

LOOKING FORWARD BY LOOKING BACK: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is in honor of 100 hundred years of American Caucasian working class women. From my grandmother, the “school ma'am” turned farmers wife, to my beloved mother, the lunchroom lady who spent her working years feeding the children, to this author, the lost little girl who never gave up, this work is a testimony to resilience in the face of adversity. Through rapidly shifting sociocultural eras, you have met your challenges and faced bravely your turning points; you have proven yourselves worthy. Though your job descriptions have expanded exponentially over these years, you have achieved your purpose as bedrock of home and family.

This dissertation was inspired by the magical, creative lyrics of Joni Mitchell’s “*Both Sides, Now*” which has meant so much to me throughout my life. Miraculously, Mitchell’s artistry has described the eras of my life in ways that I could never have expressed.

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Over the course of my lifetime many people have crossed my path. Each one of these individuals has presented an opportunity for self-reflection. Some have delivered much needed lessons, though not all lessons have been easy to receive. Yet, in the end, I am grateful for each and every one, for I have been made a better person through each encounter. Some individuals have come into my life and departed rather quickly; others have stayed a while. Occasionally, there are those who remained by my side for the entirety of my lifetime. But, for every person, whose names are too numerous to mention, I am grateful.

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ABSTRACT

PATRICIA HOLLAND LEVASSEUR

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This dissertation describes the uniqueness of the Caucasian working class woman's experience. Using autoethnographic methodology, this study examines three "turning points of identity" (as described by Anselm Strauss). Throughout three turning point eras in my personal story – namely, the eras of subjugation, professionalization, and liberation – I have used the theoretical lens of C. Wright Mills' *sociological imagination* to illumine the nexus of personal problems and public issues. Throughout, I have noted sociocultural forces that impacted my personal life.

Key findings of this dissertation include the persistence of a patriarchal hierarchy in predominantly female workplaces despite dramatic strides by feminist scholars, such as Dorothy E. Smith. Traditional family values, including the basic structure of the family much touted by conservative political factions, are by now so threadbare that they are unrecognizable in many instances. Andrew Cherlin, in his research on family and workplace, describes the dissonance and disparity experienced by the Caucasian working class woman raised to embrace traditional family values with the realities of family structures and workplace in recent years. In the rapidly changing eras since the 1970s, women have endured role stretch and structural strain due to the seeming impossibility to

live up to what was considered traditional views of family in a working class female environment. The job description of the Caucasian working class woman has undergone tremendous change. Women are now strongly, though implicitly, advised to remain youthful, marriageable, and employable well into their older years in a culture that lauds these characteristics above the traditional ones. Women are often engaged in work outside the home while continuing to discharge their responsibilities for a “second shift” work at home as described by Arlie Hochschild. The home front has been the traditional domain of women and little has changed despite their entry into the workforce where they are often the breadwinners of the family. This female breadwinner role has been reinforced with the rising unemployment rate which has affected men, making them no longer able, in many instances, to be the traditional sole breadwinners for the family. One other finding that applies to both men and women is that economic stagnation affects the family values of both men and women who are coequal victims of unemployment and underemployment.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Both Sides, Now

Rows and flows of angel hair
And ice cream castles in the air
And feather canyons everywhere
I've looked at clouds that way

But now they only block the sun
They rain and snow on everyone
So many things I would have done
But clouds got in my way

I've looked at clouds from both sides now
From up and down, and still somehow
It's cloud illusions I recall
I really don't know clouds at all

Moons and Junes and Ferris wheels
The dizzy dancing way you feel
As every fairy tale comes real
I've looked at love that way

But now it's just another show
You leave 'em laughing when you go
And if you care, don't let them know
Don't give yourself away

I've looked at love from both sides now
From give and take, and still somehow
It's love's illusions I recall
I really don't know love at all

Tears and fears and feeling proud
To say "I love you" right out loud
Dreams and schemes and circus crowds

I've looked at life that way
Oh but now old friends are acting strange
They shake their heads, they say I've changed
Well something's lost but something's gained
In living every day

I've looked at life from both sides now
From WIN and LOSE and still somehow
It's life's illusions I recall
I really don't know life at all

I've looked at life from both sides now
From up and down and still somehow
It's life's illusions I recall
I really don't know life at all.

--Joni Mitchell (1969)
Canadian musician, songwriter
Permission granted under FAIR USE
(See Appendix C)

There is growing consensus in scholarly research describing the existence of a chasm between the lived experiences of the middle and working classes. Social inequalities manifest across a broad spectrum: health, access to resources and social capital, racial and gender disparities, and educational access (Cherlin 2014).

While such concerns are far from novel, scholars point to the lived experiences of low-income women, particularly maladaptive responses to life experiences due to lack of opportunity, residual effects of childhood trauma, and differences in lived experiences of African-Americans and various immigrant groups. There is an ongoing struggle by feminists to gain equal footing in a patriarchal hierarchy which has permeated all sectors of US and global society (Smith 1974).

Since the 1970s, scholars (Cherlin 2014; Hochschild 1989; Smith 1974, and others) have talked about women's implicit dedication to reinventing themselves in order to keep pace with the ever-changing demands of the workplace. Rather than a workplace that changes to accommodate the needs of older workers, women (and men to a lesser extent) feel obliged to continue to act and look youthful well into old age. This is an element of "role stretch" that demands women to simultaneously appear in various capacities (Cherlin 2014; Hochschild 1989; and Smith 1999).

The struggle continues as women discharge duties as homemakers, mothers, and often primary breadwinners for their families. Many Caucasian working class women find themselves in this category (Cherlin 2006). Battles over traditional roles of women are ongoing with seemingly little progress toward alleviating women's predicament of what is dubbed *The Second Shift* (Hochschild 1989).

A chasm separates what one knows from the reality experienced by many working class individuals (Smith 1974, 1999). The so-called *traditional family values* mentality is a mere fiction today for many working class families (Cherlin 2014). Such fiction is useful, in reality, as a propaganda tool. A mélange of parenting styles predominate. One or both working class parents are often away from the home for a significant portion of the day; both incomes are required just to make ends meet. There is no longer a choice for the woman to stay at home to nurture the children and to provide an emotional home base for the family like there was in previous eras (Cherlin 2004, 2006, 2014; Hochschild 1989; Smith 1974,

1999; 2014). As a result, children are frequently left with no clear-cut parenting model upon which they can draw later in life.

Since the latest wave of the massive entry of working class women into the workforce in the 1970s, the workplace has changed dramatically (Cherlin 2014). Not all changes have been beneficial for women. Beneath change lies embedded a patriarchal hierarchy. One prime example is the nursing profession: a predominantly female occupation dominated by a top down agenda which gives women little voice in decision-making concerning work or family issues (Cherlin 2014). Another example of the top-down patriarchal hierarchy exists in academia (Smith 1974, 1999, 2001, 2005).

Working class women go through their lives humbly accepting these circumstances as just the way things are (Cherlin 2014). The decimation of union representation in the post-World War II era has exacerbated the inequalities in which women are entangled (Cherlin 2014). In many cases, women are grateful to even have a job, frequently reminded of this by employers, and are fearful that if they ask for assistance due to family needs or even if they ask for a well-earned vacation their jobs will just disappear upon their return. Thus, even within the bounds of a profession such as nursing, there exists no real job security for women in the US (DeVault 2013).

Feminist researchers have called attention to “intensive parenting” techniques as practiced by many middle class families (Hays 1996; Smith 1999). Such practices have been advised for working class women as the ideal way to raise well-rounded children. Shouted

from every mountaintop by well-meaning medical and psychiatric professionals, social workers, and teachers that were known personally to me through professional contacts, is the lauded model of “intensive mothering” wherein a woman devotes herself to the role of nurturer and chief provider of all the children’s needs, often to the exclusion of her personal needs and aspirations. This mothering ideal leaves the working class female feeling guilty and ashamed that she cannot provide such a level of nurturance for her offspring (Hays 1996; Hochschild 1994; O’Reilly 2007). Even the children in the working class families promote this parenting style. When they attend school they establish friendships with children of the middle class for whom parents provide intensive mothering which provides many opportunities, including access to cultural events, seemingly endless time for discussions, ballet lessons, musical instructions, and frequent excursions and vacations with great amounts of time for togetherness with the family. Working class children come home and ask their parents why they cannot have these same advantages and opportunities (Hays 1996; O’Reilly 2007). How does a parent who is doing everything in her power to keep a roof over the heads of these children respond to these innocent queries? As children approach adolescence, these queries become less innocent and more accusatory. Though many researchers have examined the above tensions, I will use the critical social theory of C. Wright Mills to situate my personal life in the context of history.

In many instances, the turbulent 1980s disrupted family traditions among the working class Caucasian society in the US (Bowen 1988; Creed 2000; Gingrich-Philbrook 2005; Hartman 1992; Sullivan 2004). Working class families have been

consumed by just making ends meet, leaving little time to engage with the greater community, either religious or secular (Bowen 1988; Creed 2000; Hartman 1992; Hochschild 1989; Hyman and Summers 2004; Standing 2011; Sullivan 2004). Therefore, I explore not only my own lived reality but that of other Baby Boomers as we enter our twilight years. It is widely known and undeniable that the Baby Boom generation has contributed greatly to the technological revolution. Among these contributions are the personal computer, greatly expanded internet capabilities available for home use. Putting a man on the moon was one spectacular contribution which everyone was aware of. It may also be surmised that Caucasian working class family's self-perceptions have been transformed as work has assumed the prime focus for both men and women in contemporary North American society (Cherlin 2014).

Using the sociological methodology of autoethnography and the theoretical approach of Anselm Strauss' "turning points of identity" (Strauss 1959, 1992), I will highlight three periods in my personal life during which my perception of myself underwent dramatic changes. This dissertation combines both micro and macro approaches in its examination of my three turning points of identity and the transformative periods in my personal life that followed each. It is interesting to note that when one is embroiled in massive, often painful, personal transitions, cultural forces tend to take a backseat to the very concrete issues at hand. Only by looking back on these turning points is it possible to point to their effect on one's individual life.

While it is obvious that a one-case study does not provide a basis for generalization to a broader sector of the population, I do intend to provide an interpretive analogy to the lived experiences of other members of the Baby Boom generation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What makes the contemporary Caucasian working class female experience unique?
2. How do sociocultural forces impact the lived experience of the Caucasian working class female?

A significant body of literature addresses the struggles, limitations, and dearth of opportunity for minority groups in the US (Cherlin 2004, 2006, 2014; Creed 2000; Ellison 1947; Ehrenreich 2001; Liebow 1967; McGee 2005; and Terkel 1972, among many others). Though much is written concerning the Caucasian working class female experience, this dissertation offers my unique autoethnographic perspective which shines a light with which the past, once dimmed by “clouds” can now be seen” (Mitchell 1969). Only through an improved perspective of prior circumstances and transitions (turning points of identity) can one see clearly the path ahead.

It is my desire that the reader of this dissertation will note my emphasis on those sociologists who have tried to make social research relevant to society. The endeavors of C. Wright Mills, Anselm Strauss, Dorothy Smith, Arlie Hochschild, and Andrew Cherlin have been influential in this dissertation. It must be said that none of their theories would exist without their classical forebears, upon whom they relied for their insights.

RATIONALE

This dissertation opens a window to gender, race, ethnicity, and class differences as perceived by the working class woman in the mainly urban US society (See examples of race, ethnicity, and class differences by Ellison (1947), Liebow (1967), Terkel (1972), and Ehrenreich (2001) among others. Women continue to perform their roles as mothers, breadwinners, and instillers of morals in offspring while participating in a predominantly patriarchal hierarchical tradition in the workplace (Hochschild 1994; Hyman and Summers 2004; Sullivan 2004).

I will focus on the contemporary Caucasian feminine working class's lived experience while highlighting systemic inadequacies that, in many cases, exacerbate the struggles of low-income women. It is hoped that development sociologists, feminist/gender scholars, activists, policy makers, and researchers may benefit from the findings of a working class mother, author of this dissertation research. The overarching hope in this dissertation effort is that readers from the working class may see a validation and much deserved honor for their daily efforts and struggles to work and raise a family.

This study further demonstrates the importance and increased clarification afforded by qualitative research, including this dissertation. Findings compiled through qualitative research will amply demonstrate these stressors to the family dynamics that quantitative data can obscure.

PLAN OF WORK

Five chapters comprise this dissertation. Chapter One provides a background summary of points to be discussed in the study, its purpose, significance, and a plan of work. Chapter Two reviews and summarizes a wide variety of literature on the transformations in women's *lived experience* since the 1970s and is divided into five sub-sections, each describing a particular theoretical focus. Chapter Three describes how, through an autoethnographic approach, I connect my personal experience (micro) with public events (macro). Chapter Four begins with a description of my proud heritage in the working class and, thereafter, presents my personal story during three transitional "turning points of identity": subjugation, professionalization, and liberation - and eras they inaugurated. Chapter Five consists of the interpretation and discussion of the results presented in the previous chapters which concludes with a summary of the main findings, implications, contributions, and limitations - offering suggestions for future research. An epilogue follows wherein I try to plot a course for an unknown future based on the new insights gained from this dissertation process.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The extant literature covers the massive sociocultural transformations occurring since the 1970s. Many of these transformations are highly applicable to women's *lived experience*. Some are particularly applicable to my personal experience. In this section I will examine ways in which cultural transformations impacted a Caucasian working class female from Southern US origins: the author.

The first section describes the theoretical social research lens of C. Wright Mills (1959) who coined the term *sociological imagination*. Mills underlines the connection between personal troubles and social issues. This notion is pivotal to my dissertation. However, curiously, when critical events of my life were in progress, I had only a liminal awareness of the impacts of cultural forces on my personal decisions and reactions.

The second section focuses on the "turning points of identity" theory of Anselm Strauss as it applies to my personal lived experience (Strauss 1959). Three turning point eras of my life: subjugation, professionalization, and liberation - are seen through the lens of Strauss.

The seminal work of radical critical feminist social theorist Dorothy E. Smith is reviewed in the third section. Smith's theorizing brings to light the patriarchal hierarchy in which women's lives are embroiled (Smith 1974, 1999, 2001, 2005). As a nursing

professional, I witnessed, first-hand, the patriarchal structure in the profession that, in many instances, failed to have compassion for women's expanded role as a member of the workforce while having responsibility for the home and family. The top-down approach is present though often subliminal in dictating women's lives at their very core.

The fourth section reviews literature stemming from the work of Arlie Hochschild and others who speak of women's ongoing dual roles as homemaker and worker. Hochschild's work describes the experience of middle class women who are in the workforce. My personal experience as a working class female is vastly different.

Section five examines research by Andrew Cherlin and others on family and workplace experiences, focusing on the low-income women's experiences. Mention is made of the differences between the Caucasian experience and those of African-Americans and various immigrant groups. This dissertation comes from the perspective of the Caucasian working class female for a different, though no less valid, experience that needs a voice.

C. WRIGHT MILLS – SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

C. Wright Mills, born in Waco, Texas on August 28, 1916, is known as a radical critical social theorist. One biographer (Horowitz 1983) has called him an American utopian. Mills' relatively brief career spanned the inter-war years until his early death in 1962. Mills was born into a working class Texas family. He was not a born radical. His influences included John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, and especially Karl Mannheim. His critique of sociology expressed the view that the methodology used in the social sciences has leaned

toward that of the physical sciences. Mills criticized the dominant academic position of American sociology as that of systematic theorizing which produces textbooks for students rather than true insight into sociocultural issues that would be of benefit to the public (Horowitz 1983).

The term *sociological imagination* arose, in part, from Mills' disdain for acceptance of the status quo. Mills defined the sociological imagination as follows: "The sociological imagination.....in considerable part consists of the capacity to shift from one perspective to another, and in the process to build up an adequate view of a total society and of its components" (Mills 1959:211). He further stated:

Know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues – and in terms of the problems of history-making. Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles – and to the problems of individual life. Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of societies occur; and within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time (1959:226).

He perceived a public sphere in post-World War II in the United States as being indifferent to US politics. Mills stated: "No social study that does not come back to the

problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within a society, has completed its intellectual journey"(1959:6). Thus, he saw clearly the intersection of private troubles with public issues. Mills proposed that by using the sociological imagination we can see our way to a better future for society as a whole.

Mills is known as an American realist. He witnessed a discrepancy between his own version of reality and that offered by conventional sociological lore. He called attention to the emptiness of abstract empiricism. By emptiness, Mills referred to the regard more often on methodology to the exclusion, in many instances, of social studies. He is quoted as saying, "I have been intellectually, politically, and morally alone" (1959:230). According to Mills, the *sociological imagination* involves the capacity to shift from one perspective to another - from political to psychological views and vice versa. He viewed personal knowledge as being at the root of the sociological imagination. A leap of imagination releases the individual from a debilitating sense of personal moral fault, providing individuals with a basis upon which to build solidarity and community with others who are frequently discouraged by the dominant power structure that encourages divisiveness and a heightened sense of individual responsibility (Mills 1956).

Mills' *sociological imagination* continues to inspire and inform current sociological research. In *The Criminological Imagination*, Jock Young (2011) describes his vision of criminology as it could be while simultaneously criticizing what it has become. Using the theory of C. Wright Mills, Young emphasizes the importance of using the *sociological imagination* to critique mainstream criminology. Young's work is but one example of how

the sociological imagination may be of use to suggest changes to a broken system. Young argues that “it is tempting to look down at the poor and supposedly more problematic parts of society” (2011:viii). This traditional practice inevitably distances the subject from the researcher. Mills’ sociology was a stance against traditional sociology. Young’s aim is to examine “the way in which Mills’ predictions have panned out today, and to gauge the extent to which his warnings have been heeded” (2011:1). His argument is that much effort has been expended to quantify the criminal justice system by counting heads of incarcerated individuals. Yet, while this is going on, little has been done to eradicate the scourge of over-incarceration which has beset the US population. The excessive criminalization of human lives is but one example of how those in powerful positions avoid dealing with cultural issues that could perhaps shift the balance of power toward a stance of greater fairness and equity for more individuals. Young’s work is meaningful to me in many ways. I worked as a nurse in a penitentiary and witnessed, first hand, the breakdown in our criminal justice system that often results in the warehousing of individuals whose families are irreparably damaged through the incarceration of their family member.

ANSELM STRAUSS - TURNING POINTS /MILESTONES IN IDENTITY

Anselm Strauss's classic *Mirrors and Masks: The Search for Identity* (1959) has guided the study of both collective and individual identities. He advocated using qualitative methods of analysis. Like Mills, Anselm Strauss was influenced by the theory of action of renowned scholars John Dewey and George Herbert Mead. Strauss adds his voice to

the critique of functionalism and positivism. Thus, Strauss follows Mills in his critique of the social science trends of continual and seemingly aimless data gathering (Strauss 1959, 1992).

Strauss emphasizes “grounded theory” research method which focuses on awareness and sensitivity to the complexities and reality in social research endeavors. Linking individual identity with collective patterns highlights the need for intense examination of both personal and historical data. His work points to “the impossibility of understanding individual identity without understanding collective activity” (Strauss 1959:2). The personal experiences of both men and women must be viewed as embedded within a matrix and not simply a self-creation in isolation from the society. Included in this theory is an individual's conception of the past. Strauss defines identity as connected with fateful appraisals made of oneself - by oneself and by others.

“Everyone presents herself or himself to the others and sees himself or herself in the mirrors of their judgments” (Strauss 1959:11). For Strauss, an examination of turning points of identity and eras that follow them helps classify life patterns. Such classifications serve to define expectations and relations between ourselves and circumstances. These expectations rest upon remembrances of past experiences.

According to Strauss, change occurs not only in the environment and culture but within ourselves. Turning points are markers in personal development wherein a person stops in his or her tracks to take stock, to re-evaluate and revise. The resulting revision of identity may be significant to other persons of the same generation, occupation, or social class. Since experience and interpretation are both socially patterned, so will be the

development of personal identity. Thus, new goals appear and old ones fade away in keeping with the developing individual persona (Strauss 1959).

Each person's life account contains a symbolic ordering of events (Strauss 1959, 1992). The sense that one makes of one's life rests heavily upon the concepts and interpretations brought to bear upon past acts which make up one's life history. Interpretations, if convincing, result in some kind of continuous meaning assigned one's overall life experience. Different motives may drive an individual during different periods. However, "the overriding purpose of one's life and that of others, may yet seem to retain a certain thematic unity and coherence" (Strauss 1959:147). Events perceived as deviant may be discounted as belonging to an earlier, more immature phase of one's life. Such events may be chalked up to escapes, releases, or mere foolhardiness.

The occurrences of constancy in identity rest in the eye of the beholder. Often, family and friends maintain a fixed idea of a person, formed at a particular era of his or her life. Their external ideas change little over the years despite dramatic changes that may actually occur during an individual's maturation process. Transformations of identity, including coming to terms with oneself, involve an individual becoming something other than what he or she once was (Strauss, 1959, 1992). Such transformation is irreversible; there is no going back. One may look back, but one can evaluate the past only from the new vantage point. A realization surfaces that one is no longer the person that one once was. This shift often signals progress. An incident of critical importance (turning point) may be preceded by a succession of smaller "milestones" wherein the process of change, occurring over a period of

time, culminates in a dramatic shift in self-concept. This shift is often followed by a period of quasi-withdrawal symptoms. When one is able to resist the temptation to backslide into the old pattern, then a transformation is signaled. When one is no longer even tempted, then one has progressed even further. For example, religious conversion often entails the death of old desires. The final recognition that these issues are really dead is often followed by a ritual burial, such as baptism in the Christian religions. Other ritualistic burials are often manifested by a revisiting of old haunts - actually or symbolically (Strauss 1959, 1992).

DOROTHY E. SMITH – THE WOMAN’S STANDPOINT

Dorothy E. Smith assumes a stance similar to the earlier critical social theory of C. Wright Mills, differing only in her feminist viewpoint. Smith engages her audience by questioning its personal experiences of the world while simultaneously questioning how its personal views are experienced through the voice of ruling patriarchal relations (Smith 1999). Working as a sociologist in academia, she quickly observed the woman's standpoint as a systematically neglected space. Men appear in the world as a necessary and vital presence (Smith 1974). Yet it is not sufficient to supplement established sociology by merely addressing what has been left out, overlooked, or even by making sociological issues of the relevancies of the world of women. Doing so merely extends the authority of existing sociological practices. Making women's sociology a mere addendum to that of the ruling relations of men is not enough because it fails to account for the separation between the two worlds; it does not account for or analyze the relations between these worlds.

Difficulties are two-fold according to Smith's perspective. The first is found in the methodology of sociology. Its current conceptual schemes are based on a male dominant social universe despite the fact that women have participated in its formation (Smith 1974; 1999). There is a disjuncture between how women find and experience the world with the theoretical concepts and the schemes available with which to think of them. A second difficulty arises when the two worlds and two separate bases of knowledge fail to stand in equal relation. Thus, the world is constituted with men standing in authority over women. The effect imposes the concepts and terms in which the world of men is thought onto the concepts and terms in which the world of is thought. Therefore, women are alienated from their experience (Smith 1999).

The profession of sociology is a universe that has been historically occupied primarily by men; it is their territory (Smith 1974). Institutions which lock sociology into structures inhabited by men are those same institutions which lock women into their oppressed situation. To unlock the latter will lead to an unlocking of the former. What then becomes possible, though by no means inevitable, is less a shift in subject matter than a different conception of its relevance as a means to understand both female and male lived experience in corporate capitalist society (Smith 1974, 1999, 2001, 2005).

Currently, a woman's world is bifurcated both traditionally and as a matter of occupational practice in our society (Smith 1974). The governing conceptual mode is appropriated by men. The world is organized in the "natural" attitude wherein the home is appropriated by, or assigned to, women (Smith 1974). Changes have occurred over time; yet

change has not necessarily led to a more equal division of labor between men and women. Despite great strides made by women, their further advancement is persistently blocked as demonstrated by the bedrock ruling relations found in texts and in educational practices (Cherlin 2014; Smith 1974, 1999, 2001).

A major principle in Smith's work is to make explicit what she "just knows" rather than what is available in print from the hierarchical establishment of sociology in which she finds herself (Smith 1999). She argues that a woman's perspective is vastly different from that of a man. Her goal, to serve the needs of the woman's point of view, is done by highlighting the critical need for a woman to know who she is, coupled with knowledge of how she relates with others in a variety of ways.

Smith's goal is to direct women's gaze toward the social as an ongoing symphony of people's activities which neither reduce the social to distinct individual properties nor serves to form a blob that blends all individuals into one supra-individual phenomenon (Smith 1999). Smith's *writing the social* always begins from where people are. Discoveries include evidence of the relations that generate multiple sites of diverse experience. From these diverse sites, new dimensions, organization, and organizing power can be expressed (1999). Beginning sociological investigation with the sense of a problem or of "something going on, some disquiet" is where the process of *writing the social* seeks to discover how the pieces of the puzzle are interconnected. Thus, from just having "this feeling" that there was something there, one proceeds toward the goal of making it clear for oneself (Smith 1999). Thus, sociology, so conceived, does not begin with an exhaustively developed and comprehensive

theory (Smith 1999). It goes forward as a work of discovery employed by an increasing number of sociologists using ethnographic methods.

Ruling relations have been particularly effective in ensuring, overall, that whatever knowledge is produced is not oriented toward the needs and interests of the mass of people but rather to the needs and interests of patriarchal ruling relations (Smith 1999). Since the 1960s, the women's movement has struggled against the ruling relations because these relations enact a gendered hierarchy. The contemporary women's movement has struggled to make women's voices heard. Despite these efforts, women's voices continue to be repressed and skewed by the male dominant discourse.

Smith (1999:45) cites an anonymous poet who simply describes the problems encountered by women as they write the social through ethnographic work.

As I was going up the stairs
I met a man who wasn't there
He wasn't there again today
I wish to god he'd go away (p. 45)

Marjorie DeVault, in her 2013 article entitled "Institutional Ethnography: A Feminist Sociology of Institutional Power," draws attention to Smith's work - specifically to its current elaboration into many areas of institutional ethnographic work. Smith's theoretical work makes clear "sociology for women" can be used more generally as "sociology for people." DeVault argues, with Smith, that an exploration of the problems of any social standpoint must begin a narration which can result in changes for the better.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Smith and many other feminist scholars including Walkerdine, Wilding, Wolf, and Wurtzel, to name a few, were intent on an exploration of a distinctly gendered organization of work in which women maintained a supportive role for men in varying racial and class locations. Smith revises her own theory in *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005). She calls attention to the social coordination of "ruling relations" which is also repeated in textual form. Productive use of a myriad of varieties of documents coupled with modern methods of ethnographic inquiry has been derived from Smith's insights (DeVault 2013).

DeVault highlights healthcare as one milieu in which Smith's principles could be used directly, especially as they focus on "adjusting the mindset of nurses" to their ever- expanding role which now must consider much more than excellence in practice (DeVault 2013:337). The expanded nursing function often includes administrative and profit-making concerns as co-equal with patient care. Thus, Smith's theory opens an avenue whereby nurses may improve their patient advocacy role through having their voices heard by an administration whose primary goal is profit. Smith and her many followers ground their sociology in everyday life - in nursing, motherhood, immigrant issues - all milieus in which the work of everyday life must be kept in view during vast social transformation. This ongoing transformation, affecting every sector of society, is the harbinger of a different world wherein new accountabilities must be considered.

DeVault (2013) draws attention to the work of Dorothy Smith and Alison Griffith, a former student (2005) who, together, compiled a collection of essays thematic of Dorothy

Smith's theories. A chapter written by Griffith, entitled "Mothering, Schooling, and Children's Development," is particularly applicable to this dissertation project. Griffith's work may be equated with the work of Arlie Hochschild on work/life balance and mothering. Griffith focuses on child development discourse, mothering discourse, and child-centered educational discourse. Together, these subjects rely on particular kinds of caring and educational work commonly undertaken by women. Griffith's point is that all mothers do not participate in the same way in this discourse. The mothering practices recommended in the middle class-focused mothering discourse depend upon the availability of personal, social, economic, and educational resources within the family - resources on which a mother may draw to organize her work experience. Some mothers, typically those in the middle class, appear to engage easily with the mothering discourse in their childcare practices. Working-class mothers do not describe their family work organization in the same terms. These expectations make a difference, creating a dichotomy of views, and leads to confusion for both mothers and children as to their expectations. Frustration on the home front often occurs as a result of these differences in expectations. While Griffith focuses particularly on teaching mothers how to participate more effectively in their child's schooling, the applicability of this teaching simply falls on "deaf ears" for mothers who are occupied outside the home for the greater part of the day, earning a living for the family with rarely any time left over to focus on children's education other than assuring that the child's homework is done.

ARLIE HOCHSCHILD – TRANSITIONS IN WOMEN'S ROLES - *THE SECOND SHIFT*

Hochschild (1989) sheds light on the struggles of two-career households to find the correct balance of time and energy for jobs, children, and marriage. Hochschild's personal experience makes her sympathetic to the difficulties experienced by dual-career households. She highlights dramatic transformations at both personal and societal levels of mainly middle-class working parents in America today.

Hochschild's work is written for a middle class reader; therefore, it fails to capture struggles unique to the working class experience. The working class sector of the population has struggled through the same sociocultural changes of the 1980s, yet the effects on them are dramatically different (Cherlin 2014). Nonetheless, Hochschild's work contains elements that resonate with all couples, despite class association. In this respect, her work contains a message which recognizes the changing socioeconomic culture in which women have been plunged, some by choice, others through deteriorating economic circumstances. The author points to the attitudes of men toward their wives as they enter the workforce. Depending upon the way a man is raised, he may possess traditional ways of perceiving a "woman's place." This factor alone has led to dramatic struggles between marriage partners. Many times such marriages end in divorce.

Working to support the family, to provide care and nurturance for children, and to keep up with the "normal" housekeeping duties, women often work the equivalent of a double shift (Hochschild 1989). It is no surprise that many women cave under the burden of such enormous responsibility. Resorting to reliance on the government for subsistence is the

only way these women can maintain their traditional, nurturing, caregiving role while faced with being encouraged by well-meaning friends, teachers, medical professionals, and even family members to be more attentive to their children. Many women give up in their attempts to be what has come to be called “supermoms” who are all things to all people (Hochschild 1989).

Society has seemingly devalued the work of the home by considering women as inferior simply because they engage in this devalued work (Hochschild 1989). Fathers also pay an emotional cost but in a different way. For the father, the emotional struggle is in coming to grips with his wife’s rapidly evolving role. Mothers, on the other hand, as the main managers of the second shift home front, become the “heavies” the “time and motion agents” of the family and work speedup. They hurry the children through their daily rounds: "hurry up and eat...," "hurry up and get into your pajamas...," and, thus, often become the targets of children's aggression later on (1989:109).

Micki McGee, in *Self-Help, Inc.* (2005), points to the incessant demands upon women to re-create themselves physically to keep pace with their dramatic new roles in society. “Contemporary women are not only permitted but expected to develop themselves in work outside the domestic sphere” (McGee 2005:15). This once revolutionary ideal of male individual autonomy and self-invention is now extended to women, producing contradictory outcomes. We live in a world that seemingly devalues the labor of caring for and shaping others in every practical and material way while simultaneously characterizing these labors as private and “priceless.” Today’s woman is urged to develop and “invent herself” to

accommodate herself to suit the shifting requirements of a volatile labor market while paradoxically finding some way of cultivating an “authentic self” that is unaffected by rapidly changing economic times.

In this increasingly anxious scenario, individuals are advised not only to work longer and harder but also to invest in themselves, manage themselves, and continuously improve themselves (McGee (2005). The less predictable and controllable the life course has become, the more individuals have been urged to chart their own courses, to “master” their own destinies by re-making themselves in a frantic search for one’s “true calling” (McGee 2005). This call to action is reminiscent of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber 1958) and the biblically originated command to find one’s true calling or lifelong work.

Sullivan, in the article “Changing Gender Practices within the Household: A Theoretical Perspective” (2004), points to a growing body of literature documenting changes in gender practices among heterosexual couples within the domestic sphere. Controversy remains, and is perhaps growing, over whether these changes should be interpreted as merely adjustments occurring in response to changes in the public sphere or as more meaningful indications of change in gender ideologies and relations in the domestic sphere.

As reported by Hyman and Summers (2004) “Lacking Balance? Work-Life Practices in the Modern Economy,” efforts have been made in the UK through a lightly-regulated approach to help employees balance their work and domestic lives. The concept of “balance” itself is arguably problematic since there is a need to recognize that balance can have both objective and subjective meanings and measurements that vary among individuals. The rather

wide range of policies that have been assumed under the heading of “family-friendly” or “work-life balance” defies precise definition. This suggests that potentially vastly different provisions may be applied to different circumstances. Thus, it is questionable whether any consistent application or even clarification of policies has been addressed. With such conflicting agendas, the limited scope in practice is not surprising concerning policies for this work-life balance.

Hochschild’s findings helped me frame my own lived experience and its conflicts and disjunctions in terms of “second shift” with a working class twist. Through her work I was able to fully appreciate, perhaps for the first time, the lack of personal power available for me as a single mother, breadwinner, wearing multiple hats, to do any better than I actually did to hold my family intact while doing honor to the profession of nursing.

ANDREW CHERLIN – FAMILY AND WORKPLACE CHANGES

Andrew Cherlin, in *Labor’s Love Lost* (2014) describes the “rise and fall” of a distinctive kind of home life: the working class family. Beginning in the early 1800s during industrialization of the American economy, numbers of working women rapidly accelerated both in Europe and in the United States. Along with industrialization was an exodus from rural communities. This migration to urban centers to take industrial jobs embraced a deeply gendered form of family life. Men took factory work while women's focus was on maintaining the home and care of children's needs; all while managing on a meager income (Cherlin 2014).

Life was anything but easy during this period. Families were large. There was no gas, no electricity, no home appliances, no phone, and no indoor plumbing. Thus, “women's work” was much harder (Cherlin 2014). Twenty-first century women can scarcely imagine the intensity of women's labor during that era. Women did contribute even then to the family income even then by taking in boarders who paid to live in their home, perhaps even eating meals with the family and by selling handcrafts and food items out of their first floor windows. Rarely did these women work for wages outside the home. Sons were expected to take jobs at an early age, often between the ages of 12 and 14. This period was before compulsory school attendance laws raised the age of employability to 16. Sons were expected to turn over their entire pay to the parents. Daughters were expected to either work for wages (they too turning over their pay to their parents) or to help their mothers at home (Cherlin 2014).

The post-World War II period witnessed the height of the fortunes of the working class family. The average industrial worker's wage more than doubled in purchasing power from 1950 to 1970 according to Cherlin (2014). This allowed, for the first time, large numbers of working class families to attain the middle class ideal of the male breadwinner family with men doing the most earning while wives focused on homemaking, child-rearing, and emotional support, with perhaps some part-time work mixed in. This era continues to hold an out-sized place in collective memory, especially that of current neoconservatives. Reality, however, is vastly different. This period is now seen to be a historical exception. In addition, it is now seen that these years can be interpreted as the peak years of American

capitalism. Income inequality was at a historic low while industrial workers' wages were high. This was the Caucasian experience.

It is worth noting that the historical African-American experience was different since the males were a lesser part of the lives of their families (Ellison 1947; Liebow 1967). Thus, the Caucasian cultural ideals mentioned above were less relevant. African-American women were always expected to work outside the home; first in the fields as slaves, then as sharecroppers indebted to their landlords (another form of slavery) (Cherlin 2014). Later, African-American women were engaged in domestic work as servants or washerwomen to Caucasian households. The reasons for such a divergence in roles of women are easy to discern. There was simply not a job market in industry for the African-American male. Only after World War II did this situation begin to change. African-American men began to find factory work, and African-American women started to move away from domestic service.

This scenario began to rapidly change in the early 1970s. The peak of the industrial economy began to stagnate. With these rapid changes in the industrial growth also came a shift in the conception of family (Cherlin 2014). By the 1980s and thereafter, many manufacturing jobs simply disappeared, being exported to overseas factories. Those jobs not exported were often computerized. Times were difficult for the traditional American male traditional breadwinner. If that was not bad enough, times were even more difficult and stressful for immigrant men, regardless of their country of origin. It was during this period that women began to enter the workforce in increasing numbers. The difference was that now

women were obligated to work to maintain their families, often as sole breadwinner, when faced with their husbands' unemployment (Cherlin 2014).

There is widespread agreement among family researchers and practitioners that there exists a rich diversity of interpretations of what makes up family values (Bowen 1988; Creed 2000). Values, perceptions, needs and behaviors are increasingly diverse. For example, ethnicity is a vital force in American society as a major means of group identification as well as a major determinant of family patterns, values, and interactions (Bowen 1988). Today we have blended families, same-sex parented families, and non-married couples who simply choose to share accommodations for economic or social reasons outside the bonds of traditional wedlock. Real families are comprised of as many different dynamics as one can possibly imagine, including single-parent households, same-sex households, and dual worker households, among many others. Thus, there is no longer a dominant traditional model that determines the functioning of a family.

Broadly defined, values are organized sets of preferences for how individuals wish to conduct their lives (Creed 2000). These preferences serve as the basis for choice and a guide for actions. Problems arise when there is conflict about what family members value or expect as far as outcomes in family relationships. Such values and expectations are derived from each individual's own history and experiences of family while growing up. For example, if a family member wishes to have the normative template of the "Leave-it-to-Beaver (Clever) type household" (Bochner and Ellis 2002) that has a mom and dad and three balanced meals on the table daily when in reality, either one or both parents are obligated to work often

overlapping shifts, perhaps even at low wages, making it impossible to have the entire family gather around the table, or even to afford food for a healthy diet, this expectation may result in conflict between values and realities.

Gerald Creed, in “Family Values and Domestic Economies” (2000), has linked American family structure with economic activity. He points to consumerism as the bedrock of our economy. What is known is that the post-World War II period in American capitalistic society has undergone tremendous economic changes that have greatly shaped families. In other words, fictionalized ideals and composite families, such as the Cleavers, the Nelsons, and the Huxtables of 1960s to 1980s television popularity, have become more real than reality itself, merely exacerbating the sense of familial dysfunction. Thus, the collective anxiety created by these developments makes the family a target of popular concern and ripe for political posturing.

This family identity dysfunction leads to the increasing discourse on family values as linked to political processes since the early 1990s. An interesting example stems from an editorial written by Hartman (1992) wherein is highlighted the then-popular television sitcom *Murphy Brown*. The star, Murphy, openly challenges the conception of a traditional family by choosing to have a child with no supportive spouse in the picture. At the same time of the airing of this television sitcom, Vice President Dan Quayle used this television program as an argument for traditional family values, part of the conservative Republican Party platform of the 1992 campaign.

The conditions of the working class family are different. The struggles of working class parents, or even a single parent, have seldom been described (Cherlin 2014). My dissertation expresses the unique concerns and troubles of this large, though often overlooked, sector of the population. These troubles have fallen largely on the shoulders of working women who are often the sole breadwinners. It is upon their shoulders that Hochschild's "second shift" mainly falls most heavily. Faced with few, if any, options, the children in these families grow up confused about what a family should be. Often, the absent (for work) parent or parents have failed to adequately bond with their children. This has left an entire generation of young people feeling abandoned (Cherlin 2014).

Working class parents of today grow old harboring feelings of grief and guilt because they were unavailable for their children through no fault of their own. Led on by cultural shifts, they were merely acting in response to the currents in the economy and the shifting gender roles that have occurred since the 1970s (Cherlin 2014). Cherlin argues that economic conditions are an important driver of marriage patterns. He posits that any successful labor policy must have a labor-market component.

Family life is better for some and worse for others. Thus, it may be seen that cultural ideals are largely at the root of both family and workplace societal issues. The segment of the population hardest hit by recent rapid cultural changes is the children of the industrial working class (Burton and Cherlin 2009; Cherlin 2014;).Lack of opportunities in the middle class labor market signal the development of new patterns of family with their own social costs: children facing insecurity and instability and adults drifting away from religion and

civic-group membership. What is gone is time. The dearth of time has led to an individual focused on family and workplace (Cherlin 2014).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

METHODS

According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013: 201), autoethnography is “a form of autobiographical narrative that explores the writer’s own experience of life. It is an approach in which the researcher/subject draws upon his or her experience, story, and self-narrative to examine and connect with the social context.” Thus, autoethnography derives largely from a social constructivist paradigm.

Carolyn Ellis (2004: 37) further defines autoethnography as “writing about the personal and its relationship to culture. It is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness.” Autoethnography, hereinafter referred to as AE, is distinguished from other, older though similar approaches, such as autobiography and narrative inquiry. The difference is that AE is specifically a self-narrative to examine and question the social reality. This is an ideal framing for the systematic use of two earlier sociological concepts; Mills’ “sociological imagination” and Strauss’ “turning points of identity.”

Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013: 22-25), in their *Handbook of Autoethnography*, enumerate four prime attributes of autoethnographic research. First, they argue, it must “comment on culture and cultural practices.” If the author experiences an epiphany and reflects on nuances of that experience, or writes to show how aspects of

experience illuminate more general cultural phenomena, then the author is writing autoethnographically. Second, it must “make contributions to existing research.” This addresses the importance of building on existing theoretical scholarship while contributing significantly to the sociological research. Third, it must “embrace human vulnerability with purpose.” By this they mean that autoethnographers, through grounding stories in personal experience, call attention to their vulnerabilities that other human beings may endure silently and in shame, in order to call attention to these vulnerabilities. Fourth, it must “create reciprocity in order to compel a response.” Their argument is that through expectations of a response from audiences, this becomes the means by which the autoethnography embraces vulnerability with purpose. The authors succinctly conclude that:

Autoethnographic stories invite us not to describe the world as it is, but, instead to *move and live into* the world with others to try to shape a future together. Living the autoethnographic life allows us to share a future marked by compassion, by solidarity and communion, by change and justice, and by hope (Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis 2013:669).

My specific strategy within autoethnographic research is to submit the self-narrative to social context through first exploring the relationship between my personal troubles and public issues (Mills) and secondly, the trajectory of events that ushered in my three turning points of identity which, in turn, have resulted in my present persona.

I do not mean to convey a sense of completion and mastery of my destiny. This dissertation helps me to come to terms with the past and to prepare me for life still unfolding

for myself and for everyone else through a continuous intertwining of the personal and the cultural, the microcosm of the individual, and the macrocosm of the society that “constitutes” that life experience.

A major premise of this method is that without personal insights one may not effectively understand public issues. AE is a qualitative research method that utilizes data concerning the self and its context to understand the connectivity between self and other (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, and Chang 2010). AE differs from a memoir or autobiography in that AE methods contain a detailed chronological record of an individual situated within a particular society (Bochner and Ellis 2002, 2016; and Denzin 2014). AE re-creates and re-envisions the biographic past (or portions thereof). It is a way of making the past a part of the biographic present. C. Wright Mills maintains that we must consider both the personal and political to arrive at a valid view of society. Particularly, AE teaches how to bring new value and meaning to identities, cultural commodities, and texts marginalized and stigmatized by the larger culture (Bochner 2014; Bochner and Ellis 2002; Denzin 2014; Ellis 2002). It allows us to interpret, perhaps even change, conditions under which lives are lived.

AE research endeavors to recognize the ways social positions and identities influence the ways in which we read, write, research, and evaluate experiences, cultures, and research texts. Qualitative research, of which AE is a branch, focuses on human intentions, motivations, emotions, and actions, rather than generating information and general descriptions of interactions.

Self-reflection acknowledges a researcher's relationship with others utilizing deep, careful meditation on particular personal and political issues (Lynch 2000; Mauthner and Doucet 2003; Mills 1959; Pearce 2010; and Pollner 1991). It captures people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the very meaning of their struggles, balancing intellectual and methodological rigor (Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis 2015).

Ethnography is conducted by many disciplines. Literary figures have engaged in it to shed light on societal issues. Milan Kundera, Tom Stoppard and Albert Camus are influential literary contributors who highlighted unjust sociocultural changes (Denzin 2014; Denzin and Giardina eds. 2011). Recently, Svetlana Alexievich received the Nobel Prize for Literature for, among other works, her brilliant *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster* [1997] (2006).

Narrative inquiry frequently intersects with analyses of social patterns and processes (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011; Tedlock 1991). Originating in the field of anthropology, over time narrative inquiry has formed a bridge joining anthropological field work with endeavors which focus on the researcher, using the social science ethnographer's own personal experiences as data to be examined with an eye to the cultural components surrounding these personal experiences. Thus, the autoethnographer deals simultaneously with experiential data, reflections, and cultural analyses.

AE has been used in social research since the 1980s to expand the detail of findings to include subjective and emotional aspects of research that have been systematically omitted in more formal data collection methods of survey research.

AE has demonstrated the unique capability to shed light on the personal aspect of sociological issues such as gender, race, and rapid cultural changes (Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis 2015; Behar 1993, 1996; Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis 2013). For example, important sociological questions relating to the tendency to reproduce the social class of one's parents are fruitfully explored using AE (Holman Jones 1998; Manovski 2014; Pelias 2004; and Tamas 2011).

Arthur Bochner, in his seminal work *Coming to Narrative: A Personal History of Paradigm Change in the Human Sciences* (2014), points out that human beings are more than merely thinking animals. They have feelings too. Positivists claim that inclusion of emotions makes subjective research biased. I argue that this reflects their innate bias against expression of emotions which stems from the American Puritan ancestry since human beings react both intellectually and emotionally. According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013) humanistic psychologists want to position feeling on an equal plane with theorizing.

Scientists in general and social scientists in particular are engaged in seeking universal truths. Autoethnographers perform a complementary function with regard to social relations. They make stable knowledge claims about human experiences, relationships, and cultures. They differ from ethnographers who generally work as documentarians by observing cultures, frequently even participating in the lives and activities of the community, writing field notes, then leaving the milieu to write up and publish a representation of their evaluations of a group. Social science researchers hope to reject this ethnographic approach, perceiving it as distant, removed, and disengaged (Bochner 2014; Denzin 2014). Rather, autoethnographers

recognize that the observers are part of the study, seeking to demonstrate how we are shaped and affected by cultural and historical forces which produce emotional reactions and are an integral part of social life.

It is important to consider ethical issues when producing AE in any research. In my research, I name no names. Neither do I refer in any way to my family connections with the exception of individuals who are deceased. The Institutional Review Board has determined that my dissertation does not have requirements for research concerning individuals (See Appendix D– IRB Exemption).

In practice, portions of this research are written in the first-person, featuring inner dialogue and self-reflections connected with the social context. Combining autobiography with ethnography links personal and cultural issues within a study.

Chapter Four, which contains the data of my personal story, is connected with sociological theoretical references, but I have moved them to footnotes in order to improve narrative flow and to assure that the emotional impact of my lived experience may be best felt by the reader. For further clarification of historical incidents mentioned throughout the dissertation endnotes have been added.

Appendix A contains a concordance of personal, cultural (musical), and historical/political events as they coincided with my personal life experience. Reference to this appendix will give the reader a birds-eye view of the juxtaposition of personal and sociocultural events during my turning point eras.

DATA

Data collection includes, but is certainly not limited to, a chronicling of past events in my personal life. Differing from a memoir which records the past in its entirety, the AE is limited to only those events that I have deemed to be of critical importance. In this dissertation, I narrate the way in which I underwent transformative events: times in which, from one day to the next, I became an entirely different person. Self-inventory is one approach frequently useful for visualization of the self. The collection of self-reflections in the form of free-writing is helpful to determine major life themes from which the autoethnographer is free to choose. Dialogue, thoughts, reflections, and emotions may be utilized, depending upon the particular focus of the study. Using my own experiences, I examine interactions between myself and others.

Primary data include self-experiences. Interpreting myself as a member of the broader culture enables me to offer a better understanding of my personal relationship with others through two critical theoretical lenses: *sociological imagination* and *turning points of identity*. Public and private events coincide. To elucidate the impact of these conjoined forces in my personal life, I have provided a chronology of the eras under examination in this dissertation with a side-by-side comparison that demonstrates the places in which personal and public intersected in my life thus contributing to my reactions and perceptions of events (See Appendix A). During personal turning point eras I was not always consciously aware of the cultural impact on my perceptions and reactions. Some events were less obviously related to my own struggles. Yet, they made an inevitable imprint on my subconscious mind.

I focus on my personal membership in the underprivileged, disadvantaged, Caucasian working class and as a female, aged member of society. My major area of doctoral work has been social inequality. This has been far from an accidental occurrence since my lifetime experience has been a history of extreme class awareness. Through the telling of my story, my goal is to expose societal power and practice that have stymied the achievement of the hypothetical American Dream in my life despite a lifetime of striving.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

SOCIAL BACKGROUND - THE STORY - EARLY INFLUENCES

Earliest memories situate me firmly within the American working class. Grandma Bessie, prior to her marriage, was the "School Ma'am" in the one-room school in a small farming community in southern Georgia, where she taught grades one through six. Grandpa Mitchell was born in 1895 and Grandma Bessie in 1897. Once married, it was customary that a bride assumed homemaking tasks, providing support for husband and family.¹ Interestingly, Grandma participated in "second shift."² As a farmer's wife, Grandma would take care of the cooking and cleaning and childcare as housewives of that generation did. Then, she would go down to the fields and work alongside Grandpa assisting with planting, cultivation, and harvesting chores along with the men. In Grandma's generation, women earned no income from either homemaking or second shift work.

¹ Andrew Cherlin (2014, 64-65) describes in *Labor's Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class Family in America* the role of women in the interwar years in America. During this period, once married, a woman was expected to relinquish any paid work and to devote herself to taking care of husband and family responsibilities. Coincidentally, during this period men were returning from serving in World War I and were in need of jobs. When women married and left the workforce this freed up jobs for returning veterans.

² Arlie Hochschild (1989) in *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* describes the entrance of women into the workforce, necessary to make ends meet during economic stagnation in America. While women entered the workforce, they were still left with the same household duties as before. Thus, many women work the equivalent of a second shift, leaving paid work after a full shift only to be met with household and childcare duties upon their arrival at home.

Little is known of Grandma's educational attainment. It may be surmised that she possessed no more than a high school diploma since this was the average educational attainment of the working-class population during the early part of the 20th century in America.^a Grandma was the oldest child in a large farming family. Grandma's schooling came to an abrupt halt when her labor became essential on her parents' farm. It was expected that as the farm boys would go off to fight the Great War (known in the US as World War I) the farm daughters had to step in, to help out in any way they could. Grandma, having the most education, was able to begin a one-room school. It was rare to find schooling in isolated rural areas of the Deep South. Child labor laws were non-existent during these years so both young and old participated in farm labor.^b Grandma taught grades one through six during war time. After the war ended in 1918, Grandma's brothers, thankfully all surviving, returned to the farm. Survival was the goal in the post- WWI years in the United States where there was a predominantly agrarian society.^c Farmers were accustomed to hard work.

When “the boys” came home from the war, Grandpa and Grandma were married in 1918. Thus ended her career as School Ma’am. Customary during these years, a woman's role was one of homemaker. Their young family migrated to Florida in search of better prospects. My grandparents were able to purchase a plot of land in Osteen, Florida. Their intent was to begin a farm. Little is known of this first farm, however, for Grandpa never wanted to discuss it. What is known is that the interwar years were times of great struggle and hardship in Florida as compared to the northern states.^d A combination of crises, environmental and economic, caused this increased level of hardship. Historical facts of the

time, however, have revealed that Florida was having a temporary land "boom" due mainly to land speculators which contained a shady undertaking that became a "bust" once the sale of swampland to unsuspecting northerners, looking for land in sunny Florida, was determined to be a fraudulent scheme.^e It is likely that they might have lost this first farm though this was never mentioned. In 1926, Florida's economy began a precipitous decline. Several factors coincided to bring this about. There was an epidemic of Mediterranean fruit fly that completely devastated Florida's citrus crop.^f In addition, Florida was hit by several devastating hurricanes.^g Perhaps the worst, however, was the banking fiasco. To begin with, Florida's banks received a 50% increase in deposits between 1925 and 1926. Then suddenly, one major bank failed, followed by others. This bank failure was later attributed to bankers' greed that was using depositors' money to fund and fuel fraudulent land speculation. When the boom turned to bust, the land was not worth what people had paid; their money was lost. Within three years the United States had fallen into the Great Depression.

3h

My grandparent's early lives contained many milestones and turning points⁴ during the turbulent times of the early twentieth century. It is interesting to note that it was rare that

³ Raymond Vickers (1994) describes the fraudulent land schemes that lured many investors from the northern states to purchase a parcel of "land in the sun." Often this land was merely swampland. Vickers attributes this fraudulent speculation to economic decline experienced so severely in Florida.

⁴ Anselm Strauss (1959) discusses milestones and turning points that occur in peoples' lives, points at which individuals must take a new path and times where their identity undergoes a dramatic shift within a very brief period of time.

negative circumstances were discussed. Thus, little is actually known of many of the tribulations that may have befallen the family during those early years. No assistance was to be had from either federal or state governmental agencies; communities were left to their own devices for survival. And survive they did. It was a testament to Weber's protestant ethic⁵ with its hallmark of strength of will and character plus the working class ability to persevere, despite obstacles. Without the assistance of nearby family and neighbors, my grandparents' chances of survival would have been very slim. Many people perished during these dark, interwar years.ⁱ

Customary at the time, large families were an essential asset to provide a source of free labor for farms (Cherlin 2014). My mother, the oldest of seven, including five girls and two boys, was born in 1925 during the interwar years. In 2011, I conducted an interview with my mother who recalled the interwar years vividly if not too fondly. She specifically recalled the theme of hunger. One highlight of my interview of Mama was her fond remembrance of her early school years and especially her male school teacher. He was aware that all the children were hungry, so he would bring in oranges from his backyard tree. He asked each student to bring in a "handful" of vegetables from their garden or farm, with which he would make a pot of soup each morning so that the class could have lunch together. Mama proudly

⁵ Max Weber (1930) [1958] in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* observed that to Protestants the highest form of moral obligation of an individual was to fulfill his daily worldly obligations. Religious behavior has greatly influenced capitalism in the day-to-day world, even now.

commented on how this beloved teacher "fed the children." This experience had a profound, lifelong impact on her.

In later years, when Daddy became ill, Mama had to enter the workforce. The "second shift" (*See note b*) was also her lot. The only employment my mother ever had was in the school lunch program of the elementary school. She worked full-time at the school lunchroom and then came home to her homemaking duties. She retired from the school lunch program after 27 years, again because my Daddy had become ill. It is interesting to note that the circumstances that forced Mama into the workforce are the same circumstances that forced her to leave it. In effect, Mama's life work was "feeding the children" just as her beloved teacher had done during her early school years. Research has shown that the historical accuracy of the oral family history is questionable. I can, however, attest to the summers that I spent with my grandparents. Since I was their oldest grandchild and, at the time, the only granddaughter, Mama and Daddy felt it best to send me to Grandpa and Grandma's farm to spend my summers to ease my parents care of the family which consisted of me and my four younger brothers. A secondary reason was that I was now old enough to assist Grandpa and Grandma with chores around the farm and to "look after" the elders. My early years were markedly impacted by the ideology of my much beloved grandparents.

Having always the greatest respect and admiration for my maternal grandparents, I learned from these models the value of hard work, sharing, frugality, humility, selfless behavior, and survival skills, such as gardening, canning vegetables, milking cows, and tending chickens. (*See note e*).

Alas, I also learned what I later came to view as negative things. Living in the Deep South, I experienced the racial divide. I learned not to go near the "Darkies." *Darky* is one of many ethnic slurs used during that era by Southern whites against African-Americans.^j I was taught that they were to be feared. Grandma, in my opinion, was the greatest story-teller that "ever lived." She kept the grandchildren captivated with stories which frequently contained such ethnic epithets as "Uncle Tom" and the "Darkies" and "Pickaninnies". This ethnic viewpoint was how they were raised. Grandpa and Grandma were born, the post-slavery era. This was how they were raised. It was only natural that they passed on their conceptions to the younger generation. Understandably, this viewpoint is what was taught to children and grandchildren, lovingly, with no tinge of malice. Simply put, in this way racism is transmitted from one generation to another. Indoctrinated in our early years, our beliefs become deeply ingrained. Over time, we are no longer conscious of them. They are there, nonetheless, and we act on these unconscious beliefs each time they are triggered.

My paternal grandparents both emigrated from England having English, Irish, and Scottish ancestry. Their arrival in America coincided with the winding down of the Industrial Revolution in England around the turn of the 20th century.^k During this same period, America was in desperate need of workers. It was this need that lured their families to "cross the pond."^l They met and married in Massachusetts. They had been born within a few miles of each other in the Lancashire district in Northern England, the heart of the Industrial Revolution and an area known for its textile mills.^m

Despite the proximity of their birthplaces, they had never met while in England. They had two children, my father and his sister. My grandfather, still a teenager, and a proud immigrant, enlisted in the United States Army to serve in World War I. He frequently described his privilege of going "over there" to defend his birthplace from the enemies of freedom. Grandpa died young; I was a mere toddler.

My father, following in his father's military footsteps, joined the United States Navy and served in WWII. When Daddy returned from the war, he was stationed in Central Florida, and it was there that he met and married my mother. Mama was a farm girl, who, like her mother before her, was removed from school to work on the farm while the "boys" were away in the war. Once her war-time labor on the farm was finished and her brothers were safely back at home, she took a job working in the telephone company.

Once married, Mama and Daddy migrated to Massachusetts, so that my father could find work. Daddy found a position in the local thread mill where sewing thread was manufactured. He had worked in this mill prior to the war. His father had also worked there until his death, as a cotton mill worker, a skill he had learned as a young boy in England. Once again the pattern repeated with the Massachusetts thread mill closing and Daddy was looking for work once again. Migrating once again to Central Florida, Daddy found work as a housepainter. He held this job for many years and was more or less seasonally employed throughout his work years.

My oldest brother and I were born in Massachusetts. Daddy was a hard-working man who always brought his paycheck home to Mama to provide for the family which grew to five

children in a few years' time. Contrary to custom, Mama took care of the finances in the family; she gave my Daddy an allowance each week - which he used to drink beer with his buddies. Mama told me that she was forced to control the money "or Daddy would just drink it all up."

When I was a young teenager, Daddy became ill and was hospitalized for about a year. These were difficult times for Mama, left alone with no support for five children. Mama, resourceful as always, found odd jobs to make ends meet. Church members helped out some. One church member, who managed the local primary school cafeteria, offered Mama a job scrubbing pots. She accepted this job since her other option was to live on welfare benefits of \$8.00 per week with which it would be an impossibility to feed five children. From these humble beginnings of my Mama's work experience, she was encouraged to graduate high school with her GED (General Equivalency Diploma) a year after my own high school graduation, with the promise of a promotion in the lunch room if she had the GED. She rose through the ranks in the school lunch program to a position as manager. She eventually retired from this job after 27 years and lived quite comfortably on her school board pension until her recent death.

My brothers are all younger than I am. We were all born between 1946 and 1955. We were poor working class people. Of course, most everyone we knew was of the same class. We all attended public school. I loved school (always have) and I was a "satisfactory student."

I could have done better, but, since I was "tracked"⁶ to a working class status, there was little encouragement given at school to achieve more. Mama and Daddy did encourage me, however they never really praised my achievements; rather they always goaded me on to do even better. They never focused on my brothers' schooling in this way to my chagrin. My brothers, it was assumed, would just get jobs and go to work or join the military once they were old enough. Three of my brothers graduated from high school. The fourth dropped out; yet it was he, through the military, who earned his GED and later on achieved higher education prior to his eventual retirement from the United States Navy.

When I was a junior in high school, I was given the opportunity to participate in work-study. I was the first junior (age 16 at the time) that was given the opportunity to participate in the work-study program at the high school. I worked part time at the Credit Bureau - and attended classes for the other half day. Since money was in short supply, I took advantage of this opportunity and, as was the custom, I turned over my pay to Mama to help out with family expenses.⁷ I moved out of the house in my late teens, again the custom in those years. Among the working class of that time it was understood that once a young person had graduated from high school or entered the military he or she would be considered adult and would be on his or her own. Struggle was the name of the game during

⁶ Andrew Cherlin (2014) in *Labor's Love Lost*, describes tracking was a technique used in the public school system at that time. This system sorted students, depending upon parents' economic status and, therefore, their ability to send their children to college. Children were sorted beginning in junior high school years – 7th and 8th grade – into either college-bound coursework or business-related coursework that would prepare a student for the workforce once high school was completed.

⁷This was yet another manifestation of what Cherlin (2014) describes as the working class ethic, deeply engrained in American culture.

that period. I found out how difficult it is to support oneself on minimum wage - then \$1.25 per hour. I relied on friends to feed me and provide transportation during that period. These were the "lean" years that provided a taste of other lean periods that were to come in my life. In essence, I learned my survival skills in my early years.

The many early traumatic events in my childhood resulted in my manifesting poor self-esteem. Being the victim of what is known today as bullying is only one example. Perhaps it was because of being poor and not having the best clothes, or being "chubby" - who knows - and today it doesn't really matter. Living in a household with four brothers I had no strong female role model. Mama was away from home for work during the daytime, and my contact with her was very minimal since she came home to fulfill her "second shift" home duties. (*See note b.*) As a result, I never developed a sense of closeness with my mother during those years. I am still saddened by this, even today. My perspective of American culture in the early years was working class - from start to finish. Everyone worked hard. Daddy drank for pleasure and as a coping mechanism. Alcoholism came later. Of course, he had probably inherited the disease of alcoholism from his own parents. One of my brothers, recently deceased, sampled alcohol early on and became an alcoholic. He quit and battled with a panic disorder for many years thereafter. It is widely known that alcohol or drugs often masks underlying mental issues, such as panic disorder and anxiety, to name only two.ⁿ I was afraid to try alcohol since I had witnessed its effects on our family.

Despite his alcoholism, it was Daddy who encouraged me to do well in school. He possessed an eighth grade education, the working class norm during his youth. He was an avid reader who devoured the *Readers' Digest* and the *National Geographic* magazines. In addition, he read the daily newspaper from cover to cover. He frequently told me that I was "Mensa material." I didn't know what that was but I thought it must mean I was very smart. It was beyond our working class family's means to send a child to college. Even if there were financial means, this privilege would undoubtedly have gone to one of my brothers since girls had a certain role to fulfill which did not involve higher education. Despite these cultural circumstances, Daddy instilled in me the love of knowledge which led me to pursue higher education later on in my life.

Though memories of my junior high and high school experiences are cloudy at best, I do recall learning about the Vietnam War through civics lessons. Nonetheless, the knowledge of this cultural event had little impact on me. In contrast, the Cold War and fear of a Russian invasion were spoken of frequently both at home and at school. Students were drilled on how to prepare for nuclear attack. In retrospect, the drills were laughable. We now know that hiding under desks at school or under our beds at home would do nothing to protect against nuclear radiation.^o

I entered late adolescence during the late 1960s, one of the most turbulent times in recent American history. The country was in a state of social revolution and unrest.^p My first vivid memory was impressed upon me even before I was graduated from high school. The first president born in the twentieth century - John Fitzgerald Kennedy - was for our

generation a symbol of a spirit of hope for the nation. November 22, 1963, my parents' wedding anniversary, coincided with the assassination of President John Kennedy. His assassination has been indelibly etched upon my consciousness and the consciousness of others in my generation. I grieved as the nation grieved for his loss. With Kennedy's death many felt that their future hope had died.⁹ This was especially true of young people and supporters of minority rights. A time of innocence and hope were rapidly being replaced by an era of anger and violence.^f More and more Americans -Caucasians and African-Americans alike – protested, demanding an end to the unfair treatment of black citizens. Large groups protested, demanding an end to the war in Vietnam and the senseless killing of our young men. Many others protested, demanding full equality for women.

My first vivid memory of racism occurred when I was 16. I was sitting in a local diner when I noticed a black couple sitting at the lunch counter. They waited for a long time in the nearly empty diner prior to having a waitress come to serve them. They ordered pancakes. They were informed that butter would cost them extra and that they would need to pay before they ate their meal. Even at age 16, I knew this was wrong. In retrospect, this event signaled the advent of my social consciousness. Throughout my school career, I had always attended segregated schools. The southern states were reluctant to accept the Civil Rights Act that was signed in 1964, the year of my high school graduation.⁵

In addition to President Kennedy's assassination, two other influential leaders were slain during the 1960s. Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Junior was gunned down in Memphis, Tennessee in 1968.^t Several weeks later, Attorney General Robert Kennedy,

President Kennedy's brother, was shot in Los Angeles.^u He was campaigning to win his party's nomination for president. These two deaths resulted in riots in cities across the country in 1968.

Unrest and violence affected many young Americans. This effect seemed especially bad because of the time in which this generation had grown up.^v Growing up in the 1950s, most families had a father breadwinner who earned a living wage sufficient to support the family. Most citizens were satisfied with their lives, living in the afterglow of the post-World War II boom era (*See note 22*). Even those families who struggled more than most were able to instill so-called "middle-class" values in their children. These values included a belief in God, hard work, and service to their country (*See note e*). Turbulent times forced many young Americans to question these beliefs and parental values. They came to believe that parents' values were not enough to help them deal with the social and racial difficulties of the new era of the 1960s (*See note 22*). They rebelled by letting their hair grow long and by wearing strange clothes, such as tie-dyed shirts and bell-bottom pants. Music was one venue in which the youth were able to express their dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the preceding generation (*See note 22*).

I remember my favorite song of this early 1960's era was "Blowin' in the Wind" (1962) by Bob Dylan. His music was one of the first protests against the conflict in Vietnam that was already claiming many American lives. I witnessed, from the sidelines, the fighting for social justice. I heard of women's groups seeking equality with men.^w They wanted the same opportunities as men to get a good education and a good job. In addition, they demanded

equal pay for equal work. I was too young to be allowed to join these efforts. Throughout all this unrest, my parents continued to lead their normal lives of work, family, and home life.

Music was the main venue through which youths, known as ‘hippies,’ were able to express their dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the society, to rebel against their parents.^x The Beatles and many other artists tapped into the emotional quandary of American youth, and their music became symbolic of the generation. The popular songs for that era had a profound effect on my thought. In retrospect the lyrics of “Blowin’ in the Wind” proved to have been of far greater literary value than was perceived at the time. Songwriter Bob Dylan has been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016.

Not all was bad in the United States. The Beatles “invaded” the USA, making their debut on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, a popular weekly television variety show. I was glued to the television that day, falling in love with them, especially Paul McCartney. I sang “*I Want to Hold Your Hand*” their debut song in 1963, for weeks on end. This love is still alive in my heart today. In many ways the Beatles music resonated with the social protesters in America. Their music, according to British friends of mine, was much more popular here in the US than in Britain. The Beatles often mentioned “doing your own thing,” a veiled reference to drugs and sex.^y This expression, referring to doing whatever you want to do without feeling guilty, became common among the youth and is still heard today. Hippies were all about more love and more personal freedom in America.^z

Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*⁸ hit the bookstores in the fall of 1963, a few months prior to my high school graduation. Many female graduates received a copy of this book. I received one along with a set of luggage, symbolic of the current expectations that now that I had achieved a milestone of high school graduation I was "of age" to move out on my own. While graduates with more affluent parents needed their luggage to go off to college, many working class youth were expected to just move out of the family home, expected to be independent. This was a "rite of passage" into adulthood for young people of the working class.^{aa} I had two weeks' notice to seek other accommodations. Thus began the mad scramble. I was luckier than most since I had already been working part time, becoming a full time employee upon graduation. I went to stay with a co-worker, renting a room from her family. The minimum wage was \$1.25 per hour at the time.^{bb} My wage remained unchanged for as long as I worked at the Credit Bureau – eight years. These were my lean years. I earned only enough to pay my rent. Fortunately, my lodging was just across the street from where I worked. The next few years were my "wild years" when I began to date, a privilege not available to me while living under my parent's roof. While I never got involved with drugs or alcohol; nevertheless, I had a good time and thoroughly enjoyed my freedom.

In the early 1960s, Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady, led a committee to investigate the condition of women in America. The committee's findings helped lead to new rules and laws.

⁸ Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* hit the bookshelves in 1963. This book urged women to develop professional lives of their own, a complete reversal from the traditional view of women at the time.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act guaranteed equal treatment for all groups - including women.^{cc} After this law went into effect, however, many activists found that it was not being enforced, neither for blacks nor for women (*See note 29*). The National Organization for Women (NOW) was begun shortly thereafter in an effort to correct this problem.^{dd} Women's liberation activists, called "women's libbers," were, especially at the outset, mainly rich, white, and liberal women (*See note 29*). Later activists included women of all ages, women of color, rich and poor, educated and uneducated. Together these women endeavored to win recognition for the work done by all women in America.^{ee}

In the wake of Kennedy's assassination, Lyndon Baines Johnson assumed the presidency. Johnson inherited the Vietnam conflict. The Johnson Administration's plan was called The Great Society which promised abundance and liberty for all.^{ff} It demanded an end to poverty and racial injustice and a place where every child would have access to education. Due to a belligerent Congress, many of Johnson's plans failed. The Congress argued that there was simply not enough money to support fighting in Vietnam and in the Dominican Republic simultaneously as well as enacting proposed wide-ranging social programs (*See note 32*). Johnson was told by his advisors that the communists were losing the war and that North Vietnamese troops and Vietcong forces would soon stop fighting (*See note 32*). Even when he learned of the deception of his advisors, he believed that withdrawal would not bring an end to the conflict, but would rather result in a "domino effect" of the communist takeover of one country after another in Southeast Asia. Thus, crisis dominated the Johnson administration (*See note 32*). Despite the Vietnam issues, Johnson was successful in signing the Civil Rights

Act of 1964. Then in 1965 the Medicare Act was passed, providing healthcare for the elderly. Both pieces of legislation were monumental achievements for any presidency; they continue even today, despite being currently on shaky ground with the present administration, and are widely popular with the public.^{gg}

In the post-World War II era, the Cold War fears of a communist overthrow of our country were at their highest. By 1966, many Americans were becoming suspicious of the words of administration officials, specifically that all was going well in Vietnam.^{hh} Many suspected that the government was not telling the truth about the war. They became cynical about government communications altogether. The roots of my cynicism concerning government arose during this era. I was angry, and so were many Americans. Public opinion began to shift away from President Johnson. The taint of Vietnam remained to discredit him so he decided not to seek a second full term of office (*See note 34*).

I was beginning to wish for a change of scene away from the racial realities of the South. I was feeling the social unrest on my personal home front as much as the culture was feeling it on a much grander scale. The Mamas and the Papas musical group were popular by 1965. Their song “California Dreamin’” was a particular favorite of mine. Little did I know at the time that I would be in California in the future.

By 1966, my party days were replaced with a time of somber mourning. Unrest and violence affected many young Americans. Receiving news that several of my schoolmates had died in Vietnam took the glow off my wild years. Vietnam was increasingly out of

control though much of the truth concerning the realities of the conflict never reached the ears of the US public (*See note 34*).

These violent times were especially traumatic for Baby Boomers due to the stark contrast with the peaceful and prosperous 1950s post-World War II era in which they had grown up. These “middle class”⁹ values included a belief in God, hard work, dedication to service for the country, and strict moral parenting style.ⁱⁱ

Television, though on the scene for quite a few years, was now more readily available to the general public. Programming depicting traditional family values included *Father Knows Best*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *Leave it to Beaver*.^{jj} Shows like these painted a picture of normalcy amongst the population. Once again music took center stage in my life. The Beatles produced “Hey Jude” in 1968 as part of an album. This music soothed my mind; sublimating the negative sociocultural forces in play at the time. This lyrics of this song continue to resonate within me, even today. The portion of the lyrics which says “take a sad song and make it better” finds expression in my dissertation.

Through autoethnographic analysis of three particular eras of my life, I hope to take these sad times, and by viewing them in a broader sociocultural frame, make them “better, better, better.” I was still too young to vote in 1968; however my parents voted. They really didn’t take the vote seriously however. They failed to see any direct impact of politics and government officials on their personal lives. The family joke between Mama

⁹ I recognize these “middle class” values as principles referred to by Weber and *Protestant Ethic*.

and Daddy was that they would each vote a different party; Mama was always a Democrat and Daddy was always a Republican. Therefore, they laughed about cancelling out one another's vote.

By the year 1968, I was grieving the loss of even more schoolmates in Vietnam. And, I was still working at the Credit Bureau - still making \$1.25 per hour minimum wage. Richard Nixon began his first term of office. I ventured out of the nest of the South and moved to Massachusetts where my aunt and uncle lived (and where I had been born). I stayed briefly with my aunt and uncle until I could find a job and a place of my own.

The Nixon presidency got off to a rocky start in 1969. Policies on Vietnam were quite unpopular.^{kk} Some Americans felt the war should be expanded. Many others demanded the immediate withdrawal of all American troops. Nixon's proposed agenda was "New Federalism" which would include revenue sharing. Under his plan, the federal government would share tax money with state and local governments. Congress blocked passage of this legislation for over three years. In 1972, finally, this revenue sharing plan was approved. Nixon further proposed a change in the way American men were called up for military service. He instituted the draft lottery. This was a huge change. Many people had been critical of the earlier system which had taken far too many poor men and too many men from minority groups. I knew about this personally. In my small, predominantly poor Southern town we lost so many young men to Vietnam. Nixon also changed the voting age, bowing to significant pressure from younger people who argued successfully that they were dying for this country on the battlefields around the world while not even having a right to vote. Thus,

the voting age was reduced from 21 to 18 years of age (*See note 37*). The 26th Amendment to the Constitution (1971) changed this voting age.

Don McLean wrote a popular lyric in 1971, “American Pie”. This music has come to mean many things to many people. For some, it was music of rebellion against the war; for others it was the loss of control over social forces or for personal losses and deaths. Buddy Holly, along with Richie Valens, and The Big Bopper, famous musician/singers, were killed in a plane crash when I was still in high school in the late 1950s; and, their music died. For me, their still popular music, heralded my freedom from living in the racist South. By the time Nixon was running for his second term, I was eligible to vote – and I voted for him. I found a job right away, and it was through this job that I met, and later married, my husband. And, voila, I moved to California.

TURNING POINTS OF IDENTITY

First Turning Point - Subjugation

Bathed in twilight, I walked home from church where I had gone for a meeting with the priest in preparation for my upcoming confirmation as a Catholic. I climbed the outside stairway only to be met by a door, locked by deadbolt, key, and chain. Mid-October of 1980 in Ville de la Baie, Quebec, the air was bone-chillingly cold and crisp. Though the walk was brisk, I had been looking forward to the warmth of my apartment. Despite repeated knocking and calling out, I was met by a deafening silence from within. After many fruitless attempts to gain entry, I sat down on the top step and allowed myself time to contemplate what I might have done wrong that could have somehow justified this treatment. Jealousy apparently

knows no bounds. It was clear that I had somehow displeased my husband. I had never given him reason to be jealous, yet I did know that he had a jealous streak similar to that of his father. Evidently my lockout treatment was designed to make me regret making the conversion decision on my own. I was never allowed to make any decisions, however small, on my own. My voice was not allowed to echo within the marriage. For example, I would be asked “where do you want to go?” This was apparently a test. When I would suggest a place, his response was “well let’s go a different place” (of his choosing, of course).

My husband, unemployed at the time, perhaps was feeling his own powerlessness. In his effort to regain his authoritarian position in the family, he lashed out at me, his scapegoat and convenient victim. Nightfall descended, and with it my spirits sank lower and lower. As the moon rose over the steps where I sat that night, it heralded a complete eradication of what was left of my fragile ego.

After sitting there on the step for seemingly hours, sobbing much of the time, I heard the sound of a chair scraping across the linoleum floor. Then I heard the chain and deadbolt being released and the key turning in the lock. More chair scraping. Then, slowly, the door opened and a small child’s voice (my son) said, “Mama – it’s okay, you can come in now. Daddy didn’t mean to lock you out, he really didn’t.” I entered the apartment, hugged my children who were huddled together in their room in silence. I then went to bed; yes, in the same bed with my husband. I knew better than to confront my husband about this treatment. I feared what would happen if I mentioned it. Never again did I utter a word about this event. Somewhere, deep within, I felt deserving of this abominable behavior. The next morning my

husband was content, acting as if nothing had transpired the night before. However, the wounds inflicted that night were so deeply etched within my consciousness that they would affect me for many years to come. His abusive tactics had succeeded in the total annihilation of my self-esteem. My world had been crushed by this event. In retrospect, I realize that this level of hatred was merely a manifestation of his self-hatred. I was merely the object over which he could exert control. As his victim, I paid the price for his feelings of failure as a provider and father to the children. And, in my eyes for many years, he was a failure.

The “American Pie” lyrics rang loudly in my ears. Especially the phrase “My music died.” My music had died as a result of the repeated psychological onslaught to which I had been exposed. Emotional abuse perpetrated by my husband had resulted in the decimation of my ego. I feel from then on I became a robot. I had lost all sense of personal autonomy. I would wake in the morning, take care of the needs of the children and household, and lay down at night. There was no joy in my life. I felt nothing.

As previously stated, winds of change blew over America in the 1970s. At first it appeared that these years were merely residual to the social experiments and struggles of the 1960s. Gradually, signs of massive sociocultural transformations on a global scale became apparent. During the 1970s the United States was ending its military involvement in Vietnam. The civil rights and women’s movements had accomplished many, but not all, of their goals. The US economy was in recession, interest rates and inflation were high. There was a shortage of oil. Times were hard and were destined to become even harder as the decade wore on.

To me it appeared that Americans had become tired of social struggle, tired of losing money. The 1960s had been a time of working together for common interests. Now, many wanted to spend more time on their own personal interests. This societal shift was apparent in many sectors of American culture, including education and politics. One wildly popular television program of that changing era was “*All in the Family*,” about a factory worker, Archie Bunker, who openly hated black people and was blatantly opposed to equal rights for women. His interactions with his wife Edith certainly bore witness to his attitude toward women. She was the traditional housewife and designated family peacekeeper. As such, she took no active role in trying to change Archie’s views. To me, she symbolized the dutiful wife who stood by her husband and tolerated his views quietly, never being confrontational. In many ways I had been this dutiful wife, standing by my husband despite his abusive treatment. The leitmotif of the show was his family’s efforts to slowly help him to accept and to value different kinds of people. These efforts were often to no avail. His daughter, Gloria, was a newlywed but still living under Archie’s roof. Her liberal-minded young, college-educated husband, whom Archie called “Meathead,” was engaged in a continual battle of wits with his father-in-law – conservative versus liberal views. Apparently many citizens had failed to get the proverbial memo that times were changing.

Other television programs were directed toward coming to grips with these serious issues. *Happy Days* and *Three’s Company* were examples of the more light-hearted genre of this period’s television programming. Still, these escapist programs bore the imprimatur of the era: youth’s struggle with the old ideas and novel living arrangements.

My personal saga began when I was married on January 27, 1973, in Panorama City, California. I was truly welcomed to California. The 1976 lyric “Hotel California,” sung by the Eagles, became popular early in my marriage. I was to undergo an awakening like nothing I had ever experienced. The date of my wedding was memorable since that date marked the signing of the Paris Peace Accord which was, in theory at least, to end the Vietnam War. In actuality, the war continued to rage for at least two more years. Alas, my personal marital conflict far outlasted the Vietnam War, continuing for 21 years – with personal wounds that are not mentioned in the history books.

Within months of the wedding, I was pregnant. The economy was changing, and the cost of living was rising. By early 1974, with a newborn, my husband became unemployed, leaving us little choice but to rely on public assistance for survival. The Watergate scandal was unfolding, and, thanks to television, citizens felt like they had a glimpse of government in its less than favorable light. Despite this public drama, I could not make a connection between the personal and the cultural as I do now, many years later.¹⁰ At the time I placed no blame on cultural forces at play that, in retrospect, had contributed to my family’s economic stress. By 1975 fewer Americans had jobs. The unemployment level was more severe than anything seen in the post-war period. Many felt it was nearing levels of the Great Depression. When the economy falters, it is often blamed on those perceived as drains

¹⁰ C. Wright Mills (1959) *Sociological Imagination* underlines this connection between the personal troubles and the greater cultural issues. In retrospect, I failed to connect private problems with public issues at that time.

on the job market. My husband, an immigrant from Canada, was perceived as one of these drains. With jobs becoming scarce, most employers opted to give these jobs to native-born Americans.

The economy was rapidly declining in the late 1970s; food prices were escalating, and my husband's sporadic work opportunities completely dried up within a couple of years.¹¹ I was sad, and I was angry. As is often the case, negative emotional overload leads to a search for something, anything, to fill the void. I turned to food to assuage my negative emotional state. I built a shell – a very large one at that – to protect me from the constant bombardment of fears, both personal and societal. I became fatter and fatter, sadder and sadder. I ate to make myself feel better. It was becoming clear to me that the traditional marriage, like the traditional US culture into which I had entered, could no longer be trusted, in many ways, to produce the expected results. There was an abundance of distress in the household.

One public issue that did hit home for me was the gas rationing in California. Long lines at the gas pumps were common. It frequently happened that when nearing the pump, the station would have run out of fuel for the day, only adding to my frustration. Often I would spend several hours in the gas line with my baby in his car seat. This was really the first time that I could connect societal issues with personal issues having an effect on my family condition. Even Nixon's resignation, in disgrace in early 1974, was perceived as a mere "sideshow," irrelevant to the very real family circumstances in which we found ourselves.

Desperation led us to begin our migratory phase. Seeking employment, we became known in the words, of my dear departed sister-in-law in Quebec, as *les petites oiseaux de ce saute de branche en branche* (the little birds that hopped from branch to branch.) Our first destination was Montreal where we stayed for a few months with my husband's mother and father. This was a good move which led to several years' work for my husband as a plumbing laborer engaged in the construction of the Montreal Olympic Stadium. Once this contract came to an end, however, we were left once again back where we began. One saving grace was that Canada provided a better safety net for families in distress so we could live a better existence. His efforts to find other employment proved fruitless.

We packed the car and took to the road once again – this time heading to Florida where my family lived. Work options were just as scarce in Florida for an immigrant. Employers in Florida were accustomed to paying immigrants less money – and getting away with it nicely – since Florida is a “right to work” state. The tourist lingo at the time was that it is to be considered a “privilege to work and live in this great state” – the public announcement heard by all new arrivals. And Florida's public assistance was minimal. Two more children were born while we were in Florida. Between 1973 and 1978 we had three children. Alas, memories of ecstasy for these miracles of birth of my three children were marred by other emotions far surpassing these events in strength and force. By this time, we were desperate. Our marriage was failing due to constant bickering over finances. I continued to blame him for being unable to support his family. After all, wasn't that what a head of household was supposed to do?

After much frustration due to treatment by employers in Florida, we returned once again to Canada, again in desperation, with literally the clothes on our backs. This time we decided to move farther north in Quebec province to where my husband's brothers and sisters lived. Job prospects were dismal there as well. In fact, it was common practice every winter for most men, at least those who worked outdoors in trades such as construction, to be *en chomage* – or receiving unemployment benefits – due to extreme weather conditions. The only difference this time was that the local culture condoned this behavior and unemployment and lack of funds was considered normal. Seasonal work was the cultural norm in the Saguenay Region of Quebec.

Politically, things were unstable in Quebec during this period. The Parti Quebecois was in power in the province. They were actively promoting Quebec's separation from Canada. Rene Levesque was Prime Minister of Quebec at the time. He spent a great deal of time canvassing the province while promoting the separatist agenda. He came to Jonquiere and held rallies which prepared citizens for the upcoming 1980 Referendum which was to decide on Quebec's separation from Canada. Though the vote was close, the referendum failed. Most of my husband's family would not discuss separatist ideas, being content with their own lives. Many of them worked in agriculture or owned dairy farms; thus, their livelihoods were more stable. Those seeking change, any change, were those who had to work for others and who risked seasonal or intermittent unemployment. In this regard, there was no difference between the working class of Quebec and that of the United States. In both

cultures, dependence on employers for one's income makes families dependent on economic fluctuations and employers' good graces to support a traditional lifestyle.

Living in another culture was exciting for me. I became totally immersed. Learning the French language was a joy that I considered a privilege. I insisted that my children learn to speak French despite the fact that my husband did not want that. I never understood his rationale for not allowing them to speak another language, especially his native tongue. However, I continued to speak French to the children inside the home. When the children went outside the house for school or play, they spoke only French. My son attended French school while the two girls were too young to attend school. Since all their playmates were francophone, they learned to speak French quite easily.

In retrospect, I had gone into survival mode early in my marriage. One thing that was to become extremely influential in my survival toolkit was my introduction, through my sister-in-law, to the practice of deep meditation. Such practice became my lifeline that buoyed me during the times of my greatest pain. Over the years, these meditative practices have become greatly enhanced. I have continued these practices for over 40 years. The skill of being able to go within, to find a place of peace and calm, despite the outer world's storms – and there were many – saved me both physically and emotionally – from total despair.

By 1977, the lyrics of "Hotel California" "you can check out anytime you want, but you can never leave" once again rang in my ears. This time, however, the particular words indicated my mindset at the time. I was feeling trapped, hopeless, helpless, and doomed to a

life of poverty. With a husband who was evidently unable to provide for his family, I perceived that he didn't really care about us.

Second Turning Point - Professionalization

By this time we had begun the migration once again back to California. I still flush with anger as I recall how I felt, when, in early July 1981, I complained to my sister-in-law, also my husband's boss, one time too many, apparently, about our family's dismal financial conditions.^{mmm} She, despite her diminutive figure, literally put my back to the wall. I can still feel the cold concrete blocks on my back where I stood in her office. She said, "If you don't like it, you do something about it - it is up to you, and you alone, to change your life if you don't like the way it is." I knew my sister-in-law was referring to the meditation techniques to which she had referred me early in my marriage to her brother. It was as if I had awakened that moment from a deep hibernation.

In some ways the 1980s were the opposite of the 1960s. For many people, society's hero was the person who helped himself. Success seemed to be measured only by how much money a person earned. Ronald Reagan's two terms appeared to me as a reflection of this "me" generation. Young urban professionals, "yuppies" as they were called, had a reputation for living just to make and spend money. Television programming was reflective of these values. Programs such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty* were reflections of this new generation's values, at least values embraced by the upper middle class. At the movie theatre, a very popular and critical film of the time was *Wall Street*. The star was a young, wealthy,

dishonest, powerful man; a trader on the New York Stock Exchange. Eighties films such as *Rambo*, featured a hero who rejected established rules and were extremely violent.

In my personal life, violence reigned supreme. By 1980, my emotionally abusive husband had left me and the children in Canada to return to California. He had been summoned by his sister to assist in her business in response to a family crisis. His departure was welcomed by me as it provided a respite from his emotional abuse. I was alone in Quebec with three small children and no means of support. I had no alternative but to rely on public assistance. I had often imagined, during my periods of meditation, that he would leave so that our family could know a few moments of peace. The Universe had complied, and I was witness to the power of thought for the first of many times over the years.

After nearly a year, the children and I were "sent for" to join my husband in Southern California. Not long after the children and I arrived to re-join my husband, Mt. St. Helens erupted, spewing volcanic ash on the entirety of California, extending well into the Baja Peninsula. This was an ominous sign only recognized in retrospect, of further upheavals to come in our family life.

By this time, he was working for his sister, earning \$10.00 per hour. Incidentally, this was the maximum hourly wage that he earned during his lifetime. After a few months of camping out, sleeping on the floor at my sister-in-law's house, we finally saved enough money to pay deposits on an apartment. We had accumulated first and last month's rent,

security deposit, plus deposits for electricity, water, and gas. Interestingly, my husband had been in California for nearly a year and had not managed to save any money. We were able to move into the apartment, and I began to relax. I was hopeful that we were beginning to put the bad times behind us.

Back to the story, in tears (of anger) at the previously mentioned “wall challenge and turning point” I stormed out of my sister-in-law’s office and drove like a mad woman, three kids secured in car seats, to the unemployment office. I was a desperate woman that day. Once parked, I entered the unemployment office and was directed to the Job Board where all the current job postings were announced. I wanted a job, any job. I was willing to do anything that my high school education would allow. I was desperate to find a way to support my family. I had no clue how I would manage to pay for childcare which was expensive even then. And it was certain that I could not rely on my traditional husband who was adamant about a woman's role as caregiver of children with no assistance from him. I took a number. When my turn came, I sat at the desk of a woman, and, with tears in my eyes, I communicated my desperate need to find a job. She looked at my three children who were quietly standing next to me. At first she said nothing and that silence was nearly deafening to me. My pulse was racing because I felt so many emotions at that moment – fear, embarrassment, shame, and anger mixed together. I tried to maintain my composure for the sake of my little children. Then she looked back at me. Again, she sat silently, for several minutes. I watched as tears silently streamed down her cheeks. She gently patted them dry.

Then she said, "I can't help you, my dear, but, if you will go to the welfare office and see this person (she handed me a card with a name written on the reverse side) she can assist you."

To digress, by early 1981, the world witnessed the fairy tale marriage of Britain's Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer. That event removed, for a time at least, the; dismal reality of our home life which was doomed, from my perspective at the time, to a life of permanent reliance on public assistance for survival. Further diversion from the aura of doom, gloom, and psychological pain which I felt, I watched, along with the entire Western world, in anticipation of "who shot J.R. Ewing" on the *Dallas* television serial. News reports proclaimed that there had been the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II.

I was already familiar with the welfare office, having had to use it intermittently during the entirety of my marriage. I thanked her, stood, gathered my children, and drove straight away to the welfare office. I went to the information desk and told them that I was sent to see the person whose name was on the card. I was instructed to take a number and that when my turn would come I would be called to an interview room to meet with this individual. After a lengthy wait during which time I was trying to decide what I could feed the children for dinner with what was left in my pantry and refrigerator, my name was called. I was directed to a cubicle to meet with the individual. I handed her the card given to me by the woman at the unemployment office. In retrospect, this interview proved to be pivotal in my life, for it was there that I began to see a glimmer of hope.

A few months later my sister-in-law announced that she was selling her business. A competitor of her cultured marble manufacturing business expressed an interest in purchasing

her clientele, and she wished to move on in her life. She had just re-married and wanted to focus on her home life. As long as the sale was in progress, there was no change in my husband's employment status. Economic stagnation had taken a toll on us, and, with a fairly fixed income of \$10.00 per hour and rising food and gasoline costs, the pay check was not sufficient to cover our monthly expenses. Of course, we had no healthcare coverage for ourselves or for the children.

The Reagan era witnessed a drastic reduction of taxes for corporations. At the same time, massive defense spending had started. To save money, the Reagan administration decided to cut spending for some social programs. This pleased conservatives. Liberals, however, said it limited poor peoples' chances for good housing, health care, and education.

During the Reagan presidency, the American economy grew rapidly. Yet, by the end of his presidency, many Americans were concerned with the devastation that he left behind: increased military spending and massive tax cuts for corporations which, together, had created a huge national debt. Future presidents would have to deal with these problems leftover from the Reagan years. Some had benefited greatly from Reaganomics as his economic policies were named. Many others, including my family, saw continued unemployment and stagnating wages. All was not equal in America - especially on the economic front.

The early 1980's, in a liberal California environment under AFDC (Aid for Families with Dependent Children) regulations, public assistance was inclined to help, rather than punish. Yet, even then, one had to jump through many hoops. Desperate as I

was, I was willing to jump as many hoops as needed for the sake of my family's future. Fueled by an intense anger directed at my husband who, in my opinion, was not doing enough to rectify our family's economic plight, I committed that day to do whatever it would take to make a better life for myself and the children, up to and including divorce if necessary. After all, in my view, how could it be worse? We were already reduced to beggary.

Back at the welfare office, I was instructed that I would qualify for assistance if I would go back to the unemployment office and sign up officially for work. I was informed that I must report there daily to check the job board and that an employee of the unemployment office would need to sign my form, proving that I had done so. Then, I was to bring the form back to the public assistance office weekly so that my benefits could be allowed on a weekly basis. Desperate as I was, that seemed reasonable. Children in tow, I went back to the unemployment office and was just about to enter when I was approached by a gentlemen holding a clipboard who said, "I see you here looking for work. Are you interested in going to school? It can assist you in getting a job." At this point, I was grasping at any lifeline thrown my way. I said "Yes!" – my quivering voice clearly demonstrating my desperation. He then explained that there was financial aid available to assist students with the costs of attendance. I had, at that point, not even considered that there would be a charge for the class. The caveat was that I needed to qualify to enter the program. He assured me further that if I qualified that I would definitely also qualify for the financial aid.

In the car once again, with children secured, I trekked to the school to take the test to determine if I qualified. To my surprise, I did. It was then that the school advisor explained how the financial aid worked. He began the application process by asking some basic family financial questions to determine how much financial aid I would qualify for.

I explained about my encounter at the welfare office and how I had been told to go back to the unemployment office regularly to look for work as a requirement to receive public assistance. The advisor explained to me that I should take my proof of enrollment in the class back to the welfare office and that this would be used as a substitute for the daily grind of searching for work. He further explained that I might qualify for more benefits as a student than I would have as a mere jobseeker since I would have additional expenses related to schooling that I might not otherwise be eligible for.

Within a few months, my husband once again became unemployed. When his sister sold her company to a competitor, his services were no longer needed since that company already had a full staff. Being an immigrant from Canada was a definite hindrance to finding employment. Unemployment was still high. Despite Reagan's tax cuts, the economy was stagnant; especially hard hit were the jobs for laborers, truckers, and construction workers. These were the areas in which my husband had skills. To his credit, he did try to obtain work, but jobs were scarce. Reliance on public assistance became a permanent condition.

Some well-meaning employees at the social services agency discretely suggested that divorce might be an option to consider since it would greatly enhance our family condition

economically since our family would be eligible for more assistance that was denied with an able-bodied male residing in the home. At the time I was in no emotional condition to entertain thoughts of divorce.

Marriage was a means of safety for many during this period; I felt that even a bad marriage provided safety. At least that is how it seemed to me. By the early 1980s sex and drugs had proven deadly. A new disease appeared on the scene at this time. AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), its viral nature only recently identified, spread in several ways. One way was through sexual relations; another through the sharing of needles used to take illegal drugs. AIDS was a wake-up call to many Americans.^{mm} Citizens were dying all around: young men and women. The problem surfaced as a gay issue since gay men were dying. Later it was discovered that the disease affected all individuals. Both heterosexual and homosexual patients were dying from exposure to this deadly virus. Little did I know at the time, but later, during my nurses' training, I would have the opportunity to train in the very first AIDS Unit in the country. I jumped at the chance to have this experience, and it molded me into the nurse that I would become throughout my entire nursing practice. How better could I learn to be non-judgmental and to give the best care that I could give to individuals who were sicker than many with whom I had come in contact up to that point?

During the 1960s, young people talked and sang fearlessly about sex and drugs.^{oo} As the years passed, many Americans became increasingly careful about their own private lives; this was emblematic of youths as they matured and began to take on more responsibilities for home and family. The responsibility for home and family weighed

heavily on me so that I sank deeper and deeper into depression.

Another factor that caused a dramatic change in American society of the 1980s was the computer.^{pp} Computers had been invented nearly 40 years earlier: large mainframe machines which often took up entire rooms. Such machines were generally housed at large universities, big companies, and in the military. By the 1980s, computers had become much smaller. Anyone could learn how to use them, even children. Millions of Americans soon had a “personal” computer (PC) in their home.^{qq} They could use it to keep abreast of the news, buy things, do schoolwork, and play games. Our family, struggling financially, could ill afford such a luxury. The children became exposed to the world of computers gradually as schools began to acquire computers and to teach the youngsters how to use them. Such technological innovations, coupled with a reportedly thriving economy, filled many Americans of the early and middle 1980s with hope. Many felt there was almost no limit on the good life they could lead - the promise of the American Dream.^{rr} Personally it was through these experiences, literally my proverbial gates of hell, that I eventually was able to see the light of day. Education became what I referred to as my "ticket to ride."

The pieces of the puzzle were beginning to fall into place. There arose in me an undercurrent of hope, and this hope gave me the strength to take another step into the great unknown that was to be our family's future and ultimately my own personal future in a time that I could not even envision at that moment.

Let us get back to the story of my struggles with public assistance on that fateful day in 1981. Back in the car once again, I made my way back to the welfare office, took a number, and waited; the drill was now so familiar that my children knew exactly what to expect. I thought to myself that no child should learn how to beg for help. I definitely did not want my children to grow up knowing that public assistance was a way of life.

Yet, this was what they were witnessing and their exposure to the system made me even angrier. Once I was face to face with the public assistance worker, I presented my proof of enrollment form. Smiling, she said, "You have done well, Madam." She then explained the types of assistance that I could receive now that I was enrolled as a student: money to assist with childcare (which I needed for my youngest who was only 4 years old at the time), money for books, and money to help me to get some clothing and other supplies including bus fare, and incidentals necessary to enable me to attend class. In addition, our family now qualified for additional food stamps since I was in now school. I was much relieved to hear that I would no longer have to have a weekly review of my circumstances in order to qualify for benefits but would now be approved for the entire term of my classes. That was music to my ears!

On the home front things were not so rosy. My husband did not approve of my going to school. He argued with me, constantly claiming that I was being selfish and that I could not be a good mother and wife if I went to school.¹¹ Times were tough, and, as it turned out,

¹¹ Dorothy Smith (1974 and 1999) discusses issues relating to women's roles which have seen a major transition since the early 1970s. She particularly focuses on the attitudes of men toward women entering the workforce.

they got even tougher throughout the entire period of my education. My husband referred to me as "the professional student" when speaking to family and friends. He began this practice on the second day that I went to school. Secretly, I took his slur as the greatest compliment anyone could ever receive. He made it difficult at every step; he took away my use of the car; therefore, I had to get up by four in the morning to get the children ready for school, deposit my youngest daughter at the neighborhood daycare center, walk to the bus stop, and take two buses to the school. And, after school, I returned the same way, picking up my little one from the daycare and arriving home in time to greet the school bus for my two other children.

Life was difficult, but I persisted. Anger propelled me to achieve. Six months later, I learned of another course through the same technical college that would make me even more marketable than the medical assisting course. That training was to become an EKG (electrocardiogram) technician able to perform these examinations in the doctors' offices. I jumped at the chance, enrolled immediately, and thereby extended my public assistance benefits for another term. At this point I was existing from day to day. I felt that I was being directed by a force outside myself - a force that I knew nothing of.

At the end of the second term my instructor approached me and said, "You would make a phenomenal Registered Nurse, you know? (I didn't). And if you are interested, I will write you a recommendation letter for the community college where you can enroll to earn an Associate of Arts in Nursing, leading to Registered Nurse licensure." He assured me that this would greatly assist me and my children (whom he had met frequently during my schooling and with whom he was quite favorably impressed). He was less impressed, I must

say, with my husband. My instructor was, by this time, aware of the tremendous obstacles that were thrown in my path by my husband, and he was determined to assist me as best he could for the sake of the children.

He wrote the letter; I enrolled, and my husband was livid. Thus began my five year program leading to my Associate of Arts in Nursing. To this day I am so proud of that degree, for I know what I had to go through to earn it and to graduate magna cum laude. For me, education was a tremendous opportunity, and I was determined to take full advantage of it for myself and for my children's future. I was surrounded by intense anger at home throughout this entire period. At times, my husband would just disappear - sometimes for days, sometimes for weeks - without warning. Of course, he took the vehicle with him and that made my home life even more difficult since now I had to buy groceries and haul them home on the bus as if my daily bus rides to and from school were not already enough. The reality for me was that my life experience far exceeded Hochschild's description of the "second shift." I wore many hats during those years. I lived in a constant state of worry about housing, food, healthcare, transportation, and personal safety both within the home and in the community. And, as if this was not already difficult, I weighed 350 pounds at the time. I was ashamed of being poor and of being obese, and I felt the status of second class citizen deep within my soul.

As I have mentioned previously, my weight was an issue that impacted my entire Life, a tremendous stumbling block. The reality was that food had become very important to me. It was my only solace and protector from a very painful existence. As is often the

case with obesity, the underlying factors place the individual in a position where negative emotions must be shielded from view. Food was my way to stuff my emotions down. My self-esteem was very poor, and I felt that I could only live with myself if I stuffed food into my mouth. While I was eating, I felt satisfied and that the world was peaceful. This was a poor substitution for my cravings for sexual satisfaction and intense desires for a peaceful home environment for our children. Of course, it was to my benefit that I loved to cook. This sounds crazy and in many respects it was. Yet, food was the only tool that I felt I had at my disposal, so it became my way of building an ivory tower where I could reside in peace away from the painful world of my reality. With my physical body, I built a massive tower, complete with a moat: a barrier against anybody who would dare encroach upon my personal space.

My husband's occasional absences provided a breathing space for me and the children. I never learned where he went during these absences but I never questioned this. Rather, I was driven to succeed, to make a better life for my children. By this time, I had resigned myself to his erratic behavior. I took care of both home and school responsibilities – the “second shift” anyway; his absences meant nothing. And his return was not grounds for celebration for me or the children. He would just arrive and take up where he had left off as if nothing had happened. I allowed this, thinking at the time that it was bad of me to deprive the children of their father. These are thoughts that are held by many women, victims of poor self-esteem. Despite my academic accomplishments, my self-esteem was still poor; my overweight condition contributed heavily to this reality.

My school years between 1982 and 1988 were years of progressive working- class economic stagnation which existed throughout the Reagan years. My time was spent divided between my education and my children. My graduation was attended by my young children. Of course, my husband did not attend. That was his final statement of disapproval, evidently. Immediately upon my graduation, I took the NCLEX RN Licensure Exam, passing it on the first attempt. I landed my first job as a Registered Nurse at Los Angeles County Women's Hospital Special Care Nursery in downtown Los Angeles. I became the official breadwinner of my family.¹² My husband did yet another disappearing act. My starting salary was enormous compared to my income on public benefits. I took the bus to and from work, adding yet another layer to my already burgeoning responsibilities of motherhood. As an aside, I had won a full scholarship to the University of Southern California due to making excellent grades at the community college. Unfortunately, I was unable to juggle motherhood, work schedule (even with flex scheduling) and transportation, and I was unable to take full advantage of this tremendous gift. I dropped out with an A average at the end of one semester. I vowed then that one day my time would come and that I would once again have an opportunity to achieve my dream of higher education, a dream that I could see was

¹² Arlie Hochschild (1989) speaks of women's transition into the "family breadwinner role" which occurred for many women during the 1970s and 1980s. In my case "flex scheduling" allowed me to go to work early in the morning and then clock out at 10 AM and drive across town to take nursing classes at the University of Southern California. Once the classes were done, I would return to work the remainder of my shift. Thus, my 12 hour shift turned into 16 hours once my absence for school was added in.

possible even then. Never did I believe that I would come as far as I have to the doctorate.

Yea Me!

Within a few months I was able to purchase an automobile with my earnings and this was a great benefit to me and the children. Life became a bit easier. After about a year, my husband re-surfaced in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, where he said he had been in search of work. Sensitive to my children's' need for a father, and having worked in the very dangerous environment of downtown Los Angeles, I agreed to join my husband in Canada. I mobilized my resources and inquired about nursing opportunities in British Columbia. I learned that I would be welcomed at British Columbia Children's' Hospital once I re-licensed as a Canadian nurse. This accomplished, I began my employment which lasted six years, six wonderful work years, I might add.

By 1989 we had witnessed the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. This tense period had endured more than forty years during which time the invention of weapons that could kill millions of people at one time increased worldwide fears. The world was changing greatly, and the old Soviet Union was dying.^{ss} On November 9, 1989, East Germany opened the Berlin Wall for the first time since it had been built. This wall had divided communist East Germany from the West since 1961. Citizens and soldiers soon began tearing the wall down. The fall of the Berlin Wall ended much of the fear and tension between democratic nations and the Soviet Union.

Within my marriage our personal cold war was ongoing. I spent a portion of the George H. W. Bush presidency in Vancouver; another leg on my husband's seemingly

endless quest for employment. I was becoming fatigued at the constant migrations in search of work for my husband. This time, however, I was the breadwinner in the household, a position which I would maintain for the remainder of the marriage and as long as I had children under my roof. The Persian Gulf War took place during my Canadian residency.^{tt} Canada, being neutral in this episode, was neither supporter nor detractor of the United States war efforts, providing only supplementary assistance away from the battleground.

On the home front, things remained frosty. The power struggle continued. Though I earned the family income, I had to justify every expense to him; even having to ask permission to make a personal expenditure. Things were wrong, and I knew it. Yet I continued to hang on for the sake of the children. Even being in his country of origin, Canada, my husband's work record was sporadic. Though the news reported that economies were improving – from poor to good – and that unemployment was low, unfortunately that economic turnaround was not equally experienced by all sectors of the US population; specifically the working class. Economies were in decline worldwide. I supported the household as I continued my full time work and my full time household responsibilities. I was accustomed to this role by this time. Alas, years of having my self- esteem beaten down had taken its inevitable toll on me. Despite my educational successes and my success as a nurse, I became increasingly depressed day by day. Food was my solace. By 1991 I found myself dragging through each shift at the hospital, a job I loved.

The burden of carrying my extra pounds coupled with the intolerable home situation led me to seek medical intervention. I went to see our family physician, and he

referred me to an endocrinologist who diagnosed severe hypothyroidism. It was he who referred me to a surgeon for possible weight loss surgery. He explained that I would have to try to lose weight under intensive medical supervision. And, if these efforts failed, then, and only then, would I qualify to have the surgery. Of course, I was desperate by this time. I felt fatigued all the time. The effects of working long hours and taking care of home and children coupled with the stress of a dysfunctional household were taking a toll on me. In retrospect, I was fortunate that I was not afflicted with hypertension or diabetes. The doctors felt that was miraculous in itself. Of course, the efforts toward diet were unsuccessful, yet it was a bureaucratic hoop through which I had to jump. Of course, I was warned of the dangers of having surgery due to the inevitable strain that it would place on my heart. By this time I was fully accepting of the possibility that I might never awaken from surgery. That was an indicator of my attitude toward living the life that I had lived up to that time.

I was able to lose the excess pounds, over 200 pounds actually, through a surgical procedure. As a result, my self-esteem began to re-surface. Within a year I was able to make the decision to end my toxic marriage relationship. Informing the children of my decision, I asked if they would prefer to stay in Canada with their father or join me in my plans to return stateside, to Florida where my family resided. They were unanimously in favor of joining me and moving back to the States. After a fairly brief legal battle over alimony which my husband demanded, the divorce was finalized within months of my relocation to Florida.

Once I left him, he realized he had no visible means of support which motivated him to request alimony. My lawyer agreed that I would pay him alimony if he reimbursed me in a lump sum for my expenditures over the preceding period as breadwinner for the household since 1988. He withdrew his suit. In retrospect, this was his last effort to reclaim control and power over his life. Within a year after the divorce was finalized, he became ill with a rapidly progressive cancer and was dead within 6 weeks. He was 54 years old. Despite all the heartache throughout the period of my marriage, I grieved his death and for the children's loss of their father.

I found employment immediately upon returning to Florida after having applied for Florida RN licensure. I have never regretted one action or sacrifice made on behalf; of my family. I still don't, despite their current alienation. I have never ceased to love them. Thus, within less than 20 years, I had endured two major turning points in my life. Little did I know that a third was to come.

Third Turning Point – Liberation

January 4, 2010 was a memorable day. It was a turning point of identity in my life from which I have never looked back. I awoke to blizzard conditions that morning. I was thankful that I lived near the hospital where I was assigned. I left the apartment at 6:15 AM to allow time to get to the hospital safely. Weather in Santa Fe, New Mexico, that day was snowy and cold; snow was thick on the ground and more was falling. I arrived at 6:30 AM to report for my 12-hour shift. I received report from the night shift staff and began to organize my duties, preparing for a very busy day in a full medical-psychiatric unit. The

receipt of orders, a normal part of the Registered Nurse routine, involves reviewing doctors' orders and verifying their accuracy. Nurses are responsible to make certain that doctors' orders meet the guidelines for what is medically acceptable. Errors in this department can result in a nurse being censured, even fired, since patient safety is always of prime importance and no order is to be implemented that could be deemed harmful to the patient. Once the review of orders is complete, the Registered Nurse has to "sign off," signifying agreement with and approval of the orders.

My assignment that day was the care of 10 patients, a fairly routine assignment in this unit. The review of orders was, however, not normal. I noticed a strange order, and I questioned it immediately with the night nurse. This order had been written on the night shift when the psychiatrist had made his evening rounds, his normal routine. Being familiar with the medical histories of all 10 of my patients, my concern was that the MD order for OxyContin, a high potency, highly addictive pain killer in a dosage far exceeding the recommended dosage, was prescribed for this patient with a known history of being an abuser of OxyContin. This presented a "red flag" to me immediately. The patient had been admitted to the unit two days prior to detox from her addiction to OxyContin. Her normal street dose was far below that being prescribed by this order. I could neither justify nor sign off on this order. The risks were great that the patient would have an adverse reaction to this dosage; perhaps lapsing into a coma or even death. I reported my concern to the charge RN for the day shift and continued about my duties with the exception of administering that medication.

The psychiatrist arrived mid-morning for his rounds, and I asked to speak with him privately concerning this order. He agreed. Upon questioning the order and stating my unwillingness to administer this dosage that was far in excess of the recommended dosage, he said to me, and I will never forget his words, "Well, if she doesn't get it here, she will only get it on the street." To that I replied, "Then, let her get it on the street since I cannot, in good conscience, give this medication in this dosage which exceeds the pharmacological safe standard dosage range." His reply was that the hospital needed to keep this bed filled and that was why this patient was brought into the unit initially. Medicaid insurance was covering the costs of her hospitalization. It was then I realized that this was only about money, keeping a hospital bed filled, and, therefore, earning money for the hospital. At that moment I decided that I was no longer willing to participate in activities that I perceived to be unethical. I told the psychiatrist, "Today I will complete my shift but I will not return." And, I did not return. That was the last nursing shift I worked in the profession, spanning 22 years.

Leaving at the end of that shift, I made it home in an even heavier snowstorm. Blizzard conditions were expected to persist for the next few days. I began to pack my belongings, feverishly. I barely felt the cold while making frequent trips to my car to load my gear. This process, due to the inclement weather, took almost 3 hours. I drove out of Santa Fe, New Mexico, that evening. I stopped at the gas station prior to leaving Santa Fe and was told by the station attendant that the roads were going to be closed and that I would probably be turned back well before I could make it to Albuquerque. I didn't care. I just knew I needed to put some distance between me and that place. Despite the warning, I made

it as far as Santa Rosa, New Mexico, well beyond Albuquerque. There I stopped for the night and rented a motel room. I slept the sleep of the dead and awakened at 9 AM with a wake-up call from the front desk. Weather conditions remained treacherous. Nevertheless, by late that evening, I made it home to Lewisville, Texas, where I had an apartment. Since I was a travel RN, my assignments were short term – often 6 to 12 weeks. Therefore, I needed to maintain a physical base address. I was physically safe though emotionally drained.

Many people describe the 1990s as one of the best periods of United States history. During almost all that time, America was at peace. The frightening and costly military competition with the Soviet Union had ended. The threat of nuclear attack seemed greatly reduced if not totally eliminated. Military officials declared America's defenses were strong. The economy was considered as improved from poor to very good. Inflation was low with employment for many, but not all. Great strides were made in both medicine and technology.^{uu} The internet computer system created an entirely new world of instantaneous communications. Social media was on the upswing and available for many more citizens.^{vv} The US population exploded by nearly thirty-three million during the 1990s which is the most that the United States had ever grown during any given ten-year period.¹³ Some minority groups were growing faster than the white population. Immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia comprised a large segment of the new arrivals. The population of

¹³ See US Census Bureau statistics (2000). The US underwent a population explosion during the 1990s. A record 32.7 million new citizens were counted during this period. All states saw significant increases in population.

America was aging and the costs of healthcare were increasing. Newspapers and television reported people being shot and killed in offices and schools. Divisions grew greater between rich people and poor people.

Clinton became president in 1992. His second term of presidency was plagued by scandal. Congress began proceeding to impeach him during his second term.^{ww} The trial and the events leading to it caused deep concern among some Americans. For many others, however, it was merely another sideshow in a government that was out of control. American families changed significantly during the 1990s.^{xx} My family was no exception. Divorce statistics were on the upswing.¹⁴ My marriage ended in 1993. All around me there were families with only one parent. It was apparent that single-parent households were on the increase (*See note 50*). Children in such families were more likely to be poor or to get into trouble. Many American children did not live with their parents at all. The number of children living with grandparents increased significantly. Test scores and national studies during the 1990s demonstrated that many public school students were not learning as they should. The nation, it seemed, needed more and better teachers.

Upon the dissolution of my marriage, I returned to the US with my three children. I witnessed first-hand the differences in the educational systems between these two countries. In Canada, my girls were in 10th and 11th grades. Coming to Florida, I enrolled them in my

¹⁴ According to the CDC (2009), National Center for Health Statistics, divorces have seen a slight increase in recent years.

alma mater in the same grades in which they were enrolled in Canada. Soon I discovered, through their complaints of boredom, that the curriculum offered in the Florida high school was grossly different from that of the British Columbia system. In fact, their Florida studies were similar to the curriculum which they had studied in the 5th and 6th grades in Canada. After a discussion with school officials, I made the decision to withdraw both of them from high school and to send them to evening studies at the local community college where they both earned their GED diplomas within a few months' time. Arguably, the caliber of teachers is less a problem than the curriculum which they are being allowed to teach in order to comply with the standardized tests.

Racial divisions in America continued to present serious problems. Rodney King, an African - American man, fleeing from police in Los Angeles after being chased for speeding, was severely beaten and kicked by police as he lay on the ground.^{yy} The entire incident was filmed by a witness who lived nearby. He presented his video to a local television station. Soon people all over the country watched as evidence of police brutality made its way into the American psyche. The four white police officers were arrested for their actions. They were tried after they requested a change of venue outside of Los Angeles. A jury in a nearby wealthy, conservative community found them all not guilty. Riots by angry African-Americans erupted in the streets of Los Angeles. This unrest lasted three days, leaving fifty-five people dead and more than 2,000 others injured. One thousand buildings lay in ruins in the aftermath of this civil unrest (*See note 51*).

Tempers were on edge in the rural Central Florida community that included a large population of African-American descent. Yet, no demonstrations occurred. In my nursing practice, I had a significant number of African-American patients of Medicare-age. When I questioned them why there were no demonstrations here, they explained that the local black population was fearful of making any disturbance due to a long history of police abuse. They said it was simply safer for them to just keep quiet and stay to themselves rather than to risk possible retribution.

The democratic control of the White House came to an end as the Supreme Court was designated to decide the outcome of the 2000 presidential election.^{zz} The circumstances surrounding this contested election would leave a bad taste in the mouths of many Americans, especially older ones - the Baby Boomers - including myself. I was already cynical and distrustful of government. This outcome resulted in my decision to forego participation in the electoral process. I was convinced that my vote did not count and that the electoral system as it stands was rigged in favor of powerful interest groups.

Economic troubles had been brewing for several years. The ENRON scandal, in 1997, had unearthed corruption and massive dishonesty in corporate America. ENRON, a leading American energy company, declared bankruptcy.^{aaa} This was one of the largest corporate bankruptcy claims in American history. Some ENRON investors lost all their money in this massive failure. Retired employees lost monthly payments upon which they relied to survive. Some top officials in the company had used dishonest accounting methods to hide financial problems from investors. A federal grand jury in Houston, Texas, brought

charges against Kenneth Lay, former ENRON chairman and chief executive officer as well as other officers. The ENRON collapse was followed by a series of other corporate failures involving dishonest accounting methods. For example, the international communications company WorldCom Incorporated also went bankrupt and the government charged several WorldCom officials with wrongdoing.^{bbb}

Apparently, corruption was rampant in all sectors of the economy. Healthcare was not exempt from this corruption which directly affected my life. I was working at the time for a Medicare home health agency (Columbia/HCA) in Florida. This company came under the scrutiny of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for Medicare fraud.¹⁵ I had witnessed first-hand how this company was defrauding the Medicare system by signing people up for home health care despite the fact that they did not meet the criteria for admission to home care. As a Registered Nurse it was my duty to assess patients for their eligibility for home healthcare services once they were discharged from the hospital. Many times I observed that the patients did not meet the homebound status requirements for home healthcare services. I frequently would do my home health assessment and report that the patient did not meet the criteria. I was instructed to sign them up anyway. I refused to do so. I decided that it was time for me to seek other employment so I took on another position part-time, just to get my foot in the door, anticipating a complete change very soon. Apparently I did so in the nick of time. Within

¹⁵ See Department of Justice proceedings (2000) for Medicare fraud against Hospital Corporation of America.

days of my resignation, the FBI descended on the doorsteps of the agency. Employees were instructed to stand away from their desks while the FBI agents, with guns drawn, took possession of all computers and files. Within these records the FBI found all the evidence they required to make a case for Medicare fraud against the agency. I had prior knowledge of this deceptive practice. Had I been asked, I would have been obligated to add my voice to the evidence of the crime. As it stood, enough evidence was already in the records, so I was not called upon to provide more evidence. Rick Scott, the current governor of Florida, was CEO of Columbia/HCA at the time. He was in command when the hospital company was fined \$1.7 billion for Medicare fraud.^{ccc}

These shenanigans in high places made me more cynical than ever. I decided, then and there, not to ever cast another federal election ballot. In addition, my faith in the Florida government was completely eroded. Kathryn Harris, Florida Supervisor of Elections, was, coincidentally, co-chair of George Bush's Florida election committee and a cousin of George W. Bush.^{ddd} This fact made the situation clear in my eyes. I knew that my days as a resident of Florida were rapidly coming to an end. I decided to move to Tennessee where my brother lived, hoping for a fresh start. By this time I was certainly no stranger to migration since it had been a large part of my life since the 1970s.

I moved to Tennessee began work as a nurse. After a few months living in a rental house, I decided to buy a piece of land and to build a house. Within months of Bush's rise to power and the attack on the World Trade Center and other targets on 9/11, Bush launched his "war on terror" directed at the purported al-Qaida terrorists.^{eee} Two years later he

declared his intentions to invade Iraq. Many people were skeptical of our need to discover weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) that supposedly were hidden in Iraq. Many Americans could not see the connection between the administration's announcement that the Taliban in Afghanistan was sheltering Osama bin Laden and the decision to bomb Iraq. On advice of Bush's advisors, many of whom had long supported an invasion of Iraq, he was assured that there were WMDs hidden and that only through invading Iraq could they be discovered. The Patriot Act, passed by Congress on October 26, 2001, had provided the government more power to get information about suspected terrorists in this country. Critics said the legislation invaded citizens' rights to privacy. Civil liberties groups charged that it gave law enforcement and other agencies too much power. After 9/11 government agencies were criticized for not cooperating to gather intelligence that might have prevented the terrorist attacks. Many Americans were persuaded that 9/11 attacks had changed their lives, their country, and the world, forever. Many more saw it as a power play by the government to remove citizens' inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. A new agency, the Department of Homeland Security, was created to strengthen defenses against terrorism. Citizens observed even more erosion of both civil liberties and privacy. One example was seen in the tightening of airport security measures.

By 2002, I moved into my new home. I was less worried about terrorist acts than I was about the erosion of the economy and its effects upon the wages of the working

class. I had witnessed my nursing wages decline since I had become a nurse in the 1980s, and, in 2002 I was making less per hour than I had earned on my first nursing job. Yet my experience level had increased vastly.

I decided to try travel nursing; I obtained my first travel assignment in Vermont at a federal penitentiary for male inmates. I was in charge of the infirmary in this penal institution. This position, in retrospect, was one of the safest nursing “gigs” that I had ever had. After two assignments there, I returned to Tennessee. I had been offered a full-time position to remain, but, despite the fact that I enjoyed the work, the prison was to be converted to a female correctional institution, and I did not feel qualified to administer care for females due to the heavy obstetrical/gynecological nursing duties. Nursing female inmates, from my personal experience, is quite different from males, especially since females are often victims first prior to being criminals. As such, they often feel entitled to special treatment in consideration of this reality. I simply did not feel qualified, nor did I wish to provide that level of care.

I returned home to Tennessee briefly, while seeking another travel assignment. I came to Lewisville, Texas, after obtaining a travel assignment at the Denton State School as an RN case manager. I completed that assignment and took a position with a local mental health/mental retardation outpatient crisis unit. This was to be a permanent position; however, it turned into a brief employment. During this brief employment, coinciding with the Great Recession (2008-2009), I was case manager seeing clients for medication management and counselling. During a period of six months, during the height of the recession, I saw three

gentlemen who had come in for services with complaints of anxiety and depression. I learned in each of these instances that these men had lost their jobs, their homes, their automobiles, their children, and even their dogs. They thought they were mentally ill. The clinic offered medications to help them, thus medicalizing their very real concerns. Sadly, I learned that these three men each committed suicide; they left this world thinking that their troubles were somehow their fault and that there was something wrong with them. That was when I saw the impact of cultural forces as they play out in the personal lives of individuals. The nursing profession had medicalized their legitimate social issues. These events, occurring within a period of six months, was enough to convince me that medications could not solve social issues. As a professional RN, I was bound to the rules of the profession that dictated the limits of my care. I was not permitted to discuss social issues with my clients. I was appalled that our culture and the nursing profession could condone allowing individuals to feel responsibility for cultural forces. That policy is blaming the victim. I think that was when I realized that I was a sociologist. I left my position and decided to do that last assignment as a travel nurse in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

After my Santa Fe, New Mexico last nursing assignment, I returned to Lewisville, Texas and spent the winter unemployed, I applied for Social Security benefits at age 62. I needed an income and that was my only option. After several months of physical illness of unknown origin, later perceived to be emotional withdrawal from a toxic work environment, I began to research my options. Thus, I came to Texas Woman's University. I was given hope by a very caring Admissions Counsellor that I could dig myself out of a toxic career through

re-training. I began my first class on May 17, 2010. I had slammed the door on the nursing profession. However, a new door was now opening. I have never regretted my decision.

For a long time I refused to admit that I was a victim of nursing burnout. Yet, that is what had happened. And it was not dealing with the patients that had resulted in this burnout. Rather, it was the medical system within which I had to work. Looking back over my varied nursing career, one pivotal event that forever altered my opinion about the nursing profession was my witnessing first-hand the differences between nursing in a capitalistic healthcare system (USA) and a socialized medicine environment (Canada). Therefore, my exodus from nursing, the third turning point, was more a series of occurrences than one pivotal event. I perceived the prime motive of US healthcare as monetary considerations. Rarely, if ever, did I see the prime focus being patient-centered.

My Canadian experience was vastly different from my US experience. Financial concerns were addressed at the executive level in the hospital where budget adjustments were made. Never, ever, had such budgetary constraints affected patient care or even resources and services available for patients. Serving on the hospital board at the hospital where I worked in British Columbia I observed that the hospital board decided on funding cuts. I knew this first hand since I represented nursing staff as a member of the hospital board. These decisions were passed down directly to the individual units that would, in turn, adjust their unit bed capacities and staffing quotas. There was never a question of different levels of care depending on type of insurance.

To back step a bit: upon my return to the United States, I tried several in-patient hospital work settings before finally deciding that the monetary consideration was prevalent across the board, depending on the insurance (or lack thereof) of the patient. Coming from Canada's socialized medicine system, this was extremely difficult for me to understand. Through the remainder of my nursing career, almost 10 years, I was, in effect, withdrawing from the profession since I could not ethically align myself with the American healthcare system.

For survival in the profession during this period, I chose positions that were more "away from the bedside of the inpatient facilities," opting, instead, to work in mental health crisis units, hospice homecare, elderly Medicare homecare case management, and travel nursing - milieus that demonstrated less focus on the money though it was always a factor. These positions did not present me with daily "in your face" monetary conditions under which patient care decisions were being made. For example, in hospitals, each item used and each service provided for a patient has a charge slip or billing sticker attached. Much focus is put on the need to make sure all charges are promptly credited to the patient account. In other nursing milieus, the charges were more block-focused, and the entire service package had one cost; if one qualified for the service, there were no individual charge tickets to manage, leaving the nurse free to perform vital nursing functions without the need to worry about the individual billing.

As mentioned above, travel nursing was another option that I chose mainly avoid in-patient hospital settings. I genuinely enjoyed travel nursing and generally received much more

pay on these shorter term assignments. Since I was not regular staff but considered as temporary assistance, I did not become involved in the regular issues which were presented to the regular staff. Neither did I have to deal with the politics of the regular staff or the billing issues. I was there primarily to provide the skilled nursing services. This made my work tolerable. Unfortunately, it was in this type of setting, an in-patient medical-psychiatric unit in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where I finally saw things as bad as they could get.

I left nursing, never looking back. After a few months of recuperation, I came to Texas Woman's University as an undergraduate in May 2010.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The guiding principles of this autoethnography have been C. Wright Mills' *sociological imagination* (Mills 1959) and Anselm Strauss's *turning points of identity* (Strauss 1959). In my effort to connect "personal troubles" to "public issues" I have used, in addition, insights from three other scholars – Dorothy Smith's *women's point of view* (Smith 1974, 1999, 2001, 2005), Arlie Hochschild's *second shift*, (Hochschild 1989) and Andrew Cherlin's views on *family and workplace* (Cherlin 2004, 2006, 2014).

I have identified three watershed, turning points and eras in my personal life. In order to keep the narrative flow of my autoethnography, theoretical insights have been inserted into Chapter IV as footnotes. In addition, endnotes serve as further clarification of historical commentary.

This dissertation project has been drafted to make critical sense of the "why" of my life experiences. I hope to have given expression through my narrative descriptions, to those of my generation who have shared similar class, gender, family, and socioeconomic situations (Hovermann et al 2015). Through narrative vignettes, I aspire to trigger emotions leading to thoughtful consideration of changes in the sociocultural patterns of working life, family values, and attitudes over time (Holman Jones 1998).

Autoethnography (like autobiography or memoir) makes no pretensions to a non-biased stance (Denzin 2014; Ellis 2002). Emotions are inevitably a part of social life, integral

to how we relate to and with others (Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis 2015; Bochner and Ellis 2016). My perspective is that of a Caucasian female, navigating a difficult, meandering road, transitioning from poor to working class. I own my biases. Autoethnographers "own" their bias. How can it be otherwise? It's who "we" are (Bochner 2014; Bochner and Ellis 2002, 2016).

With maturity, many individuals arrive at a plateau whereupon they strive to make sense of what life has handed them. It is hoped that the reader will empathize with the plight of women who were forced to take on the *second shift* for their families' survival, and, therefore, at once, performed and broke traditional gender roles.

This dissertation is far from being a rant against Western capitalist forces. Rather, my desire is that the reader is made aware of vulnerabilities and risks inherent in the personal lives of poor, working class Caucasian women who attempt to juggle career and home responsibilities. As an older person, I wish to add my experiences, including the failure of my family to live up to the traditional cliché of family values.

Among themes pursued in this dissertation throughout various eras of my life is the reality that individuals may fall victim to social forces outside of their power or even their awareness. This theme serves to emphasize the importance of keeping abreast of problems occurring in the greater cultural arena while we are simultaneously dealing with problems that are pertinent to our smaller group.

Another purpose of this dissertation is to emphasize the importance of education

in elevating our awareness of the interconnectedness of human beings. Another insight emerging from this dissertation is that during our lifetimes we may be presented with opportunities. As I look back, I realize that being able to step out to embrace an unknown has been a driving force in my progress.

I am writing this dissertation from the viewpoint of an older, Caucasian working class woman in order to honor the life experience of this sector of the population that is often submerged and unsung. There are many reasons for this state of affairs. Chief among them is the fact that books are written for an audience that can afford to purchase those books and has the time to read them. That group is comprised mainly of middle class professionals who often have more stable home lives and the support of a spouse who contributes to the family income. With a dual income, there is frequently extra money available for purchases of books or other materials that are often seen as extravagances for a single-earner household (Hochschild 1989; McGee 2005). Many working class women are barely able to keep a roof over their children's heads and food on the table. Thus, purchasing books might not be a top priority. Going to the library to check out these books may not be an option either since many working class women are working long hours each day and often arrive home exhausted, faced with performing household or childcare tasks which leaves little time to trek to the neighborhood library.

Over the years, women have been encouraged to keep themselves knowledgeable by constantly upgrading their knowledge base (McGee 2005). As a nursing professional, I was

expected to complete mandatory hours of continuing education annually to assure competency and eligibility for continued nursing licensure. In addition, women have been implicitly encouraged to keep themselves marketable, marriageable, and youthful well into their older years. Our American culture persuades youths and women to do whatever possible to maintain the above image. This forces many women to read self-help books, attend classes, keep abreast of politics, and maintain an attractive appearance. Many women undergo plastic surgeries to regain their youthful appearance.

Women who suffer from low self-esteem are especially susceptible to self-help and beauty advertising claims (McGee 2005). Thus, many women get the message that they are never good enough, beautiful enough, or smart enough. This plays right into the hands of a deeply entrenched patriarchal system that considers men as the dominant force in the world. In particular, obesity is a great contributing factor to low self-esteem. Thus, obese individuals often are the most vulnerable prey to the advertising and self-help industries. This vulnerable population is willing to do anything within their power to make themselves acceptable to the greater society (McGee 2005).

Throughout our lifetimes contemporary women contribute to society in many roles: mothers, housewives, and employees. This desire to contribute continues well into our older years. This dissertation has served the purpose of making sense of my life experiences in order to determine the reason why certain things happened. By looking back upon these turning

point eras, it is my hope to provide encouragement and hope to others who may question why life has apparently handed them “lemons.” Rather than vain regrets, my account suggests that we are each able to take whatever circumstances that have been handed us, even the worst circumstances, and turn them into something more positive and hopeful: the proverbial “lemonade.” In this way, I hope my dissertation will make a difference; will inspire women in similar circumstances to look forward to a future wherein they may use whatever experiences, good or bad, to make a contribution to the future of our society.

Growing up in a working class home has had a significant impact upon my life. Later, my nuclear family underwent many trials throughout the years of my marriage. I have expanded on the impact of successfully juggling multiple roles of breadwinner and traditional housewife. I address challenges which resulted in the eventual end of my 21 year marriage.

My encounters with public assistance throughout the early years of my marriage were painful for me. Yet, welfare provided a lifeline without which my family would have been in even worse shape than it was. By reaching out for help, I was preparing a way for a better future for all our family. This dissertation has offered me a new insight concerning the plight of my husband. For many years I held an intense anger toward him. I blamed him for his inability to provide for us. After all, I had been socialized to believe that this was what a “good” man should do. He also believed this. I can only imagine his feelings of helplessness at failing at this primary male task. My feelings of anger have now been replaced with a new

understanding of how ashamed he must have been. Of course, harboring this shame is no excuse for lashing out at me in the ways in which he did, by any means. However, it does shed a new light on how these actions might have come about. The intense self-hatred that he might have felt must have had an outlet or it would become overwhelming. I was that outlet. When I divorced him after 21 years, he no longer possessed that scapegoat. This does not explain his premature death a year later from cancer. Yet, I see through this process that he may have simply given up, dying a failure. This makes me feel a tremendous sadness.

My husband's plight was made much worse due to sociocultural events of the 1970s and throughout our marriage. During economic decline immigrants have a great deal of difficulty finding and keeping work. This is often the case during times of cultural economic stress and high rates of unemployment. It is always the immigrants and other minorities that are the first to lose their jobs and who have difficulty finding work to provide for their families. Often the stress of joblessness can manifest in abusive behavior. Individuals are rarely just “bad seeds.” Rather, their behavior is affected by factors external to them. Hence, the impact of societal forces upon families.

Music has always been important in my life. This dissertation acknowledges music that was thematic of various periods of my life. Without music and meditation practice, I would not have managed to survive many turbulent eras. I am grateful for the contributions of singers and lyricists throughout the last 40 years who have kept me sane, speaking to me gently, while all around me I perceived a world that was going mad.

Music signified the link between my private troubles and public issues. It came from “out there,” but it spoke to me, explained, commiserated, and revealed to me the “true essence” of my suffering. It connected my biography to history. Now, toward the completion of my journey, I can, with Joni Mitchell, see life from both sides with a far greater clarity than I did forty years ago. The music provides that elusive link between the self and the society, the private and the public.

One of the most powerful critiques of autoethnography as a sociological technique stems from its lack of objectivity. Indeed, autoethnography is subjective, and therein lies its value as a sociological technique. The answer to the question “what is really going on here” is found by the addition of autoethnographic methodology. Used successfully as an adjunct technique in a well-defined qualitative research project, it may be especially fruitful in the mixed-methods approach which already combines quantitative and qualitative data. Through introspection of an individual’s personal perceptions, often hidden deeply within the subconsciousness, the researcher is able to extract gems of insight. Such data, in itself not generalizable to the population, may be added to existing qualitative and quantitative data and, combined, may very well be applicable to society in general. An example would be if a group of individual researchers, working on a specific issue, are each assigned the task of introspection related to that issue. Once this procedure is done and the results are written, then the group meets together to share their introspective findings. The results of these individual findings which contain ideas from the individuals, holds a high potential for the creation of new knowledge. Autoethnography provides the missing link – the personal perspective –

lacking in quantitative or qualitative techniques alone. In this manner, mixed methods qualitative research may be truly enhanced for the benefit of sociological research.

Adding this expanded emphasis on reflexivity provides a segue into mixed-methods. Only by exploration of the multidimensionality of the research position is it possible to derive new knowledge not accessible through quantitative or qualitative techniques alone. The main premise of autoethnography is that each of us is a font of wisdom since each human being possesses unique perceptions from which he or she is able to draw. By its very nature, autoethnographic self-examination is able to link the personal to the social in ways that enhance scholarship in the discipline of sociology. Its contribution to qualitative research is inestimable since it adds the personal component found only through introspection.

LIMITATIONS

An autoethnography presents unique limitations. First, and foremost, is the problem of cognitive verification. This would relate to cultural norms, beliefs, and practices of the particular era in focus. An utterly personal and idiosyncratic depiction of a life crafted and shaped by the author contains an inherent and ineradicable bias. Autoethnography is not generalizable since it only examines one cultural setting, one person's point of view on a day-to-day perspective.

A story thus presented is a self-narrative that connects the social context of an individual with the larger cultural context within which it is embedded. Thus, autoethnography stems from a social constructivist paradigm. Both the research process and product are geared toward a better understanding of the cultural experience.

Autoethnography may be easily misinterpreted or misrepresented by the researcher's own cultural bias or ignorance. Such a work is necessarily time-consuming since it involves an in depth analysis. It cannot be done either quickly or badly if it is to be viable, honest, representative, and ethical. At all times ethical considerations must be kept in mind to assure non-identification of the data.

The researcher must keep in mind the vulnerability of both the author and the audience. There exists a danger of falsely objectifying the efforts. Autoethnography continually strives to gain acceptance as a credible research methodology; hence the researcher's need to describe the methodology to others even though autoethnography is a valid qualitative research technique that has been in professional use since the 1980s.

The writer must possess courage, both with the writing and with coming face to face with uncomfortable feelings. The readers may also be affected by some of the personal trials of the authors. Even though they will most probably not be exactly the same trials of the author, they may trigger memories of similar emotional periods in their lives.

Finally, the autoethnographer must possess a fervent belief in the value of this work as a tool useful to gain a greater comprehension of micro-macro societal issues in play in the life of an individual at all times.

Ultimately, autoethnography in sociological perspective could be interpreted as the Weberian *verstehen method* (Elwell 2013) applied to the life of the sociologists themselves and, as such, a variety of *reflexive sociology* (Bourdieu 1990).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

No dissertation, especially one that is subjective in nature as is this one, can hope to answer questions on a broad basis. Future research using autoethnographic methodology may be quite enlightening for the researcher if for no other reason than gaining clarity about the whys and hows of lived experience. It may also serve as a means of laying to rest issues of pain and possibly misunderstandings which will provide for the researcher-author an opportunity to come to terms with his or her past and to chart a new course. This result has certainly been the case for me.

I hope that other autoethnographic research that would use the options of *sociological imagination* and *turning points of identity*, articulating eras of the author's life in the same (or in other) cultural and biographic eras, would put this study in greater comparative perspective.

EPILOGUE

As I enter my seventh decade, I can truthfully say that I would not have changed a thing – for all of these experiences that I lived through have made me stronger. I have a well-earned resilience which truly marks the life well-lived. Embracing good health and a positive outlook, I look forward to making many more contributions to our world before I draw my last breath.

Throughout the dissertation, I return to choices that had to be made throughout these various periods of my life. Choice is never easy; it is never without impacts on others, specifically, in this instance, my family. Yet, I do not regret the choices I made. Furthermore, I

am boldly unapologetic for these choices. Many of these choices were, in fact, not really valid choices at all. I address the fact that many of my personal choices were imposed upon me by societal forces in play at the time. For example, the "choice" of whether to be a stay-at-home mom or to be the breadwinner of the household. Therefore, sociologically speaking, society is complicit in our choices, on both personal and cultural levels, at all times. In many cases, there was only a choice between bad and worse options.

Through making sense of my life in these three turning point eras, I hope to enlighten others, drawing attention to the plight of many Caucasian working class women as they navigate the new world of work and family responsibilities. In my research, I began to get a sense of the underlying human essence of each theorist. C. Wright Mills' lifelong desire was to make sociology of benefit for the public. Anselm Strauss identified the importance of turning points in the lives of individuals; Dorothy Smith added the woman's voice while calling attention to the differences in perspective in how women perceive their world. Andrew Cherlin has focused on the rapidly changing culture of the family and workplace and how it has affected low-income women in the US. Thus, I was able to evolve toward a new way of viewing my own personal experiences. Exposing some of the long-term results of the workplace and home front pressures placed upon women 30 years ago, it is hoped, will enable those in positions of responsibility in today's workforce to make better decisions that will ultimately affect the lives of their employees, both in the workplace and in their home

lives. My desire is that policies may be implemented to curtail unreasonable demands made upon employees that, in many cases, force them to decide between their job and their children. A better appreciation of the multifaceted nature of families must include a better understanding of the fact that there is no clear-cut definition for what is presented to us as a “traditional” family. This family concept is merely part of the fiction that comprises American life; it is useful politically to some who would advertise their notion of “proper” norms and values.

While looking back on my life experiences, I would be remiss if I did not recognize that I played a great part in the events that unfolded in my life. Questioning what part I played was a novel insight. What was it about me that drew these particular life experience to me in the first place? And, why could I not just “say no” to being a victim in these circumstances? To wax philosophical, I must admit to a belief that individuals are placed on earth to grow and that part of this growth is to be able to come to grips with circumstances which might have persisted from time immemorial. Failure to deal with such “problems” may doom one to try again until such time as he or she is able to grasp the real message underlying the experiences. That philosophical stance is my current perception of the reasons for my life experiences to date. Yet, to take this view to another level, I admit that, as a member of a certain culture and its correspondent political economy, many forces were imposed upon me from many directions. The impact of such cultural and economic forces may not be understated.

To conclude, I must pay homage to the practice of meditation. “Looking Forward by Looking Back: An Autoethnography” has been a true meditational effort. Meditation

has been a lifeline for me throughout all eras of my life. Without the knowledge of techniques of going within and thereby stilling the chaos of my life, I am convinced that the outcome for me thus far –this dissertation included - would have been impossible.

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APPENDIX A

Concordance of Personal, Cultural, and Historical/Political Events

CONCORDANCE OF PERSONAL, CULTURAL, AND HISTORICAL/POLITICAL EVENTS			
DATE	PERSONAL	MUSICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL/POLITICAL EVENTS
1962	Entered Workforce Work-Study	1962 "Blowin' in the Wind"	February 1, 1960 Woolworth's Lunch Counter racial
1963	Witness to lunch counter racial discrimination in early 1963 November 22 parent's wedding anniversary Grief for loss of president	1963 The Beatles – debut on Ed Sullivan Show "I Wanna Hold Your Hand"	Kennedy assassination November 22
1964	High school graduation move out of parents' home Began full-time		
1965-69	Dating years Angry/Grieving loss of school- mates in Vietnam	1965 "California Dreamin'" 1968 "Hey Jude" 1969 "Both Sides, Now"	Racial unrest National mourning Vietnam War protests Assassinations MLK and RLK
1971	My first vote Moved to Massachusetts	1965 - "American Pie"	Nixon second term
1973	Marriage January 27 Son born September 10 Sitting in line to get		Paris Peace Accord January 27 OPEC Oil Embargo
1974-75	First unemployment of husband First encounter with public assistance		Watergate scandal Nixon resignation Economic stagnation
1976	Daughter born October 11 Poor family finances	1976 : "Hotel California"	Gerald Ford presidency Economic restraints to offset inflationary trend

1978	Daughter born July 25 Marital discord		
1979	Family migration in search of work First turning point of	Echoes of "Hotel California"	Failed Quebec Referendum
1980	Volcanic ash descended on Southern California – an ominous warning to me of events to come that went unheeded by me	Echoes of "American Pie" My music died	Mt. St. Helens erupted The world watched in anticipation of "Who Shot JR" on the Dallas television serial
1981	No fairy tales in our home life as dependence on public assistance became permanent An aura of doom and gloom led to personal feelings of hopelessness		The world watched as the fairy tale princess Diana wed Britain's Prince Charles The AIDS virus was identified
1982	Second turning point of identity -Professionalization Public assistance Began education at technical school		Reagan inaugurated Stagflation Tax cuts for businesses with hope of "trickle down" benefits for workers (did not materialize)
1983-88	Nursing education RN licensure		
1989-93	Moved to Vancouver, BC Re-licensure as Canadian nurse Marital cold war period Divorce 1993 Return to US with children		Fall of Berlin Wall and end of Cold War Israel/PLO Peace Accord Reagan left office
1994	Death of ex-husband		

1995	Began HCA home health nursing		
1997	Left HCA home health nursing to work as psychiatric nurse		Federal investigation of HCA for Medicare Fraud
2000	Moved to Tennessee Re-licensed as RN		1.7 billion dollar fine for HCA Rick Scott, CEO at the time Contentious G.W. Bush election
2001			ENRON corruption 9/11
2003			Iraq War
2005	Travel nursing		Irrational exuberance in the financial sector
2008	Assignment as RN in Federal Penitentiary in Vermont		Increasing unemployment Great Recession
2009-10	Third turning point of identity – Liberation 3 suicides of men clients of mental health agency within 6 months January 4, 2010 - Last nursing assignment New Mexico May 17, 2010 - Enrolled at TWU		

APPENDIX B

Age and Gender Discrimination – A Rant “You Have to Understand”

“YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND!!!!”

I have had it and I cannot hold back for one more minute. Here is how age and gender discrimination has affected me as a Caucasian working class female through seven decades of my life. Yes – I did not misspeak – seven decades. What is more, it continues to affect me as I strive for a future post doctorate.

As a little 6-year old girl, (1951) brand new to school, I so wanted to ride a bicycle. More than that, I wanted one (a red one) for my very own. Needless to say, I didn’t get my bicycle then, nor for many years thereafter. My four brothers received brand new shiny bicycles for Christmas that year – they were all younger than me. I said “it’s just not fair” and the response, simultaneously from both Mom and Dad, was that little girls do not ride bicycles – it’s not ladylike. And, that was the end of that. I did get my very own bright, shiny, red bicycle, however. I was 50 years old when I received it as a gift from a boyfriend. He had to teach me how to ride it. “You just have to understand.”

A little later – by the time I was nearing 11 years of age, (1956) many girls were allowed to wear pants to school and I wanted to wear them too. Up to that time I wore skirts and blouses or dresses. I asked Mom and Dad if I could have some pants to be like the other girls and, in unison, they said “No, girls do not wear pants since it is not ladylike,” and that was the end of the ‘discussion’ as far as they were concerned. There was never to be an argument with one’s parents. The repercussions were too severe to even contemplate. “You just have to understand.”

A few years later – as a teenager (1960) – I wanted to be allowed to go out on a double date with my girlfriend and two of our classmates. Of course, I asked permission of my parents and the same refrain “No, you are too young for dating. There will be time for that once you are done with your schooling and live on your own. It is just not ladylike to be unchaperoned.” “You just have to understand.”

By the time I was eighteen (1964) I had graduated from high school and, having achieved my rite of passage, now I was living on my own. I had my first date then – with the son of one of the employees where I worked. To be allowed to go on this date, however, I was told that we would have to be chaperoned, again (this time according to the boy’s parents) “It was just not proper to have young people going out to the theatre unescorted.” Thus, my memorable first date was being accompanied by the boy’s parents who said they were going to the theatre anyway and would just “tag along” with us and drive us there and home. “You just have to understand.”

I had begun to work while a junior in high school (1962) – working part-time at the Credit Bureau. I made minimum wage which was \$1.25 per hour. I was so proud of being able to earn my own money. Once I graduated from high school in 1964, I was hired full-time. I was told that my hourly wage would remain the same because you are very young and we can’t afford to pay more than minimum wage to young people.” By this time I had 3 years’ experience and I was frankly disappointed that I did not get a raise. I worked for the Credit Bureau for 5 years, leaving when I was nearly 20 years old. And, never did I receive a raise and when I had my annual reviews, the explanation for my not getting a salary increase like

others was the same diatribe. I could not receive an increase in pay because I would probably leave soon to get married anyway and they could not afford to invest in an employee who would leave at a moment's notice to get married – as young girls do. “You just have to understand.”

After taking two job preparation courses in medical assisting and electrocardiogram technician courses, I finally was enrolled in community college in 1982 and by 1988 I had earned an Associate of Arts in Nursing and was licensed to practice nursing in California by July 1988. My first nursing job I was told that there was a fixed wage for new employees and that I had no choice but to take that pay scale. I quickly learned that men were receiving more money as entry level RNs. When I asked about this, I was told that men have families to support so we must pay them a living wage.” I argued that I was the sole support of my three children and I needed a living wage too. I was told “you have to understand, that is what the rules are and we cannot break the rules.” “You have to understand.”

By 1989, I had moved to British Columbia to re-join my husband. For the first (and what was to be the only) time in my work career, I received a living wage. I was forever thankful for a strong nursing union that guarantee fair and equal wages for both men and women. For six years, I received nominal annual pay raises (per union contract) and generous, compassionate benefits that recognized that women play a dual role – second shift – and occasionally had children who needed them at home. For the first time, I understood my value as an employee without being judged on the basis of age or gender. Through my Canadian work experience, I was NOW beginning to understand!!

Then, when I returned to the US in 1993, after my divorce, I once again entered the workforce a nurse. Florida nursing wages were deplorable. I made less money with 6 years' experience as a nurse than I had made as a new graduate in California. When I questioned this, I was told that we don't have unions here and it is a privilege to work in the great State of Florida therefore you won't need so much money. When I argued that I was the sole support of family I was met with the now familiar refrain "you have to understand, we don't pay women like men since they are not as dependable since they might have sick children and may get pregnant and leave the workforce and we will have to hire new replacement nurses to replace you." By this time, I had 3 children, was divorced, and my ex-husband had died. Yet this information fell on deaf ears. I just "had to understand, once again that these were the rules and rules must be followed." "You just have to understand."

After coming to Texas on a travel nursing assignment, I soon took a full time position (2009) where I was told that working in mental health you will not earn much money yet the work is satisfying." I was nearing fed up with "you have to understand by this time (I was 61 years old). By early 2010, I left nursing since I finally "understood" that the workforce was not friendly to women of any age. "You just have to understand."

Now, as I complete my doctorate, I am once again faced with the perennial "you have to understand." This time, I have to understand that I can't be hired because I might get sick, might get injured, and might not be capable of performing the required work tasks, or I might even die. "You just have to understand."

The crux of the matter, in my “understanding” is that women are devalued throughout their lifetimes, both by age and gender. I am taking the opportunity to voice my discontent (if not now, when, I ask you?) on behalf of women of all ages. With my last breath I will proclaim the blatant unfairness of a society that has systematically denied equal pay for women throughout my lifetime. I do understand, all right. But what I understand is that this patriarchal hierarchy has been excused long enough as “just the way things are.” It is time that women everywhere stop and think about their loss of prestige in the eyes of the men who are, often unconsciously, imposing the rules on the supposedly “weaker” sex. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, women have gone through their lives feeling deserving of being treated in this manner – after all isn’t this women’s place? Females of all ages, young, not so young, and older are all pawns in a patriarchal hierarchy that works to the advantage of those in positions of power – husbands, employers, government agencies. This has not changed in my lifetime.

It took me 70 years but, slow learner that I am, now I GET IT – NOW I REALLY UNDERSTAND!!!!

APPENDIX C

Copyright Permission (*Both Side, Now* lyrics)

I'd like permission to reprint Joni's lyrics.

For permission to print the lyrics to one of Joni's songs in a book, magazine, advertisement, etc., use the following contact information.

United States:
Fred Dinkins / Licensing Administrator
Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.
PO Box 10003
Van Nuys, CA 91410-0003
permissions@alfred.com

RE: Permission to print lyrics of Both Sides, Now in my dissertation

Levasseur, Patricia

Wed 1/4/2017 12:17 PM

To: 'permissions@alfred.com' <permissions@alfred.com>;

Importance: High

Hello Mr. Worden

As a point of clarification regarding the usage of my doctoral dissertation, I wanted to let you know that the document in its entirety will be housed in an open access repository as well as ProQuest where it is available for purchase in its entirety. I would appreciate your acknowledgement that this is acceptable use included under FAIR USE.

Thank you,

Pat

*Patricia Holland Levasseur, ABD
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Sociology and Social Work
Texas Woman's University
Denton, Texas*

From: Levasseur, Patricia
Sent: Friday, December 23, 2016 2:14 PM
To: 'Alfred Permissions'
Subject: RE: Permission to print lyrics of Both Sides, Now in my dissertation
Importance: High

Thank you so much for allowing me to cite Joni Mitchell's lyrics for Both Sides, Now. If it is possible, would you let her know that her beautiful work has meant so much to me throughout my life and that it has become especially poignant at this time. Much respect to her as a creative figure.
Pat

*Patricia Holland Levasseur, ABD
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Sociology and Social Work
Texas Woman's University
Denton, Texas*

From: Alfred Permissions [<mailto:permissions@alfred.com>]
Sent: Friday, December 23, 2016 1:50 PM
To: Levasseur, Patricia
Subject: RE: Permission to print lyrics of Both Sides, Now in my dissertation

Hello Patricia,

Thank you for your request.

We are happy to inform you that this usage is considered EDUCATIONAL in nature and therefore deemed FAIR USE.

You are clear to proceed forward as needed.

Thank you for respecting the rights of our artists and we wish you the best with your dissertation.

Sincerely,

Michael Worden
Copyright Resource Administrator
Alfred Music

From: Levasseur, Patricia [<mailto:PLevasseur@twu.edu>]
Sent: Wednesday, December 21, 2016 6:27 PM
To: Alfred Permissions <permissions@alfred.com>
Subject: Permission to print lyrics of Both Sides, Now in my dissertation

I am a doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas. I would love to be able to cite Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides, Now" lyrics as the opening "tone setter" for my autoethnographic dissertation. Her music is thematic for my entire dissertation project since I am a 70 year old who has literally seen both sides, now and this is the story I am creating using an autoethnographic technique for my doctoral dissertation. I do not intend to sell, sing, or otherwise reproduce these lyrics. They will be used strictly for educational purposes. The words of her song, Both Sides, Now is reflective of how I am looking at my life at this point . Her song has spoken to my heart and I wish to honor her by citing her lyrics.. I would appreciate hearing from you.

Thank you,
Pat Levasseur
PhD Candidate
214-412-5185

APPENDIX D

IRB Exemption

NO NEED FOR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THIS DISSERTATION

Human Subjects in Research

Human subjects in research are living individuals about whom investigators (professionals or students) conducting research obtain (1) data through intervention or interaction with individuals, or (2) identifiable private information. Identifiable private information includes any acquired information via self-report, behavior, or observation in which the identity of research subjects is or may readily be ascertained by the investigators or be associated with the information.

ENDNOTES

^a See Schofer, Evan and John Meyer. 2005. "The Worldwide Expansion of Higher Education in the Twentieth Century" in *American Sociological Review* 70(6):898-920.

^b The US Congress passed two child labor laws, 1918 and 1922, but the Supreme Court declared both unconstitutional. In 1924, Congress proposed a constitutional amendment prohibiting child labor, but the states did not ratify it. Then, in 1938, Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act. Accessed April 4, 2017. "A History of Child Labor." Accessed on April 4, 2017. <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content-history-child-labor>

^c See Sellers, Charles, Henry May, and N. McMillen. *A Synopsis of American History*. Chicago, Illinois: RandMcNally.

^d See Stuart, John and John Stack, Jr. 2008. *The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy and Community Building, 1933-1940*. Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida. See footnote c.

^e Raymond Vickers (1994) describes the fraudulent land schemes that lured many investors from the northern states to purchase a parcel of "land in the sun." Often this land was merely swampland. Vickers attributes this fraudulent speculation to economic decline experienced so severely in Florida.

^f See Pierre, Raphael Yves. 2007. "Economic Impact of a Mediterranean Fruit Fly Outbreak in Florida." PhD Dissertation. University of Florida. Accessed April 4, 2017. <http://purl.fcla.edu/fcla/etd/UFE0010125>

^g NOAA/National Weather Service. Memorial Webpage for the 1926 Great Miami Hurricane." Accessed on April 4, 2017. <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mfl/?n=miamihurricane1926>

See also – NOAA/National Weather Service. Memorial Webpage for the 1928 Lake Okeechobee Hurricane." Accessed on April 4, 2017. <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mfl/?ns=okeechobee>

^h See "Great Depression." Accessed on April 4, 2017. <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archeology/great-depression>.

See also "The Great Depression and the New Deal" at <http://fcit.usf.edu/Florida/lessons/depress/depress1.htm>

ⁱ "Counting Death and Disease: Classification of death and disease in the interwar years 1919-1939." Interwar Era 1920-1940" at encyclopedia.com – Death toll rose due to epidemics of whooping cough, measles, diphtheria, and paratyphoid." Accessed on April 4, 2017. <http://www.cambridge.org/journals/continuity-and-change/article/counting-death-and-disease-in-the-interwar-years-19191939/8252D1F6B6BCCEF66064588739229>

^j "List of Ethnic Slurs." Accessed on April 4, 2017. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darkies>

^k See "The industrial Revolution and the Failure of Great Britain." Accessed on April 4, 2017. www.victorianweb.org/technology/ir/ir7.html

^l “Cross the Pond” – phrase implying travel between Europe and the US. Accessed on April 4, 2017. https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/across_the_pond

^m “Mill Town.” Accessed on April 4, 2017. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mill_town

ⁿ “Top 10 Reasons People Use Drugs and Alcohol.” Accessed on April 4, 2017. <http://www.recoveryconnection.com>

^o “Duck and Cover.” Accessed on April 4, 2017. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duck_and_Cover

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