

Dr. Pat Kachuk (AnSo)

Interviewed by: Sara Burns, 2000

SB: Can you describe your early academic background, such as how you came to work in Anthropology/Sociology and what you did your undergraduate degree in?

PK: I did my undergraduate degree at York University in Social Anthropology, which is different from the Cultural Anthropology taught at UBC. I suppose I chose Anthropology because I was coming from working in accounting and I wanted to work with people, and Anthropology had a focus on understanding people in their daily lives, so it was a holistic approach to research that appealed to me. Also, Social Anthropology is very much like Sociology in that it looks at contemporary societies, mostly close to my own in Canada, and societies in Europe. It enabled me to study contemporary issues such as race and class inequalities.

SB: Did they have a Women's Studies program at York when you were there?

PK: Not when I was there. That was in 1981, and I don't recall any Women's Studies or any courses actually that related directly to women in Anthropology or Sociology.

SB: You have answered what it is about Anthropology that appealed to you. What about Women's Studies; how did you come to be involved in Women's Studies?

PK: It actually came very late. I finished my degree in Anthropology and I did my M.A. and Ph.D. here at UBC. I was beginning to teach and my courses were in Sociology, and at that time I had some in Anthropology. Then I met Gillian Creese at a party [laughter] and she said, "Why don't you come teach in Women's Studies?" I think one of the reasons she invited me is that my dissertation was recommended for the Jean Elder Book Award which is awarded for the best doctoral dissertation by a woman at UBC, and she was on the committee. So she knew my work. And that work – whether explicitly or implicitly – was done using feminist methodologies.

SB: So you are going between Women's Studies, Anthropology and Sociology; is there one discipline that you feel particularly more at home in?

PK: Well, I don't teach them very differently. I have a sociological perspective perhaps when I teach Women's Studies and a Women's Studies perspective when I teach Sociology. It is a little less free to be out as a feminist in Sociology and Anthropology, but certainly the issues are there. The classes are a lot more mixed and you may run up against a lot more hostility, but, I have aged in my teaching. I don't separate them anymore. So I am a feminist in all of them. I feel at home in either one of them.

SB: You mentioned a feeling of danger to be "out as a feminist" in Anthropology/Sociology; how does that manifest, what kinds of things do you notice?

PK: Basically, it used to be even worse. You would see it on your evaluations! [Laughter]

SB: Oh really?

PK: Yes, everything from “she always dressed in black” – like this is the typical feminist, to, “she’s too feminist” and, “I’m sick of hearing about women’s issues!” And you know the sad thing is, often you will get those reactions from women. But by and large, I don’t get that much anymore because I just more or less say, this is how things are; and I don’t force people to have a certain perspective on anything – they develop their own. I feel less inclined to try and teach as though I didn’t come from a feminist perspective. What I have learned, is the sooner you come out as a feminist, the quicker you are to get a more tolerant and more friendly class. They shift and they just go to another course if they can’t handle it. So I feel, well, I will be up front with you right away, and this is what is going to happen in the course. I don’t just put it as a feminist perspective, they realize very quickly it is an anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and anti-sexist course. So, those things are pretty much ground rules. But I think over the past three years the students I have had have been wonderful in their interests and in their openness to difference.

SB: So you are noticing a trend?

PK: Oh, yes. Either I am getting rid of the jocks at the beginning [laughter] or there is more understanding or awareness – and more awareness among male students too. I am actually very pleased with the male students – they are very interested in those issues and a lot of them do write on gender issues and do quite well. So I find that they are interested, and that they don’t feel alienated from the topics.

SB: What about other staff and faculty members? How do they react toward you being a feminist?

PK: [laughter] Well, the nice thing about being a sessional lecturer is that they probably don’t bother with me too much. Certainly a lot of them are very much against feminism. But then I don’t have to deal with them because I don’t go to the meetings. [laughter] They take me as I am; I don’t get open hostilities.

SB: Are there any other feminist scholars in Anthropology/Sociology?

PK: Yes, certainly in Sociology, and we have some of the newer ones in Anthropology. but we don’t have a large body. Most of the feminists in Sociology are also in Women’s Studies.

SB: Let’s go ahead now to some of the research projects that you have worked on in the past. Can you describe some of them?

PK: Well, I guess the very first one was when I worked as an ethnographer, and actually that was contracted work while I was still doing my M.A. I went into the schools in

Vancouver and did an evaluation on race and ethnic relations policies – a five-year evaluation.

SB: Was that in primary or secondary schools?

PK: Both. I worked in four different schools. My work, my ethnography – it was acknowledged as such – became the basis of the report. I interviewed students, I interviewed teachers, and the people within the school. It was not a glowing report to say the least. It was incredible. Students certainly did feel alienated. There were problems – there were some very dedicated ESL teachers, but there was a lot of marginalizing, you know, the 'ESL wing' or 'the trailer' or whatever. And certainly within the regular faculty there was very little tolerance for people who had language difficulties. There was actually blatant racism. So that was the first project I worked on.

SB: How long ago was that?

PK: That was about 1986. And then I became interested in Ireland. That was when I was doing my M.A. – I was looking for a new topic, because I was changing my topic.

SB: So, to clarify, was your M.A. on the school project or ...?

PK: No. For my M.A. I came in and was going to look at the potlatch. [laughter that more I was very interested in how mythology was used politically. I went to England in 1986 on a holiday and I was going to look at Irish mythology – which shows you how much I knew about the Irish situation – to look for it in England! [Laughter] At the time I was in London I went to the Old Bailey. At that point they were having the trial of the Brighton Bomber, so I went to the trial. I hadn't really followed what was going on in Ireland at the time. It was that realization of what is happening. I looked at the people who were being tried and you have this created image of terrorists. At the time it was incredible because you had to go through all sorts of body searches and declarations. It was a completely awakening experience. So I came back and I had to find out more about what was going on. I told my advisor I was doing my M.A. on Irish Nationalism. So I did my M.A. which was more of a historical background. Then I got involved, because the only way you can understand what is going on in the North of Ireland is to be there. So I wanted to go, but I needed more knowledge so I started working in the Irish community here.

SB: In Vancouver?

PK: In Vancouver, and I actually made connections with people who had come over, people who had left Belfast and who were here but had family back there.

SB: Recent immigrants?

PK: Yes. They basically taught me an awful lot and also gave me connections back in Belfast. I worked on looking at organizing, looking at what happens to people who

migrate out of a country that has a high-conflict situation at home and how they cope. There is a lot of guilt in these communities. The wanting to be back and also the way they maintain frozen realities of what is going on. They had the image of what was happening when they left. So I worked with them here for about a year. Then in 1988 I went over to Belfast and at that point I also had contact with Sinn Féin, so they knew I was coming. I arrived in Belfast on a preliminary trip to see if what I wanted to do was feasible. I had met a member of Sinn Féin over here and I told him of my interests and he said, "Well you have to go over there," and I said, "Well I'll see." And he said "Come and look me up." So I went and I knew absolutely nobody in Belfast at that time. I had not really connected with relatives of members of the Irish community at that point. So we were in Belfast, sitting in the bus depot – (my partner had come over and withstood it for two days then said "I'll see you dear, I'm going home now") [laughter] – so I knew one person in Belfast. I was in the bus depot in Belfast, and then I phoned and said "I'm here."

SB: This was the Sinn Féin person?

PK: It was the Sinn Féin person, and he said "fine." So they put me with a family in the community and I actually went to Crossmaglen which was bandit country – to Derry, and then to Belfast, and I just spoke with people. I had no restrictions whatsoever, I just talked with different people and I stayed with different people in different places. They said, "Certainly you can do what you were planning – it's no problem." I told them I wanted to look at symbolic resistance; I wanted to look at what was going on. And they said, "Fine, come and stay." So basically I came back and did my proposal, and then in 1990 I went over and stayed for fifteen months.

SB: That was working on your Master's?

PK: No, my Ph.D. I had finished my Masters by that time and I was doing my Ph.D. My Ph.D. was on symbolic resistance and looking at all sorts of different mechanisms like political art and the marches and the Irish language. Which was what I eventually wrote about – the Irish language activism that was going on there. But, because you are in a war zone, and it is a society in which men and women are quite separate, I spent a lot of time with the women. And you bond and become a part of the community and I very much became a part of the community.

So I also learned a lot about women's situations as a result of the war and the participation of women in the war, as well as women being targeted. Also, the violence in the home in which cases they had no one to call, because if they were being beaten in the home, and they called in the R.U.C. (the Royal Ulster Constabulary), the R.U.C. would come in to get the men – they didn't care about the women. Of course Protestant women in the Loyalist areas were being just as badly treated. In fact they would sneak down to the women's centres on the Falls Road – a Nationalist area – to get information on battering or to hide out from their batterer. It was an incredibly bad situation. So the women had to form their own support groups, because living in high conflict areas there is a lot of violence and they do not have protection. They are also getting violence from the state because the state is coming in and going through their homes, so there is that

violation as well. There is also the violation of being taken in and being strip searched, and that was being used as a weapon against them. So there was a lot of violence against these women, and a lot of that became part of my research although it was not what I wrote up.

SB: It sort of inadvertently became your focus?

PK: Right, so that was my lead-in to my current research. When I came back I finished my Ph.D., then I started studying and looking at women in conflict areas. I was looking at their situation, and there were a lot of similarities. I looked at Bosnia and into the Middle East and how often women's issues are incorporated. In the trenches women become equal, and then they get sold out at the end. Their issues would go by the wayside. So that became my area of study.

SB: So basically that experience in Northern Ireland opened you up to different war zones in totally different geographic areas ...

PK: Right, yes, in Bosnia, the Middle East and Nicaragua as well as some of the other conflict areas.

SB: Have you been to any of the other places?

PK: Well, actually I was very war weary when I got back. It was very tense, and you live it. Everyday when you leave the door at home you never know whether you will come back – whether you will be arrested or dead. But we all lived in that situation. Actually, a lot of my views of the world changed because of that experience and I think it made me more aware that what is important in life is to live life for each day, to give what you can. And that was the other thing, it was such a giving society – they had nothing, they were impoverished but we just all pooled everything together. So it really changed my values. And a lot of my feelings toward what is important in the world, which is why I do so much volunteer work now, because really, experiences are the things that are important. You can get a lot of money in the bank but those things are meaningless in the end. It is what you do with people that is meaningful.

SB: When you came back to Canada how did this all lead into the research you are doing now?

PK: When I came back to Canada I started teaching here because I decided I did not want to go tenure-track – I love teaching. All I wanted to do was teach and I started teaching Women's Studies and Sociology and Anthropology at that time. And then I met Yasmin Jiwani; she was is the executive director of the FREDa Centre for research on violence against women and children. I joined just help her out and became incorporated into FREDa, and did some policy analysis and some research. I am a Research Associate there right now, and have been for the past four years – almost going on five years now. But I couldn't handle my teaching and doing the actual projects because at that point FREDa's core money had run out. Project money means you focus and you are just

doing projects. And that wasn't what I wanted to do – I wanted to work in the community. That was very much part of FREDA as well; part of the mandate was to work with members and groups in the community.

SB: It was the community action research that appealed to you?

PK: Right, and to both of us that was what was most important, but because we were chained to doing projects, that was the thing that was being left out. So I formally stopped – I couldn't justify taking money from FREDA so I stopped my wages but continued in my position and became a part of FREDA in the community. At the time, shortly after I started there, I became a member of the Vancouver Co-ordination Committee on Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy, a committee which has about sixty groups and agencies working together to see that the VAWIR policy is implemented and that there are no contradictions. It is funded by the BC Attorney-General's Department but it is contracted out to women's community groups. And on that particular committee, I actually joined the Justice-Sub-Committee, which has in it all the members of the criminal justice system, members from Victim Services, the Attorney-General's Office, the police, the Crown, probation and all the other different agencies within systems, plus women's groups from transition houses.

SB: This was a sub-group within the larger committee?

PK: Right, within the larger committee. The VAWIR (Violence Against Women in Relationships) Committee has a health sub-group, a children's issues sub-group, a media sub-group, a cultural sub-group and a couple of other sub-groups which are all concerned with issues of violence. And also two caucuses: the Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Bisexual Caucus; and the Women of Colour Caucus. So it has a lot of varied points of view. That led into my current work and the justice sub really became part of what I am doing now.

SB: Can you describe what exactly you are working on now?

PK: Basically I am on the VAWIR Committee as a committee member. I am there as an activist, I am there as a women's advocate and so certainly I use my academic knowledge to analyze what is going on – to ask questions of the systems. I am there committed to the research. But what happened was in about 1990, the police started a quantitative study about compliance with the VAWIR Policy. Every year they would do this quantitative study.

SB: Was that just a statistical study?

PK: Yes, just statistical, and they would look at the cases. They actually had a Simon Fraser University student come in and look at the files to see that there was compliance – and they dramatically dropped their non-compliance through this.

SB: What does that mean – “compliance”?

PK: It means that they were arresting and they were charging. So rather than just going in and saying it was a private issue, they were actually going in and charging. Or if not charging, they were recommending for charges in most cases, however, there is still a percentage of cases in which that doesn't happen. About two years ago, the police inspector who was presenting a report said, "Well, we're to this point, what we need now is to go on, and what we would like is a qualitative study."

However, what usually happens in research is that you come out with a bunch of recommendations and you give them to the systems people who look at them and say, "Maybe I'll do that one," and just shelve the rest. I thought it would be great if everybody was involved in the research, so when it was presented to the police to make the recommended changes, they themselves would have been involved at all stages of the research. Therefore the police would know that the research was not something that was just manipulated to make them look bad. [laughter]

Actually, if you go back to the work of Habermas, he talked about generalized discourse and then specialized discourse, and the generalized always taking precedence over the specialized. If you think about that in terms of what happens in the community, you have systems like the police and the criminal justice system, which have a discourse that is given more acceptance than that of women advocates or women in transition houses. So what we had were women-serving groups, groups of women who experience violence, and representatives from all levels of government, and what I wanted to do was bring them all together in a non-hierarchical situation where they would do the research. They would define what needed to be researched, and how to go about it and actually physically do it. And that is the stage where I am right now.

The research we are going to be doing will look at how the criminal justice system does and does not meet the safety expectations of women who have experienced violence. The women from the transition houses said, "Are you just going to ask women in the system?" To which we replied that we cannot do that because we would not get a full picture if we did. So we are looking at these groups of women: women who have never gone near the system; women who have gone to the system and a report was not written up, so they were cut off right at the beginning; and women who have gone through the system.

SB: The unofficial cases will be included as well?

PK: Yes, so I pivoted it on women for whom there wasn't a police report. That doesn't mean that the violence was not reported, just that the police did not record it. Now the other thing that we deal with so much is that there are whole populations out there that face many, many barriers in interacting with the criminal justice system.

First I wanted to look at differently-situated women in Vancouver in terms of their power differences. So you have white women differently situated from women of colour and women from diverse backgrounds. And also the two populations – those who didn't go near the system, and those that did go at some level through the system.

Next I wanted to look at the systemic barriers, so I gathered a representative sample. We are going to have aboriginal women, Iranian women, Latin American women, sex workers who have violence in their relationships, and lesbians (who virtually

do not go near the system because of homophobia, so they have reasons for not calling).

Because of the way the VAWIR Committee is set up, all of those groups have their advocates or groups that deal with issues in those communities. But what we did – and it took a long time to do it – is ask how do you ethically contact women, and who would contact them. This is participatory action research. We ourselves probably will not be doing the interviewing. What is actually proposed right now, is that the main interviewers would be in the communities. Therefore the person who is interviewed would have a choice of what community background she would like her interviewer to be from. We will have a number of interviewers whom we will train. The participants will also have the option of being interviewed in their own language. We are also very cognizant of the fact that we want a collaboration in writing up the historical/social/cultural/economic and political context because to understand the experience you have to have that write-up and we want to do that in collaboration with the communities themselves.

We have built-in ways that they can come back to the material, to the transcripts, and we want to develop ways that they can revisit that transcript. We also would like people from the community and the women themselves to be able to come back and look at the analysis before it gets published and to give an evaluation and have their voices reflected in that way. So if they say, “No that’s not right, that wouldn’t be what I would say was a proper analysis or even a proper analysis of my experience,” then we would respond to that. So it is participatory at all those different levels. We could perhaps develop an advisory group for a particular community so that we could have a better understanding to do the analysis. The most important thing about this research is that it is action research because of who we have at the table. Once we have identified something then the whole group (as an advocacy group) can make the changes – they write policy. Or, we could take it back to the justice sub and the justice sub can immediately start advocating for change. It is a powerful group because of how it is situated. They could start writing letters and actively saying, “This is what we want done.” It has successes; the DVU (the Domestic Violence Unit), is a result of people at that table.

SB: Do you find any resistance from the police systems at this point?

PK: Not in the research. They know what the research is. Sometimes I’m a little surprised at that because the issues are issues that we assume they wouldn’t want to address, like racism, sexism, and homophobia. But I think they are very sincere in this, so no, we don’t have problems with them at this point. I think they genuinely want to take part. I don’t think anybody has ever invited them to be incorporated into the research team. I don’t know if it has been done before – this is sort of a dream, this is my fantasy! [laughter] But it is so wonderful because the community has been researched out, they are sick and tired of research and academics doing research. I am in there as an academic but I am a part of a team; we are not doing a partnership here, really, we are all working together. But the community has had enough of people going in there and doing research and taking it away – they want action.

So it took a long time – certainly I wrote the proposal and they liked it, and I wrote it in collaboration with them. But now they have taken possession of it, it is becoming more and more of a team. Before it was me saying this, but now they are

saying, “Hey, we can do this.” It is a strategy for social change, it is not just research – it is for change. So with that type of commitment at least you have ground rules. What we are doing now is working on the terms of reference; how to solve disputes, how do we act together, who has responsibilities – and bringing all of this together. So we are working it out piece-by-piece, and developing a model so that next time when the issues come up we can just say we are going to go out and this is our target. We will have this mechanism in place so we are spending a lot of time developing the model. And believe me, the ethical code we are developing is much more rigorous than what is in the university because you have people who know the vulnerability of the women. And the women’s voices – they are in dialogue with the justice system. It is amazing because this is total feminist research and you have people there who you would not suspect would have anything to do with feminism. But they have all said, “This is great.”

SB: Would you say that what you are doing is quite different than a lot of research that goes on at the university?

PK: It is totally different than what goes on at the university because the university does not do social change. It is research that is being defined by the community, being done by the community, and they are the ones who are seeing it through, so they are putting it into action.

SB: Do you think it has as much clout as research done in the university by a tenured professor who is researching the same subject, but maybe not in the same way?

PK: I think it has a lot more clout, because your professor in Anthropology/Sociology would be removed. What we are doing is action, so we are basically not doing any more gathering of documentation – enough of documentation! We’ve got oodles and oodles of documentation that just sits there. What makes this unique is that it is strategy for change. It is not just to gather a bunch of information that is just going to sit. Women who have experienced violence do not need to be retraumatized for research gathering. The data is there. Our database will continue to grow, it will be a very rich database so I can imagine that academics would look at it with a great deal of envy. But the other part is that it will be owned and controlled by the community – it is not owned and controlled by the academics.

If you looked at our team and counted the number of academics – I suppose I am the only one there with a Ph.D. but there are at least four or five with M.A.s and many other different degrees there – and then went around and counted the number of years experience in doing research, and then went around and counted the number of years of being in the community working on this topic, you have got a far more knowledgeable and experienced team than you do with someone coming in from outside.

SB: This sounds like very new, innovative and empowering research. Do you think that you could ever go back to doing that type of removed academic university-based research?

PK: No, I don’t think I ever really did, and I don’t think any feminist ever really can. This

is the whole myth of objectivity. I don't think that is necessarily good research. I think what is good research is research where you really attempt to understand the experiences of the people. And I did that in Belfast. There, I went in with a broad topic and my topic became defined as I interacted with the community. It was the community that said, "Here is where you want to look for the essence of violence". And that is the one thing about feminist methodology that I think is so superior over this attempt to pretend distance and pretend that they don't have the prejudices, that they don't have biases going in. We all do. So I don't believe that the community does any less credible research than academics. In fact, I think that the community does more credible research because they know the issues; they know how to get to the people and the people can talk to them. And certainly, it took me a number of years to develop trust in the community because of the distrust that has resulted from past research which has been ... very shoddy. It was research that really did not respond to the community. It is called community research but it doesn't respond to what the community needs – it responds to what academics need. I believe that if you are not going to respond to the community in your research, then don't do it.

SB: How do you bring that into the classroom when you are teaching Anthropology/Sociology? My other major is History and often this is what the professors are trying to condition you to – the objective, removed researcher ...

PK: Yes they teach that model, and that is where feminist theorizing – even in Sociology – is barely scratching the surface. But certainly in Sociology, when they start realizing that they have to start looking at interconnections between race, class, sexuality and all of these issues, they are going to realize that their methods are not adequate to do that. I suppose Dorothy Smith is the opener in Sociology, because she was bringing the individual to Sociology, and opening the way to many subjective truths – rather than this pretended objective truth. I never had any problems in Anthropology because the person who was my advisor (who taught me methodology) showed me that hermeneutics involves types of understanding, and that everything is constructed – so all facts are constructed. Accepted truth as fact depends on who has the power to say what truth is.

And of course if you are in Belfast, you realize very, very quickly, that truth depends on where you are getting it from. I would go to marches and there would be an incident and I would see what was going on and I would hear from the community how they saw it and then I would hear from the officials how they saw it and I sometimes wondered if the officials even attended the same event that we did. Truth does not really exist – it is all how you construct it and of course, what power you have. Even in the sciences they are beginning to question this whole thing of objectivity. So if the sciences can do it, I don't know why the social sciences are so slow in adopting it. This is feminist theory, and feminist theory beyond the hegemonic feminist theories, and it is making more headway in terms of the disciplines. I know in Sociology it is at least squeaking in there. I am currently teaching a course on feminist theory – and I have men in my class too. The interest is there because they are finding out that if they are doing something with people, this whole objectivity, this whole abstract model in academia, isn't explaining anything. They are coming to the realization that they have got to do something else and they have got to start bringing in the subjective truths in order to

understand. So that is a long-winded answer to your question! [Laughter]

SB: Well, what have we missed ... yes, the question about other areas of your life. How does feminism come into other areas of your life?

PK: To tell you the truth, my theory allows me to be an activist. I am an activist in everything I do, in my classes – I cannot separate the two. Feminism has to be connected to activism. The important thing is to try to figure out how to go beyond postmodernism, recognizing differences, allowing voice, allowing different voices, equality and speaking and getting rid of power differences and who has voice. That has to happen, but at the end of the day, women still have to come with that strong voice and speak together demanding that the systems recognize that they have to take into account all of these systemic issues and differences before they start making policy.

One policy is not going to do it all unless they allow for diversity and we speak together. As a white woman, I have to learn – and I am learning. And that's the other thing. Learning to become an ally. I am working with an Aboriginal group of women who are trying to educate themselves on the criminal justice system and violence in general. What I'm doing is learning to share resources and learning to just be an ally. That is what white women have to learn to do; they have to learn that they cannot control, they have to learn to listen, they have to learn to give up that power and share it. I don't think that we are there yet. And I don't think I am there yet. I am in that whole process of re-learning how to work and to value and to say that my interpretation is not the only interpretation. I have to listen and support and validate and see that other voices get heard and not just mine.

SB: Do you find that difficult to do, not only because you are a white woman, but also because you are an educated woman? Does that make the dynamic more difficult?

PK: Yes, it is always there. You always have to recognize all your privilege – so the onus is on you and it is much harder to set aside those privileges or recognize those privileges and then just really work to be an ally. And ask people, "How can I help you?", and stop trying to take over their issue. "How can I help you get your voice heard?" So what you are doing is learning to subordinate yourself in the situation where they have power. You have to learn that and you have to make their voices a priority. But you always have to recognize your privilege, otherwise you are lying. And everybody knows that.

It is how you use that privilege. You are giving it to them. That is what I am doing in this research. I have academic privilege, and I can use that privilege if it is needed, I have resources, but it is their project – I am not taking ownership of it just because I have these privileges. I am one of the team and it took a long time for me to realize that. You want to have the community do it but you are also looking at it as an academic so you try to realize that you are doing that. You have to look at yourself all of the time. This is what we have to do as white women. There is so much racism that has to be overcome. Then we can start having a feminist movement that is going to work together and start making major changes. We are doing it now, but we are not doing it as well as we could.

SB: So you would call for more self-reflexive approaches?

PK: Absolutely, we have got the lip noises, now we have to make them have some substance, because believe me, women of colour, aboriginal women, lesbians – they hear our lip noises that lack conviction. We are going to have to realize that it is not good enough to say we have to recognize diversity and then go back to our white ways. We genuinely have to come to a realization about our privilege, what it is, how it oppresses others, and start getting beyond that. And that is hard, believe me, that is hard. You sure find out a lot about yourself that you didn't want to know. You are not as great as you think you are. But I'll tell you it is so rewarding.