hidden until she turned fifteen. A leader of the Chinese community told my assistant that he knew of three children with disabilities. He thought there would be more and promised to invite them to participate in the production of their pamphlet.

Tension in the Middle East led to conflict within Arabic-speaking communities and with the general community to delay the project even further. My assistant approached the Mosque and individual Arabic leaders several times. Although no-one declined to talk to her (she was a Muslim), no-one set a definite date for an appointment either.

While the Hungarian Club, the Italian Women's Group, the Spanish Grandparents' Association, the Vietnamese Senior Citizens' Association, the Australian Chinese Club, the Serbian Priest, the Greek Community and the Polish Club were delighted to cooperate, the Croatians were concerned about who should represent the community.

Initially we contacted individual leaders and members of target communities to ask them about how we should approach others in their communities. As our relationships progressed from formal to informal, more individuals from each community joined the project. In addition, formal invitations from the MRC were sent to everyone.

Immigration statistics have shown that the Italian community has the highest proportion of bilingual speakers, yet Italian women said there was a definite need for pamphlets in Italian for their community. As life expectancy increases with improved diets and public health services, more and more people suffer from senility, dementia and other age-related conditions, and return to their first languages. On the other hand, old established
communities also viewed ethno-specific services as their right to access and equity.

- **Unexpected Setback**

My research assistant who was desperate to have the job — her first paid professional work — tendered her resignation for a better job, promising she would stay on the project to render a helping hand, aware of her responsibility and agreed commitment. Once bitten twice shy, I asked the Chairman to have another one appointed immediately. This time, he told me to advertise the position in the paper and continue the MRC's fair tradition. To select a worker for some fifteen hours a week, an interviewing committee needed to be set up. The process took longer than usual because the new Management Committee member who had been a temporary resident in Australia for some six months also volunteered her service; as a new arrival she was still grappling with Australian regulations and their usual practices. Two weeks later, my incumbent assistant gave her definite notice. The project was left in disarray. The Management Committee wanted me to negotiate with the funding body for an extension, but I was determined to meet the current deadline.

Having promised my relatives to visit them in Vietnam and having made arrangements with Vietnamese researchers and academics to gather data for my research on dreams, I finalised my travel arrangement. I asked the Management Committee to appoint the research assistant and resume the project during my five weeks' absence.

Although Diane had been interviewed and selected during my leave, she had not been appointed. On the day of my return, she contacted me to ask whether her services were still required! We had wasted six weeks.

The Management Committee member who had accused me of 'job for the girls' recruited my former assistant for another organisation and further undermined my project. The Management Committee did not know what to do with the newly selected worker, hence they had to wait for my return. There had been unfinished projects at the MRC (a large portion of the funds for community development in 1989–90 had to be channelled to MIX$^{45}$, a

$^{45}$ MIX stands for Multicultural Exchange, a project conceptualised by Renata who has extensive knowledge and experience in community development, but executed by an academic who was also a computer expert. He put all the information in the most 'unfriendly' computer at the MRC. Without detailed knowledge in computing, the staff
dead-end project) because of ignorance and lack of management skills.

4.3.3 Second Stage of Pamphlet Production

The new worker turned out to be efficient and friendly; she had a natural ability in public relations. In addition, Diane was punctual and dedicated, an Australian by birth with extensive experience in, and intimate knowledge of, the Middle East. Although she looked young, her manners were those of a mature, confident and relaxed person. Within less than an hour, she knew what I expected. I transferred the project to her.

Diane had no difficulty in gaining access to the Arabic-speaking community and the Mosque, or to any other community. She was a listener. Everyone liked her and she related well to everyone. Combining her public relations aptitude with efficiency, Diane was able to work with several groups of people belonging to some dozen cultures. She would have afternoon tea with Father so and so and attend various religious sessions with Sister this and that. Diane was a friend to, or an invited guest in, every community. A relationship was formed not only between Diane and dozens of ethnic communities but also between them and the MRC. Whether they were Orthodox Serbian, Catholic Italian or Muslim, Diane was a willing listener and an understanding outsider. No-one needed to fear that his or her secret would be spread all over the community; no-one needed to feel reserved that Diane’s religious persuasion might be in conflict with his or her own either — but was all that my optimistic, biased perception?

Diane was as passionate about the pamphlets as I was. She worked day and night, making herself available to the communities six days a week.

Other agencies came to the MRC for networking instead of the MRC sending out letters to various agencies and institutions.

In less than six months, the MRC had undergone a fundamental change from not knowing what it was doing to becoming fully conversant with the needs of individual clients from thirty different cultures and communities. Clients, communities, workers and government project officers were happy with the research because, for the first time, communities fully owned a project and workers followed their instructions instead of following orders from high-ranking professionals. Government project officers at ACT and Commonwealth levels expressed their desire to be present at the launch.

and I are unable to access the information to benefit the community.
Various programs organised for migrants and NESB people including evaluation workshops by FECCA had had no more than twenty participants. It was even more difficult to attract the attention of service organisations as community workers were used to peer assessment without clients' participation.

4.3.4 Pamphlet Launch

There were some problems that were still of concern to us, such as accommodation for a large number of clients and representatives of communities, service organisations and government agencies; the provision of interpreters; and seating arrangements for those who needed interpreters. To limit the number without undermining the project's relevance or significance, invitations were issued in accordance with community suggestions. Some community leaders complained that they were left out. Consequently the MRC became aware of their existence and their lack of grassroots support; the MRC also became aware of conflict between ethnic leaders and those they claimed to represent. More importantly, complaints were evidence of public acknowledgment of the MRC and its new direction.

Because funding for interpreters was limited, community members who were fluent in English were happy to serve as interpreters; therefore community groups were seated at tables where interpreters' services were provided so that everyone could participate. This knowledge played an important role in encouraging a large number of participants. People not only needed to understand what was going to be said, but they also needed to be reassured that someone they knew was going to be there to support them.

Community contribution was generous; people provided culinary specialities from their home countries to make the occasion an international feast.

One hundred and twenty people from ten communities and three government departments, as well as politicians, were among the guests. The absence of community service providers, particularly those funded by HACC, was acutely felt and formally recorded. The MRC Chairman was proud of the MRC success.

4.3.5 Evaluation by Funding Body

The Commonwealth HACC Manager in the ACT congratulated me

76
The ACT HACC Office also agreed to give me extra funding for a follow-up HACC workshop to include communities whose languages had not been selected such as the Cambodian, Lao, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Sri Lankan communities.

Although Diane was offered a part-time job in the ACT HACC to work with the Croatian community, she delayed her acceptance until the project was completed, but she could not stay on for the following workshop.

Diane suggested that the MRC appoint her replacement on the day of the launch so that people would be able to meet the new appointee — thus continuity would be preserved. It sounded reasonable and I trusted Diane's judgment. I asked her to approach the Chairman herself. He agreed immediately.

4.3.6 Follow-up Workshop

The funding body agreed to fund the follow-up workshop. One hundred and fifty people attended, including 30 service providers, disabled clients and their carers grouped according to language; each group was provided with an interpreter. To respect dietary regulations and cater for multicultural tastes on a low budget, I prepared a nutritious international lunch.

Because of the shortage of space, service providers were invited to speak in the morning (five minutes each), followed by questions from clients and their carers. In the afternoon, service providers circulated among clients.

In addition, two medical experts were invited to speak: one was a British therapist (married to an Egyptian), who had worked with people of non-English-speaking backgrounds for two years, the other was a visiting Sri Lankan general practitioner from Papua New Guinea. The latter urged her people to see doctors and listen to their advice. She, too, was trained in Western medicine and health care.

To me it was a publicity stunt — the MRC was put on the map. However, there were shortcomings. For instance, an experienced social worker from South America agreed with me that the therapist spoke from a totally Western perspective. Being employed by the government, she also exaggerated the quality of service. Her information could be dangerous because symptoms, like behaviour, are culturally specific: for example, what a

\[46\] Available on request.
Westerner perceives as depression may turn out to be serenity.

The questionnaire should also have been better designed. However, considering time constraints and other mishaps, the workshop was a remarkable success. It was the first time government officials and service providers met their potential consumers. One carer even asked for help publicly.

Concerned that people might rush their relatives to be locked up in hospitals, I mentioned what psychiatry and psychology meant in different cultures. Unexpectedly I received an ovation from Asians who were worried.

### 4.3.7 Questionnaires

Questionnaires designed by HACC staff were distributed to participants. However, because of language difficulties experienced by the migrants and refugees, only the interpreters filled them out.

Eighteen individuals or groups returned the questionnaires; all clients wanted more of ‘talking workshops’. The Italian community liked the wording in the pamphlet. The Greek community wanted to know more about psychiatric disorders and other services; they also wanted to learn French.

The Vietnamese community wanted to have bilingual workers. As their interpreter, I learnt that elderly people in the Vietnamese community are worried that they might have a heart attack or serious crisis and would be unable to access services because of their lack of ability to express themselves in English.

By now receiving and handling complaints had become part of my new position. Unexpectedly a Croatian interpreter complained that the ‘translation’ in Croatian was done incorrectly and unprofessionally. It took me some time to explain the concept of preparing pamphlets with the community for the community. Then she changed her complaint: ‘How come I have not been consulted? What community did you consult?’ This proved to be the difficulty at the beginning of the workshops: the MRC needs to improve communication with ethnic communities as multicultural community development must aim to reduce tension and conflict between and within ethnic communities to promote social cohesion.

The MRC’s sudden rise in popularity resulted in a sharp increase in clients
and new needs; Vietnamese women asked me to intervene as TAFE (now CIT) had discontinued their English classes. I promised them that I would organise alternative classes at the MRC for them if there were at least 12 students.

4.4 Project 3: English for Senior Migrants

There was no budget to pay for teachers, so I tried to recruit volunteers while informing TAFE and other organisations about our new service. Three people volunteered to teach. I anticipated between 10 and 15 students for one class and therefore thought that there would be more teachers than needed. To my surprise, over 30 students turned up on the first day. News about the MRC’s English classes travelled far and fast; the number of students quickly rose to sixty. We needed at least three classrooms; therefore I converted the kitchen into a classroom. However it turned out to be too noisy and crowded, so I rented a nearby room while looking for funds to pay. To provide teachers for three classes twice a week was not an easy task. I called universities to ask for teaching students who needed work experience. I also asked the Senior Citizens’ Club and the Council on the Ageing for help. Eventually a social welfare worker and a Chinese teacher volunteered to teach on a regular basis. One class remained undetermined.

Although the classes were well attended and students were happy my project was far from satisfactory: both teachers lacked qualifications and experience. The Chinese teacher still confused the R, N and L sounds. Eventually more teachers with appropriate experience or qualifications joined in. Less than a year later, the project received funding from the Department of Education, Employment and Training. Since then, the project has been regularly funded.

4.5 Project 4: Work Experience Program

I created the work experience program at the MRC for professional migrants to convert their qualifications into marketable skills. This necessitated supervision and training skills; knowledge of appropriate cultures: indirect and direct cultures; knowledge of different work practices; and understanding of learning modes: people who come from direct cultures and western industrial societies learn by exploring (trial and error) and analysis while those who come from indirect cultures (Confucians) learn by observation. I also organised the professional tutorial scheme for new arrivals to gain relevant technical knowledge and vocabulary for the labour market.
To maintain clients’ enthusiasm while searching for volunteer trainers, I taught English for employment to help migrants understand Australian organisation cultures such as EEO, ID, Access and Equity.

Because of the overwhelming public response, the MRC staff experienced problems with adjustment: insufficient time to inform and train staff and staff resistance caused by previous MRC organisation culture. Time and energy were directed to overcoming these difficulties.

4.6 Project 5: Work Placement Program

Even though the permanency of my position had been approved (after nine months of probation instead of three) and I had gained proven success, enthusiastic clients’ support and excellent evaluation by government agencies, I continued to live under great stress caused not only by excessive work demands but also, or even mainly, by some Management Committee members’ malice and incompetence. To reduce my stress, the Management Committee ordered me to discontinue the work placement program which had been a life saver for me. This free and effective service which was desperately needed to respond to the MRC’s critical shortage of qualified staff was provided by capable and enthusiastic students who were willing to learn from me and to explore the new model I suggested. On the other hand, I was free to respond spontaneously to their enthusiasm for new knowledge. With their volunteer labour, I organised new projects such as the English Pronunciation Class, the information workshop for Spanish-speaking new arrivals and the Migrant Women’s Health Programs. They helped me maintain and even expand services with reduced funding. In 1992, the MRC received no funding for health education. But with the work placement program, I was able to offer more health education than the previous year when we had received $4000. By assigning students to find untapped resources, the MRC was able to continue health services to newly arrived migrant women by networking with the newly established Women’s Health Centre and other organisations needing clients.

Students had to work hard for their marks at the MRC and to earn my favourable reference for job opportunities in other organisations. Applying action research, I have always asked the students what they wanted to achieve, then worked out projects which would benefit them and the MRC clients. My desire for occasional teaching has been satisfied as I met their needs for new knowledge in education and training. Without any exception, they offered further voluntary services long after their placement contracts
had run out. The community development program could not have succeeded without them. Dedicated to their projects, they cooperated with me not only because I was their supervisor but because I was 'the only one who cared for them and spent time to train them'.

As I learnt more about cultures and their differences, the gap between my knowledge and understanding and those of the Management Committee widened. Several times I wanted to walk away, but I had no courage to leave the clients who desperately needed the services I provided. I learnt to watch my back with the utmost care and thought I would be safe. Little did I realise at the time that major problems would soon begin to gain momentum.
5 REFLECTION: CULTURAL CONDITIONING AND LEARNING MODES

5.1 Culture

Culture includes concepts, perceptions and tradition. For example the word ‘China’ in ancient Chinese means the centre of excellence of the continent (universe); now it means the nation in the centre; to peoples in the Western industrial world it simply means China. To Western business people it implies a billion potential consumers; to a racist it implies the yellow peril. To many Chinese, particularly those who have experienced racial discrimination, it implies superiority. This concept therefore prevents many Chinese from participating in mainstream activities because they ‘know’ that they belong to a superior culture (at least four thousand years old), if not a superior race. Thus they need not learn from others. But as traditional people, they are polite, so they will nod agreement with whatever you say while doing what they think is right. Many migrants from Latin America say they do not like the Chinese because ‘Chinese are too compliant; they never join any pressure group’. In turn the Chinese do not like the Latin Americans because they seem too aggressive.

In one culture white denotes purity and virginity while it symbolises mourning in another. The word piety means duty to God in one culture and duty to one’s father in another. Gallipoli has the same meaning as Dien Bien Phu to two different Australian citizens. Neither means anything to Aboriginal people or South American Australians. Sacred sites command the same power and respect from indigenous Australians as churches do from Christian ones. Rock paintings are much older than stained glass windows, even those in the oldest churches. Yet even the most educated white Australians can dismiss the importance of sacred sites.

5.2 Language

From oral to written traditions, from primitive to civilised societies, from the animal kingdom to human society, and among individuals, language has been the major means of communication. However, it has also been a frequent cause of misunderstanding. Socio-linguists such as Deborah Tannen have shown that men and women use different body language and different verbal expressions. Even within the same culture, language

47 This section comes from the article on Language and Culture I wrote for the Australian Society of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT).
differs between the rich and the poor, the upper and the lower class, because it conveys concepts based on experience. Language is a sequence of symbols the meaning of which is more often implied than articulated. People often listen to what is not said rather than what is said to imagine what is implied. An insecure wife could take her husband’s praise of another woman as his lack of sexual interest in her or his implicit criticism of her. The same word has different meanings depending on the tone of the speaker, the way the word is used, or the user. Black Americans sometimes call one another ‘Nigger’ as Aboriginal Australians sometimes call one another ‘Abo’, but when whites use those terms, they are considered racist and offensive. The word ‘interesting’ means attracting interest, but teachers often use the word ‘interesting’ on interview nights to avoid saying to the child’s parents how dull their child is.

People who speak English as a second language have additional problems; if they speak with native speakers their chance of being misunderstood is less likely than if they speak to other speakers of English as a second language because both sides have to go through the process of simultaneous interpreting and reinterpreting in their heads. A German could easily confuse the word ‘almonds’ with ‘tonsils’ because both are Mandeln in German, or ‘cloves’ with ‘carnations’ because both are Nelken in German. During World War II, when the fear of Nazis among Jews ran high, Jews often left the British fruit dealer in apprehension as they were asked: ‘For juice?’ when they attempted to buy oranges. To new arrivals from Germany, ‘Jews’ and ‘juice’ sounded the same.

Some Vietnamese in Germany and in Australia asked for ‘sugar’ when they meant to ask for a ‘street’ because ‘sugar’ and ‘street’ are the same word in Vietnamese. Although the words ‘sensitive’ and ‘sensible’ exist in French and English, their meanings are different in the two languages.

*Traduire c’est trahir; sui mot ly, di mot dam,* two expressions with equivalent meanings — one in French, the other in Vietnamese. Translated word for word they respectively mean: ‘translating is betraying; an inch of error is a lost mile’. Conveying messages from one language to another requires more than literal translation of each word because each word in one language derives from a different concept and therefore does not have the same number of meanings in another, and also because meanings are not only constructed but they are also conditioned by culture and upbringing. For example, the word ‘ethnic’ derived from Greek means ‘national’ or

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‘native’ in Greece while in Australia it means belonging to a cultural minority group (for example, as in the Ethnic Communities Council).

Almost a quarter of the Australian population speaks English as a second language to one another and almost the entire nation communicates in English as a second language passively or actively, as native speakers communicate with their ESL counterparts. Yet not only are training materials based on English, but jargon has been constantly changing to make the mainstream language less equitably accessible to the majority, such as the Access and Equity Package produced by the ACT Government. This package was launched in Canberra in 1992 and contained a document on language barrier which was written in such convoluted English that it was most inaccessible to the disadvantaged, especially NESC people.

5.3 Learning Modes

Understanding what has been taught enables learners to transfer meaning from one context to another, and to apply and expand theories. People teach the way they have been taught. If the teacher and the learner have the same intelligences or learning mode, then communication and understanding become simple. However, if their learning modes differ, both sides will experience frustration, and understanding could be seriously affected. I recall my experience in a tutorial session on linear algebra where the tutor repeated the same definition that the lecturer had said fifteen times to a student (there was no migrant in my class except me) but the student was unable to understand the definition. Everyone became frustrated. I interrupted the tutor by offering a practical comparison related to the student’s daily experience; the student understood immediately. Again contextual relevance was proven essential. Mainstream community education, on the other hand, is usually direct and confrontational. The word ‘confront’ has become part of the everyday vocabulary of mainstream service providers.

A newly arrived Vietnamese woman over fifty came to the MRC for work experience. I accepted Nguyen only to regret it immediately afterwards. She had no formal qualifications even though she had 25 years of experience in nursing, teaching and social work. She was unsuitable to work as a volunteer receptionist: new arrivals had enough difficulty understanding standard English syntax and clear pronunciation. I assigned Nguyen to teach English to Vietnamese people without knowledge of English. It worked out well. Nguyen learnt English and gained self-confidence. When the Secondary Introductory English Centre informed me that they wanted to interview three people for the position of teachers’ aid, I recommended Nguyen. As I was
trying to help her find work experience which required regular contact with native speakers, the ACT Rental Bond Office asked me to evaluate a pamphlet translation in Vietnamese. I found the translation correct but unlikely to be understood by Vietnamese with little education. I suggested they employ Nguyen to work with the target group and rewrite the pamphlet in simpler language that Vietnamese with the lowest level of education would be able to understand. The ACT Rental Bond Office invited Nguyen for an interview. I was also asked to go along. To my surprise, Nguyen became tongue-tied. I had to take over. She sat still and carefully observed my performance. On completion of her casual work for the Rental Bond Office, Nguyen felt ready to be interviewed for the teachers' aid position. She told me later that she was appointed to the position because she imitated my performance at the Rental Bond Office, and that my 'excellent' reference had compensated for her weaknesses in the interview.

Mainstream education content has often been void of contextual relevance to minorities and women. For example, maths text books have used Rugby League teams as examples while women have been excluded from the sport. Many migrants, especially new arrivals, have not had sufficient time to become familiar with Australian society and culture. Pictures included in school text books have often associated ethnicity with unskilled occupations: almost invariably servants are portrayed as being non-white, and secretaries as women; while doctors are often portrayed as being white and surgeons, male.

I had no difficulty with the multiplication table and could multiply any number, no matter how large, by any single digit number, but it took me three years to learn to multiply it by a number with more than one digit.

I multiply: 267 by 3 the following way:

\[
\begin{align*}
267 \\
\times 3 \\
801
\end{align*}
\]

But I multiplied 267 by 21 the following way:

\[
\begin{align*}
267 \\
\times 21 \\
267 \\
534 \\
801
\end{align*}
\]
This result puzzled me, because I knew that 3 was not the same as 21, but I could not tell why the following way was correct:

\[
\begin{align*}
267 \\
\times 21 \\
267 \\
5340 \\
5607
\end{align*}
\]

On the other hand, I could work out the result in my head and solve complicated mathematical problems which my classmates failed to understand. I kept asking the teacher to explain the process to me. But he told me to follow his examples as he wrote them on the board instead, repeating the same thing hundreds of times until he gave up. Asking older or more respectable people for anything was considered impolite in Vietnamese culture. He scolded me, then concluded that I was stupid. Finally, my father's assistant explained multiplication to me, 'the number 1 stands for units, but the number 2 stands for tens, so the multiplication was in fact the addition of 1 \( \times (267) + 20 \times (267) = 267 + 5340 = 5607 \)'. Several decades later, I realise that I am among the minority with logic and linguistic intelligences\(^{49}\), and my learning mode is analytical, theoretical and abstract while that of the teacher who had failed to explain multiplication to me was imitative.

Whether my son was born with logic and linguistic intelligences, I cannot tell, but I know that he was unable to read and write until he was six. Teachers suspected that he might be retarded; my husband and I knew he was exceptionally intelligent because he was capable of logical argument at three, but neither of us could teach him. English is not a logical language. He became frustrated and told us to give him the books. 'I'll teach myself'.

He would stare at the books and ask us how we said this and that. Within a few days, he managed to read simple texts and within a month he was able to read *Alice In Wonderland*. At twelve, he was able to read an introduction to Einstein's theory on relativity by Bertrand Russell. He received awards for arts and crafts throughout his school years and was selected to be trained with the Mathematical Olympiad Team at the age of seventeen. We discovered that, in addition to his logic and linguistic abilities, he is also a visual learner. For many years, he would say, 'I draw' this letter, this word.

He is a computer graphic designer.

A mature-age student asked me to tutor her in maths after having failed to understand her tutor at the university. They keep repeating what they have said. I did not understand what they had said in class; I did not understand it later either. It’s frustrating’. She was able to understand the whole course after a few weeks because I related mathematical functions and equations to her daily chores and their solutions. Again contextual relevance was proven essential.

An Aboriginal girl could not understand subtraction as I kept repeating: ‘You have $8 but you have borrowed $3; you have to pay back the $3 you have borrowed, so you in fact have only $5’. It is crystal clear to me that $8 - $3 = $5. However, the child’s inability to understand the simplest equation persisted: ‘No, I have $8 and I have borrowed $3, so altogether I have $11’. I refused to conclude that this child was stupid because one of my teachers had mistaken their inability for my stupidity. So I talked to the child about her language and culture to learn about life in her community and about the Aboriginal sharing tradition. I learnt that, in her culture and many other Aboriginal cultures, there is no word for borrowing. In her usage, borrowing meant giving or sharing. That is why many Aborigines do not return what they have borrowed. Living at the Armidale Reserve, neither the child nor her parents spoke an Aboriginal language, but their different conditioning resulted in different concepts.

Resorting to new maths, I changed my strategy: $5 and $3 make $8, so $5 + $3 = $8, or $8 = $3 + $5. The child understood symmetry without difficulty. ‘Now, instead of writing $8, you write $3 +$5’, I explained. The child understood this as well. I then crossed out 3 and said: ‘so, without 3, you are left with 5 because $5 +$5 = $8$. Taking 3 from $5 +$3 or $8$ is called $8 -$3 the way my name is Loewald and yours is Ahoy, taking away our first names. Thus $8 -$3 = $5 because $5 +$3 = $8$. Symmetry is known in all cultures. Naming is important in all traditions. Aboriginal cultures are rich in relationships (cases). The child therefore understood subtraction, when explained in terms of a name.

A ‘naughty’ child who had been shifted from one school to another for tests to determine whether his learning disabilities were pathological or environmental (but no-one had visited him at home) was brought to me for assistance because no other volunteer wanted to help him. ‘He’s disruptive, has had terrible problems with speech, can’t count past 7. Just to have him removed from the class would be helpful’.
I observed that the child was under extreme stress. The moment I asked him to sit down, he threw himself on the seat, immediately hugged himself tightly, and clenched his fists and his jaws. His veins stood out; his muscles trembled.

I asked him why he behaved the way he did; he told me: 'Teacher told me to do it because I am naughty'. I was amazed by the way he used the word 'naughty'. My children would never report to me that anyone had told them they were naughty. If I found out, they would defend themselves to the best of their ability. This child accepted 'being naughty' as part of his self.

With special permission, I visited the child at home. I discovered that he was constantly punished by his father (who was absent at night during the week) for not succeeding in sports, and for being naughty by his mother (who worked as a cleaner during the day). The parents never spoke to each other in front of him. His mother was always busy because she believed that being busy was virtuous. The Encyclopedia Britannica was neatly displayed in a locked glass case; there was no book available for his use, but there were clothes waiting to be ironed everywhere. In her spare time, his mother also ironed other people's clothes at home for extra income. The mother's speech was 'normal' although her vocabulary was limited because she had the minimal education required by law. His father spoke like him. It confirmed to me that the child's disabilities were caused by his environment — conditioning he received from his parents and teachers.\(^5^0\).

I asked him what he did when he was naughty. He looked at me disbelievingly at first, then, when I persisted, he grinned and threw forth punches in the air. His muscles relaxed; his speech became clearer, but his tongue still appeared ill at ease. I encouraged him to 'misbehave' as I tried to teach him pronunciation. We showed and examined each other's throat, tongue, teeth, lips and postures. A relationship soon developed. I became used to the child's speech as he became used to my accent and inquisitive approach. Eventually I found that his single wish was to rob banks and to become rich. I thought this was reasonable and supported his scheme. In his place, I would want to rob banks so that no-one else's laundry would clutter my space and my mother would have more time to spend with me.

'But you must make sure that you don't get caught', I advised him. 'Otherwise you will go to prison for a long time'. As I explained things to him, I discovered that he was intelligent and had a good memory. I also

explained to him that bank safes were usually opened by combinations of numbers. I was not sure I knew what I was talking about but I was sure in which direction I was heading: introducing him to maths. 'You must know how to add, to count how many times you have to turn the knob and so on'.

He wanted to play cards with me. This needed special permission, and to my relief, permission was granted and a packet of cards provided. We played cards according to rules I invented as I went along, to help him learn counting and adding. The result was quick and spectacular: he was able to count to twenty and could add three numbers correctly to win. As he enjoyed winning, gradually I was able to help his speech.

His father's attitude changed little but his mother was happy to cooperate; she agreed to play cards with him in her spare time. The child made immense progress. I discontinued my service as I had successfully helped the mother and child bond.

About half a year later, I saw the mother in a supermarket; she smiled as she called me. 'How is your son doing?' I asked her. 'He's good', she said. 'He's playing cards by himself and leaving me alone now'.

5.4 The MRC: Staff, Clients and Cultural Conditioning

The behaviour of some staff members towards each other and towards clients who frequented the MRC inspired me to systematically document my observation of cultural conditioning. People from extended-family cultures have little understanding of social services. The family is the primary political and social unit. In Confucianism, it is the foundation of the nation. The father is the supreme figure to be respected and obeyed according to Confucian teaching: 'Emperor, Teacher, Father'. When the father is corrupt, the son (daughters do not count) has the duty to protect him, piggyback him into hiding. Confucius carefully structured social behaviour from birth to death. Even the mourning process was prescribed in detail. This conditioning has spilled over to relationships between individuals and groups in society. Younger people and those who hold junior ranks do not approach their senior/elder directly when they need to redress a wrong. Instead they would look to their sympathetic protectors, their elder or senior's equal, to address those issues on their behalf. Bypassing this process is considered impertinent and certainly not prudent, for there may be repercussions. The opposite applies in Western culture. Direct negotiation is the norm.
Through observation, documentation and discussion with my collaborators, then tests with clients, I was able to divide cultures into five major groups: direct, indirect, caste, Koranic and indigenous. There are strong connections and diversity within each of the first four groups. The last group is related only by international classification as the UN has declared 1993 the Year of the Indigenous. The caste system has created a distinct culture which is direct and indirect, pushy and reticent, forceful and gentle depending on the individual's position in the caste system and their perception of their position within that caste. Those belonging to the upper castes are used to order and exert pressure to maximise services. They become pushy. Being pushy becomes a bureaucratic institution. People who have lived in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have told me that people's behaviour could be observed through the way people drive in their countries: power has priority. This observation has been confirmed by what I saw in movie scenes about life in those countries and the behaviour of clients from those countries, who have come to the MRC for help. Among 40 clients I have served, ten have not been pushy; at least half have not accepted a negative answer.

Tamara and her husband, also an ANU scholar, told me that when they were in India to study Sanskrit and Buddhism, they used to observe men's attitudes in the bus. 'Each would try to maximise his space by spreading his legs and arms as far as possible. If you allowed him more space, you would be squashed. You have to push back as far as you can'. Being pushy is a necessity in Sri Lanka, as a most recent visiting scholar, a PhD holder educated in the US, confirmed my observation: 'That's the way bureaucracy functions in my country. If you don't keep pushing, you'll never get anywhere'.

There is no poverty among the Dunera Boys in Australia; they supported one another despite the wide range of educational and cultural differences among them. There is no beggar in ethnic Chinese communities in Vietnam, Fiji or a dozen countries in the world I have visited but, in spite of the fact that Indians dominate the economy, I encountered Indian beggars in Suva when I last visited Fiji. The caste system appears to prevent people from supporting one another even though they belong to the same race and community.

A new national identity in Sri Lanka and the use of Sinhala as the national language for education appear to have reduced class-consciousness among young Sri Lankans. While these individuals knew exactly what they wanted,
they were unaware of what was expected of them. They were also uncompromising about their demands. For example, three Sri Lankans approached me about English classes at the MRC. I informed them that one was being conducted and suggested they go in to experience it. They refused without explanation, saying that they 'would come back on Thursday.' Having heard that the MRC had received $5000 from the Chief Minister's office to run workshops on small business for women, an Indian woman phoned for help to set up a garment trade in Australia. I informed her that she could come and discuss with me what she wanted to know and we would work out a program together. She repeated three times what she needed to know and told me to find out the information for her, as if she had not heard what I had said. Workers and volunteers at the MRC have complained to me that people from caste cultures treat them as servants, born to serve them and their communities. I have been told that people from lower castes and the untouchables are gentle and considerate, but I have never had any experience with them because people I have interacted with in Australia are from high castes.

On the other hand, Howard Gardner wrote: 'Yogis of India posit a theory of the development of self which is far more complex and differentiated than any embraced in the West. The way in which the Realm of the person is carved serves as another useful point of comparison.' Perhaps the caste system which prevents free exchange of thoughts and emotions between people living in the same geographical region has generated extra depth in self-understanding (intrapersonal intelligence), as nomadic living has resulted in the Aboriginal ability to see four times as far as the average non-Aboriginal Australian. So far, generalisation has been classified by professional multiculturalists and professional ethnicities as stereotyping to be avoided. Cultural conditioning which may hinder multiculturalism (social coherence in cultural diversity) has been swept under the carpet; instead, its potential negative power should be exposed to reduce, if not eliminate, outdated and undesirable cultural practices. Male community leaders have used cultural preservation as an excuse to treat women as inferior beings and keep children from participating in, and interacting with, other cultures.

To understand the impact of cultural practices on multicultural Australia it is necessary to study the politics of multiculturalism. For the time being, I am interested in the practical aspect of understanding cultural differences and cultural conditioning to design better training material and to improve my approach to fulfil my brief as the coordinator of a multicultural community service provider in the ACT and Queanbeyan.

5.5 Personal Development

Understanding cultural conditioning and learning modes has helped me improve my communication and training skills. I have learned to recognise the limit of verbal expression and individual major intelligences. Subsequently I have applied contextual relevance and the theory of multiple intelligences to everyday situations to help myself and clients overcome cultural and social barriers, and to reduce our apprehension and alienation.

I have also learned to understand, to respect and to avoid provoking people's unconscious reaction (pressing the wrong button) and to discern individual behaviour within the same culture.

Having helped about a dozen clients overcome debilitating depression by helping them secure appropriate employment, I have learned that the most effective therapy for depressed people is the provision of opportunities to demonstrate their outstanding skills. Conversely, action research is not suitable for people in crisis; they need re-assurance — routine activities they are familiar with and tasks they can perform with expertise — to feel empowered and to recover.
6 MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT II: TRAINING FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE TEST

The Administrative Service Test training has great potential because it aims at preparation for entry to the largest employing body: the government — local, state and federal. Its title suggests something measurable because there is a test at the end of the course. As a course it contains specific components: vocabulary, critical thinking, arithmetic, spelling and accuracy checking. Each component is valuable in itself. It is for both professionals and non-professionals, and has the potential to become a multipurpose program.

Past experience has shown that no matter how carefully the training course timetable was designed and the starting time was chosen, there were always people who missed out. Thinking of the Sydney Women Writers’ Workshop which was open to anyone at any time, I suggested to participants that we have an open training program so that people could join at any time. To make sure that those who worked during the day would not miss out, we also agreed that training sessions would take place on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings.

6.1 The Trainer

Believing in role models I invited an Indian trainer as a volunteer at first, then as a paid worker. Unfortunately the effect she had on her students was an unfavourable one. I observed how people’s self-esteem became quickly shattered because, coming from the second highest caste in India, she used the terms ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ to compliment people who performed well and told them how kind I was to them and that, therefore, they needed to respond to my kindness accordingly.

The number of participants dropped to such an alarmingly low level (two or three) that I asked Tamara for help and the Indian trainer to assist Tamara with registration of names and to serve tea and coffee until the funds for her trainer’s position ran out. Tamara’s assistance retrieved lost participants and gained some more. However, Tamara was not able to stay on for half a year; therefore I recruited Tom, an economist with extensive experience in training and interviewing in the Commonwealth Public Service. He promised to help me develop training material but was unable to do so. He used the same sample test and explained again and again all the sections. I observed that participants’ understanding of the subject did not improve.
However, on the two occasions when Tom was absent and I called in my son Tonio to help, the situation was reversed; the participants seemed to absorb everything Tonio said even though he always speaks very fast. They kept repeatedly asking for him. The number of participants increased sharply from one session to another. There seemed to be a real bond between Tonio, a private enterprise consultant in computer animation and graphic design, and ‘housewives’ who have been unemployed for years. It was obvious that Tonio’s handsome face and his attractive voice contributed to his success, but he was also a born trainer and obtained results. I liked what he did: he drew things as he spoke; he transformed words into pictures and one picture into another. His drawings assisted the participants’ understanding of English. He speaks accurate standard English (he obtained 97 per cent in his HSC English) and assists non-migrants to understand graphs. Participants told me that he carefully measured their non-verbal response. When he asked whether everyone understood, if they said no or appeared confused, he would explain again, in a different way. He repeated the explanation again and again in a different way each time until everyone understood. I found out later, from talking to Ms Kate Carnell, an ACT politician, that training in pharmacology requires pharmacists to explain dosage and procedures to clients in three different ways.

To test my assumption, I asked Tonio to leave and let Tom resume his training. I then observed Tom’s mode of teaching: he repeated the same explanation given in the sample test with little deviation. ‘I must admit that I cannot develop mock tests of the same standard, let alone better ones, that’s why I haven’t done anything’, he said finally. This proved that Tom had misunderstood my requirement: I had asked him to observe Tonio and prepare different forms of mock tests for variety so that the same participants would not be bored while new ones would not have difficulty in following my principle of open class which people can join any time when it is convenient to them.

Tamara and Tom explained to participants how to handle critical thinking again and again. They observed that although Vietnamese and Chinese had immense difficulty with English, they had no problems with analytical thinking; however, the majority of people from Indian and related cultures kept asking what they should do to achieve the highest marks: ‘Show us the correct way’, they implored Tamara. Tamara withdrew after a short time to return to her own work (tutoring Sanskrit at the ANU). Renata participated when I needed her and when she had time to spare. Tom remained unable to produce any new material.
I tried to recruit volunteers from different cultures. Many said they would help, but all except one were unable to prepare training material. Killion came from Zambia with a Masters' degree in Education from the University of London and a decade of experience in training all over the world. He helped me prepare excellent material for English for one session but said that it was too time-consuming. The participants left the program one by one until only two remained. Even though I did not feel confident that I could develop effective training material because I had never taken the test, in desperation I decided to train with Tom, hoping that he would notice my different style. Instead of approaching participants as their teacher — although I explained carefully my action research learning model and insisted on using the term 'participants' to indicate informality and equality between trainees and trainers, instead of the term 'students', Tom and others kept using the term 'students' — I approached them as co-learners and learnt from them contextual relevance. I had no time to explain; I just handed a mock test to them and returned to my office. When the time was up, I would tell them the answers with brief explanations. Participants returned to fill the training room.

6.2 Training modes and materials

They returned because of our relationship. However, the number of people who understood critical thinking did not increase. It became clear to me that our training modes vary according to our learning modes because we learn before we train and we train not only according to what but also how we have learned it. Discussing the matter with Tamara, I discovered that we have similar, if not identical, learning modes; in addition, her training material and mine are identical in design. Both of us have highly developed conceptual, analytical, linguistic and logic intelligences although our socio-economic and family backgrounds and temperaments differ. Her parents are academic, mine non-academic. Our training styles are almost identical.

Tom dropped out altogether. I had no choice but to forge ahead; the test was going to take place in twelve weeks. I worked in a fury to prepare material, any kind of material. Having no time to read world literature for vocabulary, I took excerpts from feminist writing and government policies and publications such as Equal Employment Opportunities, Multiculturalism and the Law, Access and Equity, Occupational Health Safety in the

54 Alan Hodge, Australian Identity in a Multicultural Society, Canberra Office of Multicultural Affairs, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Policy of Option Papers), Canberra, 1988.
Workforce, *Industrial Democracy* — whatever came to my desk. Not only did participants attend regularly, but they would come to ask for handouts when they needed to stay away from training.

I worked about twenty hours a week overtime to sort out what training material I could provide four times a week, starting with four pages and increasing to twelve pages per session as participants became more proficient. I worked day and night with one single principle: material used must provide new information while maintaining the same degree of difficulty as the sample test. Not being able to draw graphs, I used the same one with different questions until I became sick of looking at the same graph; I then used graphs from BHP, Bankers’ Trust, among others and Department of Immigration and Ethnic affairs (DIEA) reports. Finally I found four excellent graphs from the *Scientific American* with ready analysis. I used all four as I had no time to read the long and complex article on electronic communication.

Contrary to my anticipation of complaints, participants loved the graphs and asked for more. From then on, I used at least three graphs for each mock test. Participants seemed to enjoy training more as time went on. Some five to ten sessions later, most people, especially those from the Indian subcontinent, understood critical thinking and graphs.

One Indian grandmother with four years of high school told me she had not understood before because she thought ‘early 1960s’ meant January, February, March and April of 1960. It turned out that I did not understand that concept either. I thought that early 1960s meant 1961, 1962, 1963; ‘middle 1960s’ meant 1964, 1965, 1966; and ‘late 1960s’ meant 1967, 1968, 1969. It seemed logical to me. However, in the test ‘early 1960s’ meant from 1960 to 1965 and ‘late 1960s’ meant from 1966 to 1970. I considered that strange because 1970 should not be included in the 1960s, but my Australian son saw that as perfectly normal. Within my family, there were two interpretations. Yet the Public Service assumes that there could be only one understanding of these terms in the question. Again a picture is worth a thousand words. The graph arrangement not only explains but also illustrates what the explanation means.

Moving from one single graph (concrete picture) with one unit of questions and answers (abstract explanation) to several graphs with the same number

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55 Books handed out by the Commonwealth and the ACT governments to seek public comments.
of explanations each belonging to a specific graph, I have trained participants in critical thinking in the most concrete and non-
patronising/non-threatening manner. Feeling grateful to me for having worked overtime to help them, they did not want to participate in critical thinking for fear that criticism of my material might hurt my feelings and our relationship.

In addition, for those who are familiar with statistics in their own language (newly arrived statisticians, for instance), graphs (or well-defined pictures) are employed as tools to teach English. Thus I have not used English to teach English. Instead, I used graphs (pictures) to teach language (English). This makes sense: people who do not speak the same language can play sports such as tennis, soccer and cricket with one another, as we have observed in international tournaments. Language is no more than a set of rules through which people communicate their needs.\textsuperscript{56}

Tamara dropped in to see how I was progressing; I told her the good news. She reflected for a while and said: 'It makes sense: in India, traditional people learn by repeating things seven times. I'll translate a page of that from Pali for you. This [linking the learning mode with the training mode] is an important breakthrough because one Tibetan monk was failed by a university although he was a fine scholar. No-one knew why he failed. It's really good that you identify the cultural factor. The man wouldn't have failed if the university had known this'.

We celebrated the success together. Suddenly people understood what they had not understood for six months although they had continued to attend because of the special relationship that had developed between us and because there was no alternative for them.

Then Tamara offered the following pertinent comparison: 'In Slovenian we say "I've read it all"; in German people say, "I know it all", but in Hindi and Pali, people say, "I've heard it all". India has an oral tradition while Slovenia and Germany have written ones. Many third-world languages remain oral. In Vietnam there are often many different ways to spell one word, not only because Vietnamese literature is still at a developmental stage but also because the national alphabet was only recently adopted. My Zambian friend agreed with me. In oral traditions, people learn by repeating what has been said because, without written material, they need to memorise information before processing it.

\textsuperscript{56} Evidence available on request.
When I presented the new training material to Graham, his reaction was: 'It looks like a puzzle'. Since then, to eliminate my interpretation of the public service definition and further disadvantage to clients, I have followed the model developed with four graphs from the *Scientific American*, using graphs I collected from the Bureau of Immigration Research of the former Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs.

6.3 Test Components

I took passages from *Hansard*, public service guidelines, and pamphlets on various illnesses and diseases I picked up from doctors' surgeries. English used as training material had relevant content: who would not want to be informed about the new country? I also used articles written by well-known Australian writers, such as Frank Moorhouse, about other countries to design vocabulary tests. Familiar subjects further assisted migrants in learning English: for example, Chinese would be able to guess the meanings of the words in articles about China and Indonesians would guess meanings of the words in articles about Indonesia. Familiar content can therefore facilitate learning.

- **Aptitude Test**

In addition to material from books such as *Check Your Own IQ*, I also designed my own by coding messages in numbers and asking people to choose one out of five messages in words, thus helping them transfer number to letter quickly.\(^{57}\).

- **Accuracy Test**

For the accuracy test I photocopied names, addresses and telephone numbers in the directory, randomly removed some letters or numbers from one page and retained all in the other, then asked participants to compare the two versions. I showed them how I had designed the first test and asked them to do the same. Although I had failed to facilitate the formation of self-training groups among people living within walking distance from one another, I was able to encourage participants to share their skills: they would develop tests for one another so as to improve one another's chances\(^{58}\). For example, engineers would prepare arithmetic for language teachers and vice versa.

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57 Evidence available on request.
58 Evidence available on request.
• Arithmetic Test

Apart from some different symbols and the conversion of metres to feet and miles, this test is universally understood and requires rigorous training. Its preparation is time consuming, but it is not difficult to design. I was able to encourage participants to share the responsibility for designing the test\textsuperscript{59}.

6.4 Test Evaluation

\textit{English}

All those who had been asked (sixty-five) said they found the English training useful because they learnt vocabulary in frequent usage and they learnt the useful words. Migrants with professional qualifications benefited the most. Some who came with little knowledge of English became fluent after three months of training.

\textit{Feedback by peers and government}

Renata and Tamara were happy with the result. The MRC has been recognised as an organisation with training skills and further awarded the maximum grant of $10,000 from the Chief Minister’s Office to train unemployed youths from non-English-speaking cultures. I was invited to train twenty-five Graduate Assistants for the Department of Education, Employment and Training, using the interactive method I designed for all training by the MRC. Twenty-four participants responded positively to the method\textsuperscript{60}. At the time I was writing this chapter (mid July 1992) I had been invited to address two national conferences on training and education. This chapter was delivered as a paper to the Conference on Community Education organised by the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education in December 1992 as the ACT Department of Education is developing curricula based on Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

\textit{Statistics}

The number of participants increased by 82 from 6 December 1991 to 15 February 1992. In total there have been 132 participants from 37 countries: 1 Afghan, 1 Australian by birth, 3 Bangladeshis, 3 Brazilians, 1 Bulgarian, 1

\textsuperscript{59} Evidence available on request.

\textsuperscript{60} Evidence available on request.
Burmese, 1 Chilean, 5 Chinese, 1 Cypriot, 1 Czechoslovakian, 2 El Salvadorians, 1 English, 2 Eritreans, 1 Ethiopian, 1 German, 1 Ghanaian, 1 Greek, 7 Indians, 1 Indonesian, 1 Japanese, 1 Kenyan, 1 Korean, 1 Lao, 1 Lebanese, 2 Mauritians, 1 Nicaraguan, 2 Pakistani, 1 Filipino, 4 Poles, 2 Portuguese, 1 Scot, 2 Somalis, 6 Spaniards, 19 Sri Lankans, 2 Thais, 4 Yugoslavs, and 1 Zambians.

**Gender**

a. Two thirds of them were women; 57 registered:

- 26 with degrees from Bachelor to PhD:
  - 22 were unemployed at the time they started training;
  - 3 did not specify their employment status;
  - 1 was studying for a graduate diploma;
- 6 with qualifications not recognised by Australia:
  - 3 were unemployed at the time they started training;
  - 3 did not specify their employment status;
- 25 without qualifications:
  - 14 were unemployed at the time they started training (including one with recognised technical certificate);
  - 6 were students at TAFE full time;
  - 1 was studying 3rd year at the ANU;
  - 2 had just completed high school;
  - 3 did not specify their employment status;

b. One-third were men; 22 registered:

- 17 with recognised tertiary qualifications:
  - all were unemployed at the time they started training;
- 1 with tertiary qualifications not recognised, unemployed at the time he started training;
- 4 without tertiary qualifications although 1 had tertiary education:
  - 3 were unemployed at the time they started training;
  - 1 did not specify his employment status.

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61 The number of people from those countries is smaller than 132 because registration was not taken while the grant submitted for the project by the MRC was being processed.
Telephone survey by the MRC over one week

- None of the women were at home during working hours.
- 8 (one-third of the men) were employed. It was not possible to find out whether their employment was casual, part time or full time because their families (mostly wives) did not speak English well enough to answer the question in detail.

Feedback in March 1993 shows that over one-third (50 out of 142) of the participants have gained employment in the public, community and private sectors. Six have achieved middle management positions or equivalent.

6.5 Questionnaire

On the day 65 people attended, a representative of the participants told the trainer that the group wanted to collect a dollar each to buy a present for me. As the Management Committee Member present, Renata said it was against the MRC regulations to accept presents. Instead I asked them to answer a questionnaire and permit me to use the data for my thesis. They agreed to let me use the data. We had a last-minute influx of participants and therefore had an insufficient number of copies of the questionnaire. We started to photocopy frantically. Because the photocopier would not work after thirty copies had been done, that was the number of copies we were able to distribute. To make matters worse, only twenty stayed to fill in the questionnaire; others had to leave as they were being collected by their families.

To ensure that the answers truly reflected respondents' opinions, Renata (who has extensive experience in training) and Tamara (who has extensive international academic experience) were involved in devising the questionnaire; Renata is also a member of the Management Committee, and Tamara is a co-trainer who had closely observed the program after she withdrew from it. The questions were formulated in such a way as to avoid 'fishing' for compliments; some even contradicted or duplicated one another to detect those who had not understood the questions fully. Before distributing the questionnaire, I also urged people to give their frank opinion so that future programs would be improved to suit everyone.
Questionnaire findings

a. In what aspect are you dissatisfied with the training?
   - 8 wrote in satisfied;
   - 2 fully satisfied;
   - 2 not stated;
   - 1 dissatisfied.

b. How can trainer/training be improved?
   8 people suggested:
   - Improving critical thinking;
   - Trainer too frequently interrupted by telephone;
   - Other participants often turned up late and unprepared;
   - Trainer spoke too fast; it was hard to grasp the facts;
   - Training for interviews should also be added to each session;
   2 wanted definite answers (sic)

c. How often and when should training take place?

   - Once: 1
   - Twice: 2
   - Three times: 4
   - Every day: 2
   - Saturday: 4
   - Evening: 1
   - Monday: 1
   - As is: 6

Since at the time the survey was conducted there were four sessions a week, it is reasonable to conclude that ten people (50 per cent) surveyed considered the time chosen to be suitable.

d. What should be done to encourage participation?

   - Give lots of practical tests from previous year: 1
   - No comment: 8
   - Homework: 4
   - Good as is: 1
   - Group discussions: 2
   - Trainer to correct test: 1
- More mock tests: 3
- More quality: 1
- Indecipherable: 1

e. Part 1: Knowledge gained:
   - Australian culture: 7 definite yes, 1 little;
   - Public Service: 11 definite yes, 1 little;
   - About self and own culture: 5 definite yes;

Part 2: Self-confidence gained:
   - Through participation: 14 definite yes;
   - Through observation: 8 definite yes;
   - Through role models: 4 definite yes.

f. Is the training culturally appropriate for you?
   - Definite yes: 12
   - Not applicable: 1

g. What are the factors not yet considered?
   - Cultural: 3
   - Religious: 5
   - Personal (written in): 4
   - More trainers (written in): 3

h. Is child care a problem?
   - Yes: 4
   - No: 9

This is contrary to the responses in class. Most women said they could not come for training during the week because they had to look after their small children. Some babysat to subsidise their family income. The questionnaire was handed out on a Saturday: it reflected only the situation when their husbands stayed at home to look after the children. In January 1993 the Ethnic Support Worker asked me to help organise weekend English classes for ethnic Family Day Carers (women who looked after children in their homes).

Further Comments

Thirteen people wrote comments:

• 'She is doing a good job. Thank her very much'.
- 'Thank you very much for your support for the public service test'.

- 'The mathematical part of the teaching is very appropriate. We need definite answers for "critical thinking" sections, because this section itself carries answers with a lot of doubts'.

- 'Practising arithmetic tests. The teacher was very good'. (signed)

- 'I am very thankful to the organisers here for providing us such a nice training and wish that this programme continues; also like to be part of the Migrant Resource Centre and help fellow migrants'. (signed)

- 'I am happy as the way you are running administrative test very well. I enjoy every minute when I am here'.

- 'This is a good opportunity for the migrants to come to know the Australian public service and culture'.

- 'It is a very good opportunity for the migrants. One gains self-confidence and tries to get better. Thanks a lot to you and the participating people'. (signed)

- 'She is doing a very hard and well job' *(sic)* Thank you.

- 'Migrant Resource Centre (and the staff) serves a very useful purpose in helping migrants of various ethnic origins to improve their skills. I would like to see its services advertised more frequently on TV and newspapers. It is also preferable to extend the Centre to other population centres such as Belconnen and Tuggeranong' *(sic)*

- 'Lack of publicity as I am here for four months and my sister was here for one year and we did not know that such help from the Migrant Resource Centre could be obtained till lately. I hope for future migrants, the CES will inform them of such activities as I had only attended four sessions and I feel a lot of difference and I am depressed that I did not know earlier' *(sic)*.

- 'This system should be encouraged by inviting more volunteers to teach various aspects of the test instead of one person teaching all at the same time'.
Those who wrote 'satisfied' and 'fully satisfied' were also those who said that the training was culturally appropriate. Two who did not respond at all to the question concerning dissatisfaction also considered training culturally appropriate. Thus 60 per cent of respondents considered it appropriate.

Addressing issues raised in the questionnaire

Some issues cannot be addressed: people will continue to be unpunctual because punctuality is a cultural conditioning. In India, for example, turning up less than an hour late to a dinner invitation would be considered greedy. In Mexico, people can be up to three hours late. Vietnamese say yes out of politeness, not commitment. I have often alluded to the proverb, 'Upon entering a house, one must follow its customs', and achieved some acculturation among the Vietnamese with the help of an older Vietnamese. While some respondents asked for more volunteer trainers, none has volunteered to do the training or at least follow my suggestion of the interactive method of study group and sharing.

To help migrants learn English faster and more easily, I organised a pronunciation class. ESL teachers have told me that, before the introduction of the Adult Migrants' English Service (AMES), migrants had learned English while playing soccer with native speakers. I therefore attempted to apply for a grant to organise a multicultural soccer team for young people, but I was unsuccessful.

6.6 Reflections on Success:
What is critical thinking in non-critical cultures?

It is reasonable to assume that people thought critically before logic was named. Children learn languages and drawing with great ease even before going to school. However, adults with sophisticated knowledge and years of experience (conditioning) often find learning other languages difficult, particularly if they learn the second language for the first time. Our ancestors predicted the weather after a long process of accumulating and analysing information on natural phenomena. In ancient times people would look at the changing sky, associate cloud patterns with the weather and memorise correct predictions crucial to their survival. Looking at the clouds around the moon or feeling the wind, my grandmother was able to predict natural phenomena vital to her planting and transplanting of rice. Her prediction of the weather was at least as accurate as that of the modern forecast although her expertise was more limited.

My grandmother never went to school, nor did she ever hear of Western logic. Being an obedient daughter, then wife, she did not talk much. I did not hear her criticise her in-laws until six months before she died at eighty. She did not have a clock until she moved to Saigon to live with us. At seventy she learnt to read the time. No-one had taught her how to because we had forgotten that my grandmother had lived in a different era when watches and clocks were not available to everyone. She counted the numbers on the face of the clock, then divided its face into quarters and then twelfths until she could tell the time, using its long and short hands. She learnt by observation and analysis.

Thus, at a non-participatory level, and in indirect cultures (children do not teach their parents, and grandchildren do not teach their grandparents either), analytical thinking is achieved by sorting out similarities and differences through the matching and rejecting process such as the game in Sesame Street: ‘Three of these things belong together, one of these things doesn’t belong here...’ Children love singing along as they learn their lessons of analysis (or affirm their pre-existing skills, according to Plato). People from indirect cultures learn to match graphs with explanations as they learn what is required by the Western concept of critical thinking.

I had wondered why the Chinese had no difficulty with understanding Western logic (critical thinking) even though they are non-participatory and indirect. The answer came unexpectedly: ‘I don’t understand what you say but I’ll do exactly what you do’, one participant said. The Chinese memorised and imitated all answers. When they covered a wide range of questions and answers, they could then handle variation. Tamara reported similar findings: her Chinese student of Sanskrit also learnt by memorising and imitating. Instead of following her explanation of grammar to find linguistic pattern, he would memorise all conjugated verbs belonging to the same group and ignore similarities. I learnt the difference between learning by imitation and learning by repetition: the former requires the exact replica of the model while the latter merely requires repetition without insisting on a standard outcome. A Chinese volunteer managed to help me develop IQ tests which neither Tom nor any other was able to do despite their knowledge. Westerners often sacrifice standards for originality (high school students can often do great research but remain unable to add, multiply or divide simple numbers without a calculator).

On the Multicultural Senior Citizens’ Day in 1992, an origami
demonstration by a Japanese was organised by the Canberra Senior Citizens' Club to entertain participants aged from fifty-five to over ninety. A Vietnamese woman aged seventy-nine made a perfect duplicate of the model. This was nothing unusual, I thought, because the Vietnamese are familiar with origami. Shortly after that, however, in a food exhibition, another Vietnamese woman of similar age made a perfect swan out of apple wedges. Being thirty years younger, I was unable to duplicate it because, as a child, I had not been allowed to imitate others.

6.7 Recommendations

Multicultural training is about designing material and a training style suitable for a multiplicity of learning modes. At least 70 per cent of the people from the course have learned critical thinking which many Australians by birth are still trying to grasp. I therefore conclude that a cultural smorgasbord has been intuitively served. Now I have to write its 'recipe'.

While differentiating one individual student's need from another's is essential to success, developing teaching or training material requires the general understanding of the participating population. Although there are uncountable cultural differences, learning modes are fewer: by using 'pictures' to train people in critical thinking I responded to people from a number of different cultures and of different intelligences: those who come from rote-learning traditions, those who come from imitation cultures, those who come from the Buddhist culture which emphasises correctness, those who do not possess logic and linguistic intelligences and so on. By using a multicultural content and a wide range of subjects — from legal to medical — I got participants interested by giving them useful and relevant information, just as the Open Learning Program on Standard Deviation aroused my interest in statistics because it used literature (on 16 July 1992, standard deviation established the probability that a poem was written by Shakespeare because it contained the same degree of literary complexity and the same number of new words). Participants told me that, for the first time, they were not treated like children who knew nothing.

Rigorous training has helped a grandmother handle the IQ test and those who feared numbers handle arithmetic tests. Although the Administrative Service Test helped only a few gain employment in the Public Service, it has

63 University courses on statistics, French, anthropology and religion shown on the ABC television network from 7:30 to 8 a.m., since the beginning of the 1992 school year.
helped everyone gain self-confidence.

6.8 Comprehensive data

- The number of participants steadily increases.
- All turn up on time if not early, including those who come from 'late' cultures. There is a strong indication that clients have realised how things work (punctuality and consistency), so they act accordingly to their own advantage instead of rejecting an imposition on their culture. I never insisted that they be on time.
- The MRC services have gained popularity through referrals from, as well as passive information displayed by, the CES and other agencies.
- The 1992 review of MRC's performance around Australia by the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs has resulted in a four year core funding for four positions: Coordinator paid at ASO 6 level (manager), Community Project Officer paid at ASO 5 level, Assistant Coordinator paid at ASO 3 level and a receptionist paid at ASO 1 level, starting from 1 January 1993. Thus the MRC has two extra positions (Assistant Coordinator and Community Project Officer) and I am given a substantial raise in salary. The MRC decides to appoint the Community Project/Employment Liaison Officer (ASO 5) to focus on training new arrivals as a component of the settlement service. It is too early to know how other MRCs have used this extra funding.
- Clients are making appointments to see me and turning up on time.
- The MRC Management Committee is actively promoting employment training within the MRC. Instead of discouraging me from training migrants for employment, the MRC Management Committee has created a new position of Employment Liaison Officer to train and resource mainstream trainers to address employment needs of people of non-English-speaking backgrounds.
- The MRC is training workers in refuges funded by the Supported Assisted Accommodation Program (SAAP) services in 1993 as the trainer has observed that while SAAP services workers enjoyed cultural training, they have not succeeded in applying what they learnt.
- It appears that the principle in Western cultures based on the Christian ethics of turning the other cheek (forgiveness and charity) results in the willingness to assist people who are disadvantaged (inferior), whereas Confucian cultures based on meritocracy and righteousness leave social welfare to families and friends. Influenced by Western cultures (French and American), Vietnamese culture has become fragmented. Loyalty has been seriously undermined by political conflict and individualism; the
Vietnamese cope poorly in Australia: there is little understanding between the achievers and those with learning difficulties. This factor has often been overlooked by policy makers for fear of stereotyping, and by social researchers relying on statistical information. In reality, the unemployment rate in the Vietnamese community is much lower than the official figure. Except for students and some social drop-outs, my research on youth training has found that most Vietnamese classified as long-term unemployed are earning money under the counter, making spring rolls and other small goods for restaurants, take-aways and Chinese food shops, sewing for boutiques, repairing cars in the backyard, and the like. People from countries without a social welfare tradition treat unemployment and other social benefits as regular and permanent incomes. Those with large families often regard the few who work for less than the free benefits as stupid.

At the end of my research, Chinese clients from Vietnam asked me for help against the treatment they received from Tienanmen Square Chinese students who were permanent residents in Australia: ‘As soon as they are no longer worried about being kicked out of the country, they start to kick other Asians, first a Cambodian, then Vietnamese to create vacancies for their friends’.

I went to the scene of the alleged crime and interviewed seven Cambodians, Vietnamese and overseas Chinese to find that an ex-sports coach and his wife had bought shares in a factory to gain employment before they were granted permanent residence. At first they got along well with other workers; they worked hard and earned the trust of their employer/partner who appointed the wife who spoke better English as assistant manager. Overseas Chinese who spoke the same language were drawn to the couple as they recruited more Chinese. Mainland and overseas Chinese quickly formed a majority.

Even the dismissal of a Cambodian for spitting and urinating on the factory floor did not deter friendship between the Chinese born in China and those born overseas. No-one questioned the management decision. The Cambodian’s mother also worked in the same factory. She said nothing. I asked seven witnesses about the assault and found that intimidation had taken place since the coach had been allowed to remain permanently in Australia. The Cambodian had not spat or urinated on the floor. Spitting is a Chinese habit, not a Cambodian one. In addition, the Cambodian grew up in Australia and was fluent in English.

I suggested that the victim sue the coach for common assault and
compensation, and I helped him receive immediate unemployment benefit.
You have to return to the witnesses and ask them to make written statements about what they saw', I urged, but suddenly everyone changed his or her mind for fear of more serious violence.

Further investigation revealed that the tactic mentioned above is not uncommon among the Chinese who had grown up during the Cultural Revolution. In addition, any improvement in China before the free market era took two years no matter how small. A Chinese would therefore wait for two years during which he or she would do anything to facilitate change, such as getting people fired or gaining trust from people in power. The use of false evidence is not uncommon either. Working with the police and a Chinese informer I discovered that many of the Tienanmen Square students who came to me for help had used false qualifications.

I failed to understand the impact of Buddhism and Confucianism in Australian society. While Buddhism helped Vietnamese refugees struggling to stay alive to accept possible death, it has undermined their integration into Australian society. Some Buddhist leaders have advised battered women to remain with their husbands: 'It's your karma'. Yet the same leaders have modified their own behaviour: smoking and eating meat. Clients have expressed their anger that meat is prepared at a Buddhist Temple for sale to restaurants. They worked for no wages to aid payment of the large debt incurred by the construction of the ostentatious Temple (which they considered unnecessary). It is difficult to know whether or how much of this claim is true. I observed only that young Vietnamese have given up employment training to work as volunteers at the Buddhist Temple, making spring rolls for Saturday lunches.

The problem with Confucian teaching has also become obvious to me. Since the father is the absolute power in the family and the son is the servant, Vietnamese boys have great difficulty adjusting to freedom and participation in Australia. One boy attacked a police officer because he wanted to go to gaol. At the police station, he was asked what he would do if he were not gaol ed, the boy said he would return to his father. It made no sense to me at first. He could not explain the inconsistency between his two statements. He did, however, say that he was depressed, having no job, no money, no pleasure in life... After careful consideration, I realised that his statements were consistent: since the state (emperor) has power over his father, imprisonment was a means for the son to free himself from the irresponsible,

64 See Cultural Revolution in Appendix 8
drunken father — Confucian logic.

During my three and a half years at the MRC I observed that migration affects men worse than it does women. I then asked women attending a function about this observation. They all agreed. Cultural and family dysfunction in the Vietnamese community is serious. It is necessary to develop training for social workers and counsellors who assist Vietnamese and other Confucians.
The government recruited fewer and fewer workers every year as the recession continued. To help migrants more effectively, I organised a free job-application service and interview training for individuals and groups.

7.1 Job Application Service

To have an application written by a professional can cost more than one's weekly unemployment benefit. Migrants compete poorly in the labour market because many do not know how to address the selection criteria, write an effective résumé or ask for a reference. To address Access and Equity in the labour market, I organised this free service shortly after I had been appointed. Together with interview training, fifty migrants have gained employment through this service.

7.1.1 Employment counselling

Although the Administrative Service Test training is culturally suitable for young professionals and people without qualifications, it could be embarrassing for those who had been in the work force overseas or in Australia for many years. Unemployed migrants have benefited greatly from counselling; they have felt more positive about further training in Australia after realising that they are not alone, that there are doctors, lawyers, economists and other professionals like them who used to be unemployed but who have successfully changed professions after training.

NESB migrants who have been informed over the phone that they had been selected for a position but they were not actually appointed were convinced that they were victims of injustice, if not racial discrimination. By investigating their cases carefully I found that others from non-English-speaking backgrounds had received similar treatment; I could therefore conclude only that there may have been unfair discrimination against them. I was then able to help them address the issue. On the other hand, if my investigation showed that people of Anglo-Celtic backgrounds were in the same boat, I could console migrants that it was the recession, and help them redirect their energy to more positive purposes.

Many Australians still treat migrants as if they knew nothing. Not knowing English has often been mistaken for being illiterate, if not stupid. Those who
treat non-English-speaking migrants as illiterate do not realise that they, too, are illiterate, as everyone is illiterate in some language.

By informing recent arrivals about job vacancies, skills and qualification recognition services, I have saved the government unnecessary expense and migrants much heartache. Without adequate and appropriate information, many migrants have been trained in dozens of Skillshare and volunteer agencies thinking that the more training and experience they acquire the better their chances become; some have even sacrificed their professional competence for uncoordinated experience and training and have become depressed. One engineer from Sri Lanka on the Job Start Scheme was given Meals On Wheels for work experience; he was sent to me for moral support. An artist with high standing from Macedonia was also depressed because of unemployment, so the same social worker referred him to me. I went to his house to look at his paintings, then advised him to apply to the Australia Council for a grant to exhibit them. His depression has been replaced by enthusiasm: 'I may not get the grant but I am applying anyway; I have half a chance; if I don’t apply, I have none'.

Thus I have helped unemployed migrants realise that they need not only to secure jobs and retain their professional identity, but to select effective and appropriate training and retraining to maintain and upgrade their professional competence for continued employment.

7.1.2 Work experience

Many migrants, especially professional ones, have come to the MRC to ask me to let them do anything. I have assigned them research projects so that I could monitor and evaluate their performance and give them effective references. First interviews have changed the outlook of many unemployed. Knowing people personally has also helped me understand their needs and expectations for more effective assistance.

Even unemployed people born in Australia have great difficulty in obtaining work experience. As a migrant service organisation employee, I have taken in all migrants who came for work experience and set up programs to meet their immediate needs. Migrants felt at home with me and at the MRC. The Link Agency (a community service organisation in Tuggeranong) reported that no migrant attended its employment training programs while standing room only was available at the MRC.

On the above principles and philosophy, I organised the job application
service and training for job interviews to be carried out by the Social Welfare Worker and myself. For the first time, I am satisfied that I have not exploited migrants for my Master’s degree; it has been a fair exchange between my clients’ training and employment, and my research.

7.1.3 References

Migrants need local references which address specific selection criteria in order to succeed in securing employment. Unfortunately most of those who train them are unwilling or unable to write effective references. To address this vital need, I asked migrants to perform their voluntary duties to the best of their ability. I would write references according to my assessment of their performance. My references would address the selection criteria specially and would convert their NESB factor into an attribute (speaking foreign languages and possessing international experience).

Good references also increase applicants’ chances at being selected for interviews. I have always advised migrants to include their references in their application.

7.2 Training for Job Interviews

7.2.1 Training components

*English pronunciation*

My dog Ripley used to bark every time a Chinese or Vietnamese visitor came, even though she was a quiet dog. I used to joke that she was racist. She would bark furiously while I taught Vietnamese at home, but she would stop barking as soon as my student and I spoke English.

Soon I realised that tonal languages disturbed her. I find it hard to listen to people who speak English with a sharp tone or too monotonously. Many of my friends have told me that they used to have difficulty following what I said because of my accent. Realising this, I organised an English pronunciation class to help migrants perform better at interviews.

*Using role plays to train migrants in body language and presentation*

Initially I asked two migrants to participate in a cross-cultural communication workshop; they said they gained so much experience by attending
the workshop that they subsequently succeeded in their job interviews. Learning from their experience, I organised interview workshops for groups and training for individuals before an interview took place. I would invite at least one person who was unknown to the client so as to attain optimum benefit.

**Video training**

To make sure that people understood their roles and the roles of the panel, I asked them to watch two video tapes, one from the interviewee’s perspective, the other from the interviewers’.

**Alternative to verbal communication**

For professionals who do not depend on verbal expression and whose English is still too limited, I would suggest the use of tools such as diagrams, written material and flowcharts instead of verbal explanations. Since the end of 1992, employment consultants have sent their clients to me for interview training, realising that mainstream consultants do not possess cross-cultural skills.

**7.2.2 Outcome**

**Two ASO 5 appointments for doctors with qualifications not recognised in Australia**

Both husband and wife had been unemployed for almost three years; they had been trained in office work and industrial cleaning at TAFE but were unable to obtain steady employment. She had casual jobs such as a cleaner of animal cages, and as a shop assistant in a pharmacy, but she was always retrenched as employers found workers (high school leavers) whom they did not have to pay as high a wage. He was a casual cleaner picking up garbage at the ACT Showground. By the time they came to the MRC, only he was still in casual employment. As they did not possess Australian qualifications they had given up hope for professional positions. They were studying for Master’s degrees by research, but stress seriously affected their ability with English and their concentration.

They had extensive experience in their former country in counselling and rehabilitation. I advised them that, although their qualifications were not recognised, their skills and experience were still valuable. I also informed them that counsellors in Australia need only experience, so they should
convert their unrecognised qualifications into new professional skills. They secured casual positions in rehabilitation counselling, then used their Australian experience to move on. Now each is employed as an ASO 5 in the former Department of Health, Housing and Community Services, one permanent, the other temporary.\(^{65}\)

**One female is employed as an ASO 4 in the Public Service**

The woman had extensive international experience but was unable to get interviews until she joined the MRC and was trained in order to acquire job interview skills.

**One former male diplomat is employed as an ASO 6**

He had been in Australia for ten years, unable to get a professional job despite his international experience and language skills. After two counselling sessions at the MRC, he secured an NGO job overseas.

**One unskilled female finds casual work**

After having been disappointed with Skillshare and TAFE training, the woman only came to the MRC to have something to do. She was too shy to approach people and 'sell' herself. In her culture, applicants must say they are willing to learn because, although they have been trained, they do not know enough. After counselling, she understood the difference between being aggressive and being assertive; she did not 'sell' herself but she needed to compete with others in presenting her skills to potential employers.

**One male finds a part-time job in a community organisation**

The man did not know that he should not answer 'nil' in oral and written communication, particularly as he spoke good English and had excellent writing skills. The reason for his answers was that, having worked exclusively as an accountant, he had not had to speak or write messages. Learning from the MRC program how to address the selection criteria, he secured a part-time job in a community organisation.

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\(^{65}\) Both are now at ASO 6s.
One female finds full-time employment at an embassy

The woman had been unemployed for some 11 years. To eliminate the pain caused by migration and the loss of professional identity, she had successfully blocked out her past achievement. By the time she joined the interview training at the MRC, she had forgotten that she was a professional woman — although she spoke four languages including Arabic, with a NAATI Certificate for level II in interpreting. After three sessions, she remembered that she had been a teacher of French in her country and that she had many other skills. She thanked me for having helped her ‘reclaim’ herself. Within six weeks she found full-time work and is now translating pamphlets into Arabic for one of the wealthiest oil-producing countries.

One female arts graduate finds a full-time job

A university graduate from a working-class background could not find employment despite her qualification (she had a Bachelor of Arts degree) and despite her fluency in French and Portuguese. She heard about the MRC program and came for work experience. She was assigned a research project and learnt a new style of research: action research. Shortly before her completion of the assignment, because of her passion for action research, she secured a full-time job as a research assistant.

One female arts graduate is employed in a community service

Similarly, another woman who had had no luck with employment was trained in action research and community development. Now she is permanently employed as a community development worker.

One unemployed female teacher finds full-time work

This new science graduate came to volunteer her services at the MRC; there was only one half-time receptionist’s position for work experience and two hours a week for volunteers. The reception work had already been taken up by at least three others. I created the first bilingual class and assigned her to teach English to senior Vietnamese migrants. A few months later, she secured employment as she received an excellent reference from me for having developed a course to teach adult migrants because the MRC had no material available.
One musician and computer graduate is employed by OTC

A Vietnamese woman with a Diploma in Computer Science (also a music teacher and performer in her country) who had failed to find employment for a year came to the MRC for help. After having had work experience at the MRC, she understood that having a job was her main objective, any kind of job, because the country was in recession. She successfully applied for a semi-skilled position with an 'excellent' reference\textsuperscript{66} from me.

Another recent graduate in computer science came to me for work experience and advice because her father, a student of an English for Senior Migrants’ class, respected me. I placed her in the reception area, as the MRC was in desperate need for a casual/temporary receptionist while interviewing to select the new one. The young woman proved to be excellent for the job; she was therefore paid for an additional eight working days. This encouraged her so much that she wanted to learn about being an efficient and effective receptionist. While she was still working at the MRC I received a request for a bilingual teachers' aid. I trained her to write an effective application and to handle interviews. She succeeded. Her unemployment status ended after four weeks at the MRC.

One experienced female legal secretary is employed as a full-time housekeeper

This woman comes from Africa; she had had many bad experiences in Australia concerning racism which caused serious stress and undermined her self-confidence and adversely affected her self-confidence and performance. Although she had been an accurate typist, working for legal firms overseas, she was not able to secure permanent positions, not only because of the recession but because of her stress caused by racist remarks such as: ‘Are you a little black or very black’, when she inquired about vacancies over the phone.

She asked me to help her get a job — any job; I suggested that she apply for a full-time housekeeper’s position. She was selected among many applicants. Although her employer was not racist she was unable to cope with her own conditioning, resenting the white employer and black servant relationship as an offensive pre-migration social model. She left the job. I

\textsuperscript{66} See 6.3. Learning Modes.
supported her to accept herself, Australian practice and social reality. She worked as a housekeeper again. Then she found a temporary office job. Since 1993, she has had permanent employment.

Temporary full-time receptionist’s position for a female new arrival

This woman participated in the MRC Pilot Project; she came for employment advice shortly after her arrival in Canberra. Freed from misinformation, she was helped to have realistic expectations. Although trained as an economist with extensive experience in her country of origin, she repeatedly failed at interviews, both because of her English and because of the discrepancy between terminology she had learned in Europe and current Australian idioms. I advised her to take any job. She then applied for the receptionist’s position in her community’s club. She was eventually dismissed for not speaking English adequately. However, she was convinced that the dismissal was unfair and was appealing to the Human Rights Commission. Thus she had learned within the first year of her arrival that her own community could be guilty of unjust discrimination, and more importantly, the Australian process of addressing unfair treatment. Now she is working as a secretary to a Parliamentarian.

A male corporate lawyer becomes a businessman

A man with international experience in business and company law was recommended to the MRC by two friends. He had been employed by Australia Post to sort mail; he left this permanent job because he was sick of the mundane nature of the work. He had been helped by his wife (an ASO 6) to write applications but without success. He was depressed and convinced that he was a victim of injustice. His behaviour became more and more aggressive. After undergoing two hours of counselling at the MRC he realised that, although he had made serious and persistent efforts to apply for professional jobs, he kept writing the same unsuccessful application, addressing an abstract set of issues with abstract statements such as ‘my written and oral communication skills are of a high order’. In other words, he repeated what was stated in the selection criteria instead of elaborating on his individual and specific experience and talents. He spoke Japanese but did not let anyone know. He had communicated in several languages with international company directors but did not name the companies or their representatives; he had secured contracts worth millions but did not mention them. At the counselling session the man took his pen and crossed out all of the applications as ‘stupid’. Then he addressed each set of selection criteria individually and specifically so that panel members could visualise him as if
he were in front of them like a lawyer presenting his case in front of the jury and judge. He thanked me for having counselled him: 'Thank you; you have helped me reclaim my professional identity'.

A few months later, his friend reported to the MRC that the lawyer had started his own company and was doing business with his native country.

*A male computer programmer is selected but not appointed*

The young man had been retrenched by a private company which had recruited him before the recession. The experience was devastating because he had never expected to be unemployed with a postgraduate degree in computer science.

At the MRC he realised what the American experience had shown: computer graduates need to have some arts component to succeed in securing employment. Everyone needs to communicate effectively. He had little oral communication skills and would freeze when interviewed; therefore I placed him in the reception area to answer clients' questions. I also set up a mock interview for him before he was interviewed. He failed in the first round, but succeeded in the second.

However, the appointment was postponed, then postponed again for months. Then it became uncertain whether he would ever be appointed, yet he was the interviewing panel's first choice. His girlfriend from the same ethnic minority had an identical experience. He was convinced that racism was the main, if not the only, factor. It was difficult to prove him wrong since another man (African) with a Master's degree in economics also received three calls to say that he had been successful without ever being appointed. Unless a survey is done, I cannot be sure that unfair discrimination against those two men did not take place.

*One NESB woman interviewed for an ASO 7 position five times*

Renata had been unsuccessful in her attempt to secure an interview for positions below the ASO 6 level because she was overqualified, having previously worked as an ASO 8. Although she did not succeed in securing employment, her seven interviews were a success. However, like her, women sharing similar experiences have become depressed and convinced that they suffered from injustice because they had repeatedly failed to secure positions despite their experience and/or qualifications; ASO 7 positions
were often, if not always, given to people who were already acting in them, they said.

From Renata’s perspective, it is difficult not to feel persuaded that she was another victim of discrimination because the feedback she received was excellent, except ‘but you lack current experience’ while the one chosen may lack knowledge. Claims against the selection criteria by one of the successful applicants who had applied for the same position as Renata included:

Having to prepare, research and deliver tutorial papers is an example of the above skills coming to fruition whilst studying... (sic)

... Having worked [actual position of receptionist omitted] at [organisation name deleted] I know that I have sound team leadership skills as aspect of my duties included having to delegate and work effectively with a small team of co-workers. Delegation ranged from daily activities of running the [organisation name omitted] to specialised tasks... (sic)

I have great understanding of the needs and aspirations of Non-English-speaking background people, this is evident, namely as I structured my degree in such a way, so to concentrate predominantly on issues ... An example so to highlight this, are the two practicences required for the completion of the abovementioned degree... (sic)

Her application was consistently illiterate. The woman was half Renata’s age, having barely completed an associate diploma; she had neither research nor language skills. Having two parents born overseas was her only claim to NESB heritage. However, she secured a Multicultural Liaison Officer’s position with minimal kitchen and reception experience. The information was given to me by her former friends.

There can be little doubt that migrants like Renata have suffered severe subtle discrimination. Fortunately, Renata finally secured a job in research.

An interview for a man at ASO 6 level

This African man had not had an interview since his arrival in Australia in 1990 and was referred to the MRC by his social worker because he became seriously depressed.

Although he had a Graduate Diploma and a Master’s degree from Oxford University and had used computers for his research leading to his degree, a Skillshare trainer told him he should improve his chances of employment by learning word-processing. He did that, but he was granted no interviews.
On the other hand, having had extensive international experience in management and training, he once received a telephone call from a private firm: 'We would like to know how to address you: Director or... because your qualifications and senior positions in international companies...' but the interview was cancelled when he told them he came from Africa. Yet Skillshare neglected to inform him that he should not to include his birthdate or previous qualifications from his country of origin in his application and résumé if he thought that the inclusion would disadvantage him, that experience gained in home countries should be called international experience, thus translating an inferior (ethnic) experience into a more desirable (international) one. When interviewed, many migrants did not realise that they should refer to their native country by name and not as 'my country'. The man mentioned above rewrote his curriculum vitae with only details about his British qualifications and experience and secured an interview. He has secured a permanent ASO 5 position in the Public Service.

A computer analyst

Two months after his arrival from Brazil, a computer expert asked me for help with the first job interview which was to take place in less than a week's time. Having no computer knowledge, I could identify two difficulties: my lack of relevant knowledge for effective training and his lack of language skills. I could barely understand his English in spite of immense concentration which could not be expected of any interviewing panel. I wondered whether my difficulty in understanding what he said might come from another source: ignorance of computer jargon.

I asked for assistance from a senior IBM software engineer. The man said my client knew his field but would have problems conveying his knowledge to the interviewing panel; he would say 'a mess' when he meant AMES (Adult Migrant Education Service), 'fire' when he meant 'file' and 'Seero' when he meant CSIRO. Both of us failed to understand what he intended to say, so we asked him to write it down. As he wrote it, I realised that computing is a language. Suddenly I was reminded of how McEnroe could play tennis with Russians and Chinese who spoke different languages — the game rules are an international language.

I suggested that he use flowcharts and programs to express what he had done and what he could do with computers. I further suggested that he prepare a number of flowcharts related to each of the selection criteria, so that when
he was asked a question he would utter a single short sentence and then hand to each member of the panel a chart to peruse.

Neither of us dared to hope that he would be appointed to the position of computer analyst. But he was. His success was proof of an effective alternative means of communication.

*Recent arrival was appointed as a Parliamentary Guide*

She comes from a culture in which argument is the mode of communication. In addition she has 'the gift of the gab'! Although she talks sense and what she says is intelligent, she wears people out because she pursues every subject in great detail no matter how insignificant. I trained her to be less outspoken and explained to her the general Australian culture. To make sure that her interviewers would not be turned off if she talked at length, I also wrote a reference for her, turning her verbosity into a quality: 'open and communicative...'. She succeeded against native speakers of English: one of six selected among 76 applicants.

*A woman who cannot handle interviews because she is too quiet*

Learning from the previous case, Renata wrote a reference to present this woman's quiet nature as a quality: '...active discerning listener who ponders carefully and talks only when it is absolutely necessary. She is discreet and excellent for sharing office space with...'. She was appointed to a position which normally requires a talker.

I now receive enough support from the Management Committee to express my opinion in the report to the Chief Minister's Department for further funding:

This kind of effective job counselling would not be possible if knowledge of different cultures and trust between clients and counsellors were not available. One or the other can be available elsewhere, but the combination of the two can be available only at the MRC for the time being until Australia becomes a genuinely multicultural society and suspicion between cultural and racial groups is substantially eliminated.

The job application and interview training at the MRC is therefore a success, with statistics and case studies to support its claim. This project also facilitates migrants' acculturation, disseminates information, sustains migrants' interest in the labour market, maintains their professional competence and confidence so that they will be ready to return to the work.
force when the economy improves. Together with the MRC's work experience program, this project has helped many migrants obtain interviews for the first time, thus breaking the monotony of unemployment. Many mainstream trainers have asked: 'What's the difference between being interviewed but not getting the job and not being interviewed at all?' The difference is enormous, particularly for new arrivals. Being new in the country, they have no means of knowing whether their abilities measure up to Australian standards. An interview proves their ability to compete as an equal in the labour market.
8 CLOSING THOUGHTS

This chapter has been the most difficult one to write because, at the end of the research, I am left with more questions than answers. New issues are as numerous and exciting as new insights. I am still struggling with the definition of Social Ecology and my ability to practice it, with the initial conflict between process and content and with significant data which I gathered before my commitment to action research. These data serve as the foundation on which I build the research, but they contradict the principle of democratic participation because I have no means to ask my 'co-researchers' for their permission or version. It would be unwise for me to collaborate with people who appear to be engaged in criminal activities. However, omitting them would be dishonest, if not impossible; victims' stories remain in my memory and influence my view and understanding of the world. In addition, adhering strictly to the principle of Social Ecology, until 'research subjects' have been asked to give their opinions, no quotations should be included either, as some data have not been democratically obtained. So, how do I assess my research against the definition Graham (my internal supervisor) quoted to me:

Social Ecology is a comprehensive holistic conception of the self, society, and nature... It sets out from the basic ecological principle of organic unity in diversity; affirming that the good of the whole can be realised only through the rich individuality and complex relationship of the parts. And it applies this fundamental insight to all realms of experience.  

Graham's comment about my approach to Social Ecology is partly true:

In your work it is easy to see the holistic conception of self and society, whereas the focus on nature is not developed in its broad context. It is, of course, present because you include a great amount of reflection on human nature. The absence of fuller emphasis on 'nature' is not an issue for me as, although I subscribe to the definition, I don't see it as applied similarly in all realms of experience. It is not our job to prescribe values. Equally the principle of 'organic unity in diversity' shines through your work in the emphasis on the wellbeing and dilemmas of multiculturalism.

I believe that I have achieved the 'organic unity in diversity' which, at the beginning, I had failed to appreciate fully. My lack of appreciation of Graham's comment had led to conflict between us and to my apathy towards

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my own thesis. I then assumed a defensive position instead of a responsive and exploratory one which is necessary for action learning. In my new understanding, I realise the gap in experience and knowledge between the Social Ecologists at the Social Ecology Centre and myself. That gap is caused by my living between 'two worlds' — Social Ecology and the MRC — and my attempt to build a bridge between them. The thesis is holistic and 'organic' because I have taken into consideration all observable factors relevant to migrant settlement and my ability to deliver and/or administer services. The natural environment means little to recent arrivals (Chapter 3, Dreams and Cultures). Thus my documentation is influenced by the MRC — a research environment. To record an evaluation of my ongoing action learning process — my life — which I believe to be 'holistic' and 'organic', it is necessary to report everything which preoccupies my mind.

Although I have not been able to attend regular residential sessions at the University, I have read articles circulated by academic staff. I share Graham's concern about conventional and experiential approaches:

Classic approaches to research emphasise the detachment of the investigator; whereas social ecology approaches, along with related trends in many areas of social science, see the investigator as immersed as a whole person in the process of researching or learning. A spiral is a more apt metaphor than a road or path. It is as if we double back on ourselves, loop out into others' perceptions and understanding, come back to the complexity of the lived experience of our lives and relationships.

In retrospect, I see myself as having a dual role: I have been immersed in a process where the power is shared equally; yet, when investigating the behaviour of the Management Committee, I had to be aloof, and use the classic approach. Without changing Management Committee members' attitudes, I could not hope to improve client services. It would be unwise for me to invite democratic participation by those who want to have me dismissed. Should action research risk the exclusion of those who subtly disagree (withdraw from activities) and those who feel safe to express their opposition? Should it include those who hold unequalled power? I see classic and social ecology approaches as complementary, as I see that lived experience is not learned until it is understood in and outside its context. While my action learning is spiral, my action research can at times be straight. For example, with the Administrative Service Test training I followed a narrow path, assisting migrants to achieve equal access to the Public Service — and I succeeded. But putting that experience in the context

126
of the thesis, the metaphor is spiral.

Almost three and a half years have passed since I was appointed Coordinator of the Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan Inc., in charge of the provision of information, referral, welfare, education, training, and work experience to new arrivals, established migrants, and Australian citizens by birth. I feel a sense of achievement not only because I know that my time has not been wasted, but because I have experienced immense pleasure, having facilitated employment for three newly arrived friends. One is a fast learner with logic and linguistic intelligences and a learning mode similar to her successful mainstream counterparts, the others are from indirect cultures whose needs for careful and thorough instruction have often frustrated me. I attempted to give them up several times, but they persisted. Together we went on like an extended family.

Having survived serious crisis management twice, I have learned crisis management: intervention needs to be immediate and discreet so that those affected will be unaware of their predicament to preserve dignity, to continue normality and to prevent dependency. I know what our crisis services have done wrong: they have often contradicted this principle. Without appropriate training, not infrequently crisis workers have taken too long to recognise emergencies and intervened without sensitivity to clients. Many services have confused objectives with strategy and have caused clients to feel patronised.

8.1 The Issues

Through the dreams I have collected and the conversations I have had with NESB migrants I learnt that they have dreamt about the landscapes of the places they lived in before their migration to Australia. They told me that they continued to dream about their ‘home’ countries until they felt at home in Australia. Then the landscapes of their dreams depended on their realities. In Ha’s case (3.4.1), dream symbols did change with migration. However, it would be more accurate to say that they change with people’s consciousness — awareness of other cultures, peoples and societies. That change is particularly observable when new dream objects are added. Thus dream symbols change as new arrivals become established settlers feeling at home in the host society and culture. Recent arrivals who suffer from long-term unemployment dream about their ‘homeland’ while those who found jobs easily and quickly — such as the man who was appointed to the Public

68 I use this term to distinguish Australian citizens born in Australia from Aboriginal Australians and Australians who were born overseas or who are migrants.
Service three months after his arrival and academics who migrated to Australia for employment — dream about adventures in their host country and about the places they left behind (3.4.7). There is no doubt that dreams are interpreted differently in different cultures — the Quiche Maya of Mexico (3.2.7), Confucianism (3.3.1) and Renata’s dreams (3.4.6), just to name a few. Although Renata’s interpretation is unique, the other two models are widely applicable in their own societies. In addition, as Buddhism and Taoism have influenced the Western consciousness, it is reasonable to speculate that they have also influenced the Western unconscious. Through my experience in interpreting for therapists I have learned that understanding NESB clients’ cultures is essential to helping them, especially those who do not speak English.

8.1.1 Western Therapies and NESB Clients

All the cases I have studied show that individual therapy is not useful and can even be harmful to people in extended-family cultures because each individual in an extended-family culture is assigned a specialist function, and the assignment is not conceptualised then theoretically delivered, but demonstrated and imitated until the standard outcome is achieved. If it cannot be achieved, a more capable person would take over the task. It took me two decades to understand my Aboriginal friend’s statement: ‘When she has a baby she will grow up’. It sounded irresponsible to me at the time. Now I realise that the statement implies on the job training to be a parent. Much communication is lost through interpreting, as concepts cannot always be transferred from one culture to another. When interpreting for therapists, I have often had to explain meanings to Vietnamese clients so that they can match how they feel with therapists’ diagnostic vocabulary — diagnostic tools. The Department of Health and Human Services is funding a project at the University of Sydney, School of Nursing, for a Vietnamese PhD student to develop diagnostic tools to be used in therapy for Vietnamese people. The importance of cultural understanding at social and individual levels has been clearly demonstrated in Baby Lan’s case, when the client — an infant — cannot be taught appropriate verbal expression or responses comprehensible to service providers. Thus it is unavoidable that therapists impose their views on NESB clients such as the Vietnamese. Crisis management across cultures has to be carefully and sensitively monitored to ensure NESB clients’ dignity and independence, especially where arrivals from Asian and non-democratic traditions are concerned. Ba and other mentally ill people at

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69 See Baby Lan in Appendix 9.

70 See Baby Lan in Appendix 9.
the MRC have shown that migrants from indirect extended-family cultures need a supportive environment where workers do not treat them as outcasts. Therapists must not promise what they cannot deliver: friendship independent of income.

The MRC experience shows that the relationship between a therapist and his/her NESB client can be uncomfortable, if not incongruous; newly arrived migrants treat everyone they know as potential friends, especially those who say they want to be friends. Most counsellors and therapists I have known pledged friendship but discontinued it as the therapy ended either because the government could no longer afford the cost or the therapist decided that the client no longer needed therapy. This policy makes clients feel rejected and powerless.

Case management undermines NESB clients' rights to privacy and even human rights. Social workers, doctors and therapists have often unknowingly supported one another against clients. Most, if not all, people I have met are superstitious to some degree, but when I helped a client in a ghost buster, conventional workers tried to intervene despite evidence that shamans have been essential in facilitating healing in the Hmong communities in Tasmania and the US. The rights of the 'insane' are seriously violated in Western society, not only when involuntary commitment occurs but when workers misunderstand symptoms and causes. Community service has been delivered to alleviate conditions as perceived by workers rather than clients. Despite their good intentions, therapists have served their own needs instead of those of their clients.

8.1.2 Therapies Across Cultures

As I became more successful in training migrants for the work force, I also gained increasing expertise in providing individual counselling and therapy for them. People, especially well-educated people, have great difficulty expressing their personal needs. They believe that, as intelligent human beings, they should be able to solve their own problems, and they are unaware of available assistance, or even of their own needs. Intellectual discourse, on the other hand, is the familiar mode of communication, for they practice it daily. Thus discourse is their learning mode.

By telling stories, real and invented, I have helped one female European academic suffering from nymphomania; at forty she believed she was approaching menopause and had been in therapy before our meeting. To make matters worse, she had more male than female students in her class and kept thinking about having sex with them. At night, she would insist on having sex with her husband so that she could go to class satisfied the next morning. The husband was exhausted at the time we met.

She and her husband spent their holidays with us. He seemed to want my company so that he could stay away from her. He would spend long hours with me, telling me about specialities his father had prepared for him when he was a child, so I ended up recreating his childhood environment. As we became close friends, she told me her problems and asked me for advice. I inquired when her mother had started going through menopause; she replied that her mother had been very ill, had gone insane and had eventually died at forty-two. Her father was a gynaecologist who prescribed incorrect drugs to her mother. I told her that I knew many women who had the same symptoms because they were worried about menopause (at that time, I had little knowledge of psychology, so I risked inventing a harmless tale); I said no-one died of menopausal symptoms any more. ‘Menopause is just a change of life, like puberty’. I told her about books on human sexuality and criticised Western culture: ‘Masters and Johnson have been responsible for Western people’s obsession with sex’. To my surprise, she knew nothing about the subject, ‘being only a teacher of literature’ speaking half a dozen languages. Even more surprising, before our vacation was over, she ‘recovered’ from the bout of nymphomania and was no longer worried about becoming like her mother.

Having ‘cured’ one woman of irrational behaviour, I tried the same method (finding the cause of her fear) on another. It worked. An Australian nurse did not exactly suffer from nymphomania but, ignorant about menopause and its impact on women, she feared that her femininity would be terminated at forty because her mother had gone insane at that age and was committed to a private psychiatric institution. She had an affair with her one-eyed gardener not because she loved him but because she cared for him and because he was the only man she knew besides her husband. I related to her that in Vietnam menopause is celebrated as a liberation for women: no more
children, no more periods (the curse). After menopause women enter a new phase of life, equal to that of men's. This woman returned to her marriage.

Both these women's psychiatrists omitted to ask them when their mothers had started menopause and how their mothers had experienced it. I made no financial gain on either case. Instead, both women became my friends. It became obvious to me that it was necessary to inform women in Australia about menopause and its side-effects. Years later, the first book on menopause was published; there are women's health networks all over Australia to explore menopause in other cultures and alternatives to hormone replacement therapies.

8.1.3 Crisis Management

More recently, while running workshops on domestic violence, I met an academic; I noticed her sitting silently in a corner, wearing sunglasses. I felt like approaching her, but decided against it. Luckily she approached me after the third session. She closed the door behind us and said she wanted to explore the issue in more depth with me. Happily I invited her to my office where we could talk quietly. She agreed to come, but we chatted about everything else in the most detached manner. My impatience was just about to explode when she asked me about domestic violence. I said I knew many academic women suffering from abusive relationships, mentioning Professor Bronwyn Davies of the University of New England as an example. I invented a few other cases as I went on, watching out for her response.

The woman was a professor of science married to another academic who beat her every weekend. She was worried: he would set a bad example, as the children were approaching their teenage years. She could not move away from him because he would kill her and the children. I provided her with the latest and most comprehensive information about domestic violence but made no suggestions. Some years later, she told me she was still with him, but she had a network of domestic violence survivors. Her husband has not completely stopped beating her but his behaviour has improved considerably. She no longer needs sunglasses.

Crisis symptoms are not universal because their meaning differs from
culture to culture. The Turkish incident by Azih Acba of Germany demonstrates the importance of cultural understanding in therapy and diagnosis. Direct confrontational approaches often hinder disclosure. On the other hand, oversensitivity (that is, not mentioning what is considered unacceptable by the community) also inhibits requests for assistance. Trusted, caring outsiders can be an effective solution.

Treatment of new arrivals by mainstream social workers has generated many complaints, some of which are justifiable. Clients have felt patronised, if not indoctrinated. Many women want to use the refuge for time out to regain strength to cope with life. Having lived in refugee camps for a long time, refugee women do not want to be separated from their family and community again, even if it means putting up with violence. In addition, moving away from their community can cause severe identity crisis, especially when women do not speak English. Alienation can turn into psychosis. Moving away from the matrimonial home also gives the male-dominated community the opportunity to point their finger at the woman. Many women of non-English-speaking backgrounds and their mainstream sisters have expressed their desire to have a men’s rehabilitation centre, like existing drug and alcohol services. They want the police to charge perpetrators and to compensate victims, as many women need a long time to regain self-confidence to rejoin the work force. The rehabilitation centre must charge perpetrators who are income earners to recover costs. This model will indirectly educate communities and their male leaders: it will show that, no matter who the perpetrators are, they will be dealt with by the law as serious offenders. It will also save the government money: instead of moving a mother with one, two, three or more children to a refuge, only one man will be moved. Rehabilitation programs should include domestic service, such as toilet cleaning, ironing, cooking and nappy washing to turn violent men into useful family members able and willing to share household chores.

8.1.4 Social therapy

Therapy at the MRC is not necessarily elaborate. A gesture is often sufficient to support a woman whose husband has not given her flowers.

72 Manuscript in German available on request.
since the day they first met. I helped organise a birthday party for a woman, and every year, I call her up on her birthday to wish her a happy one.

A visit to an exhibition organised by a woman who had never been allowed to participate in any activity outside the home has helped me understand that participation means emancipation to women confined to the home. Women appear to be more democratic and to want democracy. They have proved to be better learners by their higher success rate in training programs.

People, particularly those from indirect cultures, respond better to indirect approaches which could be safely withdrawn without causing harm or loss of dignity to either side. Indirect therapy is a long road for me to travel. I am hopeful that, through training people for employment, I shall be able to facilitate participation by people from non-participatory cultures in the mainstream culture. Participation is necessary in democracy. However, a redefinition of participation is necessary to include indirect styles. I have begun to cooperate with youth workers from Western cultures to raise awareness of the power of indirect messages used daily in political propaganda and advertisement. Not being aware, many Australians have fallen victims to them.

There is no certainty that therapists can assist people whose backgrounds are unfamiliar; it is therefore necessary to preserve the dignity of those clients whose psychological needs fail to be addressed. The role of the therapist is to inform and support clients by improving their external environment. Individual therapies are also too costly and ineffective. People who have undergone extensive therapy have often become alienated from their families and communities. Community development, on the other hand, is more cost-effective and less alienating, as it helps individuals to get to know people and to end their isolation.

Because things are likely to be alien to recent arrivals — particularly refugees who have suffered extensive exposure to uncertainty, if not trauma and torture — trust is essential to settlement. In most cultures, trust is indirectly established: people go to doctors whom their friends recommend even though those friends are not medical experts.
8.2 Personal Growth

Although I have never thought of myself as anything other than Vietnamese and Asian, I never wanted to be anything else either — except when, for a short time during my childhood, I wished I were a boy. When I could not afford comfortable and convenient sanitary pads to absorb heavy menstruation, I wished I were male. There is little doubt that I have aptitude for language and logic (mathematics). Fortunately I had the opportunity to receive Western education which suited my critical thinking. My mother who was born with similar aptitude has been conditioned not to question previous generations' thoughts and actions and has lived with recurring nightmares for decades. My father's conditioning (being oppressed Confucianism) has turned him violent towards his children because of his lack of self-satisfaction. However, not all my siblings have the same aptitude as I have, although all have been conditioned successfully by US culture.

So, what part of me, if any, is Vietnamese? This question became more disturbing when, on 16 April 1992, I told a Nigerian criminologist about my finding that there is no alternative model for researchers from the third world like myself and probably him because we have been conditioned to think and act like Westerners although the colour of our skin is yellow or black. We are really white inside. We are in danger of serving our host country as subcolonialists.

I expected him to get angry. Instead, he acknowledged that, coming from a village, he was able to identify over one hundred plants as a child but he might remember only five now if he returned to his native village. This is shattering. Virgin rainforests in Brazil, Thailand, Vietnam and many other countries could have been destroyed to support multinational greed because educated local people in those regions have become ignorant of, and alien to, their native environment. Migration on the other hand has been detrimental to the ecosystem: unless people are familiar with the natural environment, they cannot preserve it.

Then, on 16 April 1992, while watching an ABC television debate between an atheist, a priest and a physicist, I realised that when social ecologists at the University of Western Sydney soul-search, they look to Christianity
which is their conditioning, whereas I look to Confucianism and Taoism. Intelligence is developed and conditioned by culture. By itself it means nothing, as shown by Howard Gardner in his article ‘Cognition: A Western Perspective’.73

At first I felt as if I did not belong to the social ecology environment. Admittedly I did not try hard to mix; having been a lone achiever who needed little outside or peer support, I recorded my feelings but dismissed their importance. Tamara supported my theory that, although there was a range of practices and behaviours within the social ecology environment, there was a general social ecology culture confined within the mainstream tradition. She was stunned by social ecologists’ ignorance and appropriation of other cultures. My interpretation of organisation culture practised by social ecologists was therefore not entirely unreasonable.

Social ecologists have also promoted the use of the right brain. Is it possible that social ecology turned people away from logic and linguistic intelligences according to Howard Gardner’s theory? Thus, while advocating individual and personal styles of research, social ecologists may have accidentally striven to make others (students) conform and convert the already converted. I have learned much about my own prejudices and their reasons by observing, reflecting on and recording the prejudices of others; I have begun to understand my own conditioning and its consequences as I have helped many clients understand themselves. My happiest moment came when Ba, my very first client, came to the MRC and asked me out for a hamburger. I noticed that he did not become furious when I was unable to take up the invitation: there was an emergency. I was unable to explain the reason in public; therefore I assumed that he would interpret my action as my preference for the company of staff. I expected him to kick the rail as he left; but he left quietly, without attracting attention to himself. I noticed that a few weeks earlier the Vietnamese man who had come to the MRC now and again in silence or talking to himself had returned to ‘work’. He would polish our kitchen table and the stoves. He washed anything and everything, then poured Ajax on the kitchen towel to bleach it. Since the MRC always needed a wash, his obsession was a welcome and useful service.

At a McDonald's Family Restaurant, Ba told me that he had been helping his new friend. 'He is always hungry. I cooked for him; I showed him how to clean his flat; I told him to remember that he is Vietnamese and that Vietnamese don't smoke marijuana, so he stopped. Now he has some money to spend, so he is not as hungry as he used to be. His father was a Major or a Colonel. He came from a rich family...' I told Ba that the man was now cleaning the MRC and that I was happy that Ba had finally found a friend, so neither would be alone. Ba giggled and told me I could go back to the MRC alone: 'I want to walk around and look at things for a while before I see the solicitor'. Although Ba complained about the solicitor wanting him to pay before the service was completed, he did not swear as he would have done in earlier times. At the MRC, I talked to Ba's new friend; he told me how he had been burnt and cut and that ASIO and the CIA were after him, talking exactly like Ba: 'We are good friends now. When he sleeps I watch the flats and when I sleep he watches the flats, so they [imaginary intruders] can't come and harm us'. The man lives in the flat above Ba's. Ba has not hallucinated for some time. Together they bought two unregistered junk cars and 'fixed' them. Every time Ba suffered a setback, he repaired something: first a small radio, then a washing machine, then one car, then two cars at the same time. He spent all his income on repairing things. Is he deconstructing or reconstructing himself? He has improved remarkably. A counter transference has taken place.

By the end of 1992, Ba acknowledged that he was mentally ill and his friend was now in the same condition he himself had been in. The friend talked about his own family and said how he missed them. He later asked me to contact his mother in Germany on his behalf. I called her and asked her to contact him through my office number, but she never did. Ba was well enough to visit his family in Vietnam in June 1993. Although Ba knew that his family exploited him badly — they took almost US$2000 from him and asked me to send them the rest of his criminal compensation award — he was also aware that he could not refuse them because they are his family. Our discussion on the subject revealed Ba's ability to assess complex emotions realistically. The friend is now cooking meals for himself at the MRC when I am around. He misses me when I am not there and the stoves remain cold until my return. Ba has also functioned independently, being aware that he is no longer mentally ill, he decides not to hang around the MRC kitchen because he is well. Ba advises me to be a social worker. Although I could not ask Ba to participate in action research to alleviate his condition — suffering — at the beginning, he has cooperated with me to help himself and his friend. Together, they have brought a third client,
homeless and depressed. We have carried out an action research without having conceptualised the model. At least three times, I have effectively applied what I have learned from literature and experience.

My relationship with Ba has been honest and natural from the outset. Although I was not able to discuss my literature review with him, I acted according to what I learnt from reviewing world literature, starting with dream analysis which I quickly discarded. Then because of time constraints, I left Ba and other individual long-term clients to their own devices. Not to make them feel rejected, I explained to them honestly that I had no time. I also let them know when they became too much for me; they accommodated my feelings most of the time. However, even with the allegedly violent schizophrenics, I never had to use outside help. I did not take unnecessary risks either. With the mentally ill, I felt free to act and react naturally. In the end they seemed to have benefited the most. When I felt deeply depressed because of the Management Committee’s misconduct, my ‘patients’ were my source of consolation. I never told them how I felt, but understanding my own frustration had somehow helped me relate to them as equals rather than regarding myself as someone with superior knowledge or mental health.

If literature reviews are to develop a better theory, and if a better theory is determined by its usefulness to humanity, then I hope that my clients will allow me to share some of the success. If I could say that I was successful in facilitating self-understanding and self-help as well as understanding and support between individuals and groups, then I did it incidentally. All of my successes at the MRC have been incidental and simple, but only Ba’s success has helped me answer three important questions: Have I done anything? What have I done? and Have I done it right?

In answer to the first question, I did try to help Ba, but at first I aggravated his condition. Reflecting on my failure, I realise that I tried to impose my conditioning on him and therefore confused him. I feel that I did ‘the right thing’ because Ba told me again and again that I was the only one who had helped him. The second question is most difficult to answer. I was honest with him, I accepted him and I explained my constraints concerning time, space and my own needs. I stopped making appointments to see him once I understood that appointments also meant imposition, control or conditioning. Ba and I had a good relationship built on freedom, equality and honesty. If I could describe my successful therapeutic approach in a single expression, it would have to be ‘informed acceptance’. I never told him that his behaviour was unacceptable, but I did tell him that I was scared
of his behaviour and that some others were also scared of it. Knowing the meaning of contextual relevance I changed research direction. Having helped many reclaim themselves, I was still feeling oppressed by the Management Committee, government bureaucracy and, to a smaller degree, clients' expectations. The MRC has to be non-political and so has its Coordinator. My success with training people from different cultures with different learning modes helped me realise that I did not need to change my personality. I needed only to change my process and to know how to relate to individuals, but I was entitled to retain my identity and to be myself. I have mistaken the position of the Coordinator of the MRC with myself. Not having participated in political demonstrations since I joined action research and social ecology, I wondered what to do next.

Graham has challenged my belief many times and I have re-examined my premises and modified my stand, but some degree of apprehension remained. It was sufficiently strong to consider returning to the conventional academic tradition. After our break, we have ‘connected’ again (Graham's words in his unfinished letter to me). Our initial conflict has made me reflect on my attitude and re-assess my knowledge. Our ‘connectedness’ has brought about a much improved mutual understanding.

In hindsight, I realise that I lost my self-confidence for a year: I was disconnected from my previous experience, unable to relate what I had learned to what I was doing. Because of this, I failed to help migrants with critical thinking. I also insisted on transplanting a Western concept on people from indirect cultures. Thus I experienced double failure. Then, as success came unexpectedly, I began to reassemble the pieces. I regained self-confidence to realise that action research has been practised since time began. For example, over a thousand years ago, before the Dien Hong Battle, Vietnamese people responded to the call of their leader and discussed their situation to develop appropriate strategies. Together they successfully fought against Chinese invaders and restored freedom and independence for themselves and their country. However, Vietnamese history recorded only the result of their effort, not the process. We need to re-invent the wheel because its ancient formula has not been recorded.

As I regained confidence, another blow came to my professional competence: the client who had become my friend turned out to have lied to me,
Lee fabricated false evidence against her ‘best’ friend, someone she had proclaimed her sister — she was also my client, who had also helped Lee find a job — to eliminate fair competition in the labour market. I searched my memory for answers: all along there were cues, but I ignored them against unsubstantiated allegations because, again, I demanded evidence following the Western principle that people are innocent until proven guilty. I felt guilty towards the victim — my former client. I wonder whether and how many other clients may have also been cheated. This incident has thrown me into depression. How could I sustain a ‘healthy’ degree of suspicion while trying to promote trust among people who do not know one another? To facilitate social justice community service providers need also to be aware of dishonest clients; they need to maintain a professional distance and to investigate when a slight question arises. I hope to remember my own advice.

On 31 March 1992, I was naturalised as an Australian citizen together with about 200 others in a community hall. Some who were to become Australian citizens in less than an hour could not speak English. As I was wondering what would happen next, an Immigration Officer came to the microphone and introduced herself, then announced the program. Mr Sharp, then MP from Gilmore, was to give a speech. (It was an improvement on our son’s experience, my husband chuckled softly. They had played a commercial tape then!) Future citizens were divided into two groups: one swearing, the other affirming allegiance to the Queen who was permanently absent. My husband and I belonged to the affirming lot. I listened to my neighbour struggling with the language. The officer congratulated newly sworn citizens with an encouraging ‘Well done’. Then Mr Sharp repeated the congratulation. He told new citizens about commitment to Australia, to democratic tradition... saying that Australians have come from somewhere else, Australia is a wonderful country, there is majority rule, voting and a high standard of living envied by others, you can only take out what you put in, but he failed to mention Aboriginal people. I was choked as I perceived implicit racism. Then I felt consoled: I wore an Aboriginal T-shirt. Suddenly I realised that I had stopped communicating with people who had been my comrades, war protesters, radical writers and poets because I ceased to speak a radical language — my language. I reclaimed myself and agreed to read at the Timor protest site in front of the Indonesian Embassy. As usual, I was
the only Asian participant.

Timor
Forgotten names
Forgotten places
Forgotten lies
Forgotten crimes
Since the Pyramid
lives have been cheap
Civilisation requests proof of the holocaust
to inflict pain
in concentration camp survivors
before German children learn history of crime
against humanity by their ancestors
Pol Pot and Khmer Rouge
stand for democratic election
instead of trial for murder
How many peoples have died
for Kissinger's Nobel Prize
suppressed by economic expediency
Humanity weeps 74

I did experience humanity when Ms Monica Hamers, a local psychic, touched Ba like a mother, a sister or a friend. He looked more and more relaxed minute by minute, saying he saw golden light and was feeling better; it was then that I recognised the missing component of my care: I never touched him. At first, I blamed myself for lacking humanity. Then I identified cultural constraint: in Vietnamese culture, physical contact between the sexes is forbidden except between relatives in exceptional circumstances such as serious illness. Had I touched him, my action could easily have been misinterpreted and therefore progress undermined. Another mentally ill Vietnamese confused our friendship with sexual invitation. Ms Hamers comes from a tactile culture. Her care was appropriately expressed. Ba has often talked about his mother. Living in isolation for so long, he must have longed to be touched. Being touched in a gentle and loving yet non-

74 This 'poem' and some others I read on the day have been published in *Blast*, a literary magazine published in the ACT.
sexual manner was what he needed to remove the evil force of isolation. Ba
reported no nightmare that night and many nights after that. His condition
appeared to improve overnight. An Australian (direct) cultural practice has
been applied appropriately to complement Vietnamese (indirect) cultural
practices. Thus a multicultural precedent has been set: therapy across
cultures. Human needs are universal but cultural conditioning often hinder
appropriate responses. Interaction between peoples and therapists from
different cultures needs to be explored for the development of cross-cultural
and multicultural therapies.

8.3 Dreams and cultures

After the literature review on interpretations of dreams in non-mainstream
cultures, I set up several research groups to collect dreams and
interpretations. I also joined the local Jungian group for comparison. While
this group gave me a wealth of dreams, I remained the only participant from
a non-mainstream culture. The groups I set up did not provide many dreams;
they gave me even fewer interpretations. I approached individuals to collect
dreams, with some success.

8.3.1 Dreams

In addition to findings documented at the beginning of this chapter (8.1
Issues), I have found out that some Croatians still dream about Croatia,
especially since the civil war this year, even though they have been in
Australia for decades. Whether and to what degree migrants' dreams agree
with their reality depends on their past experience, their current situation and
their degree of acculturation; these depend more on what they brought with
them and their age on arrival than on the time they have spent in Australia.
Many elderly parents brought to Australia under the Family Reunion
Program by their children to become free baby-sitters wish they had stayed
in their 'home' countries. Being unable to speak English, they become
prisoners in their children's home. Their dreams of life in the land of milk
and honey quickly turn into cultural nightmares. There is strong indication
that, like dream contents, dreamers' emotions during their dreams reflect the
degree of their acceptance of reality, thus their acculturation. Some
individuals have successfully controlled their dreams with video, music or
just determination. Dream symbols and interpretations are necessarily
different in different cultures, as they affect the unconscious. But sadly, because of the domination by Western culture, many countries in the Third World have unquestioningly followed Freudian — Jungian models. To address this issue I have explored alternative therapies with some success. My Chinese friend who asked me to help him get rid of nightmares reported to me on 25 February 1993 that he dreamt that he strolled in some uneventful street in Yarralumla about six weeks after he and his mother moved in to live with us, away from a house haunted by ghosts. My effort to help improve his living conditions had had results whereas dream therapy had failed. My Chinese friend and his mother were given a government flat about ten months later, but they wanted to stay in our house: ‘It’s our home’, they said. I helped them decline the offer. However, they were given a perfect flat just before Christmas 1993. With great reluctance, they accepted it and moved into their new home, but they keep a key to our house so that they can come and go as members of our family. My friend’s mother still teaches our daughter Pamina Mandarin.

Two of my clients who suffered recurring nightmares have reported sleep free of nightmares after one year of therapy. During the research period, my dreams have often been revelations.

I went to the annual Christmas party organised for interpreters and translators. I enjoy going to this party immensely every year because I meet people with international experience, not to mention the food and music that go with it. There is no other congregation of so many highly qualified but underemployed and underpaid people. This occasion was even more pleasant than the last because I now know more people in the group and I have become reasonably fluent in organisation culture and politics. I knew the issues of the day, my own goal and objectives and how to cooperate with others to achieve them. I have been trying to help a peer fight her adversaries and restore a similar community service. We met and had a useful exchange in coded language. Her staff also liked me as I supported them and their service.

I drove home at about 11 p.m., so exhausted that I could barely keep my eye on the road. Parliament House seemed to block my way. Everything appeared dark. I did not realise how dangerous my condition was until I
turned into my own street and felt I was out of control. I went straight to bed where my husband was awaiting my return.

I dreamt that someone I did not know came to see me with her newly published book called *Child Of Vietnam*. I was aware that it was the title of my own book, but I was not angry, just a little surprised and perhaps slightly irritated. The book was published by my publisher. I was aware that a copy had been sent to me earlier with an invitation to the launch and that I had put the invitation away somewhere not intending to attend nor to buy the book. As the woman showed it to me, I realised that the cover was designed in blue and white, the blue of Copenhagen Airport. The title CHILD OF VIETNAM was well blended among faces in blue and white, without features, looking like flowers. The perfect blue, neither bright nor dull, impressed me most. I flipped through: all the pages were similar to the cover. All were exceptionally pleasant. There were only a few lines of words. But as the woman showed me the book a second time and explained to me that she liked my book *Child Of Vietnam* so much that she decided to illustrate the entire story, all the words disappeared. I could not see the relation between the illustrations and my book; I liked it anyway because it was beautiful and had a calming effect. I also liked the woman. Tamara came, so I bought a copy for her. Then I bought all four copies the author brought along for friends. I noticed that the publisher had anticipated I might buy them, so she wrote its price $6.95 in large black print. I woke up remembering the dream vividly and felt good. I discussed the dream with my husband. His remarks about the details of the dream made me realise that I have always liked that soft blue, but my parents had discouraged me from wearing it because it would pronounce my freckles and dark skin. The dream associates my childhood with my favourite colour, connecting my current activities with my cultural roots. The dream links community work and research with my acceptance and understanding of my childhood. Hence I have completed a full cycle intellectually and emotionally.

My daughter came home that afternoon. I told her one of my dreams. She told me hers: 'I dreamt that I was dying of a wasting disease; my neck was stiff. My cells turned into strange figures I saw on the computer screen. I was really worried, but I concealed it from everybody until I could no longer do it. I looked terrible: something went wrong with my skin; someone took
me to the hospital. While I was waiting to be examined, I could not move my head any more as I became paralysed. I thought I was dying, but I stopped worrying about it and decided to fight with everything I had. I woke up. My neck was in exactly the same position as in the dream.

I asked her who took her to the hospital. 'It could have been you', she said. I told her it was a good dream; it meant a reflection of her past years staying at home, her acceptance of the past and a change in direction. She thought it was just a bad dream and that she had finally accepted death. She had always been worried about death. The cells turning into those strange figures on the computer screen were easy to understand: she had spent almost three years of her life doing nothing specific, just playing computer games while others worked.

My daughter came home a few days later and told me she was going to work for an advertising company without pay. They might want to employ her after they trained her. It was wonderful: she had changed her direction of life as she reached her twenty-first birthday. My personal development has therefore been successful.

8.3.2 Cultures

At the beginning of my research I included Chinese culture in non-mainstream cultures. Graham challenged my decision as China 'invaded' Tibet. I wondered whether I should redefine non-mainstream cultures concerning China. As I have moved away from dreams, this concern has become a non-issue.

In figures, my achievement is great and the research environment is perfect: not only have I had the opportunity to be part of almost 100 groups from almost 50 countries belonging to six continents but also to be in charge of the MRC administration. Having helped at least 50 long- and short-term unemployed migrants secure jobs, I have learned cultural differences at the most practical level to develop training material and to organise appropriate work experience for unemployed migrants.

Coming from an indirect culture with the knowledge that China has invented
practically everything, Chinese migrants are non-participatory learners proud of their achievements and work hard to maintain their meritocratic tradition. Confucianism treats the nation as an extended family. To honour one's family is man's primary duty. Thus the Chinese do not share the Western democratic concept of a nation in which individual rights and responsibilities are defined by the constitution and the law. As members of an immense extended and often illiterate family, the Chinese possess exceptionally strong group identity\(^{75}\) but suffer weak individual identity. This is because the rules and regulations recorded in Confucius's Five Classics were but tales abbreviated and altered as they were transferred from generation to generation to become a code of ethics on loyalty between family members, clan branches, or friends. Combined with their desire to establish power, take revenge on those who have oppressed them and restore dignity for their ancestors, some have become susceptible to organised crime\(^{76}\). Some Chinese youth, with identity confusion caused by conflict between their parents' cultures and the host culture, become susceptible to delinquency while those who can overcome cultural barriers are less likely to be involved in crime\(^{77}\). Malaysian and Hong Kong Chinese migrants I have interviewed advised me, 'it's OK to know or have friends who are Triad members, but you must not join them unless you join all of them. Then they will leave you alone'. Thus Confucian adherence to loyalty has prevented the Chinese from exposing criminal activities within the community: 'If your father were found corrupt, you should piggyback your father and go into hiding'. Respect for teachers, fear of losing face by doing the 'wrong' thing and respect for empirical evidence\(^{78}\) by the Chinese has resulted in learning by imitation.

\(^{75}\) Stanford Morris Lyman, *Chinatown and Little Tokyo*, Associated Faculty Press, N.Y., 1986.


\(^{77}\) Sheu Chuen Jim, *Delinquency and Identity, Juvenile Delinquency in an American Chinatown*, Harrow & Heston, N.Y., 1986.

\(^{78}\) Chinese culture is an empirical culture in which acupuncture has been practised for thousands of years; the Chinese felt no need to explain why it worked. Similarly, doctor of medicine degrees in China have been awarded to people who could cure rare diseases, but they are not required to disclose their formula. As soon as the Americans (Western system) were interested in acupuncture, they used isotope to explain how acupuncture could work as anaesthetics.
Migrants from the caste system have appeared to be lost in Australian egalitarian society because they are either superior or inferior in their countries of origin; they have been conditioned to be served and to serve; their ambition is to accumulate wealth and upgrade their status. Although they become achievers in their host countries, they attract hostility.

I observed people from the Indian subcontinent together and drew certain conclusions about their general behaviour. Since then I have discussed my findings with my Sri Lankan friend (Dr Chitra Fernando at Macquarie University), academics and participants at the MRC and have become aware of the similar learning modes of people coming from the Indian subcontinent — learning by repeating. Teachers belong to higher castes; therefore 'students' (although I always use the term 'participants') obeyed. On the other hand, those who belong to the highest caste assert their power over others, including teachers. Believing in their superiority, they have attained a higher rate of employment than other Asians with similar qualifications. Their self-confidence shines through. Often interviewing panels have not noticed 'Indian' accents while they notice other Asian accents, although all are tonal. This could also be the consequence of the British Empire. There are exceptions: one Indian man treats me as his 'superior' because I have 'superior' knowledge, and a couple participates in every activity as equals.

Arabic-speaking clients from the Middle East have often exhausted community workers with their 'bargaining' habit. Their reality appears different from the mainstream, Confucian or Christian reality, just as their perception of truth and evidence appears different if not contradictory. All my clients from the Middle East have suffered severe consequences in divorce proceedings or custody negotiations because they have oversupplied evidence and renegotiated with their partners (from direct cultures) against legal advice. This did not become clear to me until I heard the ACT Chief Magistrate advise ANU Law students: 'Stop cross-examination when you think you have scored your point'.

Reflecting on the conflict and negotiations between the Arab countries and Israel, I have begun to understand the bargaining culture. Since the Six Day War, Arab countries, starting with Egypt, have lost territories to Israel.

There are disputes concerning who started the war, and truth may not be known for a long time. However, Arab countries which lost their territories to Israel have continued to demand their return as a condition for peace negotiations in the Middle East. A new process and a new culture have begun. Regardless of agreement and convention, bargaining for territories has benefited Arab nations in the Middle East. How much of this has contributed to individual behaviour? The continuous negotiation over power and territory started with Muhamad and the formation of Islam\textsuperscript{80}.

8.4 Multicultural Community Development:
A New Direction and Project Action

To address the multiplicity and diversity of the needs of migrants and refugees, multicultural community service providers need imagination, flexibility and innovation. They must be able to design complex and sensitive programs based on genuine needs at the lowest possible cost because these needs are unlikely to be recognised by policy makers whose understanding and vision have been conditioned by bureaucratic cover-up, if not lack of ability and skills. On the other hand, multicultural community service providers must be prepared to change as well because the Australian population is constantly changing. To deliver services effectively, they need to speak appropriate languages, or they need to have ready access to interpreters in relevant languages. As more and more refugees and migrants settle in Australia, the need for interpreters soars. The Government now requires that all Telephone Interpreter Service interpreters obtain level 3, as awarded by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATT). That requirement has been postponed because there is no incentive for people to obtain that level (candidates are required to have university qualifications; level 3 interpreters earn the same amount of money per hour as level 3 interpreters).

8.4.1 Immigration and Settlement Service

While Australia has rewarded business and professional migrants generously with the point system, working-class migrants from the Third World have settled in better because no matter how bad their new living conditions

might be, they are several times better than what these new settlers left behind. They would never have to fear war, hunger and persecution again. Having been exploited in their former environment, some would try to rip off the system and need to be informed about laws and regulations, but most would make the best contribution, as guest workers in Western Europe and Japan have helped strengthen those countries’ economies. Vietnamese children have performed above the American average even in English. Because of these positive statistics, educational and social service providers have overlooked problems caused by a small minority of Vietnamese who are unable or unwilling to adjust and thus undermine the efforts of their community. They are either adults who occupied high positions in South Vietnam through their connections but lack suitable qualifications to regain similar status in Australia, or male youths who suffer identity crises. In extreme cases, they have become extortionists, drug traffickers, or even murderers. Some have disguised themselves as anti-communist leaders to address community gatherings and intimidate innocent people to convert followers. Unless the Australian Government takes appropriate action, organised crime will become serious in the Vietnamese community.

Having improved their lot, refugees have been grateful and loyal to their host countries. Australia has benefited immensely from the Dunera Boys, refugees from central Europe sent by Great Britain to be interned in Australia, as the Governor-General, Mr Bill Hayden, acknowledged in his speech in 1990 when he was invited to their 50th Anniversary. Since then, genuine refugees have continued to make loyal and committed citizens.

I am relieved that the business migration program has been suspended. Australia needs to examine the professional migration scheme more carefully so as not to commit international vandalism on human and national resources: for each unemployed professional migrant, Australia has robbed another country, particularly the Third World and the socialist block, of a valuable human resource while imposing an economic burden on Australian citizens. Unless professional migrants employed in their country of origin have guaranteed employment in Australia, it would be better for the world that they remain in their country of origin. Pride has often prevented

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unsuccessful migrants from returning home. A few would rather commit suicide than admit their mistakes. Poverty and frustration have made them feel bitter towards their new country.

Some professional migrants with genuine commitment to internationalism and humanity have not succeeded in entering Australia because they refused to lie about their fear of persecution or experience with unjust discrimination in their home countries.

In addition, professionals with narrow life experience and connections with power in their countries of origin (those who enter the work force immediately after graduation with family and/or friends' assistance) can quickly become dependent on people from their own communities, social workers and those who are sympathetic to them. Applicants must be emotionally as well as professionally assessed so that well-qualified but immature people will not be deprived of appropriate and effective support while Australia will not be burdened by a new generation of exploiters.\(^\text{82}\)

People, especially women, with some incomplete tertiary education and knowledge of basic English in their home country have appeared to benefit most from Australia and to give Australia the best value. Only a few countries in the world offer similar educational opportunities to adults.

**8.4.2 Migrant Hostels**

Unfortunately technology has created new problems. As there are fewer manual jobs, migrants and refugees from Third World countries must be actively encouraged to participate in training. This must begin immediately and systematically after arrival, so that recent arrivals will not suffer long disorientation and dependency on social services. My interviews with Vietnamese migrants who were processed through migrant hostels and those who were given independent accommodation on arrival show that hostel migrants are better informed, possess better knowledge of English and have more appropriate domestic skills. All reported that they had nothing to do and nowhere to go, so they studied English in the hostel. Most hated life in hostels because they did not like hostel food. Some one-third of sponsored

\(^{82}\) See 'Emotionally Immature Migrants' in Appendix 10.
migrants appear to have immense difficulty attending English classes. Even though ‘Australians’ workers understood that Vietnamese cannot eat lamb, they failed to deduce that chicken or pork baked in the same oven with lamb smelt like lamb and therefore became inedible. It appears that the government has thrown out the baby with the bath water. Hostel use may solve problems with accommodation shortage, training some migrants in the use of modern equipment, providing convenient English classes. Further investigation is necessary to establish a more appropriate language policy for settlement.

8.4.3 Ethnic Politics and Racism: Obstacles to Settlement

Multiculturalism means different things to different people, from ethnic ghettos and hatred towards one’s neighbours to internationalism, equity, justice and peace. Although all communities had been multicultural long before the word ‘multiculturalism’ came into existence, many people remain suspicious of one another.

My observation of migrants’ behaviour shows that a few care to know how racism has killed Aboriginal Australians and how their original countries have oppressed minorities. Yet all complained about unfair discrimination they experienced in Australia. Not infrequently Chinese and Vietnamese have commented on Aboriginal laziness, not to mention that Italians still deny the existence of the Mafia. Thus my research requires a greater depth and width to link new arrivals with established settlers and facilitate their acceptance of the Australian heritage which started at least 40,000 years ago. Preoccupied with Equal Employment Opportunity, Access and Equity, Social Justice, ethnic communities have seriously overlooked their negative behaviour towards one another: Greeks against Macedonians, Serbs against Croats, Ukrainians against Russians, and blacks against yellows.

My concern was supported by the Couchman program on the ABC on 15 April 1992: some Croatian, Serbian and Greek children who were born in Australia or came to Australia as toddlers are burdened by their parents’ bitter experience and filled with hatred towards their parents’ or ancestors’

83 ‘Croats’ and ‘Serbs’ are used by Australia only. ‘Croats’ and ‘Serbs’ are used in other English-speaking countries and the former Yugoslavia.
enemies. After this program many people, including migrants, commented that multiculturalism is the worst possible social theory ever invented and opted for the melting pot in which standards are properly defined and principles respected. Multiculturalism has been a bitter national debate. The raiding of ASIO by Lionel Murphy, the Attorney-General, in March 1973 which failed to find Ustashi documents led to the concession to Croatian fanaticism: the Croats demanded the recognition of a separate language which had been a dialect of Serbo-Croatian and remains a dialect in Serbia; their demand was agreed to: Because the Croats were allowed a separate language, Serbians demanded equal rights and subsequently had their own language recognised. While the Vietnamese health-care interpreter was able to interpret for the Laotians and Cambodians as well, people who receive accreditation to interpret for Croats must not be accredited to interpret for Serbs and vice versa. In addition, the Croatian community insists on dictating terms to professional organisations such as the Telephone Interpreter Service that only interpreters belonging to the Croatian Club (there are two in the ACT alone) be employed to interpret for clients. However, some clients prefer not to use any service connected to the clubs because of fear of confidentiality breach. Some refuse to identify themselves as Croatian and demand Yugoslav interpreters. The Croatian community appears to be unique in its behaviour: on 26 February 1993, Australian Croats used their own armed guards to protect diplomats of the newly established Croatia at a reception at the Hyatt Hotel in Canberra. The following day the ABC Radio reported that Croats bombed the Trade Centre in New York and threatened the Empire State Building. Aggressive behaviour has undermined Access and Equity: instead of one interpreter, two or three have to be employed. Consequently, smaller or non-aggressive communities miss out on necessary services.

Multiculturalism had an unfortunate beginning as one concession to ethnic fanaticism led to another. Fraud charges against Greek doctors were dropped; Vietnamese organised crime bosses were allowed to oppress their own people. Ever since, professional ethnics (people who make a career by claiming that they have expertise on their ethnicity) have used multiculturalism for anything and everything to their personal advantage.

84 Vox Populi, SBS Television, 1 October 1989.
As patriotic fever rages on in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, it is important that new arrivals as well as Australian citizens learn that migration and multiculturalism mean change for social cohesion so that foreign powers that have large expatriate communities here will not interfere in Australian affairs and cause physical division in this country.

People who qualify for permanent residence in Australia must learn basic English before entering the country. Afterwards they must learn about Australia, Australian culture and history. The naturalisation process must include basic English and adequate knowledge of Australian law and the Constitution, similar to American requirements.

8.4.4 Multiculturalism and the Anglo-bashing Syndrome

In 1986 I was appointed to the Multicultural Arts Advisory Committee of the Australia Council. I felt uncomfortable with the term Anglo-Celtic. Two Greek, one Spanish-speaking, one Italian, and one other NESB members kept complaining about Anglo-Celtic attitudes. Several times I suggested we define multiculturalism, but everyone feared that a definition would restrict its framework. We spent one year without any achievement. I became convinced that Anglo-Celtics were no more racist than migrants and NESB people, as my daughter was attacked in school by NESB students; the school apologised to her for having failed to control racial violence. Since then some European migrants have treated me with contempt because I am Asian. Those who displayed racist attitudes towards Asians are among those who complained about Anglo-Celtic racism. Thus there appears an Anglo-bashing syndrome among NESB people. Rising NESB power among second-generation NESB youths who interpret discrimination against young people (powerless) as discrimination against people of non-English-speaking backgrounds, could endanger Australian social cohesion.

8.5 Reflection: Cultural Conditioning and Learning Modes

8.5.1 Multicultural Conscious

At the conscious level, multiculturalism has resulted in the Discrimination Act 1991, Community Initiative Grants, Ethnic Liaison Officers in the Police Force at Federal and State levels, and Multicultural Liaison Officers
in most, if not all, government departments. Cross-cultural training has become a flourishing industry for former senior public servants, especially ex-diplomats. They become private consultants securing government contracts worth several million dollars a year to provide training packages to their former departments and other non-government agencies. People who have attended their training sessions have been thoroughly sensitised to become politically correct in NESB matters. The emperor often changes clothes, but the subject’s lot remains the same. It is reasonable to assume that those people are consciously resisting change.

8.5.2 Multicultural Unconscious

Fourteen different cultures are represented on the MRC Management Committee. Each community representative has a different learning mode but assumes that his or her communication is effective. Thus when messages are not understood, defiance or malice towards them and/or their culture is perceived.

Workers at the MRC also had to endure the ever-changing structure and personalities of the Management Committee with only five elected members but six co-opted ones, including a representative of the Ethnic Communities Council, which has so far denied MRC representation on its Management Committee.

Many past Management Committee members had hidden agendas to serve their own needs and to cover power. Clashes between them varied from innuendoes to screaming insults and raising fists at one another across the table. Feedback from migrants who have used the Cross-cultural Conflict Resolution Service showed that complaints ranged from an NESB mediator’s ardent effort to convert clients to his religion to mediators’ total ignorance of clients’ needs and of the difference between a legal matter and a simple misunderstanding between two individuals chitchatting over the fence. Complaints alleged that migrants who withdrew from the Conflict Resolution Service out of dissatisfaction were later falsely used in the service’s statistics on success, rated at 90 per cent. It appears that there exists some misinterpretation, if not misrepresentation, of statistical data by non-statisticians.

Many Management Committee members have difficulty with English

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nuances. One appointed a worker to work more than the number of hours specified by the grant contract. Another threatened the MRC's qualified accountant because the latter did not follow instructions which he considered unreasonable and erroneous. Because of their hidden agenda, these members could not appreciate my ambition to optimise client services. Preoccupied with their own advancement, they constantly suspected me of undermining their position. One saw a flyer advertising the Multicultural Mothers' Dinner sponsored by the Supported Parenting Skills Program in the reception area. He immediately questioned the legitimacy of the project. The same member accused me of pretending to work unpaid overtime to justify the time I was away from my office, working as an interpreter for extra income. Yet under the influence of champagne, he explained how he had manipulated the system to obtain promotion five times in five years. At first I attributed persistent conflict to my short tenure of office, particularly since my life at the MRC during the first year gradually improved. The chairperson (a successful lawyer) and I enjoyed mutual understanding and respect. My second Management Committee weathered many storms. Its secretary lost the minutes, then disappeared for months before resigning. One member displayed an outrageous attitude towards me, then resigned after my written protest.

I related this incident to workers and clients from different and my own cultures. Then, reflecting on Ba and two other mentally ill clients I had helped, I remembered their racist attitudes. I also remembered the off-guard anti-Jewish statements made by various people normally against prejudice and racism. Reading the Bible, watching the programs on Hinduism on SBS and reading Professor Basham's *The Wonder That was India*, I realised that the multicultural unconscious has been negatively conditioned by religions. All religions have taught us to be exclusively good: good Hindus, good Christians, good Muslims... In addition, patriotism has conditioned us to fight foreigners to conquer and dominate inferior nations. The multicultural unconscious is negative and ready to erupt whenever there is crisis. The collective unconscious has caused war and genocide: the German Nazis led by Hitler exterminated six million Jews and many others, the British collective unconscious massacred uncounted Aboriginal Australians, the Khmer unconscious killed at least one million Cambodians, the Balkan war is having devastating effects on the peoples of the region. Repeated killing of minorities by dominant cultures, then division and racism in Eastern Europe have proved that education has only glossed over the suspicious, fearful or even racist multicultural unconscious. To attain peace and

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86 Evidence available on request.
harmony for humanity, it is necessary to liberate our souls from the negative multicultural unconscious.

Then, as my research ended, incidents showing habitual lying and distrust by people from China and Vietnam were revealed: a community leader 'married' her own husband because, to facilitate migration, she acted as a widow. He remained behind to organise escape for not only his relatives but also those able to afford the fees. His son acted as an immigration agent. When the Vietnamese Government cracked down on illegal emigration, he came to Australia as a tourist, married his wife, then went to a third country and is waiting for family reunion. Similarly six Chinese women were reported to have married gamblers they picked up in clubs. They quickly got married to drunken, violent Australians. They quarrelled and called the Domestic Violence Crisis Service to obtain Domestic violence orders after one to three months of marriage. They were moved to refuges, granted permanent residence, then given priority government accommodation. At the same time, they talked about honesty and decency, social justice, communist oppression and human rights. There appears to be no connection between their actions (unconscious) and their speech (conscious).

8.5.3 Cultural Conditioning

More often than not, expressions have been quoted out of context to be misused as evidence to support or reject old data and to establish new theories to satisfy an obsessive Western desire for originality and academic advancement based on publication. While I have no difficulty with accepting footnotes when the footnotes can be found, I have difficulty finding relevant respectable sources from written material. On the other hand, the books I have read, television programs I have watched, people I have talked to and things I have seen have inspired me or given me insight. But none has provided me with what I wanted or needed: human conditioning. Yet all have indirectly proven that such conditioning exists whether it is Freud's interpretation of dreams, A New Approach To Psychiatry87, Pragmatics Of Brief Systematic Therapy88, A New Explanation Of How We Control our Lives89, or Literate Means To Therapeutic Ends90. We have been conditioned by our parents, grandparents, society, country and cultures.

During the past three years, I have interacted with people from over fifty cultures as a friend, co-learner, service provider, teacher and therapist. They have given me information much more valuable than all the books I have read. Through my passion, hope, pleasure, fear and the combination of all the human emotions, I have gained insight into my own culture and conditioning which can only be validated by what I have done and how others have felt and thought about what I have done in terms of social progress and understanding of one another and of relationships between communities, nations and cultures to reduce suspicion and prejudice. If any of my clients feel less frustrated, more peaceful towards him- or herself and others, less isolated, more aware of his or her unconscious, then I have achieved what I set out to achieve with this thesis and three years of research and soul searching.

8.5.4 Learning Modes

Conditioning comes in different forms: repeated ‘no’ from parents has resulted in children learning to say ‘no’ before they learn to say ‘yes’. School education from kindergarten to university further conditions our mind. Scholars from one country often look down on those from another. Even the use of footnotes varies from country to country if not from institution to institution. It is not important original thoughts that distinguish a tertiary institution but the emblem, the procedure, past and famous names. In 1984, Cambridge University had no money to provide stationery to academic staff, but money for morning and afternoon tea and formal dinners was plentiful. Australians of British origin still believe that wigs and gowns make the legal profession and system look serious while other Australians think them ridiculous. Mum’s apple pie is still better than others’.

At a more serious level conditioning has become learning modes. People from the rote-learning tradition feel lost in the learning-by-rediscovering tradition.

8.5.5 Cultural Dysfunction

Inability to communicate in the mainstream community language has quickly made many migrants lose not only self-confidence but self-respect. Parents have lost their authority, as children have been used as interpreters and school and government agents to gather and disseminate information. Discrimination has led to long-term unemployment, then working for low wages under the counter. Unemployed NESB males are congregating in
nightclubs to pick up 'loose Australian' girls. An NESB doctor is alleged to notarise papers for his patients and charge Medicare for full consultations. A community leader has cheated Social Security on behalf of his aged parents. Traditional and proud people have suddenly become 'dole bludgers' who appear not to have known dignity.  

8.6 MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT II: TRAINING FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE TEST

8.6.1 Multicultural Training

Our teaching and training styles are the direct results of our learning. If we have linguistic and logic skills, we will use them as strengths to convey our messages. If our students or trainees happen to have similar learning modes, they will have little difficulty in understanding us. Thus there will be effective communication between two parties. On the other hand, if students or trainees have different learning modes, it is likely that two parties will talk past each other and frustration will increase. Then each side will condemn the other as stupid. People who come from non-democratic traditions, indirect cultures and caste systems will have great difficulty in participating; most may even have great difficulty with critical thinking or analysis. Identifying their difficulties by understanding their learning modes will help teachers and trainers use means other than linguistic and logic forms of communication. Thus we should not teach French to English-speaking beginners by using French, but we should employ bilingual teachers or well-defined pictures to communicate visually.

It is therefore necessary that training material be developed for people with little or no language skills, using objects and illustrations familiar and attractive to them. For Aboriginal people who identify with the land, the use of an Aboriginal flag in three different colours, separate and integral, in the context of the land and out of that context, will facilitate understanding and communication. On the other hand, anything connected with white genocide, implicit or explicit no matter how remote, such as the contraceptive enforcement in the seventies, will hinder communication with Aboriginal people. The saying, 'in Rome do what the Romans do', has great implications in teaching and learning; The Little Prince conveys a wise

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91 See Nho in Appendix 11.
message: people will not do what they do not like doing or feel confident in doing, particularly the oppressed and those who consider themselves oppressed. As trainees and trainers are co-learners, trainers must learn to understand trainees’ learning modes to facilitate change for improvement. Thus the suitability of action research is demonstrated.

People accept criticism, suggestions and hints from their friends and those they trust better than from strangers; it is necessary for trainers to facilitate good relationships with trainees. An Indian professor told me that his Aboriginal friends said, ‘We thought white doctors were racist until we met Indian doctors’. The professor said Indians ‘invented racism’, equating racism with the caste system. A Chinese community leader who had moved away from his community to become president of a mainstream community organisation said, ‘Chinese are very racist’. The Chinese still call white people devils. But people are willing to accept criticism when there is practical benefit. When training people for job interviews I often comment on their attitude by saying, for example, that they are too arrogant, too shy, too sloppy, not caring enough, or they talk too much.

We may be born with different kinds of intelligence according to Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, or there may be only one kind of intelligence at birth which is then conditioned diversely to become our learning modes of which we are unconscious. It is difficult to tell by the time we become adults whether our intelligence has been natural or conditioned. Whatever may be the case, to be an effective teacher or trainer it is necessary to understand one’s own and trainees’ or students’ learning modes and conditioning.

8.6.2. English Teaching for Refugees and New Arrivals

Refugees experience a high degree of anxiety; they need to know what has worked, not to try what may work; they need to have repetitive action similar to knitting to accept and reinforce their new reality: safety in freedom and democracy. Last-minute results from my daughter’s learning Chinese according to the rote-learning method showed that learning is not always enjoyable, but the result of learning should always be beneficial. She rejected accelerated learning; I observed how this mode of teaching failed.

92 Saint Exupery, Le Petit Prince (France).
to work with people with a high degree of anxiety and people from the rote-
learning traditions. Adults learn better when meanings and structure are
clearly provided. Thus a serious review of the Adult Migrants' English
Program (AMEP) is necessary to save money and distress.93

8.6.3 Bilingual Instruction

Watching the making of French in Action (Open Learning of French) on the
ABC I realised the difference between students in that program and our
students: the students of French were highly motivated and prepared for a
challenge while ours were worn out by challenge. It is no wonder that
accelerated learning has not worked for people under stress! They learn
more easily from what they know, from certainty. Unfortunately teachers
and the educational system have not attempted to identify migrants' prior
learning. Thus they have unwittingly undermined new arrivals' confidence
with the best of intentions.

Language is meaning. Most Australians would be horrified if they had to
learn French with a French speaker who cannot speak English. Lessons
would therefore have to be explained in French. It would not take long
before students would start to suffer from headaches. Some students who
suffer from trauma would even hallucinate. Yet many migrants who speak
no English on arrival have been taught English by teachers who speak only
English. One Vietnamese attended English at TAFE for two years without
learning anything. Many others dropped out after a short time. The MRC
experience shows that Vietnamese with little or no English on arrival learn
better from bilingual teachers. All speak some basic English after three
months of English classes, six hours a week. This finding has been
supported by Frank Trinh, a linguist at the University of Western Sydney at
Milperra. In the US it has also been found that English teaching up to
intermediate level is more effective when instruction is bilingual.

8.6.4 Generalisation and Stereotyping

For training purposes, generalisation is necessary to identify trainers'
potential learning needs to select or develop effective training material.

93 See AMEP in Appendix 12.
Generalisation derived from carefully analysed samples and statistical data is essential for the acquisition of knowledge to bring about informed change. For example, the high crime rate among adults aged between 35 and 45 in the Vietnamese community in 1985 led me to predict that there would be an increase in youth crime in the Vietnamese community because those adults were bad examples to their children. The crime rate in the Vietnamese community also went against the general trend: in the general population, the crime rate drops in the same age group. Vietnamese offenders were not unemployed. The Vietnamese community had a much higher murder rate than the general population and a much lower rate of conviction. Thus there is a strong indication that organised crime exists in that community. In 1992 Canberra had a higher youth crime rate than in previous years. Two Vietnamese shops were robbed and owners beaten, yet no witnesses could be found. A Chinese student’s body with missing parts was found in the Belconnen Garbage Depot...

Unfortunately most community workers have not studied statistics and therefore fail to appreciate generalisations essential in identifying trends and planning services. Instead, they confuse generalisations with stereotyping, which is the use of generalisation in individual cases, such as regarding all Germans as Nazis.

8.7 Multicultural Development III: Job Application Service and Training for Job Interviews

Unlike other projects, this service has been successful from the start because it addresses an urgent and outstanding need. Most migrants cannot afford to pay several hundred dollars to have their application written by a professional. I have generated more income tax for the government than my wage and its 'on cost'. This service has also provided me with many opportunities to understand a variety of migrant cultures in depth, as I have made friends with people from all cultural groups. It has created a network between the MRC and its former clients in the public service, other agencies and private enterprise. The MRC has been recognised by peer organisations as a training institution.
8.7.1 Employment Counselling

This aspect of the service is probably the best contribution to cultural diversity and social cohesion, as clients are willing to change and to be accommodating for their own benefit. It has given me the opportunity to introduce participation and industrial democracy to facilitate acculturation.

8.7.2 Work Experience

Work experience was considered a burden to the MRC before my appointment. Now the MRC and people who come for work experience are enjoying mutual benefits. Recognising the importance of work experience, the MRC has officially appointed an Employment Liaison Officer to make this program more systematic.

8.7.3 References

In total I have provided effective references to five clients. This service and work experience are closely related. All three (job application service, work experience and interview training) are equally important to help migrants secure jobs.

On the other hand, this project has given me much pain. While references without reservations have helped migrants obtain jobs, they have also undermined my ability as an assessor. In three cases, I highly recommended people who were later found to be dishonest by their supervisors. One took the supervisor to court, using the Discrimination Act with great expertise and authority, and won. Instead of feeling proud of my ability to train new arrivals, I was struck by horror: innocently I have created nightmares for at least three supervisors. I have learned that continuous assessment and observation for two years are not sufficient to make conclusions about the Chinese trained by the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese have a different definition of trust: 'I trust people I know from childhood. I know what he has done; I know how his mind functions so that I can take care of myself if he does something against me'.
8.8 Conclusion

I feel a sense of relief and satisfaction that I have completed a document, answered most of the questions raised in the introduction, and understood the unconscious. For years I rejected everything German, associating German efficiency with German racism. Yet, I could find little to criticise German food, fashion, hygiene, arts, literature, or courtesy. Suddenly I realised that, at the conscious level, Europeans represent civilisation, but at the unconscious level, like other peoples, many remain racist. Although German racism has been revived by its reunification, those guilty of racial violence are being prosecuted; Germans are demonstrating against skinheads to protect refugees. The German unconscious which led to World War II has been gradually influenced by the German 'conscious'. I feel hopeful that effective implementation of Social Justice, EEO, the Discrimination Act 1991, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and the Native Title Act 1994 across cultures — multicultural community development — will gradually recreate a less negative Australian multicultural unconscious.

In addition, knowing how people's attitudes are conditioned by cultures and how employment training can facilitate change to promote social cohesion, I look forward to an exciting future. I feel that I have just begun a new project. There are still many areas that I need to address and issues that I need to explore such as cultural dysfunction therapy and family development program to retain the positive aspects of the extended-family culture for aged care and children's education.

To address the above issues, on behalf of the Migrant Resource Centre I have applied for a grant from the Department of Health and Human Resources to address the needs of the currently most disadvantaged group: the Vietnamese.

Even though different religions worship different gods, all have taught people the universal moral values of honesty, unselfishness, loyalty and fairness. Thus 'reasonableness' is not culturally determined, whereas manipulation and deception are. Intuitively we often know whom to trust and whom to avoid — and we are often right; unfortunately education has taught us to suspect intuition.
My personal development has resulted in my awareness that I did not understand the refugee experience; my response to the Vietnam War ceased to be emotional and personal in April 1975, when my immediate family was evacuated by the Americans. Subsequently I forced my rational political stance on people who needed reassurance to recover from shock and to reassemble their emotional pieces — I offered but inappropriate rational solutions which they took as threats to their safety, therefore they responded with threats of violence. When the Vietnamese community leader came to see me in 1992, I admitted my weakness. He was shocked, disbelieving the hard data on criminal activities in the Vietnamese community that I presented to him. However, as a scientist, he verified and then accepted them. We became friends. While I am trying to assess my improved services to the Vietnamese community, on leaving Canberra its president wrote to thank me\textsuperscript{94} for services to Vietnamese and other NESB migrants. Considering that in 1985 I was threatened with death for daring to speak 'against the Vietnamese' and two Vietnamese newspapers wrote articles to defame me, I am happy to observe that the Vietnamese community and its leaders have fundamentally changed and adjusted to a pluralistic democracy. As my attitude changed according to new understanding, I have also contributed to my native culture and to the improvement of the Vietnamese unconscious. Thus I have returned home culturally. Today, 20 January 1994, Kay Distel informs me that she also observes that people burdened with personal problems are not ready for action research; they prefer a linear approach to a lateral one as they choose predictability over adventure.

\textsuperscript{94} Evidence available on request.
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225
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Nho Giao (Confucianism as documented by Tran Trong Kim)
Viet Nam Phong Tuc (Vietnamese customs as documented Phan Ke Binh)
APPENDIX

I Rosa

Rosa’s mother met me at a craft workshop originally organised for a group of European women. The number of participants had seriously declined and I was asked to join so that other Asians would follow me. Chinese and Filipinos joined me in attending the workshop. The number in the group increased not only because of Asian participation but also because some of those who had left returned.

Everyone in the group was knitting or crocheting; I declined to join in because I had been doing that for years and could no longer afford to risk contracting RSI; I was also doubtful about the practicality of the product. Making lace was an expensive enterprise: the bone shuttle and silk thread cost a large portion of participants’ pension or unemployment benefit. My cleaner and neighbours had made similar knick-knacks only to be deeply depressed as they could not retrieve the cost of material. The reason was simple: those women mixed business with pleasure; they made what they enjoyed making or what their friends made, instead of making what others needed or could not make but wished to have for special occasions. During the same period, I had made croissants and other French delicacies which had not been available at the local market. I was able to make $8 to $15 an hour, ‘staying at home’. Trendy people would organise champagne breakfasts and order dozens of croissants which were made of mainly air — the fewer ingredients used the better the product quality.

At this stage I was still searching for an action research group. This would be the most worthwhile challenge: to inform those women on marketing, test my perception of women’s needs and address them appropriately.

It turned out that the leader of the workshop also tried to help her mother who was almost 90 but still worked as a gardener, producing wonderful organically grown vegetables. Unfortunately she also produced what everyone else could easily grow: parsley and spinach. However, I refrained from commenting because I was still an outsider and tried to restrict my role to that of an observer.

Instead, I proposed that we discuss issues that are important to women such as sexual discrimination, AIDS and domestic violence. I was well aware that my proposal could trigger immense objection, but I hoped to promote
feminist concepts across cultures, taking advantage of my role as an outsider and testing my assessment of the situation.

The leader intervened: 'I am a victim of domestic violence and I have taken out a DVO against my former husband, but I don't think that we should discuss this subject openly'. She also revealed that her mother and sister were victimised by men and that men from her culture are violent because her culture considers violence as masculinity.

I toned down my proposal but continued, and I asked Rosa's mother to interpret for me. She smiled as she disclosed that her husband had beaten her. The leader successfully steered the group's attention away from the discussion by asking everyone to join a mainstream community by setting up a multicultural stall to display their works and produce.

Happily I joined the market event by making Vietnamese spring rolls. The Chinese women were busy making prawn chips; each prepared what she liked eating or doing; the leader packed produce for her mother.

As other groups arrived and set up their stalls, I noticed that, as at country markets in Europe and Australia I had frequented earlier, everyone produced if not exactly the same then something that others could easily make to save money, because saving, cooking and baking were valued by their cultures as virtuous and desirable, and, belonging to the lowest income bracket, they really needed money.

There were more curious window shoppers than buyers. Those who hoped to purchase something they had fancied for a long time were disappointed while others commented on how producers had used patterns from magazines such as New Idea, Women's Weekly, Woman's Day and Family Circle. With heavy hearts and an overwhelming depression we closed our stall. I was embarrassed that, as predicted, my products were almost sold out. I gave what remained to others in the group and contributed most of the income to them for rent. The leader also sold some of her mother's produce and gave the rest away with some difficulty.

Instead of reviving the group, the social event that had been planned with great anticipation and hope became its death certificate. The leader accused others of not 'chipping in'. There was no post mortem because people were too depressed to attend.
To my surprise, Rosa’s mother contacted me for help: she wanted to know everything about the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and youth counselling.

Her husband was cruel to her. He occasionally hit her, but her primary concern was her daughter’s behaviour. She did everything for her daughter because she loved her and wished to bring her up away from the traditional way of life which she and her mother had been conditioned to tolerate: domestic violence. Working as a tea lady and waitress, she was giving Rosa $20 pocket money a week, but Rosa was irresponsible; she kept skipping classes and hanging around with undesirable youth. To make matters worse, the youth counsellor was advising Rosa’s mother that she was too strict because she imposed some conditions on her daughter’s behaviour. ‘He decided that my husband was violent and therefore my daughter would be better off leaving home without talking to either of us. My husband adores my daughter although he is cruel to me. Could you please talk to Rosa’, she pleaded. Rosa’s mother was frantic because Rosa was reaching sixteen and moving away from home to collect Job Search Allowance and live independently, but she could neither cook nor budget. Her mother felt guilty about Rosa’s change in behaviour: just as Rosa reached puberty, the family went back to her home country where Rosa lost one of her grandmothers. It was a bad experience: ‘She seemed to change from being a gregarious child to a withdrawn one. She wants to be a writer but she doesn’t want to learn writing, she just wants to do it. I tried to encourage her, but she hasn’t done anything. Maybe you could encourage her. I think you would be a good example for her’.

I agreed on the condition that Rosa be willing to talk to me. Rosa seemed to be at the end of her rope, so she would agree to talk to anyone, including me. I took her out for lunch at the Parliament House, trying to show her alternative lifestyles for women: I pointed out to her women MPs and other women professionals. I hoped to serve as a temporary role model while searching for a more culturally appropriate version. Rosa’s mother was right: Rosa had no interest in anything practical. She had the usual romantic old-fashioned dream that her boyfriend (a casual motor mechanic) would provide for her: fish and chips. She told me that everything was hopeless because her mother would never agree to let her have any freedom. She wanted to go to Sydney, but her mother would not allow her to go alone; her mother hated Sydney; therefore the family would never go there: ‘There’s no life in Canberra’, she lamented.

I agreed with her. Her parents seemed unaware of how difficult it was for
teenagers to live in a dormant town like Canberra. I had experienced that when I was 22, living with my parents in a resort town. It was depressing. I asked Rosa why she thought her parents did not allow her that freedom; she said it was because she was wild.

I was hopeful: Rosa admitted some wrongdoing on her part. The child was crying for help, I thought. I tried to offer Rosa a realistic version of life: fish and chips could not be anyone's staple diet even if they were nutriously sound. 'You will get sick of them after two weeks', I said. I began to wonder what she did with her pocket money, but I decided not to ask and waited for her to volunteer the information.

Rosa said little; she was convinced that her mother was incapable of change and that she knew everything about her parents: old-fashioned and unreasonable.

My task was to convince Rosa that either her mother was, or both her parents were, reasonable, while gaining an opportunity to assess them myself. As I was invited to address a conference in Sydney, I asked Rosa to come along. She would meet women academics and, I hoped, she might find a suitable model. 'But my mother would never allow me,' Rosa said. 'If I could convince your mother to let you come along, would you promise me to trust your mother and look at her behaviour differently?' I asked. After some discussion, Rosa agreed to have a try.

It was not difficult to obtain an agreement from Rosa's mother. She was happy that I would even consider taking along such a difficult child, but she had to talk to her husband about it. He was the difficult person to convince.

Rosa's parents allowed her to come along with me to the literary conference on condition that she obey me. I told Rosa about her parents' agreement, expecting her to be excited, but she seemed preoccupied. At her age, I would have been overjoyed by the opportunity. Her mother insisted that she be with me all the time.

I arranged for her to stay with me at my friend's flat. My friend is a single woman, an academic who is self-contained; I thought that she would be an excellent model for Rosa. Through her, Rosa would meet a European role model. It was a great concession on my friend's part to allow a stranger in her flat because, unlike me, my friend is reserved. Rosa's mother gave her money for the formal dinner and some extra pocket money. We were to stay
in Sydney for two days. The first would be my time to attend the conference, the second Rosa’s, and I would take her wherever she wanted to go. Rosa’s mother packed good dresses for her. She even bought some new clothes, having high regard and great hope for the new social milieu to which I was to introduce her daughter.

I asked my husband to drive us: I intended to present a reasonable marriage model. My husband agreed to drive me and Rosa to Sydney although he is even more reserved than my friend. We went to pick Rosa up at her house. As I approached it I noticed that the door was half-open. I felt pleased about being expected, but was shocked by the piles of clothes everywhere. Although tidiness was not my virtue I was concerned: this might be some sign of disturbance. I raised my voice but there was no response. I walked through the unusually messy living room and saw Rosa standing in front of the mirror completely absorbed in her own image, looking like some cheap teenage prostitute I had seen in documentary films on television; her skirt barely covered her underpants; her blouse had some kind of violent picture. Her eyes were already too heavily made-up, but she was adding more black lines. I greeted her. This time she turned to me, disappointed: she had been waiting for some friend to come before she left for Sydney.

I insisted we depart immediately as we had agreed to get to Sydney before dark. With a long face and heavy silence, she entered our car and sat in the back seat. Even my husband who hates psychology and avoids human contact except those pleasant ones filled with music, discussion and literature (the kind often found in the European salons) said to me in French that something was wrong with her. I anticipated some problems ahead.

Rosa’s silence was uncomfortable for us. I tried to talk to her, but after a while I gave up: it was like pulling out solid wisdom teeth. We arrived at my friend’s home just as it became dark. My husband left after a cup of coffee. My friend gave me the spare bedroom and told Rosa to sleep in the living room, but I persuaded her to let Rosa have the bedroom because I wanted Rosa to feel like a pampered guest and because I was worried that she might try to leave in the middle of the night.

My friend made a special curry for us, but Rosa had no appetite; she wanted to take a walk. ‘I think you should wait until tomorrow. It’s not safe to walk at night’, I advised. My friend was horrified as this quiet child became abusive and aggressive: ‘I am not going to eat unless I have a walk first. I feel that I am in prison’.

168
I took her out for a walk as I knew that she would just walk out of the door if something were not done about it. We walked to the shopping centre in the dark. The place was deserted. In the dim light I noticed that Rosa mailed a thick letter. Then she looked for a phone booth, but I persuaded her to call from my friend’s home.

We returned, but Rosa refused to eat. She went to bed unhappy and angry. I stayed awake most of the night, listening to the sounds from her bedroom. At six Rosa woke up, all dressed and ready to go out for another walk to make a call from a public phone.

I took her for a walk. She begged me to go to Sydney. I told her we were in Sydney. ‘I mean Sydney where the action is’, she insisted, but she did not know exactly what part of Sydney that would be. I described to her in detail different areas of Sydney to discover that there was more to her intention than what she had told me.

Taking Rosa to the conference was like pulling a fighting bull away from the red cloth. At the conference my problems with her began: Rosa was in tears, accusing me of being cruel and unreasonable to her, being just like her mother. She insisted that she needed to make more telephone calls as I tried to concentrate on what was being said before my turn to be on the panel. Being the least important speaker, I was concerned that I had come unprepared. Rosa interrupted me again and again, asking for permission to go to Sydney because she was bored. I continued to maintain my ground; she started to make noises to attract attention. Then she asked me to allow her to make a telephone call and promised me she would return. I had no choice but to let her go because it was my turn to speak. She went away for the entire time I was addressing the conference. I assumed that she had bolted. However, she returned to ask me to talk to her mother. Both Rosa and her mother cried over the telephone as she begged her mother to ask me to allow her to go to Sydney and promised that she would return in time for the evening meal. Her mother consented.

Rosa returned just before we left for the restaurant, looking tired and messy, still in the same clothes she had worn on the trip from Canberra. She appeared to look forward to the dinner in silence. Everyone tried to talk to her, comparing her with their own teenage children, but Rosa maintained her quiet distance.

The party went to a Thai restaurant in Parramatta. Rosa’s eyes lit up as we approached the population density; she asked me whether there would be a
pinball parlour near the restaurant. I tried not to show my shock: 'Why do you ask?'

'I like pinball parlours. I hope there’ll be one next to the restaurant, so I can play...'

'But we are going to have dinner in the restaurant', I interrupted her. Rosa resumed her silence until we arrived. There was a pinball parlour near the restaurant. There were pinball parlours everywhere in the Western suburbs.

As soon as we entered the restaurant, Rosa wanted to go to the pinball parlour. I insisted that she have something to eat first because she had paid for the food, but she refused to touch the food and made a scene. I had to go with her to the pinball parlour where she phoned her mother to ask for permission to remain alone. Again Rosa was in tears and won her mother's support. I felt like someone who stood between them.

I returned to the restaurant and waited for Rosa. It was about midnight when we finished the dinner. I went out to fetch Rosa, only to find that she had never even entered the place; the manager told me she had picked up a boy and left with him several hours earlier. The street was almost deserted. I looked everywhere in vain. In the end, one of the men in the party offered to walk with me to the nearest nightclub. We weaved between couples passionately dancing to blasting disco music. In the semi-darkness, we could not identify anyone. 'Thousands of teenagers come and go every week', a policeman said on our way out.

After searching for an hour I decided to return to my friend's house and call Rosa's mother. I was informed that it was not the first time Rosa had run away from home, but her mother had not let me know. She apologised and assured me that I was not responsible for Rosa's behaviour; she gave me some names and addresses in Sydney where Rosa might have gone. I called the local police; they told me I needed to go to the station in person. I searched Rosa's belongings to find a list of names and addresses; she appeared to have prepared for everything all along. Among her things, I found a pop magazine filled with sex and violence. Comparing Rosa's writing and interests with my daughter's, I was alarmed by the difference even though my daughter was also a drop-out.

I spent most of the night talking to Rosa's mother. I went to the police station before having breakfast. There was not much they could do. On my
return, Rosa's mother called to let me know that Rosa had contacted her to tell her that she was safe and to apologise to me for having caused me concern. It was a terrible ordeal for me and an unnecessary disruption to my friend's tranquil existence. My friend suggested we go out for a walk.

When we returned, we found a note that Rosa had stuck on the front door with a piece of sticky tape. Again it appeared that she had deliberately come back during my absence or had waited somewhere to avoid our encounter. In her note she asked me to take her things back to Canberra and stated that she would go home by train.

I compared her writing in the note with that in the notebook she left behind — two totally different styles of writing, as if they belonged to two different people. I asked Rosa's mother about this; she confirmed that Rosa has written in many different styles. I then asked her mother about possible mood swings or inconsistency in Rosa's behaviour. Yes, her mother said, she could be very sweet, but she could also be vicious depending on her mood; she seemed unaware of her behaviour.

I called up my Lebanese friend, an experienced social worker. She confirmed my fear: Rosa might have multiple personalities. My friend suggested that I ask her mother to help Rosa maintain her 'sense of reality, instead of taking her to a psychiatrist'. My friend was against drug therapy. I reported to Rosa's mother what she had said.

Rosa came back by train. Before I found an opportunity to talk to her mother about what my Lebanese friend had told me, Rosa's mother found an empty syringe in her drawer under her clothes. Alarmed, she took the syringe to a drug rehabilitation unit to have it tested. Heroin traces were found. She then asked Rosa about it; she said that she had picked the syringe up somewhere in the park and kept it to use for painting, but she admitted to having used other drugs such as marijuana and speed. Horror stories started to unfold: as Rosa was feeling lost, drug pushers approached her and gave her free samples. They quickly became her 'friends' and tried to 'liberate' her from her oppressive parents. Only then did Rosa's counsellor believe that Rosa needed help, and arranged for Rosa and her mother to attend drug rehabilitation together. However, Rosa managed to convince her mother that she was not addicted. When she was just over sixteen she convinced her mother that she needed to move away from home to Sydney. Her mother called me up for help. I asked a social welfare worker to arrange for Rosa to stay in one of the safer refuges and to keep her returning home option wide open. Rosa left home, but returned within weeks; fish and chips were too

171
boring and no-one did the laundry.

She needed systematic detoxification, but she denied having ever been addicted in the first place, and her mother continued to believe her against all pertinent evidence. Her mother still believed that Rosa did not lie to her.

The social welfare worker had a daughter of the same age. Coming from a privileged Anglo-Saxon background and leading a sheltered life, she had little knowledge of youth refuges or counsellors. After having helped Rosa, she was horrified that her daughter might be 'talked into' leaving home. Youth counsellors often treated parents as suspects and fell prey to teenagers' novel interpretation of home difficulties. The social welfare worker confirmed my fear (counsellors treated migrant parents as people with outdated values who would oppress their teenage children: 'all parents of non-English-speaking backgrounds are the same'). Many youth counsellors need serious retraining to deliver effective services because they lack skills and understanding of issues even within their own culture. On the other hand, their attitude is easy to understand: they are influenced by statements such as 'the street is safer than the home' and statistics on homeless youths. Leading but irresponsible criminologists have failed to acknowledge that the streets are already filled with runaway youths — raped, exploited, unhappy and vulnerable.

My suspicion of parents who were eager to believe that their family and culture were moral was again confirmed when a teenager disclosed to us that her best friend's father attempted to seduce her. Without telling her mother, she went to the friend's mother and her own friend, but both mother and daughter turned against her.

My own friend's son used to attack my son Tonio by hiding in the bush to throw rocks at him on his way home. Tonio was seriously near-sighted. Even though he wore glasses, he could not see well from a distance. On the other hand, I could not be sure that Tonio told me the truth because he was an exceptionally imaginative, self-centred and intelligent child; therefore I approached the teacher and inquired about the possible situation. The teacher confirmed my worries: 'That child's a brat. His parents are totally unreasonable; they believe he is an angel because he is their son and a poet'. The teacher promised to keep an eye on the 'poet'. However, supervision proved ineffective; Tonio continued to be injured, so I invited my friend for lunch and looked for an opportunity to present my case. The lunch went on for hours; my friend praised her loving son whose 'soul was poetic' and who
would ‘never hurt a fly’. She expected him to be no less than a doctor or a lawyer and to maintain her family tradition: being top professionals. I said nothing. Tonio miraculously survived his high-school years relatively unharmed.

Being married to a Jewish man, I observed that, although it is natural that parents love and protect their children, they are likely to lack objectivity where their offspring are concerned; Jewish mothers are exceptionally protective of their children. My sister-in-law told me: ‘People can criticise my cats, my dogs, my husband, my mother or my friends, but no-one is allowed to criticise my children’.

Coming from a meritocratic culture, Vietnamese parents are the opposite; my parents would listen to all criticism of their children and try to improve our character to maintain our family superiority. Most of the time they were biased against us. Vietnamese parents do not praise their children either, so I never knew how well I did. I was always told that I could improve further.

I brought Tonio up according to the Vietnamese tradition of not telling him how intelligent he was, until he was physically abused and unhappy in school. I was forced to reveal his IQ to him to keep him from leaving. He became more confident and needed less peer support. On the other hand, I brought my daughter Pamina up according to Western theory on child-rearing: Doctor Spock’s revised edition and Piaget, among others. Pamina, six and a half years younger than Tonio, dropped out of school. Neither had group identity, but both had strong individual identity.

My sample is too small, but the article on Vietnamese children’s scholastic achievement in the February 1992 issue of *Scientific American* should make us rethink our theory on child-rearing: Vietnamese are far from being the model parents that educational psychologists would advocate; their environment and economic circumstances (overcrowded, low income) are also far from desirable, yet the children thrive and sustain the lowest juvenile delinquency rate and an even lower recidivism rate.
II Racism in Eastern Europe

Like many people who are interested in socialism, my husband and I decided to spend part of our world tour in Eastern Europe. For the first time we visited a country whose language neither of us could speak. This added mystery to the charm of Prague, the city of one hundred towers. Although the level of pollution was unbearable for me, I enjoyed my new experience.

As American citizens, we were pleasantly surprised to see banners that read 'the Czech people thank the American people'; however, as a historian, my husband became suspicious of posters declaring that the Americans liberated Prague. I felt uncomfortable by people sliding up from all sides, trying to change money.

While my husband relied on a kind waiter for information, I went to some Asians, speaking Vietnamese, hoping they would understand me. They did because they were Vietnamese guest workers only too eager to make my acquaintance. My writer's instinct and curiosity escaped my control. I asked them to tell me all about life in Czechoslovakia, expecting to hear how much it had improved since democracy began. They did not have time for a chat because they were on their way to work, but promised they would meet me at my apartment during the weekend.

Only one of the workers turned up. He seemed to look over his shoulder as he greeted me, then quickly followed me into our apartment, refusing our invitation to have coffee or dinner at a nearby restaurant.

In the apartment, I offered him coffee and bananas which are rare in socialist Europe. He accepted the coffee but refused to eat anything. I asked him about life in Czechoslovakia. He looked around as if walls were listening, lowered his voice and told me about his own experience: 'I live with many others in a dormitory near one of the largest factories. Since the killing of a Vietnamese worker, no Vietnamese has gone out without a weapon.'

I was shocked. 'The killing of a Vietnamese worker? When?'

'A few months ago,' he said.

'After the democratisation?' I asked.

'Yes, before that there was no problem with racism.'
'Tell me about the killing,' I urged.

'It happened during one of the attacks by skinheads and people who look very elegant and sleek and drive fast cars,' he looked at me for a moment. 'You shouldn't take my word for it. You are a journalist, you should check the information I give you with other Vietnamese.' The man was exceptionally articulate and possessed an unusual knowledge of history and politics of the region.

'I am not a journalist. I am a writer of fiction.'

'Whatever you say you are, you are going to write about it when you get back to your country, aren't you?'

'Would you like me to?' I asked.

He ignored my question and continued with his account: 'The terrorism of Vietnamese workers was so bad that we refused to go to work unless we received protection from the Czech government. Our embassy had to intervene. Although the government has declared that racism is illegal, skinheads and other right-wing people continue to throw rocks at our windows from midnight until four or five in the morning. We can't go to sleep. Quite a few people have been wounded.'

I felt so disturbed by the man's story that I checked it with other workers in Prague. Everything was confirmed. One detail was added to his story. Racism in Czechoslovakia had always existed. Vietnamese had been verbally and physically abused. The situation became really serious since a Vietnamese worker fell ill and was taken to the hospital. He died. The Vietnamese believed that the man died because of criminal negligence. His best friend killed the doctor believed to be responsible. Racial violence mounted. I talked to five Vietnamese in Prague. The previous socialist government meant safety and security to them.

Altogether I interviewed forty Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia, the former East Germany, the former West Germany and France.

Thirty Vietnamese who had left East Germany told me about their friend and colleague beaten to death by demonstrators against the secret police and for democracy. They became so frightened that they left for the West even though none has any strong feelings against the communists or socialism.
Some racial violence in East Germany has been reported by the Australian media. The *Jerusalem Post* of 3 June 1991 reported the attack on an Afro-German child by teenagers who shouted: 'Foreigners out! Germany for Germans'.

A German provincial newspaper reported that a group of skinheads chased a Vietnamese worker through the Erfurt-Berlin train. The man rode to Berlin hanging on to the train.

About two hundred skinheads stormed through Prenzlauer Berg in East Berlin shouting 'Hitler lives', then terrorised foreigners at Alexanderplatz and destroyed a café frequented by gay men.

European newspapers frequently reported that non-European tourists have been insulted in East Germany and other Eastern European countries. To avoid violent discrimination, gypsies have been moving from Hungary, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria to Germany.

At a dinner party in Berlin, a professor of medical history told me about his first-hand experience in East Germany: at his university a Pakistani academic had been beaten to death by a German colleague using a fire extinguisher. The law department of the university found the murderer guilty of misusing public property but excused him for killing his colleague as he had done it under the influence of alcohol.

To my surprise, Vietnamese people living in France told me many more stories about racism than their counterparts in West Germany. Despite its socialist government, France has done nothing for the Vietnamese who have come under the family reunion scheme. Procedures are so complicated that they become inhuman. Although these Vietnamese have received permission to live in France, when they arrive they remain stateless for at least six months. During this time, they are not allowed to receive cheques, open bank accounts, or rent their own home. A family of five adults have to rent their flat under someone else's name. Their children are not allowed to go to school. As a recipient of migrant civilisation (Curie and Chopin, just to name a few), France remains the most inflexible country in Western Europe.
III Ba

Ba has allowed me to write about his case without disguising or suppressing details. I have been his ‘therapist’ for the past two years and have taken several hundred pages of notes about his behaviour, progress and regress, his interaction with other clients in the MRC, his mood swings and clashes with other individuals. The following is based on excerpts from my diary as I interpret the case in consultation with others.

Ba walked into my office in dirty clothes and large scars on his face. I saw him as an ugly person if not also a potentially violent one. I tried to avoid him without any sound reason. The Social Welfare Worker looked after him.

The Social Welfare Worker started to make arrangements for Ba to live in Ainslie Village (accommodation for single adults many of whom have some psychological problems) immediately and put his name on the priority housing list.

She asked me for help because he was Vietnamese and she was worried that she might not understand all that he was saying in his broken English. By this time, my consciousness had assumed its function; I agreed.

The reasons that the Social Welfare Worker brought him to me were:

- Ba said that he had been persecuted by Vietnamese criminals; and
- He wanted to see me because I was Vietnamese.

Both factors attracted my attention: I have a passion for investigation and I am convinced that those who need help should be allowed to choose their helpers.

However, I approached Ba with reservations and even fear. My crime research in the Vietnamese community showed that helping a victim can cost one’s life. Victims are not always victims either.

As the Coordinator of the MRC I had the duty to see clients, and my own research ethics dictated that I see him regardless of his background.

Ba related to me well; he trusted me. He told me about his unbelievable experience: ‘I was living in a hotel in Perth; the hotel was burned down. I became burned over 40 per cent of the body’. He showed me his toes which
had not healed properly. I could not turn away from what I could only compare to overdone barbecued flesh. I checked his claims with a solicitor in Bankstown: Ba was burned in a fire and, if I didn’t stop intervening, his statutory limitation would run out. The solicitor insulted me over the phone for trying to take his client away. It took me some minutes to calm the solicitor down and to get him to agree to forward documents concerning Ba’s case to me. I promised that I would help obtain Ba’s cooperation. I was sure of one thing: Ba was not connected with any known criminal gang.

Ba then told me how he was being persecuted by criminal gangs. I listened to his story and took some 15 pages of notes during the first session. We kept meeting session after session. The same stories were told. Each night, the criminals would torture him; at first only Vietnamese would come to him to steal his inventions. They were electronic inventions. Then Australians, ASIO agents, would try to extract information from him. He never saw their faces properly, so he could not identify them for me. I delayed contacting the police.

I started to become suspicious during the third session when ASIO was mentioned, so I asked him how those people had come to his room. He told me that those people had supernatural powers, ‘they would walk through walls and steel doors’, therefore conventional measures failed to protect him.

I informed the Social Welfare Worker that Ba was hallucinating. A few weeks later I discovered that Ba’s hallucinations and nightmares alternated. Hallucination stimulated his nightmares. Being unemployed, he slept during the day and stayed up at night. There was no clear separation between his state of being awake and being asleep; there was no clear distinction between his conscious and unconscious as he was alone all the time.

It became clear to me that analysing Ba’s dreams and working on his unconscious and subconscious to transfer traumatic events to his conscious disturbed him. He experienced more and worse nightmares and hallucinations.

Relating his situation to those of domestic violence victims, I started to notice some common factors: any company is better than loneliness and isolation. After I had been separated from my boyfriend, while my affection for him still lingered on, I would see young boys walking in the streets as my boyfriends. But I was always aware that I just mistook a stranger for someone close to me. Because Western psychology is based on the
abnormal behaviour model we do not admit that sometimes we see and hear things which are not there. F.W. Putman of the US National Institute of Health said that Homer recorded multiple personality in his time. People started out with multiple personality, then were conditioned to become linear. This might explain superstition in 'primitive' societies.

For Ba, it appeared that dream analysis or psychoanalysis would only aggravate his condition. Analysis proved not only unnecessary but also adverse. Ba needed to return to his room in a calm state, perhaps a Buddhist kind of acceptance. I started to focus on his needs and tried to address them.

I then tried to help Ba relate to other people in the MRC while I saw him and talked to him after work. This helped him remarkably. He said that no-one had cared whether he was dead or alive until he met me.

He needed shelter which we quickly provided, but he had been given shelter before. From my conversations with him, it became clearer that Ba 'chose' to live in the street because he had company in the streets but was isolated in his flat. Although he complained bitterly about people coming to his room at night to disturb him, he remained in his flat longer than he had ever been in any one place before. He had found a community, friendship and substitute family. Our receptionist related exceptionally well to him.

Food had a magical effect on him: he would always become less agitated if food were given to him in time (before the beginning of an aggressive mood); I always sat down and ate with him. If he became verbally abusive, he would not eat. Instead, he would hit or smash bottles against the walls. He would refuse food if I gave it to him without eating with him. Other clients also joined in. Quickly the open kitchen became the family room to give warmth and support to a multicultural family. I invented the 'multicultural family' as I cooked meals for him in the MRC kitchen.

His sexual urges came in cycles. When that happened he would talk in a calm state, using affectionate expressions, about going to Vietnam to get married. However, when he was in an agitated mood, he would talk about Australian women and sex workers following him around and invading his privacy. He always knew that the invasion of privacy was illegal. Although he rarely talked about sex explicitly, when he talked about sex workers, he used the dirtiest words. Once he came to the MRC happy, in a celebrating mood, informing me that he had just raped Buddha to avenge himself because the Buddhists have done terrible things to him.
Investigation revealed that Ba had lived in a Buddhist temple in Sydney before moving into the streets. After his departure from the temple, a Social Security cheque was sent to him. Someone in the temple cashed it, using his name. The Department of Social Security regularly deducted money from his benefit until the equivalent amount was paid off. Consequently Ba distrusted government, especially Housing Trust, officials and he held Buddhists and Buddha responsible for his loss of income.

On the way to the Housing Trust, the Social Welfare Worker reported that Ba saw dogs everywhere — black dogs, brown dogs, dogs of all sizes and shapes — and made barking sounds and laughed. He talked about the way dog meat was prepared in Vietnam. He also referred to one of the Housing Trust workers as a dog. The Social Welfare Worker corrected him: ‘Don’t say that. He is a worker’. ‘His face looks like a dog’s anyway’, Ba replied; he often saw dogs as he walked in the streets.

Investigation showed that a community worker had said that he was going to help Ba get a flat. He made an appointment with Ba at a Housing Office in Sydney. As Ba arrived, he was taken to a psychiatric hospital. He was never given a flat. What had happened to him at the psychiatric hospital has remained unclear. Ba talked a lot about injections which put him to sleep. His medical records showed that he had been in hospital several times for a period of 12 months, but only sometimes were interpreters provided.

Ba’s reality has never been free of fantasy. On the other hand, he has never been confused about financial and family matters. From time to time he asked me to keep money for him because ‘those people’ made him spend it on things he did not need, such as electronic equipment and junk. Then he would be worried that I might spend it or he would fail to resist junk; he would therefore come to me and ask for the money back. Each time, he has always remembered the accurate amount I had to give back to him.

For the first six months Ba was passionate about connecting electrical wires. Incidentally we discovered that connecting things helped him become less frustrated. We also discovered that he hallucinated the moment someone contradicted him. He also hallucinated when he experienced sexual urges. Hallucination is his alternative reality when there is no possible solution. There are no solutions to his problems. Hallucination is more desirable than drugs.

Eventually Ba took our advice and saw a doctor and a psychiatrist. He trust-
ed the doctor right away until the receptionist charged him a few dollars because he forgot his Healthcare Card; he then decided not to see her. 'They all want to take money away from me'. Although I paid for him, he still said: 'All of them want money anyway. Your money, my money, the same'.

He insisted that I accompany him to the psychiatrist, but because he fancied her he decided to see her alone. I was delighted and hopeful. Unfortunately the psychiatrist was sick and her office forgot to inform Ba. Ba was furious and refused to resume treatment.

Neither the doctor nor the psychiatrist was able to help him emotionally. However, frequent meals with, and visits by, staff and people he knew helped him stay relatively stable. Unfortunately his needs cannot always be met.

I concluded that Ba had reached optimum improvement and therefore I should reduce my sessions with him. The decision appeared to be sound because Ba had functioned as well as could be expected from a diagnosed schizophrenic.

I also concluded that Ba chooses to hallucinate when he feels totally powerless and helpless or when he perceives that he is cornered. I checked this with the social worker who looked after torture and trauma survivors in the ACT. She agreed with my conclusion. She also agreed that Ba must have had psychological problems prior to his migration and accident. From time to time Ba still got into a rage. We would ask him to leave but he would come back. While he has not been able to control his temper we have learned to protect ourselves and other clients from his frightening behaviour.

Ba was awarded $20,000 for criminal compensation; the court sent a letter to him through his lawyer. The lawyer told him that, although he was awarded the full amount, he would not receive the full amount because criminal compensation includes legal expenses. He got into a rage, but I managed to help him control it.

During my two weeks' leave in January 1992 to write this thesis, I was called because Ba had threatened a male volunteer tutor with a knife; the man was constantly after women because he desperately needed a partner. Ba does not like 'indecent people' such as sex workers or men who chase women. The tutor ran away and called the Police. The incident was not observed by staff. When a police officer came to investigate, Ba was
questioned; he denied any knowledge of the incident. The next day the Social Welfare Worker questioned him about the incident again; again he denied any knowledge of it. However, as she persisted, he admitted having done something he should not have and promised he would not do it again. She then told him that, if it happened again, he would be asked to leave.

The reason for Ba's loss of total control was that the solicitor informed him that the court assessor had decided to defer payment pending his common law claim for negligence compensation, which could amount to a quarter of a million. Ba felt cheated of his immediate entitlement of $20,000 as he had planned to return to Vietnam to visit his mother after his sister's death of kidney failure. He feared he might never see his mother alive again.

He came to see me afterwards but did not tell me what the Social Welfare Worker had told him. I took him out for lunch and promised that we would have lunch together in the restaurant once a week. He was happy and said he would see me again the following week.

However, he came back the next day; I was too busy to spend time with him. He left; as he reached the balcony rail, he kicked it so hard that my office shook. I asked him not to do that again because, although I knew he meant no harm, other clients were scared. He apologised and left. He did not return for ten days and missed our lunch appointment. I cooked special spring rolls for him to eat at the MRC. Because of other more urgent matters, I was worried but did nothing about it. On Good Friday (17 April 1992) I took a beautiful present I had received from another client (a huge Easter egg wrapped in silver paper and decorated with red and blue roses) to Ba. On the way to his flat I feared I might find him no longer alive: he had been too quiet.

To my surprise, Ba was altering a jacket. He showed me a whole wardrobe: four suits and matching shirts he had bought for $100; he was shortening their sleeves. He wanted me to help him save $300 next week for his car engine. He complained about people who still came to him to trouble him all the time, but he had learned that he could stand up to them by being strong; the more strongly he asserted himself, the sooner they would leave him alone. He seemed much more relaxed. His self-therapy seemed to work for him remarkably well, considering all the recent crises.
IV Two Chinese

A Chinese man who had worked for the Central Intelligence in Beijing and escaped from a high-security prison came to me for help. One of his friends told him about me: I had helped his friend's friend to be sponsored by an Australian so that the man could come to Australia. The man came to me with his top-secret story which even his friend did not know. To keep his story secret, I had to promise never to discuss any part of it with anyone else without consulting him first. He wanted me to help him write his autobiography.

Through his story the man took me on a journey — political, historical and social — across China; I learnt more about the Chinese Cultural Revolution than I had done during a decade. We worked day and night to have his story written. However, we could not find a publisher because no-one was interested in publishing an unseen manuscript. No-one was prepared to believe his extraordinary account except me who had seen photographs of various events and have had some experience as a political prisoner.

This man was also engaged in confidential research. I have no idea what he did because, unlike the Chinese events, his research must remain confidential.

A month or so later the man told me (in the middle of the most exciting episode of his escape similar to, but more realistic than, one of James Bond's) that he had to discontinue the writing because his nightmares became unbearable. He kept dreaming about even more dangerous and more secret events not included in his account for me to write. He asked me to recommend a good psychiatrist. He then asked me whether he would have to tell the psychiatrist everything that bothered him. I said it would be necessary for his recovery. He decided to ask me for help instead.

I searched my memory for some previous experience that I have recorded. All I could remember was my own on a much smaller scale. For a few months while the Americans bombed Haiphong, I used to have nightmares about my family and people I knew getting killed. I could not sleep for many nights. I went to my gynaecologist, not knowing that American doctors were specialists and not generalists; he gave me sleeping pills. I took them but remained unable to sleep. Instead I became drowsy and unable to function while anxiety persisted and intensified. I suffered from a bleeding ulcer, but
I did not know that I had an ulcer until I fully recovered from it, years later.

So I suggested he write down his nightmares as soon as he was woken up by them, and sort out what he could or could not do about it before going back to sleep again. He should treat details of the nightmares as if they were real and work out strategies to overcome danger and defeat his enemies. He should keep all of the records secret. He could lock them away or burn them.

First he reported that the process made him exhausted; he could not keep his eyes open long enough to complete the account. Then he said that writing the same story every night was too boring, so he went to sleep fairly easily after each nightmare and stayed asleep longer. A few weeks later he was able to resume his work with me, but with reduced intensity and frequency.

A clinical psychologist, working with people who claimed that they did not sleep at all, reported that she had once asked one of her clients who said he had not slept for several days to help the night staff fold clothes (an unnecessary task), and she asked them to monitor his performance. The man excused himself after a forty-five minutes because he was too sleepy to go on. It was proven to him that he had gone to sleep. His problem was solved.

It is possible that the Chinese man had slept more than he thought to begin with. I interviewed him about the possibility. He told me that, as someone who was used to recording intelligence, he recorded the time he woke up and the time he went back to sleep. Thus there was evidence that the man did not know that he had slept.

As I tried to help him write his life story with reduced speed and frequency, I observed that his nightmares became more frequent and intensified because of my impatience to get the work completed. Hence there was sufficient evidence that analysing or talking about his traumatic experience induced his nightmares.

The same experience is shared by a Chinese woman from Hong Kong. Unlike the Chinese man, she belonged to the trade class (the lowest class in Chinese culture) and had only primary education. The man came from the intellectual class and went to a school reserved for future leaders. The woman told me that she had nightmares all the time after her coma caused by medical negligence which people responsible for it had successfully covered up. She was left with partial paralysis and serious memory loss. But she did not want to talk about her nightmares because talking about them would make her have more nightmares. She successfully blocked them out.
and avoided nightmares.

The Chinese man and his mother eventually moved in to share my house with my husband and me. He said that my home was peaceful after his experience in the previous home: 'Someone seemed to walk around. First I thought it was my mother. Then my mother though it was me'. Although he did not say he was scared, his mother said she was and both were glad to have moved away.

In my house both felt at home immediately. Although he rarely experienced nightmares since his mother came from China to live with him, he had not dreamt about Australia.

Shortly after he moved into my house, he dreamt that he walked in a Canberra street and nothing happened. He still experiences a bad dream occasionally, but no more nightmares.
V A Lesbian’s Nightmare

When I was still passionate about dreams, I publicised my own workshops and attended others. One of the people who attended my workshops was a beautiful woman with long, blond hair; she wore what I considered really beautiful and feminine clothing: a flowing, soft pastel-coloured skirt and a loose blouse which wrapped around her well-shaped body. She would be the last person I suspected to be a lesbian although I had no preconceptions about how a lesbian should look or behave. She looked obviously worried.

She told me that she had recurring dreams about being chased by men. The dreams were so vivid that she could not go back to sleep. Having done research on crime, I immediately investigated her possible connection with criminals. She was a kindergarten teacher; she could easily be looking after some criminal’s child and make some innocent observation or remark which could be interpreted as her knowledge of their activities. Then I realised that, if she were not aware of what she had done, she could not have dreamt about danger. I tried again to dredge up her unconscious and subconscious because she came from a direct culture and was aware of psychoanalysis.

Everything I asked appeared to be off track, yet she did not seem to want to leave the workshop. I interpreted that as an indicator of her need or, I hoped, my touching something tangible. Therefore I returned to my indirect style: searching for some clue. I told her stories about my life, my good and bad experiences, trying to relate some aspect of my experience to hers. I told her I had worked in women’s refuges and domestic violence services; I carefully watched for her reaction while I disclosed my objection to some aggressive and erroneous feminist practices, such as considering every man a potential rapist and all women virtuous. I believe that while victims are innocent of crime committed against them, they are capable of victimising others as they have been conditioned by victimisation. I informed her that current research at the Australian National University appeared to have found that domestic violence occurred as frequently in homosexual relationships as it did in heterosexual ones.

‘I am a lesbian’, she said, describing the conservative community she lived in. ‘I couldn’t have come out or I would have lost my job, so I tried to wear make-up and look traditional. The lesbians from Sydney keep coming to me and harassing me’.

I waited and waited for the woman to connect the men in her dreams with
those lesbians who harassed her in reality — but I waited in vain. Eventually I suggested to her that there might be a connection between the lesbians who harassed and the men in her dreams. She accepted my interpretation immediately and acknowledged that she had had no experience with men and that she considered them aggressive.
VI Work is health

When we spent six months in a village of 60 inhabitants in southern France. Longevity was not uncommon in this village. It consisted of retired people with modest incomes, peasants with small vine orchards and a few young individuals who worked as mechanics in a nearby town. It had neither a market nor a shop. A van would come twice a week to sell inferior cuts of meat, small goods and groceries; the whipping cream was always sour because it had been kept for a long time or had been insufficiently refrigerated. Yet people led a healthy and long life. All had some complaints about their stomachs, but none would give up alcohol. Instead they would drink a lot of mineral water which the Pasteur Institute had found more polluted than that from the nearby stream.

The climate was harsh, as André Gide had described in his many novels. In the winter the wind would howl. The houses were tiny, with low ceilings and often made of stone. There were large cracks in the walls through which wind blades would penetrate thick clothing to cause sharp pain to the skin. The peasants worked long hours in the field, preparing the ground for the spring, collecting old grape roots for heating, cutting down dead trees for wood and gathering vines to weave baskets. Nothing was wasted. The peasants grew vegetables and raised chickens. Chestnuts grew wild and were eaten or fed to the pigs. The peasants’ diets were almost vegetarian. They ate a lot of country bread and cheese, some eggs, but very little bacon and meat — only when they could afford it. They sun-dried their own produce for use between seasons — some six months every year.

As only a few houses had a bath or a shower, their hygiene conditions were not up to scratch. One peasant who had major heart surgery, regularly drank home-made strong alcohol that looked like mud; he told me, ‘le travail, c’est la santé,’ as he returned to the vineyard on a motor bike to dig hard and stony ground, and to pull grape vines and roots for the winter heating and basket weaving.

A Vietnamese woman who had been a nurse, teacher and social worker came to me for help. She wanted to return to the work force. I had no courage to tell her that she could not hope to find work in her own profession. Instead, I encouraged her to learn English as I believed that, being fluent in French, she would pick it up quickly. Unfortunately our staff member who had lived in France and attended the Sorbonne told me that not only was her French not fluent, but neither her accent nor her style would be
acceptable these days. There was an advertisement for a receptionist’s position by a French-speaking employer and she was convinced that she should apply for the job. The employer instructed her to send a tape of her voice and pronunciation for initial assessment. She sent them the tape and expected to have an interview, but all she received was a negative answer without any evaluation.

She is about 55 and belongs to the generation of Vietnamese who worship French civilisation. The blow was too much. She became seriously depressed. She started to have nightmares in which she would be chased around by strangers. Murder, injury and rape scenes were graphic and lasted long after she woke up. I tried to help her talk about them. At the subconscious level, she hated everyone, particularly her extravagant parents because of whom she had to give up high-school education to become an army nurse. Then she completed her baccalaureate and applied for scholarships reserved for military nurses who had done special training to go to France then the US to study medicine.

However, Nhan said, ‘unfortunately all negotiations were made in bed instead of in the office’. She could not go through with allowing herself to become a sex object so that she could fulfil her educational dream; she could not accept the alternative either.

Having been an exceptionally good student, Nhan continued to study and received a teaching diploma from the University of Saigon. She taught for a few years until the Communists took over. She was then given the job as a social worker until she left the country, but she did not have any qualifications because she had received special training only.

Although dream analysis was great for my understanding, and she did that voluntarily knowing that I was not a therapist, she did not seek therapy either. She just sought some understanding and support. I tried my best to provide for her, and I took the opportunity to learn more about the Vietnamese unconscious and subconscious. As I progressed Nhan’s condition worsened; she became sick for a week, then vomited blood.

During that time one of my clients organised a support group for unemployed migrants. I asked the client to contact Nhan. Being a doctor with unrecognised qualifications, the client gave Nhan appropriate support and company. Nhan gradually recovered and came back to me for help. Remembering the French proverb, ‘work is health’, I helped Nhan organise a group of students who wanted to learn Vietnamese privately. At the same
time the Vietnamese cleaner whom I had helped obtain the job was leaving it for full-time employment, Nhan took over her cleaning job. Subsequently, knowing that she did not mind manual work, one of her teachers of English also asked Nhan to clean her house. Nhan was earning enough money to be financially independent from her husband who had been a prosecutor in Vietnam, but had to work as a kitchen hand in Australia.

Nhan was happily occupied. Through her jobs she also understood Australians and Australian values. She experienced an egalitarian society. She revealed to me that her depression was triggered by the fact that she had been repeatedly refused cleaning positions, 'I am required to have a car and/or experience, but no-one is prepared to help me get the experience I need'.

Eventually Nhan secured a teachers’ aid position in the Department of Education and Training. She gained sufficient confidence to challenge the CES which she perceived as discriminatory and incompetent. Nhan is well and, in her voluntary capacity, she is organising educational programs to address the needs of the Vietnamese community.
VII Hai and Belle

This account is carefully reconstructed. I include details revealed to me before and after the session with an ACT counsellor for a better understanding of Mrs Hai's environment. Mrs Hai was born in 1941 in Ca Mau, the farthest tip of Vietnam rich in agriculture and seafood. Until American armed forces arrived, Ca Mau was considered a place of exile; infested with malaria-carrying mosquitoes, it was a communist stronghold. American intervention has linked Ca Mau with the rest of Vietnam. After the American withdrawal, like Mrs Hai and her family, many Vietnamese left Ca Mau to find better opportunities.

Mrs Hai has nine children and five grandchildren, three of whom remain in Vietnam with her eldest daughter and son-in-law. Having been a restaurant operator in Ca Mau, Mrs Hai's husband quickly opened a restaurant in Australia. Everyone worked day and night to make it a thriving business and to support themselves and their relatives, such as his brother's family and cousins in refugee camps. Being Buddhists, they did that out of kindness; they also tried to accumulate meritorious deeds for their children, grandchildren and for their own improved incarnation.

Like the average non-Christian refugee, Mrs Hai believed that services such as interpreting, translation and counselling were favours one individual gave to another. As a recipient, she felt eternally grateful and obliged to reciprocate whenever an opportunity arose; subsequently she would return the favour and establish friendship on equality. As Mrs Hai could not drive and could not give advice to counsellors and therapists, she would take along food she had carefully prepared every time she attended a counselling session. She would give the food and invite counsellor to her home. The counsellor would thank her for the gift and say she would visit Mrs Hai some time. The visit never took place. Mrs Hai felt more and more powerless and depressed.

They arrived in Australia nine years ago. Two and a half years ago, her husband died of cancer, a slow and horrific death. His brain tumour should have been diagnosed much sooner. Instead, he was incorrectly diagnosed; he had exploratory surgeries and manipulative physiotherapy which only aggravated the growth of the tumour and the pain. Finally, at the last stage of the illness, medical professionals diagnosed incurable cancer. In anger, the family questioned the treatment and care; the specialists involved in the case became angry and abusive. Medicare doctors refused to come to their
assistance. The only Vietnamese-speaking GP overcharged them for his
services and refused to make house calls. Mrs Hai said: 'For each visit, the
doctor charged Medibank for services to all my dependent children whose
names were on the card, but when I asked him to write a statement to
support my application for my daughter to come and join me, he refused'.

One of the interpreters involved in the case is a high-ranking public
servant's wife. Having belonged to the upper class, she was used to
receiving services from those she treated with kindness, thus she often ate in
their restaurant or took their food home for her family without paying them.
This was fine when the business was thriving. However, it became a strain
because Mrs Hai had become a pensioner struggling to make ends meet and
because her health had deteriorated: she is in constant pain caused by stress
during her husband's illness.

For months after her husband's death, she was unable to sleep. The moment
she closed her eyes, she saw her husband lying in the hospital bed helpless,
skin and bone; pus oozed out of his nose. She would wake up to recall his
desperate effort to survive.

Having been disillusioned by the practice of Buddhism in Australia — Mrs
Hai's husband had told me how the head monk used money collected from
followers for their house of worship to travel overseas — He stopped giving
generous donations to Buddhist causes. When he was told he had terminal
cancer, he became a Christian expecting to be cured by the host God. After
all, he had been a good Australian citizen by doing everything according to
social and religious laws and much more; he deserved to survive cancer.

On accepting death, Mr Hai returned to Buddhism, Confucianism and
Taoism. Like his host country, the Christian God failed to save him. He
could no longer be sure that his soul would be salvaged, so he hoped for a
better incarnation. He requested that his wife offer his soul vegetarian
dishes as he asked her to stay alive and look after their children.

Two and a half years later, Mrs Hai's nightmares were mingled with dreams
in which sometimes her husband lay dying in the hospital bed, sometimes he
lay next to her, sometimes he walked around healthy and fat (symbol of
happiness and health), and sometimes he asked her to cook his favourite
dishes for him. She would wake up to burn incense and ask his soul for
guidance and to relieve her of the suffering and loneliness. She believes that
his soul is sacred, so he does not talk much. Vietnamese also believe that
the dead do not talk to dreamers when they appear in dreams.
Eventually the entire family hallucinated; they saw him in the morning
giving them instructions. They would get together and ask his sacred soul
for forgiveness. They became too exhausted to function normally; therefore
Mrs Hai came to me for help.

It appeared that Mrs Hai was confused by the conflict caused by her
loneliness and early widowhood, and her duty to remain a single parent
because of her children: 'If I got married again, they wouldn't respect me,
they wouldn't love me any more'.

Mrs Hai wept a lot. Once I was choked by my own tears when Mrs Hai
described in detail how she had helplessly watched her husband trying to
breathe through the puss as she had tried to eat. She was not able to sleep or
eat five weeks before his death.

**Mainstream Counsellor's Approach**

The mainstream counsellor says that what Mrs Hai is going through is
normal; people need to mourn. There should be some time set aside for
mourning. Mrs Hai remembers her husband as a healthy man as well as a
sick man. Mrs Hai's positive rituals are affirmed.

Further conversations with the counsellor revealed Mrs Hai's hard life. She
was married at seventeen to a man who loved her at first sight. He had to
ask her parents three times before they agreed to the marriage. Living under
the reign of parents and eleven siblings-in-law and helping her husband
establish the family business for seven years were a constant hardship. Mrs
Hai feels proud that she has performed her duty faultlessly. Her parents-in-
law loved her, but siblings-in-law were jealous of her, so they hated her and
made her life even harder. Because Mrs Hai had to satisfy her difficult
mother-in-law, she has become a jack of all trades. 'I can easily cater for
sixty or seventy people on short notice. I would calculate the exact amount
needed so that there wouldn't be anything left. My mother-in-law hated to
waste things, so I learnt never to waste.' Mrs Hai smiles.

In addition to being a struggling widow, Mrs Hai is unhappy that her eldest
daughter, the most pious one left behind because she was pregnant at the
time of escape, may not be allowed to join her in Australia so that she would
have someone to lean on and she would no longer have to worry about her
own death.

My involvement with Mrs Hai

I attempted to help Mrs Hai talk about her nightmares and dreams as the counsellor helped her talk about what worried her. I quickly detected that Mrs Hai's condition worsened after each visit. So, instead of talking to her about her situation useful to my thesis, I did whatever she wanted. I gave her some money to rent a tent for the ceremony to formally end the mourning of her husband; I took her to various doctors; I straightened her bank account for her; I took her shopping; I obtained funds for a new pair of reading glasses before the two-year period was up and so on. I did all those things while wondering what I was supposed to be doing which would be sensible and appropriate, recalling the wonderfully comprehensive literature review I had written without having any opportunity to put it into practice.

A year went by, I had no time to visit her because of my work and my thesis, but I had seen one of her daughters now and then and interpreted for her daughter's pending compensation case to learn that Mrs Hai has become much better adjusted; she has gone all over Australia to visit her family and friends. Whenever she could not sleep, she would drink the 'pepper tea' I ordered from Vietnam for her. It was so good that she even gave some to her family and friends. My 'care' has not only touched her but also reached others. Vietnamese people were concerned because I worked too hard. They understood that I could not see them individually. The most flattering thing to me was that one of the students of the English for Senior Migrants class I instituted asked me to help him educate his daughter. I helped the girl find a full-time job and she told me a different Vietnamese family tale.

Mrs Hai said that Western treatment only cured the diseases but did not help her get well, so she continued to receive Western treatment and medicine, then visited herbal doctors in Sydney for Chinese medicine to recover fully and to stay well.

Although Mrs Hai no longer suffers from nightmares, she feels generally unwell: lacks appetite and feels depressed; she needs employment in order to recover fully. I am trying to help her join a Greek women's catering service as Vietnamese springrolls are popular among Greeks. Mrs Hai is enthusiastic about my scheme and impatiently waiting for the result.
Belle

Belle, one of my best friends, had been treated by psychologists and psychiatrists. She became worse until she decided to fight the battle herself. Following is her own account while she suffered the worst:

The story of medical malpractice actually begins long before I see Dr...[psychiatrist A]. My sister Maureen [the eldest sister] decided to change Beth’s hospital when she was dying of cancer. Maureen’s husband rang me up and said I had better be a party to this family decision. My heart sank. I didn’t want to be. I asked my husband [a solicitor] his opinion. “If the hospital’s no good,” he said, “she must be moved.” So I agreed but with the provision that Maureen’s husband [a solicitor] Beth should not be told the hospital or the doctor were no good but given more positive vision of the reasons to move her. As you know this backfired. Beth’s husband rang me extremely anxious asking me what to do. I said: “John, Why not get a second opinion on the chemotherapy – Dr ... at Saint Vincent.” One of the silliest things I have ever done along with other silly things. I can only surmise that Beth’s doctor threw a tantrum (he’d done this once before). Beth went into a shock and died on the Tuesday. She was in face terribly ill and pale with cancer of the lung at the time. Her husband blamed me for her death and would not let me see my niece and nephew. He actually swore at me at a dinner party – but he didn’t hound Maureen and Maureen’s husband this way. Perhaps they are too powerful. Anyway Uyen I developed what [psychiatrist A]. One duodenal ulcer was enough, I thought, but two? It turned out later that the ulcers were so minute as to be totally unimportant. He’d given Tagamet as a placebo. At time to take the drug induced acute anxiety especially when I read in the National Times that Tagamet induced stomach cancer. I stopped the drug and dashed off to Dr...[psychiatrist A] and that’s where my sad state begins. Also my husband hates the bastards with a profound and deserved hate. His distrust proved totally well founded, although he could never articulate his fear, any kind of language, unfortunately or argument that I could follow.

The other malpractice was my whiplash experience. Dr ...[General Practitioner B] wouldn’t believe I had concussion and refused to give me a certificate off work. It turned out she had a horror of being used in third party court cases – because she had been recently made a fool of – but to discount my symptoms as unreal. I went to a friend’s doctor [GP] who gave me the right time off work – but who then advised me to do yoga to strengthen my muscles. I told him my brother-in-law was covering the whiplash case and I suspected he contacted the other doctor. Could he have believed that I was trying to manufacture something? I found out recently from a top physiotherapist that I should not have done neck exercises for at least two years. For the whole of that year, whenever I did it I would get
pain and nausea. I would go back [to GPC] and say, "Dr... are you sure I should be doing this?" And he would say, "yes, of course." There is so much medical malpractice it is mind boggling from beginning to end. I go to get X rays. The radiologist only has a lead apron on to cover my front. "What about secondary radiation coming through my back and hitting my ovaries? Surely you should have a double sided apron." "Oh, secondary radiation is quite mild - very little effect." Anyway, Uyen there's so much of it leading to [psychiatrist A] then psychiatrist B. C then D. My God I remember my husband saying about B, "why are you going to that bitch?" But by then his affair [he has had an affair for two years with a colleague and became impotent towards his wife. But he accused her of causing his impotence] had been going on one pit after another in retrospect. I sought help then for myself. My husband wouldn't talk to me. He wouldn't talk to me.....[illegible] [hand written words] verbally assaulted me, eventually ....[illegible] leave the house. I was on his ...[illegible]

I have followed Belle's case from the beginning. I have known her since 1971. I have also employed her. Belle is exceptionally intelligent, creative, knowledgeable and rebellious. Being a member of the Communist Party, she has experienced conspiracy by the capitalists for some time. As friends we used to argue about the Vietnam War. She would deny any atrocity committed by the Communists while accusing everyone who was against them as corrupt, reactionary or right wing. As an experimental writer with a speciality in word picture, Belle has won awards for imaginative and innovative literature. As a critical thinker, she has questioned all values, especially those of the establishment and the medical profession. All therapies failed because therapists failed to understand Belle's account of her life experience — Belle had been raised in an unreality by holocaust survivors who pampered her with all the things they had been deprived of. Belle lacked a sense of reality. On the other hand, being exceptionally intelligent and imaginative, Belle completed her arts degree at nineteen and became a journalist at twenty. Yet she remained emotionally immature. Thus she retains a kind of child-like quality which is mostly misunderstood as being phony. Family and friends, then therapists assumed that Belle fantasised her experience: her husband, psychiatrists and her own professional family abused her physically, mentally and/or sexually. In the end, she solved her psychological problems without electro-convulsive treatment as suggested by psychiatrists. I was one of the few friends who believed in the rights of the insane and therefore supported her decision to sell her house and employ private nursing (paid company) while her family and other friends tried to prevent her from wasting money. At first, I believed that Belle would either commit suicide or recover by herself, then I was convinced that she would not be able to commit suicide and that I needed a strategy to maintain my own sanity and myself from Belle's
constant requests for support. She called me up daily and talked for up to two hours (occasionally even longer) for several weeks. I would become exhausted. So I decided to work full-time to avoid Belle’s long calls.

Now that Belle has recovered from her illness, she says that she fully understands what I did and thanks me for having supported her. She said that when she talked to her mentally ill nephew she realised how difficult it was for her friends to listen to her when she was sick.

Therapists failed to understand Belle as an entity — artistic, romantic, logical, sceptical, knowledgeable, warm and concerned. Each treated one aspect of her; this only caused further distress. She lived in constant nightmares for two years. Her nightmares were aggravated by therapy not only because therapists (some Freudian) kept raking up the past which triggered her imagination and speculation, but they dissociated one part of her spiritual being from another: logic versus romance versus emotion.

My assistance to her was that of a substitute mother, helping a child reconstruct the world from the beginning as the child would understand it. Belle would call me up and ask me to explain to her why so and so had said such and such, and I would explain to her to the best of my ability, as I have done to my own children, without adding unnecessary details. She said that it helped her immensely because, while her parents were intellectual and caring, they gave her a vision of their world, not their reality or experience. Belle has joined a group of Children of Survivors of the Holocaust to reconstruct her parents’ past — even though her father is not Jewish — and understand the experience they had endured, which they had successfully blocked out in order not to transfer suffering to their own children.
VIII Cultural Revolution

Although I bought Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book* and read about the Cultural Revolution, I did not understand its social implication until I completed my research with two Chinese: Mrs Wang Li, a 66 year-old Communist Party member who has served in the Chinese Department of Foreign Trades as a graduate of an American University and her 43 year-old son who has served in the People’s Liberation Army and the Red Guards and who was imprisoned for his stand against corruption. Both have been living in my house for almost one year. I have listened to their account about life in China and comments about the behaviour of Chinese people in Australia, and I have understood how Chinese moved from one culture to another and what impact they may have on Australian multiculturalism. I also gathered data through my contact with police investigators, verifying them with my Chinese friends and Australian academics with immediate experience in the Cultural Revolution such as Mrs Mavis Yen who was present in China during the Cultural Revolution. I then evaluated the data according to a Western standard of journalism: checking with at least two independent sources.

Chinese people over 40 are still guided by Confucian ethics whereas those who grew up during the Cultural Revolution are guided by the self-serving model set up by the Gang of Four. Tales about people's experience during this period match details in *Wild Swans*.  

The Cultural Revolution has divided Chinese into two generations: those who were not conditioned by it and those who were. There is a rumour that 100,000 people were eaten in the provinces during the famine caused by the Cultural Revolution, according to an anti-communist Chinese doctor in Canberra. According to a Chinese friend of mine, these 'victims' were government officials sent to the provinces by Chairman Mao to investigate the famine. Even though this cannot be taken as evidence, the fact that an anti-communist, a pro-communist and a communist Chinese believe that some people were eaten by some others during the Cultural Revolution is significant. It is important to understand this phenomenon in its context.

Thousands of innocent people were put in prison. The Gang of Four closed schools, even primary schools, and universities. From 1968, people were sent from the cities to the villages to learn from poor peasants. Red Guards were given unlimited power to kill and torture anyone they suspected of

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During this period there was a limited number of classes for the provision of general education reserved for people with politically correct backgrounds: workers, peasants and soldiers and/or their children. Officially students were selected on their merit. Unofficially, however, people not liked by the Gang of Four were excluded from the entry examination, so only those hand-picked by the Gang were ‘educated’. Like the level of general knowledge and literacy, the standard of education was low. Some university students had primary education only.

In Western understanding, the Cultural Revolution means anarchy for ten years. During this period looting was rampant: some government stationery and seals were stolen. No-one actually knows the type and amount of equipment that went missing during those ten years. An Australian investigator tested the result of this phenomenon by buying sixteen government documents for $500 in 1990. The documents including a marriage certificate and university qualifications have been verified by Australian authorities and Chinese experts in Australia as authentic; they would be recognised by Australian government institutions if presented. I have failed to detect any difference between them and the ones recognised by Australian institutions.

Graduates from these courses organised for workers, soldiers and peasants were given posts at universities but had to return to training after the Cultural Revolution. They are still known as worker-peasant-soldier graduates and have commanded little respect from the public.

Promotion or career improvement in China takes at least two years. To facilitate change, individuals have to give presents to people occupying higher positions. This form of ‘bribery’ has become a usual practice, a habit observed by Australian public servants who deal with Chinese clients in the CES and Social Security. Because women have been severely oppressed in China, they have devised effective strategies to advance their careers: patience and adaptation.

Consequently, to secure a desirable post, a Chinese would volunteer her/his service for two years to prove reliability, trustworthiness, loyalty, honesty and/or whatever the potential employer may desire. Then, when the position is secured, true character would emerge.
Because China has not been a unified country for long, and because of its ten years of anarchy, personal details are frequently invented (unconscious practice) by those who feel proud of their honesty and national integrity (conscious imitation).

My data on twenty-one Chinese former students are based on my personal contact with fifteen women and six men growing up during the Cultural Revolution who came directly to me for information and assistance:

15 women + 6 men

- 18 have very poor command of English;
- 1 woman whose parents are old Communist Party members has provided authentic personal details, and she has proven honest about her claims;
- 1 anti-communist man who actually was involved in the Tienanmen Square demonstration would be in real danger if he returned to China;
- 1 couple successfully appealed against a deportation order and was subsequently granted permanent residence;
- 1 woman collaborated with her sister in an attempt to have her husband deported from Australia because he tried to expose her 'illegal activities';
- 1 man has taken money from Chinese individuals, promising to marry their female relatives for immigration purposes;
- 7 have fabricated evidence including professional qualifications, training institutions, marital and residential status;
- 8 individuals came to me for information, about whom I have no personal details.

Thus in this random sample of 21 Chinese students with tertiary qualifications I have found 9 (almost 43%) involved in questionable activities; 3 (about 13%) can be charged with criminal offences if witnesses were willing to come forward, 2 (about 9%) gave accurate honest personal details.

Following are three case studies:

- **A 38-year-old woman**

Mary offered her services as a volunteer at the MRC. She had 15 years' teaching experience at Kunming University, but her English was very poor. It was difficult to assign her any task because she appeared to lack imagination and understanding of the system. However, upholding my inclusive principle, I took her in. She worked so hard at improving her
English that, after 18 months, her brand new dictionary had become tattered. Unfortunately there was nothing she could do competently. Her English was not sufficiently proficient for her to be a receptionist. She knew little about the services available to handle referral inquiries. She said that her family had been anti-communist and that she was therefore suffering from unjust discrimination by the Chinese Communist government. In addition, she disclosed that she had been widowed; her second husband was a gambler but she loved him passionately. Gradually she also disclosed that his mother had sponsored her and her son to Australia, and, although the couple had been separated, she still lived with his mother.

Mary won the affection of my friend, a linguist teaching several languages in a private school. The two became close friends. Mary volunteered her services to the private school where she helped teachers, hoping to create interest in Mandarin among students and a job for herself.

Using her new friend’s address, Mary advertised widely for a companion because she could not stand loneliness. She met another volunteer at the private school, a newly arrived European who was learning Chinese and Japanese. Mary quickly became Inge’s close friend. Everyone in the school commented that Mary had a good temperament and got along remarkably with staff and students.

As the NESB population in Canberra increased substantially the school secured funding for a teachers’ aid. The choice was between the two volunteers. Mary related an extraordinary story about Inge to me: ‘You’re right: migrants from socialist countries often abuse public property’, she said. ‘Inge comes from a socialist country, so she is used to abusing public property. I am so glad you taught me to respect public property.’ Mary went on to tell me how Inge had secretly photocopied an entire book for her: ‘I don’t even want it. But she is so emotional, if I didn’t accept her gift, she would feel rejected’. I suggested that Mary tell the school principal, but she said she could not betray a loyal friend. ‘I’ll pay for the photocopying. I’ve saved enough money. This would help me sleep. I never want to be dishonest. I don’t want anyone else to be dishonest on my account either’.

I thought Mary might fabricate a story to gain advantage, but before I had a chance to investigate, Inge withdrew her application for the position because she could not bear to compete against her new friend. However, the school decided to invite two more applicants to interview for the position; therefore Mary asked me for a reference.
In the meantime a suitable man responded to Mary's advertisement for a companion. He was a pharmaceutical salesman, also lonely and desperate. She and her son quickly moved in together. He treated her son as his own, having four children himself. He loved her passionately because his estranged wife was a 'domineering' woman, an academic, who out-earned him and refused to be domestic. He helped Mary obtain an unusually quick divorce (not having to wait for the minimum two years as a woman entering Australia through marriage).

But she would not marry him unless she was employed. She did not want to be supported by him, saying that 'too many Chinese have used marriage as a means to remain in Australia'. Impressed by her 'scruples', I wrote the most comprehensive reference, covering all her shortcomings, such as her lack of imagination and oral communication skill (she could not pronounce 'R'), and emphasising her reliability, loyalty and trustworthiness. After all, she worked as a volunteer at the MRC for 18 months and I knew her.

Mary got the job. I was a little surprised when she informed me that her fiancé took her to his solicitor and signed papers to leave his house and everything he owned to her if he died before her. She already owned 50% of his property. I was even more surprised, when Mary told me shortly after their marriage that her husband put her son's name on his life insurance policy, but she did not want to put his children's names on hers: 'I have only one child; he has no father. His children have their mother'. I did not see her point of view but I said nothing. She must have her reasons, I thought.

About a year later, I drove past the school, so I called in to see Mary. I was surprised to find Inge helping the teachers. Not only Inge, but everyone else in the school appeared to avoid me. Gradually I discovered that Mary had been dismissed less than six months after her appointment for incompetence. Her performance was so bad that the school would never employ a Chinese teacher again! 'She was a liar and an opportunist', they concluded. I apologised to the school and to Inge for having supported a bad candidate. I asked Inge about the photocopy incident.

'Oh, that was the perfect lie', she said. 'I was so poor that I couldn't afford to pay for the book on cross-cultural assistance in school, so I asked the Principal to permit me to photocopy it and pay later. The Principal said I could do it for nothing because I was helping at the school, but she forgot to inform the receptionist about it. As I was doing it, Mary walked past. She asked me what the book was about, I told her. She asked me to photocopy it.
for her too. So I did. She then went to the receptionist and told her that I did it secretly and that she felt so ashamed that I should have done it to give her something she did not want. She paid $15 for the photocopying. She then asked the receptionist not to say anything to the Principal. But word managed to get around that I was not suitable even though I was not competing for the job. Mary tried to use the book when she helped the teachers, but she did know how to follow it. She couldn’t express herself in English properly and she was too disciplinarian. Students left. So they dismissed her. They offered me the job, saying she resigned. I just found out recently the full story from the receptionist.

I interviewed different people who had close contact with Mary at the time she was at the MRC. According to two independent statements, she was married to a Chinese PhD student and to an unemployed Australian at the same time. She had been teaching in Beijing University and Kunming University at the same time. Her teaching diploma was given to her in 1974, two years before the end of the Cultural Revolution. She migrated to Australia after the Tienanmen Square incident. She met her Australian husband while playing poker. She frequented the Casino and maintained a strong link with the Chinese Embassy. Some Chinese have alleged that she used her connection with the MRC to arrange marriages between Australian citizens and Chinese women for immigration to Australia.

• A 33-year-old woman

A hospital called me: ‘A woman from Shanghai is married to a Vietnamese man who is very violent. Could you provide support?’ Of course, I said. ‘Is her English good enough?’ The Sister said no. ‘How can she marry a Vietnamese?’ I asked. ‘Their language is similar’, the Sister said. ‘Has she sustained injuries from the beating?’ I asked. ‘No, it’s emotional trauma caused by mental cruelty’, the Sister answered. I made an appointment to see the ‘victim’ in my office and booked an interpreter, but she did not turn up. The hospital did not contact me for further assistance either.

An old student left the English for Senior Migrants class to stay at home and look after her grandson. I was invited to a birthday party. People attending the party talked about that student with a Chinese daughter-in-law, who turned out to be the ‘victim’ who had ‘suffered from mental cruelty’.

A Vietnamese computer analyst had gone to China on holiday and met a Chinese student in Shanghai. He married her and brought her back to Australia. The couple lived with his parents. They had two children. She
wanted to sponsor her parents from China. He sponsored them, but they were not satisfied with sharing accommodation with his parents. Therefore she concocted the story about mental cruelty to obtain assistance from the Domestic Violence Crisis Service to quickly get a government house on her own. Not wanting to be tied down by the infant, she left it with the mother-in-law and took the older one along to claim child endowment.

I investigated the case to find that the Vietnamese husband in question is among the rare few who are reasonable, and has reasonable parents who put their children’s interest before their own.

- A couple over 35 years old

A Chinese Vietnamese came to me for help: ‘I have been kicked because the manager wants to replace me with his friends from China.’

‘But you are Chinese and you speak Mandarin’, I said.

‘That’s what I thought at first, but Chinese from China do not consider me Chinese. They complain that I don’t speak the same kind of Mandarin as they do’.

‘What has it got to do with working in the factory. Instructions are written in English, aren’t they?’ I asked. ‘Chinese from China gang up against overseas Chinese like me’, he replied.

‘Then tell me exactly what has happened and what you expect me to do’, I said.

He related to me the tactic the manager and his wife had devised to secure employment. ‘They were not able to get employment, so they bought shares in the business. Then they could work as partners. At first they were very nice because the government said their application for permanent residence would be assessed according to their character. They were granted permanent residence a month ago. They immediately dismissed one non-Chinese Asian, now they are trying to push me out. He keeps kicking me’.

‘Did anyone see him kick you?’ I asked.

‘Of course’, my client said. ‘Because he did it on the factory floor’.
Outside the factory, seven people working on the same floor said they witnessed the incident. One woman said her son had been dismissed for spitting and urinating on the floor although he did not spit or urinate. Others related similar tales. I asked for legal advice on behalf of my client. 'The man should be charged with assault', I was told. 'But your client should return to the factory and ask the witnesses to make written statements about what they have seen'.

My client happily returned to the factory, but no-one was willing to make a statement. They were intimidated by the manager and her husband.

Additional indirect data

My Chinese friend has received regular phone calls from Chinese individuals offering money to marry a Chinese woman and help her to remain in or migrate to Australia. The standard offer has been $20,000. Even some of my unemployed clients have asked me for advice regarding marrying women from China, Vietnam, Thailand and Hong Kong as a business. Cheating the government and people who are not from China appears to have no connection with personal integrity or honesty. In a meritocratic culture, intelligence is worshipped. Thus defeating outsiders (devils) and/or the system, any system, has often been regarded as a sign of superior intelligence.
IX Baby Lan

I was asked to help a baby who failed to thrive. Baby Lan looked like an old suffering woman. It scared me to look at her. Her eyes were surrounded by wide dark rings. She slept about four hours a day, cried incessantly when awake, and clung to her mother like a life jacket. There appeared to be no life in her, just immense effort to survive. She seemed to stare at me in fear. Can a baby understand the meaning of a refugee experience? I wondered. Her mother had recently arrived from a refugee camp infested with worms, tape-worms and life-threatening diseases. Does this baby suffer from trauma? If so, how can anyone help her?

The baby had been examined, treated and evaluated by many clinics, intervention programs and medical specialists who arrived at the conclusion, 'failure to thrive', which I had read about but failed to comprehend fully. I talked to many people about the case, carefully disguising personal details to protect confidentiality. There was not much to learn because no-one had heard of 'failure to thrive', let alone knew what it meant. I felt desperate: I could not let this baby suffer; I did not want to think of death as a possibility. Lan was put in a hospital to be sedated and taught a routine: sleeping and eating like a 'normal' baby.

Baby Lan could not hold anything; she did not know how to suck. She drank practically no milk and was forced to eat by her mother who feared that she would die without food. Lan could not even turn over, let alone crawl or perform any other more complex motor activity.

Lan lost weight in the hospital. She could not afford to lose weight, weighing merely 6kg at eight months. At least I felt reassured; hospital sounded professional and protective. I went there to visit her. Progress was slow. Everyone was concerned. The fact that everyone was concerned worried me. I started to observe the meaning of failure to thrive: Lan's fingers and toes were tightened looking like claws, instead of relaxed. She was shaking her head uncontrollably. Looking at her thin fragile neck, I feared that it would break. I remarked on that; her mother immediately grabbed her head and held it in place. There appeared no emotion flowing between the two. Some disconnected circuit in the unit had to be detected and I was the untrained technician assigned the overwhelming responsibility because I had done some research on culture. I wished I had kept my mouth shut. I wished I had never tinkered with cultures. I had already failed to detect falsified evidence because I had failed to understand the implication
of the Cultural Revolution!

I talked to people in the community: no-one appeared sympathetic to the mother. She was well-made up; she was surrounded by men. She therefore must have neglected her child. How can a mother with blood-red fingernails and lips claim that she looks after her baby? If she did not have time to sleep, how could she have time to dress so immaculately? I was convinced, but I wanted to make the last effort, just in case I was wrong in letting myself be influenced by a collective negative unconscious. I went to their temporary flat. It was tidy and clean. There was no sign of neglect. Talking to Lan’s mother I realised that she was understandably overcautious about hygiene. Knowing her circumstances, I realised that making up and painting her nails were but routine activities to retain her sanity — the only thing she could do well and that would not go wrong. In some way, I guessed, she preserved some safety that had existed in the past.

For many nights I felt miserable; I kept waking up early in the morning, feeling haunted by Lan’s sunken eyes and broad dark rings surrounding them. In natural darkness and the darkness of my soul, I reviewed literature. Lan could be autistic. I recalled my knowledge of therapy for autism and compiled characteristics of the extended family in my head.

I was worried about my ability in community and social work as I remembered a statement made by a mainstream social worker praised for her professionalism: ‘The moment I put the key into my car ignition, I leave my office concern behind’. I was too embarrassed to admit that my reflection begins the moment I close my office door. As I no longer see clients, I am free to review what I have done and speculate how I might improve services. It appeared that by examining cases in detail, I have been able to solve many problems which had been considered insoluble.

The next morning I followed happy mothers and babies around between administrative tasks, listening to their voices, recording interactive gestures to discern what I considered ‘normal’ movements and guessing what Lan might need to learn. Reviewing my involvement with Aboriginal friends for over a decade, I remembered one statement I had considered shocking: ‘She’ll grow up when she has a baby’. Suddenly it became clear to me: individuals in extended family cultures do not grow up until they are assigned responsibilities (become parents). The young parents in extended-family cultures are just teenagers emotionally, needing guidance and training to become adults. Training is achieved through observation and imitation, and, if danger is perceived by experienced elders, intervention
takes place naturally. Individuals in extended family cultures do not have to acquire a comprehensive set of skills. Instead, tasks are performed by those with the best specialised ability. This is illustrated by the Vietnamese new year's celebration in my extended family: my mother's second eldest sister made the best rice cake; therefore she always made them. My mother, on the other hand, made the best salads; therefore she always made them, and so on. After the family dispersed because of migration, the New Year celebration ceased to comprise the comprehensive range of foods, and the atmosphere has changed.

Gradually it became clear to me that Lan was deprived of normal motor activities other babies of her age took for granted. Since the child could not speak and might not understand what was said, gestures must mean something to her. I remembered my dog. Sudden gestures or tonal language scared him. Lan's mother, lonely, tired, fearful and lacking comprehensive mothercraft skills, had confined Lan out of love and protection. Then I remembered how my daughter had been cured of hypertonia by a series of exercises. I called Lan's mother and suggested she consider every movement, every gesture carefully so that each meant love and affection to Lan. Instead of suddenly holding her head tightly to prevent injury, she should gently and slowly stroke it while guiding it to her shoulder and carefully lock it between her shoulder and neck and continue to stroke it to reassure her that she was safe. I also suggested she hold Lan's hand, looking straight into the infant's eyes, lifting her body up and lowering it down on a soft surface such as a pillow to generate trust, until Lan developed a grip strong enough for her mother not to have to hold her hands to lift her up and lower her down on the pillow — I had seen new born babies capable of holding on to paediatricians' fingers strongly enough to be lifted up for a few seconds. This way, Lan's mother would teach her how to grab — hold— without resorting to verbal expression which might confuse her. I was not sure that her hearing was adequate; I was not sure that Lan was capable of anything.

I advised her mother to continue this exercise with Lan holding her hands. The exercise should be carried out for a few minutes at a time, repeated several times a day to help Lan develop muscles. Each time the exercise should last a little longer. All the time she must watch the baby carefully to make sure that Lan did not become exhausted.

Within four weeks, Lan gained 1kg, one-sixth of her body weight. The doctor was happy and asked me to help Lan with speech therapy. Never
having worked with babies before, I questioned his wish: 'Speech therapy for a baby, how?' He did not tell me how, but he said it had been done. 'It's difficult when a different culture and a different language are involved'.

Success gave me confidence. I immediately collected children's songs and lullabies and suggested to Lan's mother to sing to Lan and play with her. I also suggested she teach Lan various parts of her face by touching the child's nose, mouth, eyes, etc. while pronouncing their names and encouraging the child to touch hers. Safe body contact was important.

Noticing that Lan's legs lacked muscles and her bones should be straighter, I suggested her mother lie down on the floor with her and roll over, using her body to push Lan's body along and gently make Lan roll. I anticipated that this motor activity would help straighten the leg bones and help Lan learn to turn over. I also suggested a rebirth therapy by having the child and the mother crawl, the child under the mother. The child would crawl out from under her mother, then the two would crawl side by side or opposite each other. It would be, in my conception, a 'normal' and 'safe' rebirth which allowed the child freedom of movement in safety from the start.

Lan's mother followed my suggestions over the phone, I checked Lan's progress also over the phone and, when I had time, in person.

Two months later, Lan looked and acted like a 'normal' baby although she was still somewhat underweight. The doctor was satisfied with her progress and encouraged me to continue my help.

I consulted a Vietnamese physician. He said my 'therapy' was appropriate. 'Vietnamese medicine has ignored the important emotional component. We are only beginning to understand the transfer of emotion from mother to child'.

Feeling proud of my 'achievement', I started to brag about it. But my Greek friend who had extensive experience in achieving the unachievable interrupted me: 'The baby needs cuddling,' Effie said. 'Cuddling makes kids thrive. It's simple but psychologists don't know that'.
X Emotionally immature migrants

Since my appointment to the MRC, I have observed some cases of people who come from countries without social welfare and fail to honour their commitment to government agencies or individuals who helped them. Following are two typical examples:

1. An engineer

The man came to me with excellent references from his country of origin to prove that he had been in the work force continuously since his graduation. A young professional expecting his wife to come and join him, he suddenly found himself short of $410; his own brother could not help him. Without the money he would have to live with his brother in crowded unsatisfactory conditions. He was desperate, so his social worker approached me for help. I lent him the money. Having lost over $1000, I was reserved and concerned that my gesture of goodwill could turn new arrivals into irresponsible citizens; therefore I insisted that he sign an I.O.U form with a witness being present.

Within a week, he approached an MRC worker from the same country and harassed her into lending him $230 to pay rent. The reason was that he had used his entire rent money to buy a fridge at a bargain price. There was no money left for food. He then begged me to let him lower the repayment to $10 a week instead of $30, so that he could furnish his new flat. He also bought a king-size bed without a mattress and expected us to provide one. I refused to do any more for him. He went back to the worker and asked for a quilt. She gave him one. The demands went on as I watched him turn into a non-functional human being within two weeks.

2. A non-professional man

He is one of the refugees granted four years of asylum in Australia. He is married with two children. When he came to see me, he had one child and a pregnant wife. At first he approached me to complain about unfair discrimination against him by one of the workers well-known for her generosity and commitment. I assured him that there had to be some misunderstanding. However, I lent him some money anyway.

He returned the following week to borrow more money, then the week after that. I continued to help him with $10, $20 and similarly small amounts for
medicine or other incidental expenses. He never had any money to pay back and I did not expect anything from him. The amount quickly reached several hundred dollars. I stopped lending him more when I found out that he was also borrowing money from staff and other clients.

When I no longer lent him money, he abused me verbally. He also told a teacher who did not give him money: 'A friend in need is a friend in deed'.

Gradually I found out that the worker he had accused of unfair discrimination against him had given him a large sum of money. Various churches also gave him money. He even bought a used car with borrowed money while refusing to perform physical work.

Coming from a country with high illiteracy and having completed two years of tertiary education, he considered himself above physical labour. Being able to speak Arabic, he wanted to work in Israel, helping Arabic-speaking migrants to settle in their new country. When I pointed out to him that he would need to speak Hebrew to do the job, that many Israelis speak Arabic fluently and that Israel was one of the countries without a shortage of professional qualifications, he was genuinely surprised.

I realised that I had to explain everything to him as if he were a child. Workers had to inform one another about his behaviour and to form a consistent response to his needs. Eventually he learnt to accept physical labour as the only solution until his professional status and the Australian economy change.

While the selection process may be able to reduce the number of emotionally immature migrants, only careful training and education will help emotionally immature refugees.
XI Nho

In 1980 I was asked by the Armidale Women's Shelter to interpret for Nho who 'cannot not speak a word of English'. Nho escaped to Armidale because her husband was involved in organised crime and the crime boss feared that she might talk, so when she left her violent husband (who was later convicted of assault and causing bodily harm and served time in Long Bay Gaol), the boss would bring her back to gag her although she knew nothing about their criminal activities. They could not be sure.

A simple gesture of humanity (interpreting for a stranger in distress) turned out to be a serious risk. The crime boss was a well-known and much-feared man in the Vietnamese community. No-one would dare to be Nho's witness. She had to live in hiding for months.

My assignment was to make sure that she understood that she would be safer in the refuge and to inform the refuge staff of her needs. I was to help her enrol her children in schools and herself in TAFE.

Nho agreed only if I also stayed in class to help her understand what the teacher said. She had attended the course before and learned nothing from it.

The teacher spoke with a closed mouth; even I had great difficulty understanding what he said; therefore I suggested that he help Nho with pronunciation or assign another tutor to help her. I understood he would not have time to give her individual attention.

The teacher said that pronunciation was not necessary, 'as long as you know what people say and people know what you say'. He seemed to be annoyed by my suggestion, so I kept silent and tried to follow his method.

The class was divided into smaller groups of three or four. Each was helped by a tutor. Unfortunately Nho was stuck with the teacher because he needed to test his method for his thesis on ESL teaching — I found this out some ten years later, long after I had left Armidale to live in Canberra.

He used large photographs of indecipherable scenes such as a rodeo, some Aboriginal people in the background, some barbed wire and broken-down fences. There was no specific focus. He then asked the students what they saw. Each saw what was relevant to their culture. The visiting student from Lebanon fluent in English wanted to learn everything including the
difference between pants and slacks, shirts and blouses, jumpers and pull-overs while Nho saw barbed wire and broken fences because they were related to her experiences of war in Vietnam. The teacher wanted her to learn the word 'slacks'. Coming from the South, Nho could only produce the sound 'slut'. The teacher said: 'Repeat after me: slacks'. Nho said: 'Repeat after me: slut'. The teacher went on until he was tired of drilling Nho; he then moved to the group of advanced students.

Nho made no progress. After a week she began to experience migraine headaches. Then her migraines became so bad that she stopped going to the TAFE classes altogether. She asked me to teach her privately: 'I'll pay you'. I did not accept payment, but agreed to teach her while I was looking for a suitable teacher for her. I needed time to run my own business.

A Catholic nun who had taught English to a diplomat agreed to help her: 'I taught Ambassador...'s wife and daughter'. The nun also introduced other 'kind' people to her so that Nho would not 'have to be alone too much'.

For a few weeks I was too occupied with catering to visit Nho. When I saw her again I was alarmed, she looked as if she had not slept for days — and she had not: 'I am going out of my mind. The moment I go to sleep I have nightmares, so I wake up and I become so scared; everywhere is dark. I couldn't go back to sleep again. I keep hearing things. First it happened at night only, so I went to bed with the light on; then I see things and hear things which are not there even in broad daylight. The other day, I meant to tell the kids to put their clothes away in the drawers, but I found them later in the fridge. I had told them to put clothes in the fridge by mistake. I sent them to the toilet when I meant to send them to bed. They are so scared of me'.

Immediately I contacted my GP for help. She was the best in town. She saw Nho right away and gave her some tranquillisers: 'This tranquillizer has no side-effect', she claimed.

Nho took the tranquillizer and went to sleep. I left her promising I would return later, when she had had some decent sleep.

I returned six hours later, early in the evening. Nho was in agony: "The pills made me so sick. Can you ask the doctor to give me some different pills?"

I called up the doctor at home but she said there could not be any side-effects because the drug had been proven safe; she ordered Nho to continue
with the treatment, using twice the quantity. But Nho could not keep the
drug down. She vomited everything out and became exhausted from
vomiting. I had to help her look after the children — a job which I neither
liked nor felt suitable for.

No-one knew what to do with Nho. Racking my brains, I came up with some
questions. I asked Nho whether she saw and heard things when there were
people around her. She said sometimes she saw and heard things when there
was no-one around, sometimes she saw and heard things when there was
someone with her. I asked her whether she saw and heard things when I was
with her. She said it had never happened.

'Have you seen or heard things when people who speak Vietnamese were
around?'
'No'.
'Have you heard or seen things when Vietnamese was spoken?'
'No'.

Her answers gave me hope. I asked the nuns and shelter staff not to see her
when I was not there to interpret for them. I informed them that she had
been hallucinating badly. I promised to teach her English and to tape our
conversations for her to listen to while I was away. I also taped some
Vietnamese songs for her so that when she was tired of doing her
homework, she would listen to familiar songs and feel less homesick.

It was a cold winter day; Nho sat on the half-broken-down bed shivering
while two children ran around, their lips were grey; the doors and windows
of the flat were wide open; the electric heater was on full, but it was unable
warm up the flat. Her toddler wrapped up in quilted clothes sat on the floor
just about to tear up a Healthcare card. I stopped the child and explained to
Nho its usefulness. 'It's a letter informing me that my child endowment
payment has been transferred from Sydney', she said, surprised.

'What makes you think it is?' I asked, feeling curious.

'Because Lan told me. Now I know she's stupid too. She can't look down on
me any more'. Nho told me that the woman who 'translated' the 'letter' for
her looked down on her because she was a lawyer's wife.

'But she doesn't know English', I said.
'She never told me that, she translated stuff for me', Nho said.

Then I asked Nho why she did not use the blankets the government gave her, seeing a huge box marked blankets from the NSW Department of Community Services. Nho said she did not want to use them because they might come and ask for them back. I assured her that the government would not ask for anything back. To prove her point, Nho told me the story about an Anglican woman who gave her some things and then took them back.

I found out later that the Anglican woman tried to help Nho by giving her some clothes to iron. She brought along damp clothes, an iron and an ironing board. She made gestures to tell Nho that she would like her to iron those clothes for her friend's family. Having been given clothes and other things by various government and non-government organisations before, Nho thought the clothes from the Anglican woman were given to her, as usual. However, three days later, the woman came with her friend (the owner) to take all the clothes and iron and ironing board away. Nho felt humiliated.

Then the Women's Shelter staff came to pick her up to bring her to my house for lunch without informing her in advance. The reason was simple: I had prepared Vietnamese spring rolls for Nho because, coming from a very wealthy family and being spoiled, as Nho put it, she did not learn cooking in Vietnam.

I called the shelter and asked the worker who answered the phone to take the message, then hand it over to the worker who was assigned to look after Nho to pick Nho up and bring her to my house. The message was not taken despite my spelling every letter over the phone because the woman concerned was dyslexic and could not write but was too embarrassed to tell me about her disability. All she said to her colleague was that I called and wanted Nho to be taken to my house immediately.

Nho arrived at my house shaking in fear. She thought that her husband had come to harm her. She was holding on to her toddler while asking me to go and fetch the others from school. It took me an hour to calm Nho down, but she could not eat anything I had prepared specially for her.

My method of teaching English and calming Nho down worked. She was able to speak English after a few months and she had no more hallucinations.
I went to Sydney to investigate alleged crimes committed against Nho and many women like her. All her allegations were confirmed by the Compliance Section of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and ASIO. Hurriedly I returned to Armidale to save Nho only to find that she had been taken away by her husband. A note written by her husband and signed by Nho was left for me.

Immediately I contacted Nho by phone; she reassured me that her husband loved her and promised that she would contact me if she needed further help, but I detected something strange about the way she said it. I did not contact her again for fear of endangering her.

Nho never contacted me. The Anglican woman informed me that Nho's husband had been convicted of stabbing and was imprisoned. I tried to contact Nho in vain. Through the Vietnamese community, I heard contradictory tales about her. She appeared to have moved away from the house where I had been able to talk to her over the phone. Then I heard that she had been murdered in Queensland.

In 1985 as a Writer-in-the-Community in Bankstown, I offered my voluntary services to the nearby Neighbourhood Centre. I also asked around whether anyone had heard of Nho or her husband. No-one was aware of their existence. It was unusual, considering that the Vietnamese community was small and that he had been a prominent member because in Vietnam he had killed a re-education camp officer (communist) with his bare hands.

Eventually a woman at the Neighbourhood Centre told me that she had heard about someone fitting the description I had given her, who had run away from her violent husband. The husband had pursued her from one convent to another; therefore she had lived on the move, from one convent to another. The violent husband was connected with the underworld. He had eventually killed her.
XII Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) or Adult Migrant English Service (AMES)

Although the majority of people who have had tertiary education in their countries of origin benefit from this program, those who come from the rigid tradition of rote learning and those without English on arrival find it too alienating and difficult. Refugees who have had extensive and intensive exposure to uncertainty or even trauma and torture find some aspects — such as accelerated learning — of this program disturbing, as they can only guess the meaning of what the teachers intend to communicate to them. Not infrequently their guesses have been wrong. Thus their anxiety becomes aggravated. Many of our students belong to the second category.

Not knowing the new culture causes further distress. One older Vietnamese woman said she had to ‘shake my bottom’ — she sees dancing as bottom shaking — because ‘that’s what people do in Australia’ while other Vietnamese women of her age found learning English too embarrassing, as teachers ‘expect’ them to depart from their traditions. Vietnamese and Chinese learn by imitation. Teachers use accelerated learning to have ‘holistic’ effect, to have students ‘dive’ into culture and language. However, older students from China and Vietnam (Confucian cultures) think they must do what their teachers do. Those who consider dancing inappropriate for their age quietly withdraw to preserve their dignity and not to offend their teachers whom they must respect.

On the other hand, to compensate for their lack of English, some students from other cultures complain that ‘teachers are stupid because they don’t know how to teach’. The Ethnic Communities Council’s latest survey completed in March 1993 has shown that some migrants consider that ESL teachers lack qualifications.

Because most workers at the MRC come from other countries, migrants do not feel too shy to ask questions about culture and etiquette. They feel more comfortable to be themselves. Thus they learn and retain what they have learned more easily. Listening to workers speaking English with an accent also gives them confidence to speak.

Adults with little or no formal education in their country of origin must be taught by bilingual teachers so that meanings can be transmitted to reduce or prevent anxiety.
The MRC has provided English classes for people before they commence a course at TAFE either because they are on the waiting list or because they need some English to do a TAFE course, and for students who have completed the 510 hours allowed by the Adult Migrant Education Program. They join the English Pronunciation Class, English Conversation Groups and other programs.