

**WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS  
AND DRIVING FORCES  
BEHIND  
THE CREATIVITY AND VISION  
OF SUCCESSFUL LEBANESE IMMIGRANTS?**

A research study prepared by  
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As a project for  
The Masters of Education in the Creative Arts

University of Technology, Sydney  
March 2003

**“There is a space between  
man’s imagination and man’s attainment  
that may only be traversed  
by his longing”**

**“They say to me,  
‘Should you know yourself you would know all men’.  
And I say, “Only when I seek all men shall I know  
myself”**

**-Excerpts from ‘Sand and Foam’  
by Kahlil Gibran**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I want to thank the following people who helped me reach and fulfil my dream in my educational journey:

My dear mother, who always has faith in everything I do.

My loving husband Albert, who provoked the challenge in me.

My children, Reuben, Sasha and Maeva, who allowed me all the time and space needed and made me believe I could do it.

My supervisor, Dr Anne Bamford who is acknowledged for all her ideas, support, optimism, encouragement and enthusiasm.

My lecturer Barbara Poston-Anderson, for her great kindness

My dedicated librarian Jane Van Balen for her friendship, generosity of ideas, extra time, compassion and sincerity.

My brothers and sister and their families who were patient and silent when I needed to be away thinking and writing.

My friend Gloria, who opened the way for me to undertake this great experience and helped me blossom into who I am today.

My many other friends and family who have sent me their warm best wishes, I say, "Thank you, it was very needed".

## **ABSTRACT**

Creative visualization is an essential attribute to be possessed by an artist to achieve success in any art endeavour. To reach its purpose in all its fields, art is made manifest and is expressed through real genuine passion. This research study acknowledges Gibran Kahlil Gibran, as a distinguished immigrant artist, with a vision. A comparison is then made of six other artists, including the researcher, who have all had similar ordeals in the successful attainment of their vision.

This biographical, neo-narrative research design methodology was recorded through extensive readings and lengthy interviews, which consisted of proposing specific questions to each of the participants in order to extract valid and comparable findings. As a consequence, the art researcher was able to observe, reflect and draw some relevant conclusions towards the creative vision of Lebanese immigrants, which led to their success despite hardships, expatriation, ambition and hope.

This study has provided the researcher with real insight into the characteristics of these artists and what constitutes a successful immigrant. It has confirmed her pre-conceived perceptions that success takes time and personal effort.

It highlights the importance for the existence of tolerance between people, which in turn will enable the realisation of empathy.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The idea for this study emerged from my readings and fascination with the creative life of Gibran Kahlil Gibran. He was originally from Lebanon and migrated to America with his family at the age of twelve for a better life. A vast combination of pain, ambition, expatriation and hope contributed to his vision and creativity; this erupted into a flow of series of magical talents in writing, painting and poetry.

When I reflected on my own life I saw similarities of events. I wondered whether other immigrants had shared similar experiences as a result of migration. That is whether their creativity and vision, mixed with their trauma, had played a role in their success.

The inspiration of Gibran's enormous artistic contribution to his adopted country America fuelled an already keen personal interest in me. As an Australian-Lebanese Art student I needed to express a voice long denied: to share my own talents with other creative Australian-Lebanese artists and to be acknowledged for this creativity.



## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study holds significance to the immigrant reader in that all the participants hold an authentic identity within a minority group, which is rich in culture and poor in voice. It provides the reader with both an awareness and insight into the development and success of these individual artists measured by personal difficulties they had faced.

This study holds significance to art educators. It provides a source of knowledge, understanding and empathy of “Others”: they that have been ignored and placed into one category and one mould. Their success lay in their individual talents and their under-valued creativity. These were their only tools for survival, manifested in their expatriation, in an estranged and hostile environment.

This research holds specific significance for the Australian Lebanese artists themselves. It is an acknowledgement of their efforts and their success, which have contributed to their respective fields to the benefit of their own culture and the world’s creative arts. Each person’s contribution is valued and needed, irrespective of their origins in this multi-cultural society for the ultimate benefit of all, so that, in Australia, all people may live in harmony and share equal opportunity.

## PERSONAL HISTORY

### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE RESEARCHER

1957	Suzanne Mansour (nee Haddad) born September 7 in Tripoli, North Lebanon.
1963	Started school at age 6 years.  12 years studied a variety of subjects: Literature, Science, History, Geography and Arts in Arabic, French and English at the Notre Dame Of Perpetual Succour in Beirut  Hobbies included: Drawing and Painting, most Sports including Swimming and Dancing (classical and jazz Ballet), Music (Piano and Guitar) and Reading
1972	1st prize    Fabriano Italian Art Competition.
1973	2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize    Fabriano Art Competition  Travelled to Europe including France, Italy, Austria and England.
1975	Baccalaureate (Year 12)
1975	Departed Lebanon to escape the war.  Arrived Sydney with mother, sister and two brothers.
1975	Sydney College of the Arts (Balmain)  Enrolled in Diploma Interior Design
1977	Married Albert Mansour, a Paediatrician, preparing his PhD in Immunology.  Travelled to USA, Canada and Greece with honeymoon in Tahiti.
1977	Received Australian Citizenship.

- 1978      Toronto, Canada where I resided two years.
- Conservatorium of Toronto      Piano studies
- Museum of Toronto      Drawing and Painting
- University of Toronto      German studies &
- Egyptian Hieroglyphics.
- To avoid being homesick and lonely, I occupied myself with other activities:
- Pianist on Sundays at the Lebanese church
- National TV News-broadcaster in Arabic across the Canadian Coast
- Cooking & Craft activities
- 1979      1<sup>st</sup> son, Reuben George, was born.
- Visited Barbados, Disneyland, Mexico, Boston New York & New Jersey
- 1980      Returned to Sydney via Europe (France, Spain, Italy and Greece).
- 1979      2<sup>nd</sup> son, Sasha-Daniel, was born.
- Painting & Piano studies continued
- TAFE courses (Sewing & Art)
- 1983      Daughter, Maeva-Claire, was born.
- Family travelled to Fiji for holidays.
- TAFE: further studies in Crafts & Sewing.
- 1986      Business Administration studies including Communication Skills.
- 1991      Advanced Sewing at College (TAFE)
- 1994      Awarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize at the Royal Easter Show for 1<sup>st</sup> quilt
- Spanish studies (level 1) at Community College
- 1995      Spanish studies (level 2) at Community College.
- 1996      Community Liaison Officer in Primary School (Department of Education)
- Computers Studies at TAFE
- NAATI Paraprofessional Course in Interpreting at UWS

- Spanish Studies (level 3) at WEA.
- 1997     Studies in Adult education at Strathfield Community College.
- 1999     Medical Terminology at Community College.
- Bachelor degree in Adult Education (University of Technology)
- 2002     Bachelor Degree in Adult Education awarded.
- Supplementary Certificate in Communication Development Studies
- Enrolled in Master in Education in Creative Art.
- 2004     Masters in Education in Creative Arts awarded (University of Technology)

## **BACKGROUND:**

It took my mother three long years to fall pregnant. They were indeed very long ones considering the time (late 50's) and the place (North Lebanon) in regards to the culture and the anguish of completing this perfect image of the perfect couple within the perfect marriage by producing a baby for the fulfilment of their union. Neighbours, friends and families bombarded this otherwise healthy married couple with questions that could be considered these modern days quite personal and intimate. My mother aged twenty-two years old was considered to be getting nowhere with the daily prayers over the passing weeks followed by the months and the years to conceive a child and be accepted. My parents were very comfortable financially, with my father being a jeweller as my grandfather. After all, you needed a good reputation to survive the competition in this field of otherwise Muslim dominated town and be very original and creative. Both my grandfather and father fulfilled this wish by each one of them complementing the other in reputation and creativity. In addition, my father was blessed with the good looks, the personality and the voice to go with the perfect image. My mother on the other hand had the brains and wisdom to match her attractive body and was considered to be a very 'exotic bird' in those days and not really a beauty.

When I finally arrived to this world, the gifts touched the ceiling. Everyone was so happy. My father was so ecstatic that he had a fight with the nurse for allowing a mosquito to enter the nursery. He told my mother that ‘a real Eva Gardner was born’ meaning that his baby daughter was as beautiful as Ms Gardner, the well-known American actress and symbol of beauty in the 1950’s. This comment was to confirm that what he saw as aesthetically appealing was as important to him as being healthy. For at birth, the skin on my face was covered with an amniotic sac, which gave the pretence of looking powdered, and is considered in the Arabic culture to be rare, belonging to a very lucky person in life. My dear mother, the one who believed in me, did repeat this premonition many times on different occasions. Being the first child and having coloured eyes and the fair look helped me to be spoilt by everyone and become the centre of attention for my parents and both my paternal and maternal grandparents until my brother Nabil, who was to carry the family name, came along.

From a very young age, I opened my eyes to a world of both extreme conflict and harmony where the culture advocated the male supremacy in all domains. In my case, and being the oldest, I could not follow orders from someone younger than myself. I took the role of the protector and the nurturer even when I tried to force my baby brother to eat from a cob of corn held in my little hand through the metal columns of his crib thinking that I was feeding him the bottle of milk while my mother was hanging the clothes on the line and keeping a watch over us through a glass wall. Suddenly when hearing my brother’s cries, she ran to his rescue and found him bleeding from the mouth with me still pushing the cob of corn to his gum. I really thought I was doing him a favour and could not understand why my mother was angry with me. She was after all the most important person in my life and still is to this very day, my guardian angel. If there were any feelings of jealousy caused by the rivalry of siblings my mother knew very well how to diffuse it and supply both of us with plenty of tender loving care and attention. My mother was never expected to work.

She was an excellent storyteller. She had this way of telling me imaginative stories involving Superman and Tarzan, while feeding me, and how they would save people from the jaws of savage animals. How I enjoyed those moments while listening and imagining those extraordinary stories. Nabil, (meaning the noble one,) my brother excelled at school and was granted a scholarship for free schooling over nine years.

He was able to study anywhere in the house for an examination regardless of how noisy the place or the television was on. In contrast, I had to be well focused in a completely silent room and no interruption. We excelled in all: Sport, Art and Music, something my mother did advocate herself. She gave birth to two more children: my sister Lillian three years later after me followed by my brother Sami six years later.

I would have liked to believe that my parents were very happy together but my father's changing moods and unpredictable, difficult character mixed with being extremely demanding and a perfectionist made that very hard. He used violence and terror to empower himself against my larger than life mother and drank alcohol to forget his reality.

My mother was modern and had a strong personality. She did not conform to any set of rules nor did she follow the culture. Everything had to be logical and meaningful to be accepted. Everything was questioned and when no answer was given she used her own judgement and wisdom. She faced lots of hardship with my father who was more conservative than her, dominant and selfish enough to follow his own interests. But it was a matter of time before she took over control of the ship because she was a much better captain. He was nine years her senior. The role of my mother became the breadwinner, as there was no Social Security in my country Lebanon, to help her with the upbringing of four children including the schooling (private schools), clothing and living requirements. To make things worse, when my father made a big scene and failed to bring back my unwilling and scarred mother home, because of his violent attitude, he decided to punish her by stripping our house of all the furniture including our beds. It was at the beginning of winter. I remember vividly that miserable day when I had to protect my younger brothers and sister. On my father's orders, I was told to walk to my grandparents' home, which was quite a distance away, holding my siblings' hands, to reach my mother who was there grieving the loss of her beloved mother. I was only eleven years old.

I found solace in drawing and especially using colourful pencils. It made me so happy to the point of becoming a tool that I could use as my secret drug of real escapism whenever I wanted, in order to forget my reality, where it really hurt. I was visualizing

and experimenting with everything that came to my mind. It gave me a sense of importance and recognition. It made my mother so proud of my achievements. My skills improved as a consequence and through drawing I was living in my own world, a paradise, where only beautiful things existed and no ugliness was ever allowed. I lived my idealistic world, and it was all so perfect in harmony, the lines, the forms; I was free like a bird to create what pleased me and I believed in this world to the point of forgetting my reality. Everything was possible, for I controlled my wellbeing, my self-preservation and because of this wonderful, magical world, I felt so secure and stopped crying at night.

The pain of my parents' separation must have been so great, that my own hunger for real happiness became insatiable. My mother, realising this need and playing the dual role of being both parents, encouraged me to pursue many of my dreams at any cost and without reservation. She was extremely supportive even at times when it was impossible for her to provide the financial means to allow me to do it she did it through sheer hope and imagination. I had many hobbies. I was interested in art, dance and music. I started taking dancing lessons in Classical Ballet, then Jazz Ballet. I took all these endeavours very seriously because their fees were high and of course my Mum was the sole financial supporter of this close-knit family. I understood her unconditional love and sacrifice extremely well because the channels of communication between us were very open through interesting daily dialogues. In addition, having positive feedback and encouragement from my mother and no negative obstacles made me want to excel.

In return, and because I adored her, I wanted to be the extension through whom she could realise her dreams. She became the oxygen I would breathe, my only source of life. How could I disappoint the only one who ever believed in me? I started to contemplate the many ways I could shine even more to help repay her and compensate for her pain.

I was "spotted" and chosen between a class of nearly thirty Jazz Ballet dancers and asked to participate in some advertisement by a company who was filming us for a documentary film. I was a young 14-years-old and beautiful with an athletic build and a dancer's physique. It turned out to be similar to winning the jackpot. Through this event not only did I help to provide some financial help for my mother and open up a whole new world for myself, but my mother found a secure job working as a swimming

instructor in a renowned health and beauty centre for the rich and famous. This was going to truly help realise all our hopes and dreams. I helped locate a good second hand piano for my mother to buy for me. I also found a talented piano teacher called 'Mr Pierre' an Armenian who helped boost my motivation. He had a unique way of teaching and would often play pieces of music for me to hear before deciding whether I would like to learn them. I thrived on learning music. I would practise for up to three hours a day only to collapse out of exhaustion, with my hands on the piano. That went on for nearly three years. With the drawing, the dance and music, I found fulfilment, security and happiness despite being a moody teenager.

My school was run by the Mel-kite religious order and had good association with the Belgian nuns. Mel-kite as explained in the dictionary is "the Royal Christian order belonging to the Eastern Orthodox that followed the Chaldean communal in 451 AD". Whereas, in the Batrouney's book (1985 p.46) "the term 'Melkite' refers to those who followed the Emperor Constantine's interpretation of 'Christianity', as 'Malick' in Arabic means 'King'. I attended 'Notre Dame Du Perpetual Succour' school, which was located within walking distance from my home. There, I studied Arabic, French, English, Mathematics, Literature, Science, History, Geography, Religion and Sport for twelve years.

Art was not considered as important a subject, and so sewing embroidery soon took its place as more appropriate for girls, until I decided to enter an Art Competition sponsored by an Italian institute in Beirut. That year I was so excited, I took on competing with a mad passion. I tried to win no matter what or how. I was completely disciplined and well prepared. Later that year I won a prize and was selected for the major round the following year. This encouraged me to prepare myself in order to get some recognition for my work and attract the attention of the Principal (Sister Maximilienne), my teachers and colleagues as well as my family and friends. This recognition was to compensate for the attention I did not get from the main man in my life: my father.

One morning as we, the students, were in line ready to enter our classrooms a voice (the Principal's) came over the loud speaker and announced my name to step forward, meet and receive from the representatives of the Committee of the association the 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize



for the whole of Lebanon in the 14-year-old category. I was given a medal, books and gifts. Apparently I had just missed out by a small margin winning the 1<sup>st</sup> prize, which would have included a trip to visit 'Fabriano' a tiny town in Italy. I was ecstatic with that news but more so for the person who was going to be even happier than myself: my mother Claire. That year I was able to travel and visit four countries in Europe (France, Italy, Austria and England, as a reward from my mum for all the studies and hard work that culminated in the winning and the success). I had a wonderful time and experience visiting them all, learning a lot, with my mother and her best friend Maria from the Health and Beauty centre where she was working.

In 1974, war broke in Lebanon and my mother decided, reluctantly, that it was time for us to leave for Australia: to escape the war and to better our lives.

After a long trip we reached the Australian shores the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 1975. I enrolled at the Sydney College of the Arts in Balmain to study Interior Design, a four year Diploma. During the interview, I had three professors questioning me on different topics all relating to Art to see whether I was a good candidate to enter and do the course. They asked me whether I had visited the museums and historical sites in Europe, and if I have seen the great temple of Jupiter in Lebanon constructed by the Romans etc. of which I had good knowledge of and more.

The entry selection was very limited and places were given to only 200 students out of 1200. Each student had to nominate a second choice from the desired one like Graphic or Industrial Design. I got in with my first choice. I would have preferred to enter any University but it was too late then to apply, as the applications were submitted the year before. I quickly learnt how to reach the College in Balmain, (being very new in the country) by using trains and buses to reach my destination.

It was my destiny to meet my future husband Albert five weeks after my arrival in Australia. He was looking into a new path in Medicine called "Immunology" and preparing his PhD. I was attracted to his silence and his knowledge, as well as his charismatic looks and deep soul. I knew that in this relationship I could grow and expand and be the best person I could be to my other half. This choice or consequence appealed greatly to me. I completed only six months of my course at the College of the

Arts, because it was not really what I wanted to do, got married, and flew away. The honeymoon was spent partly in America (Los Angeles, Alabama), Canada (Toronto) and Tahiti (Papeete, Morea) during which my eyes were opened wide.

After the honeymoon we decided to go back and stay in Toronto for two years, so that Albert could finish his PhD. On the way to Canada we visited the Greek Islands (Paros, Mykonos and Ios). I enrolled at the conservatorium of Toronto to continue my studies in piano. I fell pregnant and played until I could no longer reach the piano. I excelled in music and enjoyed every minute of it while playing, and composing.

My first son Reuben was born in Toronto, Canada. That was a huge event in my life and an experience on its own that tested every single fibre of my being and most of the skills that I had previously learnt. I enjoyed it and did it with panache. To avoid being homesick and lonely in Toronto, I started playing piano for the chorus in the Lebanese church every Sunday morning inviting my husband to go there and meet other families. As a consequence of that action, our circle of friends got larger in size and in no time we were entertained every weekend.

During this period I learnt a lot by visiting those immigrants in their homes and by exchanging lots of ideas on different topics including cooking, homemaking and craft. In addition, I enrolled at the museum of Toronto to do Drawing and Painting every Saturday morning for three hours while my husband looked after our son. An opportunity came along when I was told by some friends from church of a position becoming available for an Arabic Newsreader on television across the whole Canadian Coast. I applied and got that position. I watched and criticised myself every week while reading the news. This self-discovery helped me realise a future potential.

During the holidays we, as a family, managed to fly and visit interesting places: Boston, New Jersey, Disneyland and the Caribbean island (Barbados). I had hands-on learning from all the things around me and taking in as much as I could from seeing different countries and meeting different people. The passing time with my son while being overseas felt so enriching as I learnt to be more practical and always ready to be on the move. During this period, I fell pregnant with my second boy Sasha. Certainly, this experience was difficult to manage but not impossible.

Those two years passed with great achievements both for my husband and for myself leaving behind a big circle of friends who made us feel so welcomed in their homes and a wonderful feeling of belonging. It was time to return to Sydney to our own families and again via Europe through Italy (Rome, Florence, and Venice), France (Paris, Nice and Monte Carlo) and Spain (Madrid, Andalusia).

These were the years that benefited me greatly in building my self-esteem, my social skills, having a husband and a baby with an extra baby on the way and trying to cope with everything while trying to manage this new lifestyle far away from home with *panache* and *joie de vivre*.

With every additional baby I had, more learning came along in life; these difficult situations tested my patience, the different experiences, the trials, and everything that I believed in. In addition, I was trying to be accepted in my new adopted country with the new culture. I learned to cope at an early age and to take any obstacle I would face as a challenge. This learning was not reached easily. It was only through pain, prayers and pure resilience that I made it.

The years flew by quickly, and with the birth of my daughter Maeva Claire, the picture of my life became clearer and complete. Through preschool I met some mothers who were artistic and just like a bee that is attracted to the flowers, I was drawn to them when they noticed the creative side of me. Together we started meeting once every week at night for a couple of hours at different homes in order to share our art and friendship. They were all experts in quilt making except myself. To encourage me to join the group properly they suggested that I draw a pattern for quilting or follow a quilt book in order to copy or find a pattern that was easier for my first project. The idea was also that all the other quilters would help the new member to start her project in quilt making with a deadline (approximately a month) until the project was under way.

I drew the pictures of the quilt that needed to be achieved to become a wall hanging. It took just over a year for this masterpiece to be completed. Lots of hours have been invested in this quilt. I made sure that it would be a real masterpiece. The feedback was encouraging considering the time, patience and money that were spent on making it; an

opportunity came along to exhibit the quilt at the Royal Easter Show. My turn had come to shine and I was awarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the competition. That boosted my confidence. I stayed in that quilting group for nearly 5 years until I started working in a public primary school as a community liaison Officer, dealing with the parents and creating activities to enjoy and learn. This experience lasted well after I entered University. This was requested of me because I was doing a professional job teaching the parents and conducting sessions without formal qualifications. I had to prove to myself, and to my family my ability to study and achieve. That was a turning point in my life.

The dream I had long been dreaming of: to participate and experience “University life” was finally within my reach. The long road that was going to help me in the future to realise my dream, and reach my vision was here. But alas, I had to wait many years to make that decision because of my children’s own education. However, it was really worth the wait. Not only have I gained the knowledge and structure in my work, but also the extra respect and assertiveness I needed to help me excel. As a consequence, my English register in academia improved significantly, and one thing led to another. Graduation day was truly an unforgettable day for my family and myself. I reached the goal that I thought impossible. I applied for a Masters degree something I always felt a passion for, and got accepted. Hopefully this year, 2003, I would be finishing my Master degree and starting to fulfil my dream, which is, to give back what I have learnt.

There is a duty to the readers of this thesis to be introduced to the participants through their biographies in order to gather some information about their origin. I will start with Gibran’s biography.

## PERSONAL HISTORY OF GIBRAN KAHLIL GIBRAN

Poet, philosopher and artist, Gibran Kahlil Gibran was born on January 6, 1883 to a Maronite family in Northern Lebanon near Mount Lebanon, a region that has produced many prophets, that was then part of greater Syria. Gibran was a pensive and solitary child who relished the natural surrounding of his village called Bsharri. The beauty of this region influenced his drawings and writings. Being stricken with poverty, Gibran did not receive any formal education. He was tutored at home, learning to speak Arabic, French, and English. At eight, Gibran's father was accused of tax evasion and was imprisoned by the Ottoman authorities that confiscated the family's property and left them homeless. At ten, Gibran fell off a cliff, wounding his left shoulder. Being religious, his family strapped it to a cross for 40 days, a symbolic incident reminiscent of Christ's wanderings in the wilderness.

His mother Kamila Rahmeh was thirty when she had him from a third husband. She came from a prestigious religious background. Gibran had a half-brother, Peter, who was six years older and two younger sisters, Mariana and Sultana whom he was very attached to throughout his life. Kamila, the strong-willed mother decided that the family should immigrate to the United States of America, seeking a better life, similar to Gibran's uncle who immigrated earlier. At 12, Gibran was then displaced by poverty from the beautiful but destitute village of Bsharri in Lebanon to the slums of Boston in America with his family.

On June 25, 1895 the Gibrans left Lebanon for New York. They settled in Boston, which was the second largest Syrian/Lebanese community in the U.S.A. after New York. Gibran's mother, Kamila, was the breadwinner. In 1896, he returned alone to Lebanon, where he matriculated at the Madrasat Al-Hikmat (School of Wisdom), and studied a great variety of subjects, which were outside the prescribed curriculum, including medicine, international law, the history of religion, and music. In 1901, Gibran concluded his studies with high honours. Between 1901 and 1903 he studied painting in Paris and was forced to return urgently to America, due to the death of his half brother and his youngest sister and by the fatal illness of his mother. Gibran was left with one sister, Marianna, in Boston. From 1903 till 1908, Gibran painted and wrote in Arabic until he went to Paris to study at the academy Julien, and at the Beaux Arts.

He met and made portraits of numerous distinguished persons there, among them, Rodin, Henri de Rochfort, Debussy, Maurice Maeterlinck, the younger Garibaldi, and Edmond Rostand. He exhibited twice in the Paris Salon. In 1910, Gibran returned to Boston and later that year took residence in New York City and where he stayed until his premature death.

In 1912, he settled in New York, devoting himself to writing and painting. He was encouraged and supported by a headmistress of a girls' boarding school called Mary Haskell whose letters of introduction to prominent and artistic influential people promised to raise his contacts. He held many exhibitions in New York at the Montross and Knoedler Galleries. In America, where he made his home during the last twenty years of his life, he began to write mostly in English. From 1918 he published his first English book called "The Madman".

In Gibran's masterpiece "The Prophet" which was originally published in 1923, one feels the tremendous mood, the electrifying boldness and the terrible magnetism of the immortal Gibran. His other literary works of prose and poetry, illustrated with his well over 500 mystical drawings and works of art, are known and loved by innumerable people who find in them an expression of the deepest impulses of man's heart and mind. His poetry has been translated into more than twenty languages. His painting and drawing have been exhibited in the great capitals of the world and compared by August Rodin to the work of William Blake. In 1920 he founded a society for Arab writers Mahgar (al-mahgar) with leading members.

Gibran died in New York on April 10, 1931 at the Vincent's Hospital. His body lay in a funeral parlour for two days where thousands of people came to say their farewell. The body was then taken to Boston, where it lay in state, with bodyguards from his native Bsherri, Gibran's birthplace. A funeral service was conducted in the little Church of Our Lady of the Cedars, and then the body was taken to Lebanon and kept in the crypt chapel of Mar Sarkis Monastery (Gibran, J & Gibran, K., 1998).

## **PROFILES OF THE CREATIVE LEBANESE PARTICIPANTS**

### **PARTICIPANT 1: JOHN LAHAM (ARTIST/PHOTOGRAPHER)**

John immigrated to Australia with his family in 1968 as a 15-year-old teenager. He was astonished by the country's huge dimensions, contrasted with those of the tiny Lebanon he had left behind. He remembered the culture shock he felt on arrival with the difference in mentality, fashion, law, order and lifestyle. The streets were empty and as a consequence he felt lonely and bored. He missed Lebanon's beautiful ecology, the well-known hospitality, and real friends. The people over there had time to sit on the balcony and socialise, even share a coffee with their neighbours. What John really missed the most was the sense of belonging to the community and feeling important.

In July 1974, at the age of 20 John revisited Lebanon and to his astonishment he found a different Lebanon to the one he once knew. It was even smaller in size than before, similar to a box and he felt constantly watched, in contrast to living in Australia where privacy mattered and no interference of your neighbours or friends was allowed without your acceptance or approval.

According to Robyn Hills and Saima Morel (Jan/Feb 2000) in *Commercial Photography* magazine "the Millennium Master", John Laham's reputation in the words of his clients as "...a true 21<sup>st</sup> Century Master" and, "...a photographer dedicated to his craft" are recurring themes from a comprehensive client testimonial book that takes pride of place in his elegant and refined studio. John's eagle eye and, above all, his innate ability to capture a moment in time, account for the authentic expression of his subject. Indeed, his is an established reputation for painstaking attention to detail reminiscent of a true classic renaissance master long after the lights have gone down on his final sitting. John stakes his reputation on the inexhaustible testimonials of his delighted clientele, of which the majority include repeat and long term clients. "...He (John) creates great memories"; and "with his touch of class...he has produced a family heirloom" (Hills & Morel, 2000).

With an enviable client list as far reaching as the US, Canada, Malaysia, the UK, Indonesia and Australia wide, John is regarded as... a genius, visual artist, master and an innovative and creative photographer... within and without the photographic profession (Hills & Morel, 2000). His extensive portfolio illustrates an individual portraiture style where the eyes are the focal point. He captures richness and originality and a luxurious feel in every photograph. With the use of light, mirrors and colour, John Laham has created a trademark look that justly gave rise to naming his studio 'Expressions'.

He has won more than 70 awards, his considerable, distinctive and individual collection includes a 'National Australian Portrait Photographer of the Year in 1996 and a Don Taylor Award', achieved in the same year no less. Yet, it is his clients' comments he values more than any award. John invites the clients to judge for themselves.

## **PARTICIPANT 2: ALEX HADCHITI (MUSICIAN/WRITER)**

Alex was born in 1950. At the age of twenty, he arrived in Australia in 1970 with his family from Lebanon. One year later in 1971, he formed a band with his brother and continued playing until late 1982. Alex learnt to play the guitar at the age of fifteen for a very short period of time; this introduction to music was manifested through lots of practice to become his hobby and career to this day. Alex is very talented and plays many instruments including the keyboard and the oriental guitar called el-Oud. His love for music led him to become successful and popular through his constant demand in playing and singing in many different languages and different places, as a one-man band. Alex is creative in many artistic fields including writing, painting, decorating, gardening and the art of discipline that promotes order, organization, training and education in order to preserve the energy of life. He has written a book in Arabic called "Illumination". He is the founder of I.M.U. Society that translates to 'Invitation to Multicultural Understanding'.



### **PARTICIPANT 3: DAIZY GEDEON MIR (JOURNALIST/FILM MAKER)**

Daizy Gedeon Mir is an award-winning filmmaker and accomplished journalist with over 12 years Australian and international experience. She was five years old when her family moved to Australia in 1970. In the late 1960's, her father saw early signs of economic and political instability in Lebanon and continuing military disturbances and decided to immigrate to Australia to bring his family up somewhere they would have a better and more stable life.

Daizy was 23 years old and working as a sport reporter, when she finally gave in to her mother's nagging and decided reluctantly to 'go home to Lebanon to meet the cousins'. The initial, two-week sortie to Beirut in 1987 turned into six weeks as her assumptions and perspective on life changed. When she realised the imbalance in the way Lebanon had been portrayed, she decided to help and redress the matter by making a documentary narrated by actor Omar Sharif.

"Lebanon...Imprisoned Splendour" was Daizy's first foray into film making and has proven highly successful, with the film already winning four international awards and qualifying for 1998 Academy Awards in the Best Feature Documentary category. Based on this success and the desire to promote positive awareness of people from different cultures, she used everything in her power to turn a simple story into a film documentary. It is also a close representation of the feelings expatriates have when leaving their country of origin. Daizy smoothly and eloquently describes this as well.

Over the last five years, Daizy has worked for Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation Limited in Sydney on the national daily newspaper, "The Australian" as a senior editor of the paper where her roles included: Editor- Focus Extra; Deputy Opinion Editor, and Deputy Foreign Editor. Previous to these roles, she was based in London for two years, working with ITN Channel 4 News producer during the Gulf War and also with the Middle East Broadcasting Service developing news and style programs for the new satellite television station.

Daizy is now the proud mother of two children with a third on the way and has turned her focus completely to filmmaking and family making.

#### **PARTICIPANT 4: HOUDA HAFOURI (FLORIST/HOMEMAKER)**

Ms Houda Hafouri left Lebanon at the age of 18 in the early 1970's to live with her husband, an established businessman in Caracas, Venezuela. After ten years and because of tragic incidents, they decided to immigrate to Australia for a fresh beginning. Being very creative from an early age, she managed to exercise her artistic talents and further her learning in all forms of craft while bringing up her four children. She is a perfectionist in all domains of the arts and crafts including painting, drawing, sewing and cooking. She is an accomplished florist and has a natural taste for art and beauty. She uses her wisdom and common sense in all her endeavours. Houda is positive in her attitude and considered a successful businesswoman.

#### **PARTICIPANT 5: LOUBNA HAIKAL-MACDONALD (PHYSICIAN/WRITER)**

Dr Loubna Haikal was born in Beirut and came to Australia at the age of 14 with her family in 1969, not speaking any English. After completing her schooling here, she went on to study Medicine at Melbourne University. Upon graduating in 1979, she set up practice with her sister who was also a medical doctor and worked for ten years until 1989 as a general doctor before deciding to follow her passion and become a writer. In 1990, with her husband who is a distinguished transplant cardiologist, she moved to Sydney. She stopped working as a General Practitioner six years ago to concentrate on her writing and to raise her three children. She has written a collection of short stories, some of which have been published.

In 2002 she published her first novel "Seducing Mr Maclean" which became an instant success; she writes about the satirical side of Lebanese migrants in Australia with a voice that is at once authentic, sharp-eyed and very funny. Her interest in literature was evident since her childhood in Lebanon from the age of eleven; she had some of her

early poetry published in Al-Ahdath and Revue du Liban newspapers. In 1999, she was one of four new writers awarded the “Varuna Fellowship”. This award is given to encourage new writers in their craft. Loubna is a very genuine and compassionate personality who has a full zest for life and who has helped many “others” in the name of art, creativity and humanity.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Gibran Kahlil Gibran would be considered simple, yet may sound complex to the unfamiliar ear, or rather strange to some when for example he described the meaning of the word ‘work’ as being ‘love made visible’ in his book ‘the Prophet’ (1926, p. 35). Gibran himself once said: “there are whole days at a time when I feel that I have just arrived from another planet. I am a man without yesterdays on this present Earth. Human contours are all strange to me, and human sounds” (Young 1967, p. 12).

In the preface of one of Gibran’s books “Spiritual Sayings (ed. Ferris 1962, p .7) it has been mentioned that:

*‘To those who may be reading Gibran for the first time it may be pointed out that he combines almost frighteningly vivid perceptions of spiritual reality with an exquisite lacy poetry’, and that he wrote voluminously, enriching more than thirty nations with his unique literary and artistic production. Its originality and power have won admiration and even reverence from millions of readers in dozens of languages as he has won almost equal acclaim as an artist with his drawings and paintings being exhibited periodically in world metropolises’.*”

My personal choice of Gibran for being “the golden standard” and “the centre of my research” as an author, philosopher and artist has been pre-determined and has culminated in finding all that I was searching for in a successful and artistic Lebanese immigrant who had suffered similar personal experiences in his life through change, loss and pain. The relating key terms that emerged from my study and developed as main themes in this chapter were deducted from what I consider being both appropriate and necessary attributes. Creative individuals from my readings and those interviewed all possessed these characteristics. It would have been a hindrance to the immigrants’ ultimate success without these qualities. They consist of having the following attributes: Creativity, Genius, Visualization, Vision, Aesthetic, Personal Characteristics, Influences, and Morals.

## Creativity

Barbara Young, Gibran's assistant and confidante for seven years, assessed and evaluated his art in her book *'This man from Lebanon'* (1967) and wrote about her views on his creativity when she stated, "All told, his drawings make a profound impression, and considering his age, the qualities shown in them are extraordinary for originality and depth of symbolic significance..." (p. 67). This is how Gibran was discovered through his drawings by a social worker when he first arrived in Boston at the age of twelve, who then brought him to the attention of the right people in the field.

Young was able to capture the effect of Gibran's "original creativity" that he fascinated his subjects with the unusual touches that were considered innovative and ahead of his time "for it is a world of original creation that unfolds itself; a world visibly composed of mountains, scanty vegetation and sky; with feeling of solitariness, sometimes of desolation, and always, even in contracted space, with suggestion of a margin of immensity" (p. 70).

She went on to affirm that his creativity was also regarded as therapeutic as she recalls an incident that occurred and left a memorable impact. When an old lady went to buy his successful book *'he Prophet'* from the bookstore, she made a remark to the lady at the counter by telling her: "I want this book. Only ...it isn't a book. It's bread and wine for tired people like me" (p. 16). She bought it because it was recommended.

Another incident happened, Young added, when a gentleman in New York described to her his opinion about the worth of Gibran's book *'The Prophet'* (p. 65) by saying:

*"All of these things are true; believe me, not because the book is poetry, not because of its charm and beauty, its rhythm and its music, not at all. It is because therein is written in a simple form that an intelligent child can grasp and hold in its mind and heart those things that are the most profound truth of our human existence, and the most vital. It is a living book, and it touches and stirs the spirit with a finger of fire".*

Gibran Kahlil Gibran had the capacity to develop and deliver his thoughts and art in a famously communicable way, but according to Young, p. 6 ‘The Gibran who is least known to the world, both East and West, is the painter, the Gibran who has left an incredible and priceless legacy undreamed of by more than perhaps a few hundred souls on the planet, and the drawings in the ten English books, significant and dominant as they are, are, but an indication of the supreme bequest’. Gibran has succeeded like no other artist in creating a drawing that breathes with life, after having seen the drawings to his studio one visitor said “not the memory of pictures but of living souls” (p. 24).

In regards to Gibran’s drawing skills, Young revealed (p. 73) that he captured the secret of art interpretation by: ‘Opening now to the world of art the truth of the power and authority and sensitive beauty of this man’s graphic skill, and also opening to simple folk to whom art is simply a world for something they do not comprehend a vista of colour and form and magic that gives them pleasure without having to understand’.

Young recalls how often ‘Many persons asked which did Gibran consider his greater art, which did he love best, his poetry or his painting?’ when people asked him, he only smiled. And once he answered the father of twin boys: “Which of your children can you say is nearer to your heart?”... ‘The two gifts were with him from the beginning’ (p. 7). Gibran was one of those unique individuals who excelled in many areas of art.

According to Alice Raphael in Gibran’s book ‘Twenty Drawings’ 1919, p. 2, Rodin, the famous French artist, once said: “I know of no one else in whom drawing and poetry are so linked together as to make him a new Blake” and in Bushrui and Jenkins’ book ‘Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet’ 1998, p. 175, Rodin again called Gibran “the William Blake of the Twentieth Century”, while also stated in Young 1967, p. 22. In addition, the editor and translator Anthony Ferris mentioned that the Orientals have called Gibran fondly ‘the Beloved Master’ in the book ‘Spiritual Sayings’ (Gibran 1962, p. 8).

Gibran the simple and the mystical once said, as Young noted in her book (p. 75), that “A work of art is a mist carved into an image and Art is a step from nature toward the infinite” while to him Poetry is, “the inevitable words in the inevitable place” (p. 124). Gibran’s creativity is certainly flowing like a river from the fountain of rare beauty.

## Genius

It is said that the reasons and laws that govern ordinary men do not govern geniuses, for Gibran's contemporaries felt vaguely that there was divinity in his creative power and artistic genius, a typical embodiment of the humanist ideal that was the most exquisite.

Barbara Young (1967) acknowledged that Gibran's Mother said of him in his youth "My son is outside of psychology" (p. vii) and added (p. 5) to confirm this point that:

*"Some there are who know the Gibran of the flashing mind, limitless in range and depth, the thinker who had come through the years to a profound and ordered scholarship; the man who once, for a jest, for a prank, dictated to three secretaries at one time, in three languages and on three different subjects to the amazement of all concerned" referring that "His mental world, its range and depth, was inexplicable by any standard of scholarship that we know, he could converse not only intelligently but brilliantly on any topic with any man, and exhibit a particular knowledge that even specialists in their own realms could not surpass" (p. 127).*

In 'Creativity: Genius and Other Myths', it is claimed that:

*"Artistic genius includes the ability to move others emotionally through one's work. It seems reasonable to assume that those who can do this are more sensitive and open to feelings. Artistic genius involves being attuned to the feelings of those who will be exposed to the work, which may also mean that one is more open to one's own emotional experience". (Weisberg 1986, p. 74)*

Gibran would sometimes say to Barbara Young, after long moments of preoccupation with some thought apparently far removed from the present time and place, "Forgive me, so much of the time I am not here" (p. viii). This conscious awareness reflected that he was well focused in deep matters that might have looked odd or extraordinary to us. Young added, "his quick comprehension was never failing, neither was his almost instant finding of some way to solve the problem, or at the least to renew the courage and endurance, of the troubled one" (p. 28) and he, "Gibran, like all men of truly great genius, had no thought of his audience while he was creating" (p. 25).

Gibran's genius, according to Young (1967), came from his absolute focus and passion to his creation when he once wrote: "Would that someone could make up my mind for me in all things of everyday life. I am so busy about One Thing that I have no time to choose between this and that" (p. 59), "and" again and again in moments of extreme creation he cried out "I burn" not knowing that he had cried out at all (p. 147).

According to Jacobsen (1999):

*"Most Everyday Geniuses (creative people) are practiced in recycling their painful experience. Their innate optimism and tenacity help them find creative ways to make use of all of their experiences, even agonizing setbacks. To give meaning to what happens in their lives, they look for ways to turn bad into some form of good"* (p. 212).

As an artist, I can share this theory with confidence, not as a genius of course, but in the aim of being distracted from cognitive pain that could hurt us where no imminent escape is in sight.

## **Visualization**

Visualization exists in highly creative people as confirmed by Hoffart and Pross Keene 1998, (p. 45) that:

*'It can be defined as the creation of mental images, or the devising of a story, as is one way to access imagination, involving one, several, or all the senses as bridges between mind, body, and spirit. Its activities induce "Natural High" and it uses the mind to get in touch with the inner self. As a consequence, visualization gives a sense of security and safety'.*

Gibran's powerful visualization processed through his words in the form of poetry, made people see things differently and become very emotional. The best evidence to prove this power was when he inspired many generations of readers by teaching them that "life is weaker than death and death is weaker than love" (Sherfan 1972, p. 46) and again in his book 'Sand & Foam', that while we are "forever walking upon these shores,



betwixt the sand and the foam. The high tide will erase our footprints and the wind will blow away the foam. But the sea and the shore will remain forever” (Gibran 1954, p. 1).

Barbara Young in her only book about Gibran confessed that he would recall drawing and painting passionately and then destroying the pictures as soon as they were completed because, “they were never like what he saw when his eyes were dark” (p. 8). When he was questioned about a book containing some drawings of heads of some old but famous people, Gibran replied: “There were no pictures of these great men, so my imagination helped me to draw their faces” (p. 32). While “it is of the nature of an imaginative reconstruction, in which the mind of a great poet has used, without limiting to, the materials to be found in the Gospels”...(p. 109).

When we think of giant artists like Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo or even Picasso, we cannot help but sigh to their great powers in visualization in their achievements. Consequently, Young suggested that “It is remarkable, as showing how an artist, influenced by the modern tendency to revert to the primitive and elemental, can direct it, if he has high capacity of imagination, into channels of deep significance” (p. 72).

According to Weisberg (1993), Watson and Crick relied heavily on inspiration, iteration, and visualization in formulating the double-helix model of DNA. Even though they were biochemists, they had no precedent from which they could logically derive their structure and therefore relied heavily on left-handed (non-logical) thinking (Adam 1979, pp 60-61).

## **Vision**

The meaning of the word ‘Vision’ in this context represents imaginative insights into things or rather foresights in forms of dreams. Young (1967) assured her readers that “the West has known Gibran as a man with a vast spiritual vision and dream, a gentle person, loving and beloved, with a priceless sense of humour and a divine gift for friendship” (p. 4). She also emphasised “the greatness of his vision and of his desire outran his human achievement” (p. 13) while Gibran added: “Here I am, a youth, a young tree whose roots were plucked from the hills of Lebanon, yet I am deeply rooted here, and I would be fruitful” (p. 136).

Dr Bushrui, 1999, in his article “Kahlil Gibran of America” (p. 1), noted that one of the US presidents Woodrow Wilson told Gibran: “You are the first Eastern storm to sweep this country, and what a number of flowers it has brought!” And when another US president John F. Kennedy memorably exhorted Americans: “Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country,” Dr Bushrui asked: “was he (The President) consciously quoting words written by Gibran and addressed to the people of Syria and Lebanon half a century earlier?” Gibran was a man of vision.

Young (1967) mentioned many times in her book that Gibran believed: “we have eternity” and indeed he reached it because it was his creed and it directed his life (p. xiii, 148 & 173). His soul was the controller of his being as he once said: “The soul is mightier than space, stronger than time, deeper than the sea, and higher than the stars”, and again “so his greatest and most enduring masterpiece was traced neither with pen on paper nor brush on canvas, but with his deathless spirit upon the spirit of the race” (p. xiii). Young also affirmed his dream in that “he is working to bring about a world in which there is one great fellowship of understanding and sympathy” (p. 77). She further added: “to have seen him thus transfigured before human eyes was to accept the certainty of his calling, the chosen and the beloved of the high gods” (p. 98).

Young reminds the readers of: “The contribution that Gibran has made to the art and literature of the world that takes its place not only as such, but also as a powerful influence for the healing of the nations” (p. 22). So indeed Gibran had given himself to the world, and this deep and deathless love shall be forever “his honour and his reward.” She also noted that from the very summit of his years he stepped forth saying, with majesty and wisdom undiminished, “Now, I will rise and strip me of time and space” (p. 149) and “If I die, I shall not go far from this good green Earth, not for a long, long time” (p. 41).

## **Aesthetic**

Artists in general explore the ugly by discovering the beauty in things. They have a different way of seeing objects or forms. The question is to what extent can an artist bring his realization of work to match his ideal in creation. “Gibran’s subjects were

never the saints and angels and demons of myth and legend, but were beings conceived in the dream of perfection, without fault or blemish” (Young 1967, p. 23). Here again, she notices that the hard work and the practice that the artists go through in achieving their objective can to a certain level succeed.

Barbara Young recalls in her unique book ‘This Man From Lebanon’ (1967) that after working seven years with Gibran as an assistant secretary noting his ideas and documenting his work remembered him saying to her of those days: “We were poets working together in Beauty’s name” (p. viii). “Create Beauty,” he said, “and let every other thing go to hell”; and “There is neither religion nor science beyond beauty” (pp 25-26). Gibran was asked for fundamental rules and laws for a consistent and ordered life. “I lay down no rules of conduct” was the reply. “Do whatsoever you will so long as you do it beautifully” (p. 38), “It is to create the useful and the beautiful with your own hands, and to admire what others have created in love and with faith” (p. 137). It is in Gibran’s last picture, called “Birth of Tragedy” that he reached his most profound note. ‘It appeals primarily to the aesthetic imagination through beauties of composition, colour and tactile qualities, and by the pathways of instinct and intuition invades one’s spiritual consciousness’ (p. 72). In addition, I, the researcher, believe that travelling experiences and exposure to different countries and their artistic worlds are helpful in widening an artist’s horizon and enhancing his or her creations.

### **Personal Characteristics**

“If there be one word by which to characterise this man complete, entire, both himself and his work, the rock of his foundation, the cornerstone of his building, that word will be simplicity (Young 1967, p. 28) - that divine quality for lack of which the world of human beings is lost and wandering in time and space” (Young 1967, p. 30). That was Gibran’s appeal, whether in his art or poetry. It was probably the perfect, well-balanced combination.

Gibran gave of himself to the point of being careless. He kept and maintained his friendships with all his friends through all his life. This value of being so generous was summarized by saying that: “Generosity is not in giving me that which I need more than you do, but it is in giving me that which you need more than I do” (Young 1967, p. 89).

He was a content man. Simple things in life made him happy. He practised this same simplicity in looking at things in his everyday living and experiences. Above all expressing himself: “His heart was like a huge bird. Almost one could hear the beating of its wings. His lips carried laughter, but his eyes were sad with the sadness of all the world” (Young 1967, p. 127).

Gibran was a workaholic most probably he buried himself in work to feel protected from the outside world in order to express fully himself. He referred to his studio as “his little cage” (Young 1967, p. 68) and realised his obsession with achievements as he once said: “I have the disease of work” (Young 1967, p. 128). Again it was mentioned that “it is a devotion to a changeless purpose: work, work, and more work” (Young 1967, p. 56).

Gibran knew full well the worth of his work. Many of the drawings have been left unsigned. When asked to do so, he answered that “it will still be known for a Gibran when I have lain long in the good dark earth beneath the cedars” (Young 1967, p. 24). That reminds us of the confidence of some people who made it in history by building their skills to perfection and getting their own unique style as a result. The story of Picasso’s mother who held great ambitions for him when he was a child is an example. She instructed him: “if you become a soldier, you’ll be a general. If you become a monk, you’ll end up as Pope”. “Instead” Picasso quipped, “I became a painter and became Picasso” (Jacobsen 1999, p. 138).

Gibran believed in freedom of the soul from a very young age, and no one understood this basic need except his beloved mother who knew almost in his infancy that “the passion for freedom was in his blood, and he was restrained but little” (Young, p. 9).

He loathed stupidity when he mentioned that he would not govern folly and gave his opinion about the topic in many of his work by saying: “Let ignorance reproduce itself until it is weary of its own offspring”...(Young 1967, p. 101), he was certainly a simple and intelligent man and would not and could not tolerate any nonsense under the sun.

Gibran was courageous and spoke the truth as he has been called an “audacious and daring soul”. He knew himself well in terms of doing what was right by him and what

brought the best in him as he once wrote: “I knew that I could only be what I had it in me to be if I went back to my country. It was in me to be a poet and a painter!” (Young 1967, p. 54) and “Out of trouble and perplexity and happy anguish comes poetry that eases the heart” (Young 1967, p. 14). In “Creative People At Work” by Wallace and Gruber 1989, (p. 14), William Wordsworth 1909, interpreted, similarly, poetical works by saying:

*“What is a poet? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them” (p. 937).*

## **Influences**

Every person, let alone an artist, is usually influenced in life by people or/and experiences that mould them and make them the persons they are in many different ways. We wonder at the final product, but checking the ingredients is of prime importance in determining its quality. Gibran had many factors that influenced him:

- His Mother Kamila Gibran who from a very young age formed a strong bond with her adoring son by spending hours playing with him. She was renowned in the village for her beautiful voice and her playing of the Oud (oriental guitar as she sang to him for long hours, and would tell him stories about old tales and Arabic wonderland by filling his imagination with the folk-lore and legends of the Arabs... (Salem 1963, p. 16).
- Father Yussef, the village priest who had an impact on little Gibran by visiting and teaching him Religion, elementary studies in languages (Aramaic, French, Arabic), Arts and Mathematics.

- Father Haddad of Madrasat Al-Hikmat, the present College de la Sagesse in Beirut. “He was the only man who ever taught me anything” (Young 1967, p. 117).
- Leonardo Da Vinci. At six, Gibran’s mother Kamila gave him a book about the artist who brought tears to his eyes and he requested spending some time being alone with it.
- Socrates, Jesus, Jeanne of Arc and Lincoln. These historical individuals left their mark on Gibran.
- Friends that he drew: Henri Rochfort, Debussy, Maeterlinck, Edmond Rostand, the young Garibaldi, Rodin and Albert Ryder.
- Nature: He felt united with it. Gibran loved nature and asked why man destroys what nature builds. He demonises cities and romanticises the country. He finds city as home of moral debasement and hypocrisy. “The majestic beauty of these mountain contours is as unforgettable as it is indescribable” (Young 1967, p. 173). In Lebanon, “the mountains seem to be the embodiment of peace eternal, lying under the great pendent stars that crowded the blue night sky” (Young 1967, p. 183).
- Education: “His vast Arabic vocabulary made him feel cramped in his adoptive tongue. However, that very fact resulted in the pure and almost perfect clarity and simplicity of his English style” (Young 1967, p. 36). “Gibran’s English is marked by its beauty and its clarity. It attains a degree of perfection that might well serve as an inspiration for other writers to whom English is their native tongue” (Young 1967, p. 37).
- The main benefactors who supported Gibran and his art were: Mary Haskell, Fred Holland Day and Barbara Young.

## **Morals**

The relevance of personal moral values and principles of life are discussed in this section. Gibran Kahlil Gibran was a humanitarian above all and poignantly spiritual. Everything revolved around his soul and spirit as it is read in his poetry and seen in his art. What influenced the being of Gibran most definitely were three major points:

his family's religious background; the education that helped sharpen his knowledge; and the new country that received him and boosted his potential.

The security that he lacked in his country of birth did not give him the freedom to grow. The tutoring he received as a young boy at the hands of Father Youssef, the visiting priest to Gibran's village, Bsherry, moulded Gibran. Furthermore, the three years he devoted to broaden his education in the fields of classical Arabic literature, medicine, international law, the history of religion, and music enabled him to graduate with high honours at the School of Wisdom (Salem 1963, p. 20).

"Like all great mystics Gibran was intensely religious; he rebelled against all bounds and limitations which would estrange the soul from the legitimate and free share of participation of the divine" (Young 1967, p. 40). Gibran's attitude to religion was that "Faith is an oasis in the heart which will never be reached by the caravan of thinking" (i.e. by scientific thought alone) (Young 1967, p. 89).

He was asked which words are the most important words to keep and forget all the other words in the vocabulary, he answered: "You, I, take, God, love, beauty, Earth". He believed in the philosophy of reincarnation and he would name it "the continuity of life" (Young 1967, p. 94). Gibran's spirituality in its simplicity of thought attained the highest levels.

In "The Prophet", Gibran's words underlie his wisdom and leads one to question its validity when he said: "Pity the nation that is full of beliefs and empty of religion" (Young 1967, p. 121) and "I know that I shall not leave this strangely beautiful Earth until that the 'I' in me will not perish, it will not be drowned in the great sea that is called God" (Young 1967, p. 147).

"Gibran's moral universe is marked by a radical distrust of society and its institutions", (Walbridge 1998, p. 10). He reminded us that dignity of man was to be found in nature not in social institutions. He implied that all social institutions, laws and actions are flawed in this way, to "crush the natural and spontaneous". Gibran thought that the church was an institution of oppression of the natural. His method of instruction when asked about teaching was based on faith, love, freedom and individuality. Jane Perry in

her poem called '*Success*' confirmed that: "The tools for creating a masterpiece of life are here. You are the artist. Success will depend on your faith" (Adams 1969, p. 9). Gibran did not force reasoned ethics, rational theology or prescriptions for reordering society or as a guide to life. He did not tell us what to do as in authority but rather questioned the assumptions of our habitual actions of our life, for his aim was not set at reordering the society but at making sense.

This would be an idealistic world that is difficult to reach but not impossible as it demonstrates to us Gibran's peaceful world in the highest form of spirituality and morality. This confirms his huge popularity as it touches a person's voiceless and sleepy dreams.

I have to admit that I became emotional while reading his books, his words, and on so many occasion I have shed tears for I felt the same pain and sorrow that he has endured for leaving his homeland, and having such similar and ideal vision for the world and yet deep down in my heart, my admiration was huge for this man, as I was truly happy and proud for his success and achievements.



## **EMERGENCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

There are many factors in life that contribute to success as determination, risk taking, perseverance and hard work and are certainly key factors in the formula of success, but without creativity and vision, the road is both frustrating and long. Frustrating because it lacks the tool for life and its survival and long because it lacks a plan or purpose, as destination. For this research study the following research question was established:

## **WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS AND DRIVING FORCES BEHIND THE CREATIVITY AND VISION OF THE SUCCESSFUL LEBANESE IMMIGRANTS?**

Further contributing questions about Creativity, Vision, Pain, Ambition, Expatriation or/and Hope emerged in the process of the interviews with the participants to include:

- What does creativity mean to you? How would you define creativity?
- What factors do you think either encourage or limit creativity?
- What impact do you think your life and culture has made on your creativity?
- What do you see as the link between your vision being visionary and creativity?  
What impact have these two ideas had on your life?
- Life experiences teach us a lot and affect us in many different ways. What factors do you think have an influence on your creativity?
- What do you think is the impact of education on your creativity?
- In your field, who has inspired or touched you? Who do you look up to?
- What role do you think creativity plays in the immigrants experience and do you feel this could apply to all people?
- Would your creativity have developed had you not left your Homeland or country of birth?
- Would you consider your successful achievements to be the result of pain, ambition, expatriation and of hope?

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The investigation of this study, as an analysis, has resulted by adopting a qualitative study, which represents both interactive and comparative approaches within contemporary cultural conditions. The selection of this methodology is appropriate using a neo-narrative approach because it incorporates autobiographical data and interview texts in the form of stories/answers in order to expose lived experiences to help the development of investigation under construct and reach conceptual findings, according to Stewart 1994, p. 37 (Learning Module 3, article 5).

“ The Neo-narrative was developed in response to the need to use a qualitative method appropriate for viewing the processes of framing within a contemporary culture and it oriented towards people’s ideas about the world and /or their experiences”, Stewart 1994, p. 38 (Article 5). What Neo-narrative method presents is a pluralistic amalgam of views according to the participants’ cultural personal accounts, which are recorded and documented, Stewart 1994, p. 39 (Article 5). A study of narrative deals with real stories that are re-constructed from real voice to those lived experiences. As a consequence, the neo-narrative (new stories) method helps at identifying different and immersing themes to be explored, interpreted reconstructed into significant events. My research is to prove that creativity is used not just to satisfy the “senses”, but also a survival tool for existence. “Narrative may be interpreted as an essential aspect of social life which enables the passing on of knowledge” (Alexander et al 1992:77). In addition, according to Polkinghorne 1988, “Narrative research is the basis for an understanding of life development and personal identity” (p. 184).

Polkinghorne continued to explain that “The goal of research into the production of meaning is to produce clear and accurate descriptions of the structures and forms of the various meaning systems...This is accomplished by gathering examples of these systems' expressions through self-reflection, interviews, and collections of artifacts; and by drawing conclusions from these data by using the systematic principles of linguistic analysis and hermeneutic techniques” (p. 10). The hermeneutic (interpretive) process of reconstructing experiences in a social milieu through biographical data and interview texts will act as indicator to a common link (Jensen 1991:108, p. 38 in Stewart article

5). The narrative approach I used, was necessary for me to try, as the only method I felt comfortable in using for it allowed me to discover the different schools of thoughts and opinions that I thought I shared with the participants.

As a beginning, the usage of biographies in my study research, created information in the viewing of events to entice and extract reflection in an historical context. Berk (1980:90) refers to biography as “the formative history of an individual’s life experience and its relevance in the explanation”, whereas Denzin (1989:22) focused on the interpretive studies of culture and describes the language of the participants as “only devices, tools, or bricolages for creating texts”.

Elbaz (1987:1) claimed them to be “the narrative arrangements of reality”, helped me to set some foundation for my study backed or rather completed by the participants’ interviews. Interviewing is a method of direct collection of thoughts that are meaningful as a consequence of experienced situations.

The data collected through the interview-based methodology is provided information about relevant, true themes acting as patterns of inquiry to the qualitative research in a relaxed, non threatening, judgemental or prescriptive way. The wide ranges of approaches of the participants was documented, processed and analysed to be able to reach the construct of the knowledge anticipated. It was helpful to remember maintaining each participant’s style or personal genre while undergoing the research process.

Through systematic processes and engagement of reflection as a mediating influence, interpretation, description and comparison, unpredictable results may be raised to help support the question involved or solve the main problem. The data collected through the participants’ interview was further re-analysed and grouped into salient key themes identified in the literature or as clusters of main thoughts.

This Neo-narrative model was used to display the knowledge sources of the participants and believed to be adequate. Stewart 1994, (Article 5) stated: ‘It offers a culturally relevant, sound, rigorous, multifaceted approach to gathering such evidence’ (p. 46).

To achieve the purpose of this study it was necessary to approach the study from a constructivism perspective. Constructive research methodology requires a build up of knowledge or a construct of accumulated information for new emergences and discoveries to unfold as new findings.

My Journey was constructive as I envisaged and visualized the steps undertaken to prepare the interviews. There were no problems encountered in organizing the meetings, as the communication between the researcher and participant was clear and facilitated. The only problem I faced at the beginning of the first interview was to limit the length of the conversation as it went overtime. The reason was that I was trying to get a holistic comprehension of the content and not channelling the focus on answering directly to the appointed questions.

The qualitative research requires validity of the information provided by questioning the appropriateness of the criteria which best reflect the purpose and context of the study and by determining whether what is told, as in story, rings true. It is usually affirmed through the perception or the senses, through reason or wisdom and through intuition or logic. This approach is interpretive and holistic.

The selection of participants has been in accordance with the complete conviction of the researcher, of the participants' artistic talents and allege-ability, and of the community's response to their achievements and contribution to the society at large. The range of their artistic endeavours was pre-determined to give insights and neutrality to their art.

Limitations were avoided in that the researcher knew the participants- artists and was in accordance with their personalities eliminating any feelings of discomfort for her and the others. The meetings were happy reunions and pre-arranged. The questions were organised and the approached was non-threatening. The participants were helpful and relaxed including the interviewer. Had the meetings been with total strangers, the researcher would have assumed possible negative surprises arising from the unpredictable situations of not knowing their personalities or their reactions.

This study has focused on factors that have, when mixed with creativity and vision, emerged with a successful result. This consequence of happy ending is not only lived

and achieved through Gibran's himself or the other participants, but rather with myself who shares all their similarities of events and historical background. The research process as a journey has been enriching and revealing with its new emergences that helped me understand myself immensely.

Ethical protocol was maintained through a letter of consent that was signed by each participant for the researcher, agreeing to use the information of the interviews for the benefit of the study. They have the right to stop the interview at any time. It is my belief that the study of this research will not offend or undermine any person involved, but rather, it is an agreement of the people interviewed to share their stories and be identified. In addition, it is an acknowledgement to their efforts and to their honesty to bring to the surface their inner ideas and thoughts in order to help others learn, feel empowered and to give.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **THE INTERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

This section, regarding creativity, was quite interesting and most amusing, as the interaction between participants and the interviewer was warm and friendly and both shared mutual and innate understanding to the meaning of “Creativity” and yet the interpretation was “different” and very individual. I began with the first question:

#### **1) WHAT DOES CREATIVITY MEAN TO YOU? AND HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE CREATIVITY?**

According to John Laham, the Photographer/Artist, “Creativity meant self-expression that could be emotional, artistic and mental as in visual. It was expressed through painting, photography or drawing and through the use of colour and the sense of humour in order to get feelings”. John looked at creativity from his angle through the setting he used with his clients and the use of colour and humour to achieve success.

Whereas, to Alex Hadchiti the musician/writer, “Creativity meant the art of life. He went on to say that it is a natural energy that wants to reveal itself through the manifestation of itself. It also meant reviewing to unfold the rapt inner gift of artistic living by bringing it from the subconscious to the consciousness in the forms of the creative arts. Those creative forms can be actualised at the specialty with different talents and gifts to different people according to their natural inner resources”. Alex, who is a philosopher in his own way of thinking, saw ‘Creativity as a form of communication’, he appeared quite spiritual in his answers, and somehow likes to live in total harmony with nature.

To Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker, “Creativity meant the ability to look beyond normal boundaries, conventions and standards and be able to allow your imagination to fly free to reach any heights”. “It is an emotional vision, she said, and an intellectual expression. Creativity allowed her to express herself completely. Through

other people's creativity, it allowed her as well to appreciate the world and life in its many facets. It is beyond comprehension how many levels of creativity can be reached, expressed and achieved. She continued to say that it was wonderful to have creativity in our world. Without creativity, she would be very inadequately served and terribly unfulfilled and unhappy as a human being". "How dull, simple and unimaginative the world would be without it". I, the researcher, had to admit that this answer surprised me, for I never imagined the world could have existed without creativity, let alone among humans on this planet. I took it for granted, as an artist, as it was, kind of, a part of me.

"Creativity", to Houda Hafouri, the Florist/Homemaker, "meant to come up with something out of the ordinary when you are inspired or when in the mood. When you are creative, you are always creative, she said, and nothing can stop you. It would help though to be prepared, to do the homework necessary, and to be knowledgeable of your skills". In his book 'A Whack on the side of the Head', Oech, 1998, p. 52 noted that, "Life is like cooking. It all depends on what you add and how you mix it. Sometimes you follow the recipe and at other times, you're creative". That could describe Houda the friend I knew, who, I believe, is a creator of beauty and harmony, a keen homemaker who takes pride in her creations, which always add true comfort and balance.

As for Loubna Haikal Macdonald the Physician-Writer "Creativity was the expression of the self when it is fully realized. It was the expression of a passion...that it was a link of the self to the universe, and what did link us in a meaningful way to the world around us". Loubna added, that "each person did express that creativity in a different way and that it was a way of growing with the world around you as creativity is a two way process: you give to the world and the world gives you back, a sort of equilibrium, which is really the way to eternal peace and growth".

"Creativity" as seen through the eyes of all the participants, appears to be influenced by their personal world as well as their individual experiences in life. Each, according to their level of education, was able to interpret, understand and give their own unique interpretation. It was a smorgasbord of visualizing their different views on creativity that make life in general ever more interesting.

## **2) WHAT FACTORS DO YOU THINK EITHER ENCOURAGE OR LIMIT CREATIVITY?**

John Laham, the Photographer/Artist, was certain that the encouragement of creativity stemmed from “Positiveness” as when one is surrounded by positive people, and with the “Wellbeing” especially when you are in tune with yourself. “Music” of any type, on the other hand, was an important factor in creating different moods or in forming images in the mind in order to create the artistic settings. “Visualization” was crucial in the creative process, as when the idea in mind matched the finishing product, and finally possessing a “high sensory perception”, meaning the degree of psychology needed to exist in his work in order to detect sometimes the hidden true personality of the client. John claimed that it was an art to discover what he called the “sixth sense” as it helped to capture the right moment during his photographic settings and recognise the point of maximum expression. John added that “he felt an affinity for children”, as God created their intuition for a reason and that is why they cannot lie to themselves or pretend... He continued in saying that he dwelt in spirituality, his religion, and the bible. As for the negative side of things and what discouraged creativity, he thought, they were many like: “stress, low self-esteem” and personal marital issues or domestic instability.

Alex Hadchiti, the Musician/Writer, responded in saying that “having peace within, abundance of love, while enjoying prosperity, and a well-organised life can inspire the inner forces in a person to show itself through communication of creativity” whereas, “Anger, hostility, fanaticism, racism and physical sickness are, without a doubt, the enemies to creativity as they can eliminate the true identity of “the creator of art”. Alex added that negative vibrations or energy could limit the sources of the artist’ creativity.

According to Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker, “Time” was an important factor, as creativity required it to release what was in the mind to be created. She added that: “if only parents gave enough time and facilities to nurture their children with creative arts, it would have stimulated, or for the lack of it, could have limited their creativity, as for example, in languages and computers, these could have stipulated different areas of the brain in young children and at a very early age”. She paused for a while thinking and then said: “Space”, and went on to explain that she meant your own corner where, solitude and quietness can liberate your free spirit and thoughts and



“Freedom” was another necessary factor for self-expression as “Darkness” too, even though, was confining, could stimulate the imagination in the brain and the senses, which was similar to light when you see its reflection on glowing things appearing like pictures or visions...Creativity was then indeed motivated. “Music”, Daizy confirmed, was a liberator, and without it you are limited, even your “smell sense” could stimulate your creativity...in other words your senses...as we see in blind and deaf people who are extraordinarily creative and so very unique people because they could visualize.

Daizy mentioned, and to my big amazement, that, “Education”, believe it or not, could be very limiting especially when the educational systems require you to think in a ‘certain manner’- narrow or rigid- to achieve the desired outcome. Only a creative or like- minded lecturer/teacher/professor could truly appreciate someone’s creativity or ability to express true individualism, own words or thoughts, as they could be different in reaching the same desired conclusion. “Structures” in society and cultures, could also be limiting to creativity because of boundaries and lack of freedom. At last but not least, the “Ego” that could limit and put you down especially when a teacher or mentor that you looked up to does criticise your original thoughts. Their jealousy could stump you. Daisy was talking with passion about such experience. Lastly, “Stress” could cause you to think differently and become a dreamer to escape the negative, sad reality you are in.

As to what encouraged creativity for Houda Hafouri, the Florist/Homemaker, “Two important factors were for the artist: to be in the right environment and to feel very relaxed and inspired”. As to the limitations of creativity are the duties of everyday busy life where the pressures and stresses could create an obstacle to the delivery and performance. If the person felt suppressed, they might rebel and become more creative to relieve themselves of this pressure or postpone it temporarily due to their difficulties in life. She assured me that she was still able to distress herself by finding the time to create, to feel relaxed because it distracted her in a way and made her feel very happy.

(Loubna Haikal Macdonald the Physician-Writer, told me that, “Headspace” was needed for the creativity to manifest, and that two major factors allowed creativity either to realise itself or to stop it and put an obstacle around it, which were: The environment which was the upbringing basically and the validation, or lack of it, that one was given in their upbringing for whatever passion they wanted to express in life.

“Self-doubt, Loubna explained, paused a great hindrance and had its two-edge sword”. “It allowed you, nevertheless, to question and to promote thinking and mainly the examining of the self with the world around you and also of the validity of what you are doing that was crippled by doubt and unable to progress”. “This, Loubna continued, could lead obviously to Low self-esteem or to the frustration with the self that could lead to self-destruction” meaning that “if you doubt and hate yourself too much because you can’t harness the energy that you have in a creative way, so you would instead use it to destroy the self. She affirmed that this is quite evident with some artists who lead themselves to destructive habits like drinking and taking drugs and suffered as a consequence or have even died because the energy flow has not been channelled or focused in the right direction, not in a creative way”.

Managing creativity seems to be the key for success. Acknowledging its secrets of what makes a person creative and implementing them could lead to the road of happiness and self-actualisation. Freedom of being and doing plays a big role in self-expression.

### **3) WHAT IMPACT DO YOU THINK YOUR LIFE AND CULTURE HAS MADE ON YOUR CREATIVITY?**

John Laham, the Photographer/Artist, insisted that, “the socio-economic hardship he faced while still at home combined with his father’s harshness towards him, made him rebel against what was expected of him to the point of becoming the opposite of what he thought unjustified”. That was followed by the huge change that was caused by the immigration experience. All had made an impact on his creativity: The self-independence from an early age, the self-spiritual enrichment which was a result from the one year he has spent at the monastery in Lebanon for soul searching which culminated in a fulfilment of his self-development. Those were the foundations for his creativity that he encountered under the influence of his Eastern culture, which constituted above all, of the family respect as in the bonding (as there is no such thing as leaving home when you are 18-yrs-old unless you are getting married), and the unquestioned respect for the elderly, for your religion, and being from the Christian faith, John lived by his example to others. Then, there was the equality of the sexes and his duties to others and himself through his hospitality to strangers, his generosity with others, and his brotherhood with his resilient fellow men. In addition, there were his

duties to his country Lebanon, with its rich history being a biblical country (as the foundation of humanity). John was inspired by the international admiration for his country's unique ecology, its wonderful aroma of oregano and above all the spectacular views from Mount Lebanon of the sun setting over the Mediterranean Sea.

Alex Hadchiti, the Musician/Writer felt compassion, when he talked about his culture that has been modified over the years by different invasions to his land by the Greeks, the Romans, and the Turks etc... culminating into the emergence of a new culture from the exposure of those different cultures and traditions.

"My true culture came from thousands of years of civilisation that goes back in history to the ways we lived on the Lebanese coastal and geographical cite. It has had an impact on me as in identity that helped me to continue to upgrade and update my creativity".

Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker, confirmed that her life was the result of her parents migrating from Lebanon to Australia, and to her culture that was totally instrumental as in who she was as a human being and to her creativity simply because she always had the love of writing. This has been encouraged through a teacher from school that she really started to pursue the art of writing and poetry in reading and writing, to the point where she excelled so much that an English teacher liked her writing. "The reason why I went to do 'Journalism' was because I was able to write and express myself". In her mid 20's, Daizy discovered her true culture through her re-visiting to Lebanon, as she felt an absence in her soul. As a consequence of finding herself through her culture, that was ignored or left dormant, a whole new field of emotions, thought and depth have opened up for her that she was not aware of, and that had to be expressed. "It caused me to question my identity and purpose as well as my priorities in life", she said. Her found culture enriched her and stimulated other areas of creativity in her. This is when she decided to write about Lebanon and get ready in anticipation for the making of the film... "I not only became its writer but also its producer and director", Daizy commented and "Creativity gives new multi dimensional views to things. I visualize them now in all different forms and shapes", She replied.

Houda Hafouri, the Florist/Homemaker, answered this question without any difficulty saying that the way she was brought up made an impact on her life; that her mother was creative but it was her school that was her biggest and longest influence to this day as

she was exposed, introduced and encouraged to try and experiment with things which belonged to the Art world like: Sewing, Painting, Drawing and Cooking. “I helped it to develop, grow and flourish because I had this in me or rather it appealed to me” and she added, “I remember the excitement and feeling pride when I won a prize at the National competition held in all the schools in Lebanon”. This event must have triggered a feeling of importance and value of her love for art, and had made a lasting influence. She insisted that what helped boost her creativity was the available time she had when she lived in Venezuela. She had full time servants and no immediate family to occupy her time. “To avoid loneliness, and feeling homesick, I submerged myself in Arts”. Houda lacked family support when she arrived to Australia, and her life was drastically changed, as life seemed stressful and harder in general. As a consequence, it made her less creative and still, despite all, she managed to create, out of necessity for survival. “Talent was important”, she said, as well as “strict perseverance and visualization” in achieving the final imagined product. Houda spoke of the influence of her culture that was like “the foundation or the roots that were inherited from the heritage of her parents and grandparents and theirs too, which was handed down all the way to the children”.

Loubna Haikal Macdonald, the Physician-Writer, thought for a moment and said that she could not divide her life and culture from her creativity; that they were inextricably one and the same as part of her. She doubted the idea that if she were born in Australia, she would have been able to still be a writer... “I am not sure that I could divorce my life and my culture in Lebanon from my creativity in Australia. This is all hypothetical”. She assured me that her life and her culture have had a very positive impact on her creativity; that coming from the Lebanese culture has been a great asset for her writing. “I feel very lucky to have been born in Lebanon and have had access to all the general knowledge that has empowered me with deep and wide perspectives on life”. Loubna said that her schooling in languages like French provided her the opportunity to enter another culture, think and solve problems in a different way. This, to her has been an invaluable experience. It has been a window into so many cultures and ways of life. It has opened her eyes to so many different cultures like the French and European ones.

#### **4) WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE LINK BETWEEN VISION, BEING VISIONARY, AND CREATIVITY? WHAT IMPACT HAS THESE TWO IDEAS HAD ON YOUR LIFE?**

John Laham, the Photographer /Artist, excitedly answered: “Everything I see, hear and smell triggers my creativity. It is like a transit lane between my vision and my creativity” meaning that the output or final product usually matched the image he had in mind. He assured me that ‘everything played the part’, even when watching a movie, it could trigger in him inspiration that had nothing to do with the movie. “When I cannot visualize a person, I am capable to focus and to sketch that person”. This is the extent of John’s ability and talent in his work or field. He stressed that his most creative time was mainly nighttimes because everything was quiet, calm and inspiring, as he said: “I am a big night owl as my activity in creativity is at its peak”.

Alex Hadchiti, the Musician/Writer, confirmed that: “To have a vision, is to have a connection with your inner plan that is either a natural or an individual one”. That was the natural plan where life can mould us to be creative, and the individual plan where we are naturally creative. Alex continued to say; “continuation of creativity through the natural cosmic vision could be always manifested if we were in contact with the energy of materialising and actualising the higher vision in contemporary with what was needed”.

Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker, paused and said: “Vision is what you can visualize as in things and in life, whereas, being visionary is for someone to see something beyond what is there that gives inspiration to and of being an inspiration. Therefore you are an inspiration to others and this is all creative”. She added that “having a vision and being a visionary was all in the left side of your brain that it was not just theoretical but completely from nowhere that it came; Your senses have to be so enlightened and en-heightened to be able to pick up energies in the world or the universe, extract ideas to make them a reality to be manifested in some manner”. Daizy expressed that “the first idea that comes to your mind is usually in the form of a picture or a vision” and she agreed, “certainly there is a link between what you see and the trigger to create and be inspired to. You can’t start anything without a vision. Some people do have bigger visions than others”.

According to Loubna Haikal Macdonald, the Physician/Writer, “having creativity, is to be able to live another life within the life you are leading”. It meant also “to be capable of living two lives”, which was a total bonus; “Personally as a writer, creativity is to be able to live a life that will happen in the book, plus the ordinary life with the family/friends. This life gives me the illusion that I have double the amount of time that anyone is living because I am able through my visualizing and my vision of what I am going to write about; to be in two different worlds, in two different time spaces, and in two different places”. Loubna felt, that to have a vision was both a very important part and a way of processing, in order to be able to create the space in her mind that was going to fit in the story. At times, she felt like a pregnant woman carrying a balloon and in it she had a multiple pregnancies like all the characters in the book, their worlds, all the people they were interacting with and the space where there were living as she had to walk with it while taking very good care. This was all in her “imagination”, the lives of the people/characters; how real they were, in fact she felt like she was carrying them through their own journey. “This is how alive they are in my life when I am writing about them” she said, “Unless they are real and alive to me they will not be real and alive to the reader. It is so real in my vision”.

## **5) LIFE EXPERIENCES TEACH US A LOT AND AFFECT US IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS. WHAT FACTORS DO YOU THINK HAVE AND INFLUENCE ON YOUR CREATIVITY?**

(John Laham, the Photographer/Artist, claimed that in his childhood, he remembered being so poor and living in one bedroom on a rooftop of a little building, with all the members of his family; “We grew up having no toys to play with, and we used to make our own toys”. He remembered that this passing time was treasured and taught him self-discipline at a very early age; “I had lots of time to dream and play by myself” he recalled and added “I was so lonely that I used to imagine having friends. I materialised them in the form of sketches. That was my way of being busy with myself, by creating those imaginary friends”. John’s personal experiences and his short journey at the monastery had a huge and a profound impact on his spirituality. He is convinced of his beliefs, of the existence of a greater power in the world as he confided in me: “I believe in good karma” –that doing well could bounce back to you- and if bad, God is watching!

John reassured himself to the fact that being around intelligent, older and experienced people can help the learning. “Positiveness” was another factor that influenced his creativity and is inherited from his mother who was the total contrast of his father. He learnt it as grounding in life when he was a thirteen years old boy, from a close friend to the family who was trying hard to teach and change his father by using positive attitude. John admitted that laughter or rather having the sense of humour was his core influence. “I was and still am the clown in the whole family circle always funny and believing that it can make a huge difference by spreading positive energy and changing atmosphere”. And he does so with people around him because he adopted this approach from his mother. John followed a simple philosophy in life that ‘healthy mind was in a healthy body’ and ‘the ideal versus duty in that the culture never goes or is denied but rather is part of the making of the person’. Another influence, John mentioned, as an adult, was ‘the emotional pain of love resulting from personal relationships experienced in life’.

Alex Hadchiti, the Musician/Writer, agreed that his desires in life have caused him some inevitable changes that led to a positive volcanic eruption of art. “My personal experiences were challenged in order to sing my song of pain or draw my lines of anguish to help create my musical and poetic self”. He grew more as a result of these changing desires and expectations and accepted this pain of change. “These hardships have been accepted as seasons of creativity”. Alex was clear about his influences and described them in a very poetical way, similar to Kahlil Gibran’s description of pain when he said in ‘The Treasured Writings of Kahlil Gibran’, 1975, p. 869 that “Pain is an unseen and powerful hand that breaks the skin of the stone in order to extract the pulp”.

In Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker, the experiences in her life that have shaped her were ‘growing up as a migrant and feeling very isolated’. It also caused her to think differently (not the same), to be a little different (not better or worse), but just different. “There were no structures or awareness to support you in the 70’s in Australia, when I was just five years old, to really help the young migrants here”, she acknowledged sadly, and the visit to Lebanon made a major impact on her direction in life and completely changed her views and made her pursue higher aims to reach success. “I realised that any contribution of an individual could make a difference in this world, I felt so empowered”. She finished her statement by encouraging anyone to visit their country of origin and to live their culture in order to find their true identity.

Houda Hafouri, the Florist/Homemaker, insisted that her childhood had an influence on her creativity, that her school was a positive and everlasting experience. She added that her parents too gave her the artistic genes she has enjoyed all her life, with her father being musical, playing the violin and loving gardening and drawing and her mother being creative in sewing and cooking. Houda associated also the influence of life on her creativity through many factors, which included the environment and society she encountered while living overseas, her married life where her husband supported her, helped and encouraged her as they lived abroad and especially while travelling. “Time was available to me to do or achieve many things and this, to avoid loneliness after my immigration, made me creative to express myself through painting, drawing and crafts”.

Loubna Haikal Macdonald, the Physician/Writer Everything that happened to her was included in the way she wrote; the way she was brought up, what has happened to her parents in their own lives and also to her grand parents. “It is a genetic transmission of incidents I am carrying in my genes that is affecting the way I feel, think and relate to the world as a whole around me”, Loubna was lucid towards the makers of her being. “Medicine too” had a major influence on her writing in two ways: one, that it was something she did not want to do but forced herself doing it and has somehow shaped her character in such a way as to have given her maybe another layer where she had to enter and feel a constant discomfort that caused her the pain to grow. “It is like a pearl that grows through irritation inside the shell, and without this irritation you don’t have a beautiful pearl,” she explained. The other point was that medicine has given her a vision outside her very own centred world to go into through her interaction with patients. It provided her with an incredible source of history or access to information as a place of trust, given exclusively to doctors that the patients would not otherwise have shared to anyone else because of confidentiality. “For a writer, she added, real life experience is very important to understand other people’s dilemmas, problems and discomfort, to be able to write with valid credibility. Through their stories, I can extrapolate and go on a tangent because after all, writing is about human nature, about myself dissecting my self, own emotions”. Loubna differed from the rest of the participants in that she was able to communicate and describe her thoughts as a physician as well as an artist/writer.



## **6) WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON YOUR CREATIVITY?**

John Laham, the Photographer /Artist, did not think that education had much impact on his creativity “I only reached school certificate at school”, he replied, affirming me that his Art and French had saved him from failing as he worked in the daytime to support and help his family and himself, and at night he studied English and “as the saying goes: when there is a will, there is a way”, implying that taking control of our life is crucial. The turning point, in John’s situation, happened when a family friend forgot his camera at their place after a party; “I was exposed to it initially and made myself familiar with it”. And at work his boss mentioned that he had knowledge of his craft, which was photography at the time. So John took the opportunity in just one setting to learn all the secrets of the trade; “I grabbed the opportunity and took off from there; I wanted more learning, explorations and experiences and I documented everything and payed much attention to minor details; I had the passion, not the knowledge”, he disclosed that what came later was history. It was to become John’s happy bread-winning job in life.

Alex Hadchiti, the Musician/Write, shared with me that education was alertness, an invitation to knowledge to abolish ignorance, and a way to learn and appreciate things. “It is a form of inductive awareness as you become more informed and aware of things that surround you”. He continued to say that education could help the individual in organising their way of life in order to be creative, happy, joyful, loving and generous. Alex stressed that education should free us to be creative, and not give us, due to merits, an imposed position in an industry. Alex believed that education should be a ‘liberator’.

Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker, stressed that education without a real motivation or planning is a waste of time. Whereas, knowing what to learn in order to fill up the gaps that are a hindrance to the development of creativity, was necessary for total personal advancement. “When a person is interested, he/she can express himself freely with a true individual opinion”. Daizy expressed her opinion in that education could be daunting, nurturing and create an amazing expression if looked in the right direction.

Finally she said that education can help market and present better the person, but it does not make them more creative. It could expose the person to a variety of techniques that they can manipulate and use. It could certainly give them more choices in life.

Houda Hafouri, the Florist/Homemaker on the other hand, said that education has had a big influence on her learning of the basics of skills. “It cannot make you perfect only your talent can in the context of creativity” and “It is like when you have flair in painting and you do learn properly the right ways, you can perfect your art” she said.

Loubna Haikal Macdonald, the Physician-Writer saw that education had advantages and disadvantages. When at school, she had a problem because she was good at both the sciences and humanities, but as the latter one was always looked down, the subject of sciences was highly looked up. “I was always channelled at doing sciences that I did not like because the humanities were never validated. I would have rather liked to learn poetry or philosophy. I never felt that becoming a writer would be worthwhile. I felt worthless and not where my heart was because I was driven, then, into the sciences as the proper choice”. When she came to Australia, Loubna became a widow of her lost language, the tool of her expression, and she went through a long period of intensive grief as a result of this loss because she could not communicate in Arabic or French or write to anyone about her grief at school. “I had to regress and go back to the womb as a writer and not be able to use the abstract concepts that I was already using in my original languages” and “going back to the crawling stage in the English language made me angry and for a very long time, until I started Medicine”.

At the age of 40 when Loubna wanted to make an aggressive act of claiming the English language as her own, She started writing in English. It required lots of self-assertion. “Education did not nurture my creativity”.

## **7) IN YOUR FIELD WHO HAS INSPIRED OR TOUCHED YOU? WHO DO YOU LOOK UP TO?**

John Laham, the Photographer/Artist replied that his mother was his inspiration and that Rembrandt was his favourite artist, “I wanted to be a painter just like him”.

Whereas, Alex Hadchiti Musician/Writer answered me that he always looked up to every artist that somehow showed his mission through art and creativity. “I have admired few intellectuals like writers and/or philosophers, and artists but above all, I have highly admired Gibran Kahlil Gibran because he is more than a writer, philosopher or artist, he became his own self-creator”. Alex continued saying that Gibran had seeded and planted the tree of knowledge for us so we should harvest and reap through the action of his philosophy since he also came from the same land.

Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker confided that her greatest influence because it was connected to her Lebanese culture was Kahlil Gibran, for his writings; his sketches have really moved her, less are his paintings even though she has visited his museum in Lebanon. It was more the power of his words. “Gibran is, to me, a true inspiration; what he had struggled to achieve and to overcome as an immigrant”, and creatively speaking he was ‘the One’. He is truly internationally recognized writer (many dimensions), poet, artist and philosopher. Beside Gibran, Daizy’s mother was her inspiration. She was a very ambitious person; “I gained of her much of my strength and determination. She was a migrant who was for many years depressed. She threw herself into helping the Lebanese community as a true social worker and was a wonderful representative of this tiny community. This gave me the idea of how many things a woman can do and be at the same time being successful at home and with a career. She was the first to start the Arabic schools in the late 70’s for students to learn the Arabic and for their parents to learn English language, as she realised there was a need for it.

Houda Hafouri, the Florist/Homemaker insisted that her parents were her real tutors in her private life, and her teachers were her tutors at school. Her close friend from school inspired her love and care for others through their interaction and friendship. Seeing a movie on the life of Michelangelo personified by actor Kirk Douglas left an impression

on her. In addition, the Lebanese writer, thinker, philosopher and poet Saeed Akl, inspired her. Houda followed his motto in her life that “perseverance in anything and everything towards both its achievement and perfection, should be done to the best of your ability, only if it is worth the time doing it”.

Loubna Haikal Macdonald, the Physician-Writer answered this question by saying that she was surrounded by so many wonderful people who inspired her, like her father who inspired her and still does inspire her and touch her even though he has died in 1984, but he is with her every day in her life, every time she sat to write. She remembered him as a brilliant writer who had wisdom and poetry. He was a great source of inspiration and also has made a difference to everyone who got to know him and this was something that she really treasured, to be able to touch people’s lives just with their presence. She added, that other extraordinary people who have changed the world like Jesus or Ghandi have not written a word but rather people wrote about them, their actions and examples. “This is the interesting thing as a writer, my role model”. Then Loubna paused for a moment and said that her older sister Hadia, the doctor who was not a writer but a lawyer, was her inspiration with her confidence and positiveness, no matter what the circumstances were. She was so giving of herself of what she had to people unconditionally that she was a tower of strength for the family and her. “A role model is not necessarily a person who preaches you and tells you what to do, but through their actions and way of life inspires something in you, something to inspire to”. Loubna mentioned to me, that whenever she felt down, she thought of her sister and felt better. She has achieved a lot in her own life. She has done Medicine and Law and a Masters in Pathology and science, she is a very good pianist, she is on the medical board in Victoria and she is on other boards for charity- she has just made twenty thousand dollars in a charity exhibition for the medical association for the prevention of war- she is also married with two children.

Finally Loubna left one of her great inspiration till the end, saying that Gibran Kahlil Gibran was a man she admired a lot, and that she would be getting the Gibran’s award for the writing of her book that was different in style, more satirical and fictional.

## **8) WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK CREATIVITY PLAYS IN THE IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCE AND DO YOU FEEL THIS COULD APPLY TO ALL PEOPLE?**

John Laham, the Photographer/Artist replied that he happened to be creative, not everyone was... He said that "it is hereditary and a blessing, I suppose, as my father was very creative in his own way, as well as my mother". "Creativity, he continued, goes to the next step as you have the talkers and the doers" implying that the most important thing was the action that followed. It was not enough to just sit and think about it. He insisted that it all depended on the individual, his attributes, characteristics and culture, by co-existing and being adaptable to the circumstances of his life or journey. "I can't represent all immigrants. Everyone is different". He said confidently that the use of creativity was, according to him, a release valve for expression.

Alex Hadchiti, the Musician/Writer thought that the phenomena of immigration made the person fonder to their birthplace because of the accumulated memories through the years that became of a yearning to fulfil in their reality that is alas the adopted country. "In the new society of the adopted country there is a culture shock, which automatically creates a defence mechanism since immigration can sweep the identity of your native nationality". Alex followed with the thought that only a new experience can allow you to form a new self in order to understand and interpret your older self. "It becomes almost a battle to prove to yourself and the new society of the adopted country, that you came from a rich culture and you feel handicapped by the different language, traditions and the new way of life". "The battle becomes more of a challenge to perform as a happy normal person who is trying to adapt and live in harmony between two concepts: the mind of a western way of life and/with the spirit of an eastern way of life". Alex argued that there would come the crucial point to ask oneself: "do I argue about my identity or do I create a model of my concept through my artistic manifestation in order to live together". He made a clear point that after all, we, the immigrants, are not here to learn to be westerners but we are here to contribute to the west; Alex asked for ways to know how to traditionally and culturally live with character as one global family having one common vision to make this earth a better place through understanding and by respecting each others through creativity and progress rather than conflicting with the differences. I found this idealist thinking in similarity to Gibran' Philosophy and creed.

Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker, answered my question by saying that Hardship could definitely stimulate creativity, and an immigrant experience therefore could be influenced, not just being an immigrant can make you creative. It was like people growing up in poverty who find the need to get out of their undesired circumstances. This need could stimulate their creative minds only if they are inclined that way, as it is commonly said that ‘the need is the truly mother of all inventions’. How many successful people came out from nothing simply because they resented their poor situations? “There are lots of people, who are living in poverty and they may be creative, but if they were that creative, they would be successful by now, or maybe there are people who don’t have avenues to express their creativity and so no one has discovered them yet”. “That sort of living hardship, she whispered, wants to make you creative. Therefore you would use that resource in you to express yourself and the surrounding becomes your expressive tools”. Daizy assured me that being intelligent or genius was different from being creative, as people with high IQ are not necessarily creative; “you could be a genius if you had a vision,” she said calmly.

Houda Hafouri, the Florist/Homemaker, claimed that creativity encouraged the immigrant to be more creative in order to transfer both their culture and comfort zone to the new adopted place by enticing to reproduce what reminds them of their homeland, as it had the healing effect of alleviating the irritation of feeling a stranger, and not belonging. Immigrant experiences have helped us to take the best of the adopted culture in the new country and add it to the best of the old culture and still come up with a new culture, as an emergence, the better of the two worlds by bringing in all, their culture, art, fashion, and food.

Loubna Haikal Macdonald, the Physician-Writer, insisted that creativity was extremely important especially with the immigrant experiences because to really feel at home in a place, you needed to be able to arrange the furniture, the pictures, the things you own, the way you wanted to, and unless you have this freedom to express yourself, you will never feel at home or living in your own house. “As immigrants, if we can’t express our creativity, we will always feel as strangers, and see ourselves as marginal not as a functional part of society, or people who are able to effect change. We are here in the

society, yet not quite. Others may make the change because they know better; but we as immigrants will just fit in and deal mainly with the practical side of life”. Loubna added “As artists, this is where change happens; it starts because they are visionary, they can see what is happening in society and they store this observation in order to express it somehow to people and bring this to their attention. It may be uncomfortable, as it makes people think. In that case, being an Artist is not just entertainment but also information and stimulation, whatever the change may be. So it is crucial that we, Lebanese immigrants, call ourselves Australians and be allowed to express our creativity and participate in any change, the only way to express our citizenship”.

## **9) WOULD YOUR CREATIVITY HAVE DEVELOPED HAD YOU NOT LEFT YOUR COUNTRY OF BIRTH?**

John Laham, the Photographer/Artist replied spontaneously that he surely would have developed anywhere, but it would have flavoured differently, according to the influence of the surroundings. “I was born with a gift and that was that I could sketch and draw before I could remember”. His father discouraged him in pursuing an artistic career thinking that it was not worthwhile his efforts. He would not buy John a camera until he bought one himself. He smiled and said to me “It was history after that”. His ambition was reinforced when he heard and saw the success and stardom Picasso reached when he died. John’s success is definitely measured by the obstacles he faced along the way. There were so many, and he is glad he did, for it taught him a lot in life. Despite all the difficulties faced, John’s perseverance for reaching success would have been his target. “I would not have settled for anything less, regardless”, he said convincingly.

Alex Hadchiti, the Musician/Writer, answered my question saying that potentially an artist was an artist whether his creativity was manifested or not, but if he stayed in his country, he would have been a miserable artist. For an artist to utter and express him/herself, their worst enemy would be anger, war, the sound of cannons and explosions. “An artist cannot reveal his/her art and creative inner soul unless there is peace, harmony, with his right basic survival needs and atmosphere of love and joy”. Ironically, the new technology of the west with its machinery and industries was prevailing and replacing the family unit’ simple and natural way of life by polluting and

draining mother Earth, all over the world, in the name of development and progress. Alex asked me, doubtfully, how civilized are we in the west to do so remains to be seen.

Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker thought that it would not have made any difference for if she was going to be creative, she would have been anywhere, anyway...and something else would have stimulated her probably in other things, if she stayed in Lebanon. "My life has been an experience and a journey for me to go back to my country of birth and to reveal what I had about Lebanon and myself. That is what I did". In regards to Gibran, she believed that the reason he immigrated with his family to America was the cruel government ruled under the Turkish Ottoman; "there was no freedom of thought or speech and only the high ranked people survived this type of life", she admitted. "Lots of Lebanese left the country to escape famine and war".

Houda Hafouri, the Florist/Homemaker confirmed that she was creative and learnt the basics or rules of things and will not be stopped in producing her art. Probably, she could have been more productive, enjoying the help and support of her family had she stayed geographically close. "I would have carried with me memories of my good experiences of the best times in Lebanon to my adopted land as a security measure".

Loubna Haikal Macdonald, the Physician-Writer, reassured me that her creativity would have stayed because when she was eleven, she was writing and sending her articles to the papers and having poetry and articles published. So she was 100% certain she would have developed her creativity, but it could have been in different direction like instead of medicine, she would have done law or maybe teaching. Eventually she would have ended up as a writer what she is happy at being at present. Loubna compared herself to Chekhov a play-writer and physician who said, "Medicine is my marriage, writing is my mistress and my love". That is her story. And her meaning for being successful in writing is more to being published, which is a real bonus, but the true success lay in the accessibility in the writing process, having the space and the energy to write and having the financial means to help support herself as a writer. The other social success, which is not her driving force, she argued, was to have the book published; and, of course next, would be to win prizes and to be the bestseller etc...



She is sure that she would be more successful when she would depart this earth. “The personal observations, I am making now, are very important historical contribution which will be surely revisited when I am gone as I am writing for the future, for later people to revisit this particular period of time. It does not worry me if I am acknowledged now or not”. Her next book may not be published, as the publisher does not like what she was writing and was quite concerned, she informed me. “Books may lie dormant and then suddenly they are awakened. It is obviously my urgent need to write and document for I believe it needs to bring all to surface. It can’t happen in silence, someone has to do it and I feel it is me who has to do it for there is active collaboration between you and the universe. “You are the medium”, she murmured.

#### **10) WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOUR SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVEMENTS TO BE THE RESULTS OF PAIN, AMBITION, EXPATRIATION AND HOPE?**

John Laham, the Photographer/Artist, agreed and felt that life was a journey and pain was needed to direct his journey; “Pain is necessary to add depth to my personality, he commented, it is similar to an amputation: you feel bad at that moment, but then you feel relieved when you are out of this agonizing pain”. John had so much ambition in him that he found sleeping a waste of time and kept at his work when he was inspired and that was how he won all his awards. Despite the hardship he faced which was caused by his expatriation, he felt that he could contribute to his adopted country with something meaningful. “I found difficulty in getting my goal with the support needed over the intended direction as a starting point in pursuit of my niche. As a consequence, I worked hard and created a reputation with photography that became my passion, bread winning and my life”. For his hope was to set a target in becoming very successful at what he did and to the best of his ability.

Alex Hadchiti, the Musician/Writer believed that all the mentioned ones are the result of his successful achievements in his adopted country. He shared some of his thoughts on each one of them by accepting “the pain if it was a pain of birth and he would pray to God to grant him the understanding of this creative pain”. Alex was thankful to all the circumstances that allowed him, to immigrate to this destination as his fate and destiny, and enjoy the freedom and joy of his self-actualisation. He said that this experience

could not be simply that painful if it was understood, because it was providing the person with the challenge and the knowledge of the art of immigration. Alex added that his ambition was to contribute and add to previous ones in order to be remembered as an innovative immigrant, and his hope was that one day we could reach the ultimate truth of connection between all human faces on this Earth and take mother Earth as a serious global issue.

Daizy Gedeon Mir, the Journalist/Film Maker, again agreed to all the above; her achievements are definitely the result of pain and struggle. “There has been a great deal of difficulty and pain in having to achieve it all”, she confided in me attributing that: Ambition played a major part for her success and without it no person would want to do anything. “I needed to have the ambition; otherwise, I would have been very satisfied being just a sport journalist and not move on to do foreign affairs and film-making”. Expatriation was what stimulated Daizy’s trip to Lebanon that created this resurgence of her culture. It was critical to her greater further creative expression in the film form, her interest in the Middle East and in her writing specifically about that area of the world. “The significance was relatively measured to my experience, the rediscovery of my culture and to my expatriation”. Daizy spoke with passion regarding this topic and finally came to a conclusion when talked about the topic of hope in that “you, as a human being could make a big difference to the world with this change that would create a rethinking followed by an improvement in that cause”. When I asked her about her next project, she mentioned that it would provide hope to all families for parents and children, as it will be about educating them with the use of visual technologies as a preferred choice to reading, through her writing as her creative expression.

Houda Hafouri, the Florist/Homemaker, disagreed overall but said that nevertheless, in the back of her mind she felt the pain but will not allow it to overtake her lifestyle. “Man can adapt to a new life and become part of it in his adoptive country. This is when I usually use my art and creativity at the very beginning of the immigration and then this pain disappears replaced by the survival”. That was Houda’s positive recipe! She enjoyed the challenge of showing off and proving to the new society her culture, identity and civilization, by focusing on the good points of her culture like her love for hospitality, family, the good traditions we possess and then fight against the new society’s ignorance or hostility in order to motivate their curiosity about the real us.

Loubna Haikal Macdonald, the Physician-Writer said, “Yes”, as she considered her successful achievements to be the result of pain, ambition, expatriation or/and of hope. “Pain is when you are born; your mother goes through lots of pain to let go of you and that is the ultimate act of creativity, to give birth to a child”. She explained that pain was an important factor for one’s personal development; “if you go through life without pain/experience, you don’t grow as a person”, she stated. “Without pain, there is no change or transformation, exactly like writing any book, which is a form of delivery of a life, and it is a very painful thing”; Loubna explained that a person may experience pain physically while sitting for hours on end at the computer feeling all sorts of aches as it is not really a natural position but rather and abnormal one. It is not what our bodies are supposed to do, but rather, they are meant to be moving, walking etc...and mentally how the characters are going to interact between each other and whether it will be properly interpreted by the reader or thrown away. “Ambition is a drive, an addiction, a disease, and a compulsion. I think I have obsession more than ambition and as a result of this ambition everything else suffers which is to start write my second book”. When my question reached expatriation, Loubna confirmed that it has moulded her as if a person was a sculpture; “I was a different sculpture before; my facial expression, my bone structure has been demolished and remoulded to suit the Australian environment, weather, lifestyle, language, etc...It is a feeling of uprooting and it gives such a thorough insight into your self as well and understanding of yourself. You are examined and re-examined...your values and your beliefs you never questioned before”. Loubna smiled and the tone in her voice mellowed when I approached the subject of hope. “Hope is more important than happiness because without hope there is no reason to get up in the morning and it is ‘the hope’ for anything to provoke some change or transformation in somebody’s life”.

My research felt extremely rich with the accumulated data. I could not wait to read it in order to extrapolate the findings that were of significance to the study that could open many doors for questioning, through the gathered results, the present and future situations. The honesty and courage I faced with the participants made the interviews and their reports possible. I feel obliged to those selected artists and honoured to have their thoughts and ideas documented, which are straight from the heart and the head. I wish them the best of success in all their endeavours knowing well the reason behind their success and accomplishments and hoping that they are to 'others' their role models.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **REFLECTIONS AND FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction:**

The journey I have taken in this research study has both challenged and at the same time confirmed my insight, my views and my beliefs that the Lebanese immigrants' success was built upon their creativity and vision. It has shown me that resilience mixed with faith and hard works are the ingredients for success.

The aim of this research study was to analyse 'other' creative immigrants and to determine how they expressed their creativity when compared with Gibran Kahlil Gibran who was focused, creative and deeply spiritual (viz. Jesus the Son of Man; 1928). I was enlightened by the wisdom of Gibran's words, which provided me with answers to the beauty of life and the respect for my fellow beings. It satisfied my curiosity, the more I read him, the greater my admiration. This man from Lebanon looked at the basic issues in life with the use of simple words, but with visual and emotional language that had a depth of meaning.

I conducted personal interviews, and heard the participants' points of view, which were at times similar and at other times challenged my preconceived beliefs. This allowed me the opportunity to discover and understand their hidden personalities, which motivated their success. I had been given the privilege to share in their private lives. Their individual experiences provided me with an insight into their world of desires, struggles and hope.

My horizons were broadened by the participants' responses and their interpretations of their experiences, which were influenced by their own parents' experiences. Even though I have shared similar events in my life to the participants and to those of Gibran Kahlil Gibran relating to immigration, it was quite different to their period of emigration. Innovative technological changes in our time have created a global village that allow easy and fast communication for immigrants with their homeland in contrast to the times of Kahlil Gibran.

As a Lebanese immigrant, of similar age group, and having experienced similar life events, I was able to make the five interviewed participants feel at ease. This allowed them to reveal their inner thoughts with their anxieties, anger and fears; it allowed them also, to expound on their ambitions to promote change through their words, thoughts and deeds. Creative arts are a form of communication. Effective communication will lead to changes. If the artists are allowed a voice and provided with support to fulfil their self- realisation, they will respond in turn by contributing to society.

I have chosen biographical and narrative forms as the relevant research design in that it facilitates discoveries of what all the five participants want to state and change. It is difficult to separate yourself from your culture and your own background when it comes to relating truthful realities about oneself.

This research has helped me to reflect the personal characteristics of Kahlil Gibran, the five participant artists, and myself. I discovered that all shared similarities:

They had a deep belief in themselves, in progress, in being genuine.

They believed in perseverance and hard work and achievement.

They looked beyond their square. They had a vision.

They captured the magic of the senses and succeeded like Gibran in visual, auditory and touch, as also in their sorrow, anger and joy (Viz Gibran a Self –Portrait, 1960).

They looked beyond the visible into the metaphysic.

They had a presence, charisma, sensitivity and sensibility of great personalities.

They were creative, and made an impact with their art.

They focused on achievement through reflection and simplicity.

They were rebellious: they created a voice of change with a will to survive.

They were positive thinkers, with a touch of humour.

They had love for others, sought justice and peace for all.

They were a shining light of hope in life through their generosity and goodness.

They were dreamers of a perfect world full of harmony (Viz Gibran: Secrets of the Heart, 1971).

They possessed a sense of ethics and morality.

They were intelligent with a touch of genius made visible in their creativity.

Are not these characteristics what we find in people, (teachers, doctors, clergymen, and artists), who serve the community at large? Similarly, devoted parents who sacrifice their time and energy without reward for the wellbeing and comfort of their children in order to show them the truth and beauty in life to become in turn towers of strength, not listening to the voices of tyranny and hatred that lead to pain, destruction and death.

Gibran emphasized the importance of a good soul in our world when he noted that: ‘To understand the heart and mind of a person, is not in what he has already achieved but rather at what he aspires to do’ (Gibran 1962, p. 35).

My intention is to be a creator of a better world for us now and for future generations. I believe that good intentions and actions, even though, focused locally, will become contagious and global, through their warmth and loving touch.

## **CONCLUSION:**

It is evident during the interviews, that through creativity, our lives have a meaning. It is an art of living to communicate our gifts and talents through different expression and interpretations in order to reach the full potential of our physical and emotional existence and consequently make a difference to our world.

This research study did result in universal understandings and conclusions: that if we, the citizens, want this world to be a better place, we should be productive with our creativity, and most importantly ‘create a society thriving on unity in diversity’ (Bushrui 1999, p. 2).

Creativity and art making achieved through vision are for all human beings whether from the East or from the West. To express our feelings into a tangible and visible form of creation is not only a creative opportunity but also a self-realisation that leads to success and happiness to all. This provision of creative visualization can only help to construct not destroy people’s livelihood. Regardless of their country of origin it opens doors to immigrants, to develop their potential and to be accepted and to feel appreciated. Australia is indeed benefiting from the creative work of “outside people”

who are visionaries and pioneers in their own fields. The variety of choice we encounter in Australia, in our everyday life like food, fashion, books, even education programs are either imported or created by “new immigrants”.

Gibran acknowledged this idea in his book ‘Sand and Foam’ 1927, p. 22 when he wrote:

*“Your most radiant garment is of the other person’s weaving;  
Your most savoury meal is that which you eat at the other person’s table;  
Your most comfortable bed is in the other person’s house.  
Now tell me, how can you separate yourself from the other person?”*

Let us not forget the initial obstacles and humiliation that these immigrants, in general, have faced to be accepted or tolerated; simply because they were different and did not conform to the norm or of what was accepted. This is evident in the book “PROPHET: The Life and Times of Kahlil Gibran” by R. Waterfield, 2000, p. 9 where it is noted:

“Immigrants were presented with forms to fill in; they were ‘marshalled, herded, divided, subdivided, sorted, sifted, searched, fumigated’.

This was around the time of Gibran’s arrival to America in 1895.

And in the book “The Lebanese in Australia” by A. & T. Batrouney 1985 (p. 25), their description was that ‘they are of swarthy appearance with dark hair and of sallow complexion, but approximate far more closely European types than those of India or parts of Asia further East. So far as their general appearance goes, they cannot be distinguished from the people of southern Italy, Spain or Greece’...

.. And because Australia was marked by a sense of exclusive nationalism that was expressed in the White Australia Policy, it was documented (p.27) that, ‘Although the majority of settlers came from the district of Mt. Lebanon ...they were classified as Turkish subjects by the Australian Government ...and they had to register themselves as enemy aliens at their local police station at regular intervals during the war’, not knowing ironically that the first Lebanese who started immigrating between 1880 and 1920 to the West and in particular Australia were Christians escaping the harsh economic, social and religious conditions at the hands of the Ottoman empire.



No person is compelled to leave his or her country unless they are forced to and to find a better place, because their survival is endangered or unless they are nomads. Gibran was one of those people who immigrated to find “the land of fortune” and had to believe in him-self and persevered despite the harsh criticism about his Art and Poetry, because he was an immigrant, only to be revered later in his life or more so immensely after his death.

“We need to make the world safe for creativity and intuition, for it is creativity and intuition that will make the world safe for us”- Edgar Mitchell, Apollo Astronaut.  
(Thompson 1992, p .3) This excerpt is sent to us from out of space!

## **FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study has opened many possibilities for future research investigation as it is still in its preconception stage and will help extrapolate more information from the other immigrant groups to reach a wider area of society. Particular observations that have been made in this study will demand further questions:

- How can Immigrants’ views and ideas be heard?
- How to incorporate opportunities into schools, communities, and centres of learning to promote new creative visions in art?
- What support is given to immigrants to help their creative development?
- What positive feedback is collected or encouraged from marginal Immigrants concerning their contributions to their adopted country?

It is my ambition and my dream that art educators and readers of this project appreciate and acknowledge new art in all its forms created by immigrants in an interpretation of their often chaotic new world. This world is like a bouquet of flowers; the greater the variety and mixing of flowers, the more exotic, interesting and beautiful this bouquet will be for all to enjoy.

This thesis has helped produce many ideas that could lead to changes:

- When we embrace new cultures from different peoples, with tolerance and understanding, we not only create friendships but also facilitate successful integration into the community.
- Through education, we offer immigrants the independence and responsibility to be individuals and better loyal citizens.

Creativity exists...we just have to notice it and nurture it in everyone, we can even cultivate it from an early age as it was in Gibran's case.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **LETTERS OF CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANTS.**