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Theory and experience of relationships from a phenomenological perspective

Steele, Carolyn Marie, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1989

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THEORY AND EXPERIENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS FROM A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

Carolyn Marie Steele

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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Approved by

David E Purpel
Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Adviser David E. Purpel

Committee Members Susan W. Stinson

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[illegible]

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This dissertation focuses on selected educational theories of relationships and personal experiences from a phenomenological research methodology. It assumes that we undergo a dialectic between theory and practice of relationships where we modify or reconstruct one on the basis of the other. Acting as a structuring device for interpreting our experiences, theory gives us explanations for why we engage in encounters with others, nature, and possibly a spiritual Being.

Chapter one critically examines pertinent educational theories, particulary Martin Buber, Paulo Freire, and Sharon Welch. Each theorists gives a somewhat different dimension for interpreting our relationships. Buber adds basic ground work for comparing some types of relationships--I-It, I-Thou, and I-Eternal Thou--while Freire contributes a political perspective of oppressed and oppressor individuals. Welch, additionally, supplies a female perspective on the praxis of relationships, the union of theory and practice supplemented by critical reflection.

Perceptions of relationships depend in part upon factors that can function to impede or promote our ties with other people. Chapter two explores four of these aspects. Self-knowledge relates to how we see ourselves as well as others, for we cannot define ourselves as human without some knowledge of what is entailed in being human (Heschel,

1965). An autobiographical section narrates personal experiences that illustrate the on-going quest for a clearer perception of the self with which to meet others. Similarly, we are thrown into existence (Heidegger, 1962) with traits over which we have little control. I look at gender, socio-economic class, and sub-culture, all of which interact to fashion one into the person he or she is. I am especially concerned with the relational barriers of coming from a working-class background, being female, and growing up in a Southern rural region.

Chapter three presents a different type of relationship, alienation and marginality, which offers us the chance to distance ourselves from others for a re-evaluation of the people we are and the relationships we have formed. We can even reach the depths of our being to gain new knowledge and perspectives, but a major question for our relationships becomes whether or not we remain estranged from others or go forth again into new and continuing relationships.

Finally, because this dissertation employs personal knowledge as support for its position, it includes an afterword on the dissertation process, particularly in reference to its research methodology.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation deals with an examination of the concept of relationships with particular reference to its significance to educational theory. Methodologically, the dissertation focuses on the practice of relationships as shown by personal experiences and critical reflection.

Serving as an explanation for our experiences, theory provides us with a conceptual basis for the comprehension and interpretation of them. When we learn about a theory, we can internalize the information in its entirety or in bits and pieces, just as we can reinterpret our experiences on the basis of theory. A tension exists between the two, where we use theory in terms of our experiences and connect our experiences to theory. From this metaphorical back-and-forth process, we can begin to understand who we are and the nature of our relationships.

My mode of inquiry involves an investigation of personal experiences and knowledge, including my own, in an attempt to learn about how the self permeates our activities and the research we conduct. We can deliberately be present in our work when we use the voice of I, or we can purposefully conceal ourselves with techniques like third person singular pronouns and a more objective, empirical approach. No matter which type of research we choose, I hold

that we will be present in it. We are the ones who analyze the data and highlight certain factors for prominence over others. Our past experiences and knowledge determine how we will interpret information and which theorists we use to support our conclusions, just as our thoughts are never neutral or indifferent when we think about someone or something (Heschel, 1965, p. 7). Due to the nature of these beliefs, I will be very present in my research.

In my research I also rely upon a phenomenological methodology, with its practice of a suspension of prejudices and biases. It will serve as a structure for me to delve into theory and experience in an effort to place some order upon them. I can, furthermore, apply it as a procedure for emphasizing the processes of reflection and description within a theoretical backdrop (Suransky, 1980, pp. 170-171). With a stress upon the researcher being in a state of epoche, it demands that we be open to others as well as to ourselves and allows for critical reflection about our experiences. We work to accept each aspect of our inquiry as separate "phenomena," Husserl's designation of the contents of our minds of which we are conscious (Kneller, 1984, p. 27). We enter into the stream of individual consciousness and examine our thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and other mental states, for we must look openly and directly at our minds to investigate the data gained from our experiences.

Another central concept involved in my research will be that of hegemony, the system of beliefs, morals, and values of the State and dominant class which have infiltrated all other subcultures of a society. Implicit in its definition are certain criteria which a series of ideas must meet before they become part of the hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). They must, first, constitute a way of seeing the world in a manner that is neither conscious nor intended. No evil genius is sitting in an office deciding which value system to introduce into a society and which to delete. Instead, a culture internalizes the hegemonic construct, so that it becomes a part of what is perceived as natural. The concepts or beliefs, in addition, must involve some distortion of reality, in that we are led to believe in certain values and beliefs which may ultimately lead to false promises. Although we are not misled intentionally, hegemony does have an exact consequence. It acts to preserve the status quo of the dominant class, to ward off change, and to keep the society as it is.

Thus, the infiltration of hegemony into our lives is a process of which many of us are unaware. We sometimes accept particular social, moral, and political values and do not question how they come to be a part of our existence. Instead, we take them as common knowledge and even incorporate words for them into our language so that the mores seem natural, a supposedly inescapable part of our

days on earth. We usually do not take the time to evaluate critically what we do, say, and think, just as we can be unaware of how the dominant class and State bring about a certain system of values to justify and legitimate the differences within the class structure.

My decision to include my personal experiences as a critical dimension of this research originates from an assumption that my consciousness is intertwined with the thought structures of others. Such a procedure is not narcissistic but, rather, pertains to the commonality among human beings. By critically examining myself as an example of a female Southern educator, I can start to disclose some of the conflicts and dialectics which we face in our relationships. I learn more about myself and, consequently, discover the similarities and differences of other people in a back-and-forth exchange between the self and other. In order to be human, I broaden my self-knowledge to include others, for "to be means to be with other human beings" (Heschel, 1965, p. 45).

CHAPTER I

A FOUNDATION OF THEORIES OF RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

This chapter forms an overall framework for relationships by combining selected parts of various theories into one larger theory. It is essential for praxis--practice critically based on theory--to have a theoretical foundation against which to reference experiences (Freire, 1986). Otherwise, we do not have a measuring stick for our experiences. With a theory in place, we can hold and examine our experiences in light of it, and it against our experiences, so that the theory serves as a shaper of our experiential interpretations. Each influences the other in praxis, when we critically reflect on our actions and thoughts to join theory with practice.

When we think of relationships, we have in mind certain connotations. We visualize a unity, one of people with nature, people with people, or perhaps people with God. Recognition of the other person, thing, or deity is a prerequisite, for we must bring him, her, or it into our consciousness with some sense of connection:

> He perceives the being that surrounds him, plain things and beings as things; he perceives what happens around him, plain processes and actions as processes, things

> that consist of qualities and processes that consist of moments, things recorded in terms of spatial coordinates and processes recorded in terms of temporal coordinates, things and processes that are bounded by other things and processes and capable of being measured against and compared with those others. . . Or man encounters being and becoming as what confronts him--always only <u>one</u> being and every thing only as a being. What is there reveals itself to him in the occurrence, and what occurs there happens to him as being. (Buber, 1970, pp. 82-83)

Hence, we are separate beings who interact with others, for we are one among many. We know ourselves by knowing others, our lives interdependent upon the lives of others. Being human, thus, necessitates relationships (Heschel, 1965) where we reach out to others.

Because of the person I am, the writings of certain theorists appeal to me. Their work helps me to come to terms with myself, as well as to formulate my own theory of relationships, made up from bits, pieces, and interpretations of their theories. All in all, their work fits together, each theorist adding another facet to the dialectic of theory and practice.

I have chosen Buber's theory because of its distinctions among types of relationships and its spiritual component. I do not choose to center totally on Buber because my experiences extend to additional domains. I have been selective about the portions of Buber I prefer in the composition of my overall theoretical referent, with the main criterion of inclusion or exclusion being my experiential base. Consequently, I am drawn to other

theorists to help me understand my position in life and with others.

Similarly, due to my educational studies and my teaching experiences, I am pulled to the writings of critical theorists, as illustrated primarily by those of Paulo Freire. He provides a theory of relationship between teacher and student from a political perspective, in addition to conceptualizing a methodology for a transformative and liberating education. His works furnish a way of explaining everyday relations with students. His concept of oppressor-oppressed is very beneficial in understanding students and the role of teacher, because the manner of instruction can determine the learning which occurs and the amount of knowledge shared. If a teacher assumes power while students sit passively listening, then he or she dominates over them in a hierarchy. He or she treats them as objects, not as subjects, in an oppressive fashion (Freire, 1986). On the other hand, if he or she sees them as subjects, the relationship can change into one of subject meeting subject, and a liberative, problem-posing education can replace the former stifling hierarchy. Praxis becomes the key to an authentic education, the condition where:

> Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it. Those truly committed to the cause of liberation can accept neither the mechanistic concept of consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled, nor the use of banking

> methods of domination (propaganda, slogans--deposits) in the name of liberation. (Freire, 1986, p. 66)

Thus, relationships and praxis are vital to me, as a teacher committed to the quality of education and welfare of students.

Finally, I have chosen Sharon Welch as an example of a feminist liberation theologian who helps me to consider relations from a woman's point to view. She has undergone some of the struggles of being a woman in a world that politically and economically favors the male, so that she has felt the friction in being both oppressed and oppressor. She combines the dialectics in explaining the behavior of an individual person and does not separate them into two categories of people. Her writing, as a result, builds another layer onto Buber's and Freire's theories of relationship and supplies additional room for a connection between my experiences and theory.

Section 1:

Martin Buber's Theory of Relationships

Introduction

The writings of Buber provide me with insight into the complexities and paradoxes of human relationships and human connections with nature and the super-natural. Although his work cannot fully explain the intricacies of existence, I can benefit from reflection on it, for my readings of his philosophy lead me to a deeper understanding of my own relations with the world. It serves for me as a mainstay against which I can reference my thoughts and experiences.

Buber's Theory

For Buber (1958), relationships occur in three domains, namely between people and nature, people and people, and people and the Eternal Thou, or God. These relationships form our existence (Buber, 1970, p. 53), for we continually define our world in terms of other beings. They compose our world, and it is in the process of placing one structure of being in comparison to a living being where we come to see ourselves in terms of the other. Our human constitution makes it essential that we relate to the people, world, and spirit around us.

Our connection with nature is inherent, for just as our parents are a part and product of nature, so too are we (Buber, 1970, pp. 76-77). We share the space around us with

the elements which combine to form us. We perceive the birds, trees, animals, and so on, as to how they relate to us. Our senses gather data to bring the environment into existence for us. We see the branches swaying in the wind, or the bird feeding its young only as we, through our senses, attend to them (Buber, 1965b). Such aspects of nature are held at a distance from us, so that they become distinct and separate from us. In this distancing process, we acknowledge their being and allow for a relationship with them (Buber, 1965b). Despite how we may view them, as objects for manipulation or unification, we rely upon their being for our being and world:

> An animal in the realm of its perceptions is like a fruit in its skin; man is, or can be, in the world as a dweller in an enormous building which is always being added to, and to whose limits he can never penetrate, but which he can nevertheless know as one does know a house in which one lives--for he is capable of grasping the wholeness of the building as such. Man is like this because he is the creature (Wesen) through whose being (Sein) 'what is' (das Seiende) becomes detached from him, and recognized for itself. It is only the realm which is removed, lifted out from sheer presence, withdrawn from the operation of needs and wants, set at a distance and thereby given over to itself, which is more and other than a realm. Only when a structure of being is independently over against a living being (Seiende), an independent opposite, does a world exist. (Buber, 1965b, p. 61)

The unification with nature comes from a special type of relationship with it. We enter into the I-Thou domain when our consciousness ceases to attend to the separateness between us and the object of the environment. For example, we can contemplate a tree until it ceases to be an object,

or an It. We no longer attend to the unique elements of the tree, as its branches, leaves, bark, or form, but instead, we see the tree as a whole. In its entirety, the tree merges with us, and we, in turn merge with it. We are, hence, drawn into a possible relation with nature which exists only "if will and grace are joined" (Buber, 1970, p. 58). We do not seek for such a relationship; it occurs in the presence of reciprocity.

The I-Thou relation with nature is "the most misunderstood and most often criticized part of Buber's I-Thou philosophy" (Friedman, 1955, p. 169). The sticky part for comprehension centers around reciprocity and mutuality, which are essential for an I-Thou relationship (Buber, 1958). The tree does not have a consciousness, as we understand the word. Rather, we tend to think of a tree as an object with unique characteristics. When we note its distinctiveness, we put it into the It category. We usually associate "person" with other people, who have minds and bodies as we do. Similarly, we apply most often the pronoun "I" to denote a human subject and not something as a tree, which we label as an "it" in our language.

I see the I-Thou relationship with nature, though, as extending beyond language. Happening in the present moment, the tree goes beyond being merely an object and becomes a reflection of my consciousness. I must be in a certain frame of mind in order to be open to engaging in a relation

with nature. In this state of consciousness, I cease to perceive the uniqueness of the tree which becomes no longer comparable to the things around it. Instead, it exists as it is. It becomes a subject to me through my consciousness. It "becomes my Thou, but I cannot be a Thou for it" (Friedman, 1955, p. 170). Reciprocity, such as I may experience through another human being, cannot manifest itself in an I-Thou relation with nature. Rather, an I-Thou relation with a tree is a modification of an I-Thou with another human being.

In the relations of people to people, the "world is twofold in accordance with his twofold attitude" (Buber, 1970, p. 53). The twofoldness encompasses man's and woman's attitudes towards reality, for their world comes to be one of a "great duality of human life" (Kaufmann, 1980, p. 99). Their days are divided into relations of either an I-It or an I-Thou quality, which compose the "basic words" (Buber, 1970, p. 53) of existence. The I-Thou relation extends not only to nature but also to other people and to God. Below I will deal with it and the contrasting I-It realm in relation to other people.

The I-It domain is that of experience and use (Buber, 1958). It is presented to us through words as "it," "she," and "he." They are objects, from which we can gain information and knowledge. We are aware of their usefulness

to us. Whenever we observe, classify, perceive, apply, and the like, we are experiencing the It world.

The relation of I-It does not encompass our whole being, only a part of us. It is a subject-object encounter where each action is directed towards a specific, desired goal (Buber, 1970, p. 54). We act purposefully and not spontaneously. We objectify the world in time, space, and cause-effect terms. Searching for stability, we predict what will occur if we combine element X with Y. Each moment is planned. As a result, we can easily forget about the mystery of life because we delude ourselves into believing that we can predict, order, and manipulate factors around us. We create a secure existence through the world of I-It and do not undergo the directness, intensity, presentness, and mutuality of an I-Thou. We, hence, sacrifice the discovery of much of our meaning as people existing on earth and interconnected with one another.

Still, we cannot escape living in an I-It world. To do so is a necessity for human existence. Unless we use the things and people around us, we cannot overcome our inherent limitations as humans. We need reliability, predictability, and order to exist from day to day. Buber (1970) acknowledges the essentialness of the I-It relation, for the world around us is one where objective knowledge takes precedence over subjective knowledge. People who live only in the I-It realm limit themselves in their relationships.

Although their lives become ordered, their human potential is not achieved. They experience a life of aloneness, one that is not totally free but restricted by their relations in the I-It domain.

Contrastingly, the I-Thou words "can only be spoken with one's whole being" (Buber, 1970, p. 54). We are then aware of the other as a subject and not as an object. We leave the objective position for the subjective, because we are in contact with being itself, not parts of being. This relation has a different basis that cannot be experienced consciously. Once we acknowledge the relationship, it changes from a Thou into an It. The person who was a subject to us now becomes an object again, a "he", "she", or "it" who is encompassed by others.

We can only undergo an I-Thou union in the present and not in the past, for "the present arises only in virtue of the fact that the Thou becomes present" (Buber, 1958, p. 12). Our awareness of time and space ceases, where the now moment makes up the full encounter with life. At this time we are not conscious of our differences to one another but celebrate the commonality of our beings joined through the I-Thou union. The relation occurs in the context of here and now, for once we begin to reflect upon the occurrence, we change from the I-Thou relation to the I-It. We shift from the moment of acceptance of the other to an awareness of time and, hence, of the past. We confirm who we are in

the moments of the relation. We share the state of betweenness by our potential to relate in an I-Thou:

> I affirm the person I struggle with: I struggle with him as his partner, I confirm him as creature and as creation, I confirm him who is opposed to me as him who is over against me. It is true that it now depends on the other whether genuine dialogue, mutuality in speech arises between us. But if I thus give to the other who confronts me his legitimate standing as a man with whom I am ready to enter into dialogue, then I may trust him and suppose him to be also ready to deal with me as his partner. (Buber, 1965b, pp. 79-80)

To increase the unpredictability and unreliability of an I-Thou experience, every I-Thou turns into an I-It, while an I-It may emerge into an I-Thou:

> But this is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every Thou in our world must become an It. It does not matter how exclusively present the Thou was in the direct relation. As soon as the relation has been worked out or has been permeated with a means, the Thou becomes an object among objects--perhaps the chief, but still one of them, fixed in its size and its limits. . . .The particular Thou, after the relational event has run its course, is bound to become an It. The particular It, by entering the relational event, may become a Thou. (Buber, 1958, pp. 16-17, 33)

One type of relation can, thus, be transformed into the other, and vice versa. No set of conditions serves as a prerequisite for the switching from an I-It to an I-Thou, except that we have a consciousness open to the encounter. The rest is left to grace, where we recognize the partner as an "I" in a subject-to-subject union. The return to the I-It world signifies the continuance of our everyday life, but the I-Thou prepares us for future relations between us and the other:

> Between you and it there is mutual giving; you say Thou to it and give yourself to it, it says Thou to you and gives itself to you. You cannot make yourself understood with others concerning it, you are alone with it. But it teaches you to meet others, and to hold your ground when you meet them. Through the graciousness of its comings and the solemn sadness of its goings it leads you away to the Thou in which the parallel lines of relations meet. It does not help to sustain you in life, it only helps you to glimpse eternity. (Buber, 1958, p. 33)

It must be understood that when we talk of an I-Thou state, we modify it into an I-It. We must objectify it in order to describe it, so that by the distancing and consciousness we make it into an I-It. Even Buber, in his classic work I and Thou (1958, 1970), alters the thou-ness to an it-ness. No one can retell of his or her experiences with Thou without the transformation.

Buber sees us, as men and women, meeting one another in the area of the between when we confirm each other through our dialogical relationship:

> But when two individuals 'happen' to each other, then there is an essential remainder which is common to them, but which reaches out beyond the special sphere of each. That remainder is the basic reality, the 'sphere of between'. . .The participation of both partners is in principle indispensable to this sphere, whether the reciprocity be fully actual or directly capable of being realized through completion or intensification. The unfolding of this sphere Buber calls 'the dialogical.' (Friedman, 1955, p. 85)

Hence, the dialogical is the point for understanding the meaning of our existence. It is the acceptance of our true humanity, confirming each other as we are. We are revealed as ourselves in the genuine dialogue, as our "I" says Thou.

We seek one another through our commonalities and specialness, where we each turn to the other bound in dialogue. All of our life is meeting, as we face each other in dialogue.

In the sphere of the between we recognize the responsibility of realizing our humanity. If we wish to be whole, then we must be open and responsive to the encounter with the other. Part of this openness involves authenticity, or genuineness. When we are authentic, according to Buber (1965a), we are aware of what really is and not what appears to be. The former comes from our essence, our true humanity, while the latter originates as the image, what we seem to be (Friedman, 1955, p. 85). As with I-Thou and I-It relations, we become a mixture of essence and image. Still, some of us become more in line with our essence, just as others are more concerned with their appearances (Buber, 1965b, pp. 75-76). When we give ourselves to the beholder openly, spontaneously, and without affectation, we exemplify ourselves as we are, our essences. If we are consumed with a sense of what other people say about us or see ourselves as they see us, then we are more of an image person. Inauthenticity results in cases where we act to gain the approval of the partner or where we seem to be what we are not (Buber, 1965b, p. 78). Without authenticity, we cannot share a genuine dialogue. Rather,

we show the problem existing in the between, that of being and appearing.

Although Buber (1965a) talks about the need for authenticity in a genuine dialogue, I hold, as I believe Buber intends, that authenticity as a product does not really exist. When we think that we are authentic, we are not authentic. Instead, we are concerned with the thought of authenticity. It becomes something for which we can strive, but in the seeking we put it further from ourselves, like the I-Thou relationship. Rather than thinking of authenticity as a character trait, I like to see it in terms of an authenticating act. This does exist and is something which we can experience (Friedman, 1974, p. 21). Perhaps our life is composed of moments of authenticating actions, combined with actions which are not authenticating. Such a mixture parallels our milieu of essence with image to make up our being.

We may, moreover, engage in either silence or speech in a genuine dialogue, characterized by a state where:

> . . . each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. (Buber, 1965a, p. 19)

That is to say, we reach out to our partner, and he or she turns to us in a mutual need for relation. We take each other as we are in the present moment, both of us intending to participate in a relationship. Our partner cannot become

just a facet of our experience, for if this occurs, then we are only deluding ourselves of a true dialogue. There is, in such an occurrence, no real care or concern. We are involved in a monologue, under the guise of a dialogue, which ultimately reaffirms us and our positions of self-centeredness.

Thus, not every dialogue may be a genuine one. It may be, on one hand, a monologue:

> disguised as a dialogue, in which two or more men, meeting in space, speak each with himself in strangely tortuous and circuitous ways and yet imagine they have escaped the torment of being thrown back on their resources. (Buber, 1965a, p. 19)

It can also be a technical dialogue, where the wish is to gain objective knowledge, or it can be a debate, marked by people competitively trying to match wits with other people. Spontaneity and authenticity are not that important here, for the participants demonstrate the I-It quality of our technical, modern existence. The opponents come to be viewed not as people but as objects against whom to score. All of the above types of dialogue are very common but differ from a genuine one. They are, instead, the ones in which "you [do not] have much to do with men, but one[s] in which you really have to do with those with whom you have to do" (Buber, 1965a, p. 20).

As implied by its terminology, monologue does not extend beyond the self (Buber, 1965a, p. 20). We turn

inward to ourselves rather than reaching out to another. We undergo reflexion, the same in monologue as when:

> . . . man withdraws from accepting with his essential being another person in his particularity--a particularity which is by no means to be circumscribed by the circle of his own self, and though it substantially touches and moves his soul is in no way immanent in it--and lets the other exist only as his own experience, only as a 'part of myself'. (Buber, 1965a, pp. 23-24)

Consequently, we are centered on ourselves in monologues in such a way that we see only our viewpoint or perspective and not that of our fellow neighbors. We live within ourselves and limit the interrelatedness of our existence.

Both monologue and dialogue include solitude, the time we spend by ourselves. The differing point between the two becomes whether we remain throughout our life alone (Buber, 1965a, p. 20). For dialogue, we sometimes need the time by ourselves to examine our experiences and to get in touch with ourselves in terms of our connections. We can withdraw from others, and from this withdrawal we are able to continue our old relations or enter into new ones. Our time in dialogues is not spent totally involved with the self; we have time alone in order to relate better with others as well as with the self, whereas in monologue solitude becomes an enclosing period rather than the start towards a liberating one. We are so involved with ourselves that we structure our world until a state of betweenness does not exist for us. We fail to perceive events from other viewpoints and, as a result, exist in an egocentric state.

With our world revolving around the self, we experience life in a different fashion than if we participate in genuine dialogue with others. We do not come to have the same depth to our life by closing the door on others.

As a result, the presence and absence of genuine dialogue and monologue bear a direct influence upon our relationships, for "all real living is meeting" (Buber, 1958, p. 12). We either turn towards one another or put up a barrier against the occurrence of special moments to celebrate our connectedness. We set people and things at a distance, as well as come closer in order to relate to them. We employ both dialectics in the complex fashioning of our humanity.

In distancing and relating, Buber holds that distancing comes before relating, for when we set a person or object at a distance, we perceive him, her, or it as an other (Buber, 1965b, p. 60). The person or object, hence, becomes separate from us. He, she, or it becomes like us in that we are all part of the same world, yet we also recognize the differences. Only in the separating process of one from the other, where we differentiate ourselves from one another, does a world independent from ourselves exist. We are set apart from the environment, although we do not always enter into a relation with what or whom we have placed at a distance. Rather, it is through this distancing process where a sense of the "I" emerges (Buber, 1965b, p. 63).

A person, hence, must possess a definite sense of an I, as well as an independent other, before he or she can enter into relations. Distancing is necessary for relating, because "man becomes an I through a You" (Buber, 1970, p. 80). For this reason, an embryo, who does not know a life apart from his or her mother, cannot experience an I-Thou relationship. He or she does not have a distinct self where he or she can distinguish the self from the mother. Instead, his or her life in the womb is fully dependent upon the mother's existence. His or her prenatal existence is where one experiences:

> pure natural association , a flowing toward each other, a bodily reciprocity; and the life horizon of the developing being appears uniquely inscribed, and yet also not inscribed, in that of the being that carries it. . . (Buber, 1970, p. 76)

Without a conscious recognition of the individual self, we cannot share in the reality resulting from relations (Buber, 1958, p. 63).

Thus, Buber views relationships between people as being in the I-It and I-Thou domains. Only in the I-Thou relation do we realize our humanity in the present, just as in genuine dialogue do we reach towards the other with the intention of mutuality. Imbedded in both I-Thou and genuine dialogue are the acceptance, affirmation, and confirmation which we need to be and become our human selves. We live within the tension of the self and the other, distancing and relating in a dialectic world. Sadly, though, our world is

becoming more I-It, with manipulation, use, and objectification of the other evidenced. We are becoming more and more impersonal, as we observe and criticize those persons around us:

> In our age the I-It relation gigantically swollen, has usurped, practically uncontested, the mastery and the rule. The I of this relation, an I that possesses all, makes all, succeeds with all, this I that is unable to say Thou, unable to meet a being essentially, is the lord of the hour. This selfhood that has become omnipotent, with all the It around it, can naturally acknowledge neither God nor any genuine absolute which manifests itself to men as of non-human origin. It steps in between and shuts off from us the light of heaven. (Buber, 1957, p. 129)

While the relations we have with people and nature must always enter into the I-It area, only our ties with God, the Eternal Thou, deny the It quality (Buber, 1970, p. 121). He or She is always Thou:

> The eternal Thou can by its nature not become It; for by its nature it cannot be established in measure and bounds, not even in the measure of the immeasurable, or the bounds of boundless being; for by its nature it cannot be understood as a sum of qualities, not even as an infinite sum of qualities raised to a transcendental level; for it can be found neither in nor out of the world; for it cannot be experienced or thought; for we miss Him, Him who is, if we say "I believe that He is"--"He" is also a metaphor, but "Thou" is not. (Buber, 1958, p. 112)

He or She is continually present, a Being whom we can address but cannot depict (Buber, 1958, p. 112). The symbols and representations of God are only symbols; they are not God. Similarly, when we think of God in metaphors, we are not in contact with Him or Her. We are in touch with the metaphors. Even the labelling of God by name--Spirit,

Being, God, or the Unknown--removes us from Him or Her, for all such designations are products of our thought (Kohanski, 1982, p. 98), where we are able to deal with a concept of God. Still, as we try to understand Buber's philosophy of the Eternal Thou, God is not a concept. He or She is beyond comprehension (Buber, 1958, p. 112).

We experience the actuality of His or Her presence when we undergo the thou-ness of another. In fact, we cannot encounter God except through our relations (Buber, 1970, p. 123). We meet with a partner, both subjects as independent beings engaging in the reciprocity and wholeness of an I-Thou. In those special moments of the present, we meet with God in the between that we have structured through our relationships. The I-Thou experience becomes a prerequisite for an I-Eternal Thou meeting.

Nevertheless, I see that our I-Thou relations are not totally the same as our I-Eternal Thou ones. We meet as a finite and limited being with another finite being as we go forth into an I-Thou. We see the other as an object before and after the encounter, so that we change from an I-Thou to an I-It and vice versa. When we enter the absolute relationship of the I-Eternal Thou, however, we participate in a partnership composed of a finite being with an infinite Being. God does not become an object before or after but, instead, is continually present. We accept His or Her Being completely, as:

> God is the 'wholly other'; but he is also the wholly same: the wholly present. Of course, he is the mysterium tremendum that appears and overwhelms; but he is also the mystery of the obvious that is closer to me than my own I. (Buber, 1970, p. 127)

When we come into a relation with the Eternal Thou, we must do so with our whole being (Buber,1958). We cannot meet Him or Her with anything less. Our body, spirit, mind, experiences, and so on must be unified into one, as we are fragmented in our I-It encounters (Buber, 1970, p. 54). We must overcome this element of fragmentation; otherwise, we are engaged partially in a meeting and are not relating with God. We are not experiencing the renewal of our being but, rather, existing in belief of an It.

God does not reveal Himself or Herself except in His or Her relation to people (Buber, 1958, pp. 116-117). We cannot know God until we relate to Him or Her. His or Her revelation is centered on our world and time, not the world beyond ours. We cannot escape our fellow people and the world; it is through them that we come to God. In other words, just as we accept the world which He or She created, we must accept the Creator. From our meeting with the Eternal Thou, we can go forth to our neighbors with a hallowing of our mortal life (Buber, 1958, p. 79).

Buber narrates this belief in a tale. A man devoted to God comes to the gates of mystery and is told to return to the world of men and women:

> From within came the cry: "What do you want here?" He said, "I have proclaimed your praise in the ears of

> mortals, but they were deaf to me. So I come to you that you yourself may hear me and reply." "Turn back," came the cry from within. "Here is no ear for you. I have sunk my hearing in the deafness of mortals." (Buber, 1965a, p. 15)

On the whole, we cannot just concern ourselves with God and overlook the problems and joys of other people. Even though we feel called to God, we must not become so overly involved with Him or Her that we deny our fellow men and women. A paradox results, where as we become more genuinely human through our relation to the Eternal Thou, we also stand the chance of becoming more inhuman in our dealing with people. Likewise, while we become more vulnerable in our existence in a state of epoche, we are at risk of becoming more closed. We can become closer to God but more distant from Him or Her in our forgetfulness of the world around us. We are cautioned that "those who may be called true human beings are time and again in danger of slipping into inhumanity" (Buber, 1963, p. 242).

We are faced with responsibility as we are drawn closer to the world and to God. We must assume responsibility for other men, women, and children, just as we must care for the fate of our environment (Buber, 1958). We must enter into genuine dialogue and relations with all around us, as much as we can. Although the world of the I-It still exists, we can go towards the maximum realization of our reality. Our life should be so full of relations that they become a "shining streaming constancy" (Buber, 1958, pp. 114-115).

In this way, our I-Thou and I-Eternal Thou encounters are not like the occasional glimpses of light but are similar to the "rising moon in a clear starlit night" (Buber, 1958, pp. 114-115).

According to Buber, if we look for God, we will not find Him or Her (Buber, 1958, p. 80). Instead, we will become distant from Him or Her because of our efforts. We will locate Him or Her without the search, as God is in all realms of our life. There is nothing which escapes His or Her presence. Due to this omnipresence, we should go forth into the world with an openness and reverence for God's creations. Otherwise, we see men and women, even God, as articles for profit and manipulation. Such an I-It attitude negates our genuine acceptance of other human beings and of God. We are left godless, because we deny our humanity (Buber, 1958, p. 107).

Buber's path to genuineness is filled with vulnerability and risks (Moore, 1973, p.184). In the openness needed for I-Eternal Thou and I-Thou encounters, we shed the protective veneers and prejudices behind which we often hide. We must face the world as the persons we are. There is no guarantee as to whether or not our openness will be reciprocated or even as to how others will respond to us. Instead, we proceed without the sureness of factuality, without the certitude that we will step just far enough on the "narrow ridge" (Buber, 1965a) where we find ourselves.

Hence, in Buber's explanation of our meetings with the I-Eternal Thou, we have the purest and most absolute of relationships. We must come to God in total acceptance of Him or Her and in a full participation in the life around us. At the same time, He or She is incomprehensible, but we are certain of His or Her existence because He or She is always present in everything we know and do not know. He or She is present in our everyday world and in the not-so-common occurrences, so that we are answerable to God for our actions and for the assumption of our responsibility. There can never be a substitute for us in our relations to the Eternal Thou or for other people in their connection to God. Each of us has a unique relation with God. We cannot be freed from our responsibility for ourselves, for others, for the world, for God, and for their unification.

Buber presents us with a profound theory of relationships which has much appeal to it. We can accept it fully or not, just as we are free to be selective and put more belief in some parts of it more so than in others. Other theorists offer us different theories about relations. They explore directions other than Buber's I-It, I-Thou, and I-Eternal Thou concepts. When we examine the work of Paulo Freire and Sharon Welch, we can perceive some problematics within Buber's thoughts in light of our present-day society.

Section 2:

Paulo Freire and Sharon Welch

Introduction

Theorists who construct varying explanations about relations supply us with other rationales about our connections. Paulo Freire--along with a number of other social theorists, particularly Gramsci--expresses methods for critical consciousness and empowerment, while Sharon Welch concerns herself with the dialectics of liberation in an oppressive society. Their theories support somewhat differing positions about how we fit into our lives with others and with God, while a comparison among some of their major themes illustrates how we piece together and critically approach the theories of others before we reshape the explanations to fit our experiences.

Theories of Oppression

More specifically, Freire considers the role of education as a political factor. Education, as I use the term, extends beyond the process of schooling and encompasses learning inside as well as outside of the classroom walls. Because a large part of Freire's work involves adult literacy, he also sees education in a broad context. Words as teacher and student stand for both the usual roles in school, in addition to the giving or sharing of knowledge in society as a whole. The relationships which

result between a teacher and student, or oppressor and oppressed, are ones occurring in our everyday life, where schooling parallels our society.

Writing about landowners and peasants in his homeland Brazil, Freire concerns himself with showing how some people are dehumanized in the dual states of oppressors and oppressed. The oppressors use and manipulate other people; they deny the oppressed a full expression of their rights as human beings. Similarly, the oppressed, through their passivity, support the oppressors and even go so far as to strengthen the curtailment of their rights. The oppressed tend to think of themselves as below the oppressors, within a metaphor of a vertical hierarchy. The oppressed work for the oppressors; the peasants serve the landowners.

The oppressors perceive the variation in power as natural and, to maintain the status quo, promote actions which will undergird their positions. They were taught as children and will pass on to their children that the oppressed do not have the same ability "to think, to want, and to know" (Freire, 1986, p. 46) which the oppressors supposedly possess. Consequently, the oppressors have prejudices and beliefs about the oppressed which must be overcome if true liberation is to actualize. Both the oppressors and the oppressed have internalized the hegemonic ideology which wards off change and keeps the society as it is, freezing the power relationships in a position of

stasis. The power variations of the oppressors and oppressed, likewise, exemplify hegemony at work.

Still, hegemony rests on how the State and the dominant class in a society establish their values and beliefs as cultural norms (Gramsci, 1971). A type of social control, it manifests itself in certain ways both externally and internally, as we are rewarded and punished in our day-to-day experiences in a molding and fashioning of our personalities. Then, certain values and beliefs of the State and of the more powerful groups are introduced into our consciousness, so that our thoughts legitimate as natural the existence of the oppressors--the upper class--and the chasm separating the power and income levels. By influencing both the internal and external, hegemony becomes a type of ideological process largely in the interests of perpetuating the survival of the upper echelons. We accept, just like our ancestors, the relation of the capitalistic production with the upper class. We learn from birth how money and resources connote power and that only a few individuals have access to the wealth in society. We do not question the unequal distribution of goods where the rich have and the poor have not. Instead, we tend to take at face value the hierarchical structure of classes like the oppressors and oppressed that are reinforced by the hegemonic ideology.

Of course, in order to have upper class oppressors, there must be other class levels with which to compare and establish their existence. The terms upper and lower, as oppressors and oppressed, imply a hierarchical order where the higher is dominant and the lower is subordinate. Yet, we supposedly are a society where every individual is equal and has access to equal opportunity (Karier, 1972). If all of us start at the same point, the fact that we may end up at different points purportedly shows how hard work and effort can affect the outcome. We all know, however, that we do not begin at the same base; some people have greater access to property and resources than others. Because of the availability to resources, the richer possess more power and can provide jobs for people in the oppressed lower classes, to allow the working class members to accumulate goods and to provide for their needs:

> In their unrestrained eagerness to possess, the oppressors develop the conviction that it is possible for them to transform everything into objects of their purchasing power; hence their strictly materialistic concept of existence. Money is the measure of all things, and profit the primary goal. For the oppressors, what is worthwhile is to have more--always more--even at the cost of the oppressed having less or having nothing. For them, to be is to have and to be the class of the "haves." (Freire, 1986, p. 44)

The oppressed must still in some way consent to the domination of the oppressors. They must allow or acknowledge the authority of persons over them and, thus, support their own subordination. They must make "some degree of conscious attachment, or agreement with, certain

core elements of the society" (Femia, 1981, p. 38). Due to the internalization of the values and norms of the oppressors, hegemony becomes a part of the consciousness and paves the way for allowing a particular allocation of scarce goods, for how much dissent to permit, and for how institutions can make decisions upholding the allocations. The oppressed accept their positions and through their conformity strengthen the class barriers which keep them from change and a transformation of reality.

Even when the oppressors bestow gifts upon the oppressed, the generosity becomes only a token. In fact, it illumines unjust social order (Freire, 1986, p. 46). One can show his or her greater wealth or supposed superiority to those politically inferior to himself or herself through the giving. The generosity, resultingly, becomes an agent of the hegemonic structure. It puts the acceptors in their places and does little to modify the consciousness of the oppressors. Without an alteration of the way the dominant class thinks, social injustice will surely remain.

Likewise, the oppressed also have a certain consciousness in which they undervalue themselves and their knowledge. They become convinced of their inferiority because they frequently hear "that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything--that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive" (Freire, 1986, p. 49). After a time, they picture

themselves as unequal to the landowner. For the oppressed, the differences in political power and wealth seem to point to their unworthiness. While they lack confidence in themselves and fail to recognize the preciousness and essentialness of their existence as people, the oppressed further their oppression and dehumanization. A change in their consciousness, as for the oppressors, is essential for liberation. They must acknowledge their exploitation and oppression. From this admission comes a sense of empowerment.

Teachers and students demonstrate the positions of the oppressed and oppressors, because the instructor is the dominant figure in a classroom most of the time. He or she usually has control over the plan and method of instruction, in addition to the execution of the parcelling out of knowledge to the students. A teacher can decide when and to whom to dole out the gift of information to the waiting students. They, in turn, tend not to question the distribution of power but, instead, passively do as instructed. The teacher plays the role of authority figure and the students, in general, condone and even expect to be under his or her control, so that when we speak of oppressor-oppressed, we can frequently substitute teacher-student.

Thus, some of the oppressed have incorporated the beliefs and values of the hegemony to a degree where they do

not realize their oppression. They may not clearly see how the interests of the oppressor class are served by them and their actions (Freire, 1986, p. 48). Instead of resisting their oppression and struggling for community with others, they are encapsulated by a false sense of freedom that gives them an illusion of security. They neither question their position in life nor reflect critically on the occurrences around them. In other words, they conform to the social patterns and expectations and, in return, foresee a type of pragmatic exchange of rewards and benefits (Femia, 1981, p. 40). For instance, they conform in order to achieve particular goals, needs, and wants and, in many cases, to avoid the unemployment lines. No other alternative promises the attainment of these satisfactions, such that it is often unwise for the oppressed not to behave in socially accepted ways for the landowners. A lack of critical reflection hides or denies the exploitation.

Like the power and wealth bases vary for the peasants and landowners, their knowledges come from different social positions and, hence, are contrasting ways of viewing life. The oppressors, due to their power, tend to go more towards an official, popular type of knowledge (Foucault, 1980). After all, part of the hegemony passed to the working classes originates from the dominant class. The oppressed, on the other hand, often feel that the knowledge they possess is unimportant (Freire, 1973). It deviates from

official knowledge and, because of its variance, becomes subjugated. It involves histories of oppression and resistance, or "a whole group of knowledges that have been regarded with disdain by intellectuals as being either primitive or woefully incomplete" (Welch, 1985, p. 19). Thus, subjugated knowledge lies in the lives of the oppressed, where what they learn from their experiences is held to be inadequate and inferior.

Freire notes that a large part of the subordination and dominance which we experience comes from the power and powerlessness demonstrated in the schools. The teacher, in the banking concept of education (Freire, 1986), strives to fill the students with facts and figures. Like deposits placed in a bank, the students are alienated from the material and do not identify or relate to it. They learn of a static reality and, therefore, experience a curriculum that shapes them, as the oppressed, into powerless beings. Because the instructor does not emphasize in his or her lessons that reality is actually a multi-faceted and continually changing process, the learning procedure steers the students toward an ideological distortion:

> The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration--contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity. (Freire, 1986, p. 57)

As a means of power, knowledge belongs to the educator. It is allocated to the students through disconnected and alienating courses:

> The banking concept (with its tendency to dichotomize everything) distinguishes two stages in the action of the educator. During the first, he cognizes a cognizable object while he prepares his lessons in his study or his laboratory; during the second, he expounds to his students about that object. The students are not called upon to know, but to memorize the contents narrated by the teacher. Nor do the students practice any act of cognition, since the object towards which that act should be directed is the property of the teacher rather than a medium evoking the critical reflection of both teacher and students. Hence in the name of the 'preservation of culture and knowledge' we have a system which achieves neither true knowledge nor true culture. (Freire, 1986, pp. 67-68)

All in all, the picture of reality about which students learn in schools is only a distortion. The everyday world they live in is not like the still-life photographs in a geography book. Neither do farmers produce crops smilingly and confidently, as the textbooks portray them, without anxieties of drought, falling prices, and bankruptcy. The citizens of the world are not all honest, upright, and just, and more and more children are being raised in single-parent homes. The Dick-and-Jane stories, with dog Spot and mother and father couple, are no longer applicable to every student. The official school knowledge does not totally connect with the experiences of the oppressed students dominated by the oppressor school.

Proposing another method of education, Freire supports a problem-posing alternative. It centers around dialogue

between the teacher and student, where one meets the other as subject with subject sharing in knowledge. The teacher can become a student, and the student, a teacher, for each has some knowledge to contribute to the encounter. Furthermore, the problem-posing approach stimulates deep refection about acting upon reality and promotes inquiry into the present injustices around the teacher and student (Freire, 1973). Not presenting a static reality, it is continually reshaped by praxis, as critical consciousness and action are united in an effort for empowerment and transformative liberation.

Certain components are necessary for Freire's dialogue to insure that it does not modify into an antidialogical and oppressive occurrence. First, all participants must have the right to speak their word, to humanize and change the world and to name the transformations (Freire, 1986, p. 77). From the naming procedure, the dialoguers acknowledge their connection to the world and of the world to them. They can, consequently, gain importance as people existing in the present moment. They must also live with a love of the world and of the people in it, for love acknowledges the responsibility and commitment of the subjects for each other. Love cannot exist with domination and oppression; it is an act of freedom (Freire, 1986, p. 78). Humility comes with love, because arrogance and domination lead to a subject-object relation. The persons must address their

mortality with humility; yet, simultaneously, they must believe in and hope for their power to re-create the world more humanely. This faith, combined with a critical consciousness, cannot be blind or naive, for within it lies the possibility for a rebirth in the struggle for liberation. As a result, dialogue holds the key to a genuine education, where both teacher and student learn from each other in a liberating mode of pedagogy:

> Authentic education is not carried on by "A" <u>for</u> "B" or by "A" <u>about</u> "B," but rather by "A" <u>with</u> "B," mediated by the world--a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it. (Freire, 1986, p. 82)

Freire's concept of <u>withness</u> suggests that people must work together, each with the other. The domination-subordination relationship fades away, for as long as a hierarchy of power exists, men and women cannot be authentic people with a critical recognition of reality. A transformation not only occurs with the oppressed. It can also include the oppressors, a combination of both working to modify the nature of the hegemony:

> The revolution is made neither by the leaders for the people, nor by the people for the leaders, but by both acting together in unshakable solidarity. This solidarity is born only when the leaders witness to it by their humble, loving, and courageous encounter with the people. (Freire, 1986, p. 124)

Hence, hegemonic power must be altered to encompass each individual as equal and without the subordination of the oppressed working class to define the oppressor. The

oppressed must rise socially to a medium comparable to the higher, a recognition as well as practice of equality.

With a realization of their oppression, the oppressed must learn to think critically of the world around them. It is not filled with forces or knowledge beyond their intellects but, rather, composes their reality. They must perceive their own power to transform their ontologies, "to name the world," instead of accepting their oppression as it is. They, by reflecting about themselves and their lives in the world, cultivate the range of their perception and, therefore:

> develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (Freire, 1986, pp. 70-71)

Consequently, when we compare Freire's theory of relations with Buber's, we find that the two fit together well. Buber presents types of relationships and offers the potential height of our encounter in an I-Thou and I-Eternal Thou union. Freire, though, views the world around us as I-It, largely due to domination-subordination and the consequential objectification. For Freire, we cannot achieve an I-Thou, subject-to-subject, meeting or a genuine dialogue as long as we take away the humanness of others. Domination must have an object with lesser power. It relies upon the dehumanization of men and women reduced from people to things:

> In the theory of antidialogical action, conquest (as its primary characteristic) involves a Subject who conquers another person and transforms him into a "thing." In the dialogical theory of action, Subjects meet in cooperation in order to transform the world. The antidialogical, dominating I transforms the dominated, conquered thou into a mere it. The dialogical I, however, knows that it is precisely the thou (not-I") which has called forth his own existence. He also knows that the thou which calls forth his own existence in turn constitutes an I which has in his I its thou. The I and the thou thus become, in the dialectic of these relationships, two thous which become two I's. (Freire, 1986, p. 167)

Freire, resultingly, portrays the world as having met Buber's dire prediction--that the more our world becomes I-It in character, then the less chance for an I-Thou. His political dimension complements Buber's framework and strengthens the construction from a different way of explaining life.

I interpret both Freire's and Buber's dialogical states as being unattainable as long as we negate the other person's subjectness. Both theorists speak of a subject-to-subject encounter, yet the fact that we live in a world which denies people their rights and political voices proves that we still dehumanize others. We fail to meet other people as subjects equal to us.

Buber's dialogue, though, seems to be a high degree of an I-It encounter. Although the thou-ness of the other must be recognized and the partners meet each other as subjects, they are conscious of the moments together. An I-Thou relation occurs by will and grace but without consciousness. When the union becomes conscious, it switches from an I-Thou

to an I-It. As a result, I see Buber as having a recognition of subjectness in a special type of I-It relation. That is to say, I meet another as subject with subject in a time of conscious mutuality. The use and manipulation of the other, which usually characterizes an I-It, are absent. The other partner in a genuine dialogue must be a subject to me, not an object, yet I must be conscious of the occurrence in order to formulate my thoughts and language.

When I think of Buber's concept of images and essences, I am drawn to parallel them to Freire's awareness of oppression. Peasants or working-class individuals who deny their oppression and who conform to fulfill social expectations are hiding behind an image. They fail to experience their fullest humanity, because they are trying to measure up to the expectations of others. Still, if they become aware of their oppression, there is no guarantee that they will become authentic individuals, exemplifying Buber's essence. Instead, they have had years of habits and practices of subservience to bring to consciousness or to break. The initial acknowledgment is only the beginning to the possible fulfillment of their essence. Likewise, it can be the start to a transformative consciousness, as they come to realize, in contradiction to the powerless they have been taught, that they do possess power and rights as human beings. Through critical, reflective consciousness, they

can utilize the thoughts and processes of the once oppressed combined with their own in solidarity.

In short, Freire gives us a theory focused on one person having control over another, a subject-object relationship. Sharon Welch continues with his notion of oppression, although she makes a different point by her admission that she is both oppressed and an oppressor (1985, p. 51). She lives within the tension of occupying oppositional roles unified within the individual self.

More than an identification with her as a female, I am attracted to Welch's writing because of her attempt at praxis, living critically the explanations and beliefs she employs in terms of her experiences. She works to merge theory and practice, for she has undertaken a struggle for liberation. In order to be the person I am and will become, I, too, feel that I must strive towards praxis; Welch supplies me with a model in which a female educator fights to uphold her beliefs through her actions, what I hope and try to attain.

As a woman and a Christian, she is oppressed, for women are still striving for equality to men in an environment favoring males. Her oppression then is furthered by her Christian faith. Its myths and histories denote the suppression of women, from Eve's temptation by the serpent, to the burning of witches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to anti-Semitism, and so on (Welch, 1985, p. 52).

A traditional woman, as Welch, is molded on the figure of Christ, who quietly suffers and dies for the sake of other men and women. She has been taught to be a passive and humble caregiver; her life, in the role of mother and caregiver, is to be devoted to the welfare of others. The potential result becomes an abnegation of the self, in addition to the impossible attainment of the role model. The sexual deviation from Jesus creates a gap which cannot be filled by her victimization (Daly, 1973, p. 77).

The modes of thought and even the Christian imagery are full of patriarchal and dominant metaphors. God, in the traditional Christian faith, is assumed to be a white male, dressed in flowing robes and with long white hair and beard. The pronoun He is used to denote Him or Her, while the Christian Savior is again taken to be a male. God first creates Adam from dust, and from Adam's rib, He makes Eve. Seemingly indicating his dominance over her, Eve is created after man and fashioned from a part of him. Moreover, all of the prophets, foretelling and spreading the word of God, are male. The correlations between Christianity and female suppression are easily drawn, so that a woman often experiences friction in trying to live up to the universals of her faith.

The Christian faith offers a multitude of such universals. Like the metaphors, they tend to apply predominantly to white males (Welch, 1985, p. 51). The

female gender is not considered in them, with the consequence that they are actually selective. They do not apply to everyone but are used to establish particular traits and aspects as universal norms. Hence, some men have pretentiously and arrogantly assumed the power and right to speak for others, while the humanization of the others is denied and destroyed.

Welch's vocation as a liberation theologian means that she must identify with the oppressed. Her work contains an implicit commitment to them and is defined by its application of religious beliefs into practice (Welch, 1985, p. 26). She is devoted to living out her faith, although she admits some skepticism in the commitment. The choice for her in a moral one, which she makes regardless of tradition and the life of Jesus. Despite the reasons for her decision, her identification with the oppressed entails that she consciously become an object for exploitation. She is caught within the matrix of tradition and practice, so that she must reflect critically and avoid being swayed by the dominant, oppressive ways of thinking (Welch, 1985, p. 27). She, as Freire, notes the need for critical consciousness in the unification of theory and practice.

Besides being oppressed, Welch also concedes herself to be an oppressor. Because Christianity holds many different interpretations and modes of truth, she cannot place complete belief in the discourses of liberation theology in

comparison to traditional theology. She knows that all interpretations are limited by time, and as the society changes, so will the theological discourses:

> While it may be valid for others in different contexts to ground the truth of their interpretation in the authority of the scriptural tradition, in my context such a construction of truth seems either naive or politically dangerous. For me to identify liberation theology as authentically Christian would be to evade the temporality of theological discourse. Such identification would diminish the complexity of the Christian course by establishing a secure home for liberation theology within an ascertainable transcendent destiny or historical trajectory. (Welch, 1985, p. 52)

I interpret Welch's uncertainty about truth to have a very personal dimension. After all, who is to say that her way of interpreting reality and theology is right or wrong? By writing about her position in liberation theology, she is also speaking for the oppressed. She, therefore, uses the same technique that oppressors have employed for centuries, speaking for others rather than letting them speak for themselves.

Like Freire, Welch advocates resistance to oppression and struggles for liberation and solidarity. Her claims for liberation theology are political, as evinced by her identification with the oppressed. She fights for the voices of the oppressed, as women and minorities, to acknowledge their way of interpreting reality. Such knowledge has been suppressed by dominant official knowledge and is termed by Foucault (1980) as subjugated. Welch struggles for the insurrection of these subjugated

knowledges, where she attempts to recognize and challenge the oppressive tendencies of theology and society. This oppression and resistance linger in the minds of the oppressed, in the forms of suffering and hope (Welch, 1985, p. 39). They compose dangerous memories that recall exploitation, pain, and potential liberation. For example, the oppressed hear stories of the victimization of their ancestors and experience their own dehumanization. Their knowledges have been excluded, and their recognition of oppression always contains the chance for protest and for change.

Yet, history is marked by a small number of resistance movements (Welch, 1985, p. 39). Domination has prevailed and been considered as natural, an ideological belief which strengthens the status quo. Changes brought about by the oppressed are seemingly neutralized by becoming immersed once more into the hegemony. It modifies the threatening movements and reshapes them into a new interpretation of reality that poses no great risk to the dominant (Gramsci, 1971). Resultingly, liberation theology becomes a storehouse of dangerous memories for the potential for resistance, whether internal and unobservable or external and observable (Welch, 1985, p.41). The oppressed must be affirmed as human beings; even small instances of resistance to the hegemony demonstrate to them their power and dignity.

All in all, Welch tells of her faith within the tension of dialectics. Her conflict becomes an example of the friction many women feel, dealing with their belief system in terms of their experiences. She is oppressed, as well as an oppressor. She is committed to liberation theology but at the same time skeptical about her commitment. She shows us that in our relations we can occupy oppositional roles simultaneously. We must acknowledge our oppressor qualities and work to lessen their dehumanization before we can engage in a subject-to-subject union. We must live authenticating moments which hold true to our beliefs of love, justice, and equality.

Welch, as Freire, complements Buber's framework of relations. Freire adds new factors in terms of oppression and domination, with the necessity to change critically the consciousness of the oppressed and oppressors. Such conditions must be overcome in order for a greater likelihood of an I-Thou encounter or of a genuine dialogue. Welch shows our capacity for existing within the tension of dialectics, so that we may have to come to terms with our own conflicts, one of which is the oppressive quality of Christianity. Thus, we must struggle with social and personal factors as we try to make the world a more humane and caring place to live.

CHAPTER II

PRACTICE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

In chapter one I tried to present theories of relationships which I find pertinent to understanding human experiences. This chapter will deal with four aspects which, to some extent, affect relationships in a dialectic of theory and experience, namely self-knowledge, class, gender, and sub-culture.

Theory, as an explanation for my experiences, becomes dependent upon practice, for there must be some correlation between the dialectic in order for theory to be valid or to serve as a referent. Otherwise, I am unable to connect theory to my experiences and my experiences to theory. I seek to combine them, so I can interpret my actions by use of theory and then mold or discard certain facets of the explanation to fit my experiences more accurately. It is in this fitting of theory and practice into praxis where truth lies for me. In fact, ". . . theory and praxis can be understood today only in their unity, which means truth is not something that we find or by which we are found, but something that we make true" (Soelle, 1974, p. 77). As a

result, I create truth when I combine theory with my experiences to make room for praxis and critical theory.

Yet, the explanations I use to structure my experiences do not all come from the same theory. I select, instead, sections of theories to compose a general referent which best relates to my experiences. Without this shaping, I have difficulty in making the knowledge I gain from theory meaningful to me. Even though I can take knowledge into my brain for storage, it can remain distant from me. The connections, though, allow me to understand and to personalize the knowledge on the basis of my life. This is a process that I think all of us undertake.

I must confront, however, the subjective nature of such knowledge. It relates to me and my life, although others may find similarities to their lives within my interpretations. My patchwork effort, where I stitch one theory to the next, permits me to search for meaning and truth. I acknowledge my humanness when I personalize theory and knowledge:

> Subjectivity as the attitude of the individual toward knowledge is in this concept identical to meaningfulness. Knowledge exists in the learner when it is meaningful in his life. When it is not meaningful it leads to the dehumanization of its possessor. He becomes its tool and instrument and takes no responsibility for what he knows. It is the subjectivity of knowledge which gives it its validity. (Lamm, 1978, p. 134)

Despite the joining of theory and practice into praxis, I am continually struggling to unite the two, as I live

within their resulting tension. I change with each breath I take and every experience I have. Therefore, the balance between theory and practice also alters as a consequence of my change. Once more, I am walking along the narrow ridge of praxis, in a Buberian sense, where one step too far in either direction will send me spiralling away from an attempted unification. I believe that in the process of this tension I must continually strive for its attainment but without an awareness of when I do reach, perhaps momentarily, the unity. Consciousness of the moment, as Buber (1958) indicates, undermines the authenticity of the experiences, for I must make the process of searching for unity a part of the person I am and the life I lead. The seeking is a part of my being, my humanness or Heidegger's (1962) Dasein. In other words, my present being, in terms of praxis, is not the same as my future being. I cannot reach the whole unification in light of my potentiality:

> Everydayness is precisely that Being which is 'between' birth and death. And if existence is definite for Dasein's Being and if its essence is constituted in part by potentiality-for-Being, then, as long as Dasein exists, it must in each case, as such a potentiality, <u>not yet be</u> something. Any entity whose Essence is made up of existence, is essentially opposed to the possibility of our getting it in our grasp as an entity which is a whole.(Heidegger, 1962, p. 276)

Hence, my effort to combine theory and practice, at this time, is not the same as it will be in the future, because time will alter my being and my relations with others. It also changes the praxis of relationships, where I depend

upon theory, experience, and knowledge to define the other person.

Despite my attempt at praxis, certain factors confront me when I, like others, seek to relate to others in a subject-to-subject manner. They are facts about me, ones over which I have no control. They were present with me at birth and continue to be present for me to acknowledge. Like each human being, every Dasein, I am thrown into existence, with no choice over my parentage, race, gender, or place of birth. I am:

> determined by thrownness as a Fact of the entity which it is; and, so determined, it has in each case already been delivered over to existence, and it constantly so remains. . . . As something thrown, Dasein has been thrown <u>into existence</u>. It exists as an entity which has to be as it is and as it can be. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 321)

Part of my identity, these facts often function as barriers which can cause friction between the realization of my essence and the situation of my relations. Sometimes, they can be beneficial and help me to be more sensitive towards others, but, one way or another, I must be aware of their effect.

Class, by definition, designates how people relate to other people both as individuals and as groups (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 67). The groups tend to have similarities, like coming from the same general economic or educational level, and words used to name the groups--working class, lower class, underclass, middle class, and upper class--

infiltrate our language. Therefore, the frequency with which we speak of class and class distinctions evinces their presence. They show that society, in some way, advocates an inequality in the distribution of goods and of access to knowledge, end products that justify the existence of a class system.

In America, however, one learns that he or she should be able to rise from one class level to the next, or even higher. Such social mobility is encapsulated in the American Dream, where it is assumed that people have some control over their class. With hard work and education, they should ideologically become upwardly mobile. If they stay in the same class, then they supposedly are not working hard enough or need more education. A foolproof system emerges, with individuals blaming themselves for their exclusion from mainstream economic life (Ryan, 1971). After all, ". . . in the United States, if you are not 'somebody,' you might, of course be 'nobody,' in the sense that you have the strong chance of suffering endless indignities of powerlessness and the denial of your very worth by others" (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984, p. 1).

Thus, schools function somewhat as a melting pot of class distinctions, offering a channel for possible social mobility. All sorts and classes of people are admitted into schools and colleges for final finishing touches. Lower-class members can shed the perceived roughness of their

childhood for the smoother finish of the middle-class, while middle-class individuals can either be strengthened in their current class level or step from one stratification of their class to the next higher rung. People from the upper class can learn decision-making and analytical skills, in the event that they are developing abilities which will help them to control capital goods and ownership of productive methods within the society (Anyon, 1985, pp. 122-123). They are prepared to remain in their class designation, where, in addition to promises of upwardness for the lower and middle classes, schools work to maintain class differentiation.

In many ways I have brought the American dream into reality. I am from a family who has known the ravages of poverty, just as I have lived the deprivations that are a part of coming from the working class. Now, I find myself studying for a doctorate, with the promise of admission to the minority of people who have been granted the degree. I am going from near the bottom of the social class structure into the professional realm. The realization, however, has caused conflicting internal and external cross-currents, to the extent that class, for me, has become an obstacle to overcome in my social and personal relationships. I no longer fit well into either the working class or middle class.

Secondly, my femaleness in a world fashioned from "masculine cloth" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 6) automatically leads

to the creation of tensions. I must switch from the female role of nurturer to the male behaviors of competitiveness and individualization, when I go from being a woman in the home to an instructor at a university. I am caught within the expectations of both roles and must develop competency for them. In shifting, I put on social masks appropriate for the instances and, in so doing, begin to question where my real self, my true essence, lies. I fear, in moving from male and female roles, that I will become so adept at role-playing that I will trap myself into I-Itness. The final consequence will be when I will lose touch with myself.

Thirdly, I was born in Virginia and raised in rural North Carolina, so that I was brought up in the Southern tradition. I was taught behaviors and norms relevant to the region, ranging from the importance of manners and deference to the need for submissiveness. I learned the role of a Southern woman in the family, modelled passivity in the schools, and assimilated the inner strength shown by my mother and sisters. Overall, I experienced the suppression of the Southern woman by social and familial forces, to where I must weigh behaviors and speech patterns which come naturally to me. Their apparent naturalness indicates the concept of hegemony at work, as reflected in how I have internalized submissiveness into my behavior and speech patterns.

All three aspects are combined within me and within others raised in a similar manner. They merge to compose my identity, and it is hard to separate one from the other. Still, I will try to deal with each one separately and to recreate the experiences affecting relationships in growing up as a Southern woman, daughter of a tobacco farmer, and candidate for a doctorate. To help set the mood and feeling and to restructure the experiences, I will use a variety of literary forms and references--nonfictional academic sources, fictional works, and poetry.

In narrating my experiences critically, I seem to shed the barriers which I tend to erect in an I-It world. They protect me, so that when I take them down, I become vulnerable. I open myself up, especially to the criticisms which come when I try to create knowledge rather than solely adopting the knowledge of others. This creation of knowledge, in combination with that of others, becomes one of the higher stages of female development (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). I must, therefore, face the world with strength in supporting my world view and in coping with my vulnerability. First, though, to provide one with some idea of the world from which I come and the experiences which I have encountered, I will provide a brief autobiographical narration. This information composes some of my self-knowledge that I am continually trying to

comprehend at deeper levels. I, like other men and women am in a state where:

> Man is not free to choose whether or not he wants to attain knowledge about himself. He necessarily and under all circumstances possesses a degree of such knowledge, preconceptions, and standards of self-interpretation. The paradox is that man is an obscure text to himself. He knows that something is meant by what he is, by what he does, but he remains perplexed when called upon to interpret his own being. (Heschel, 1965, p. 6)

My search for self-knowledge ultimately considers what I mean to myself as well as what I mean to the people around me. Being human allows for the capacity of understanding, so I must understand myself in order to understand others. One necessitates the other (Heschel, 1965, p. 6). This self-comprehension is not inherent. Rather, it must come through interpretation of my experiences, interactions, and thoughts. While I occupy certain physical space as a person, I can also retreat into an inner space. Thus, my thoughts fashion my inner reality. What I know and think of myself, in the end, determines the person I am and will become.

The world of others, consequently, impinges upon me and my consciousness. My self-knowledge is affected by them, and I am constantly aware of their presences. My position is in relation to their position, for one cannot exist without the other for contrast (Heidegger, 1963). I cannot exist as a person without another person with whom to differentiate myself. I cannot label myself as a woman

without knowledge of the characteristics of the female sex. I live in a world filled with people, who make it possible for my life to have some meaning through my relationships.

My thoughts of the past, which will form an integral part of my dissertation, have been brought into the present. They have been altered by time, their clarity dimmed by the years. The passing moments have shifted and readjusted them, such that with time they become colored in my favor. I become the heroine of my memories, just as we all become the main character of our lives. The present, eventually becoming the past, is always there when we think of days gone by. We cannot escape the fallacy of time, for it does not allow absolute and factual depictions to exist. Such a limitation becomes unavoidable when I recount my experiences, but to combat it, I will be as honest as I can with my recollections. These thoughts will serve as a personalized approach to an evaluation of praxis of relationships.

Hence, to come to terms with factors central to one's life, I must focus my thoughts on relationships. They are the lens through which I can view my impoverished childhood, my womanhood, and my power or lack of it. Relationships allow for the alienation I have sometimes felt, when I am caught between the potentialities and the realities of my connections. All in all, I must confront the aspirations of my relationships, what I hope to actualize, and the reality,

what I do experience, in order to know more about myself and others. Such knowledge is bounded by my class, gender, and region where I grew up, aspects which one must consider in determining his or her reason for being.

Section 1:

An Autobiographical Sketch

Introduction

Individuals are composed of experiences, thoughts, and ideas encapsulated within a body of tissue, blood, bone, and cell. As a product of heredity worked upon by the environment, people are influenced in the interchange of genes with the world around them. As persons, they bear some linkage to their family, as well as to the region where they were raised. Their relationships are influenced by such features, helping to fashion their experiences and interpretations. Knowledge relating to others begins with knowledge of the self, whereas knowledge of others aids in self-knowledge. One is dependent upon the other, because "existence is coexistence" (Heschel, 1965, p. 45).

My Life

As a woman from a Southern rural working-class background, I have a heritage and strong family identification of which I am proud. My father was a tobacco sharecropper and spent each year searching for money with which to pay the bills, put food on the table, and clothe all ten of his daughters. He continually tried to conceive a son yet was disappointed each time with the birth of another girl. My mother married at the age of fourteen, in

many ways still a child, although a wedding at that age was common in the mountain environment where they grew up. Neither of my parents went beyond the elementary grade level in their schooling. They were needed more at home to help with the farm work, and their parents saw no need for any further formal education. Daddy died when I was nine, and Mama readjusted from being a submissive housewife to the role of controller of the family. Three of my sisters and I were still at home and in school at the time of Daddy's death. It then became her duty to raise us, keep the family together, and function as both mother and father. My sisters either left high school in their teens to marry or received a diploma and then married. Money was never available for them to think in terms of college, so they took another avenue to leave home. They relinquished the security of my parents' home to enter marriage, which was considered by my mother and father to be the suitable role for a young woman.

I was different, though, from my sisters. Marriage never appealed to me as the way to establish my independence and to break some of the ties with my mother. I thought in terms of college and worked hard in school to win scholarships. Mama was frightened to think of the expense of a university education and tried hard to convince me not to seek a higher education. I persisted, however, and reaching the legal age of adulthood helped settle the

difficulty when I finished high school. In other words, there was little my mother could do to prevent me from pursuing a college education, so I left home with the determination to become a scholar. After receiving my bachelor's degree in English, I volunteered for Peace Corps service. My assignment was as a teacher of English as a foreign language in Senegal, French West Africa. I spent three years there and returned to North Carolina to study for a masters and doctorate. At home my mother and sisters saw me as somewhat unusual, the proverbial black sheep of the family; they had learned to accept that I would not be satisfied with a husband, a child, a small house, and a job as a factory worker, secretary, or teacher's assistant.

The above sketch outlines the basic facts about me, yet they do not really describe the person I am. When I tell someone that I grew up in a so-called poor environment, they know the statement but cannot begin to fathom my experiences, hardships, and joys. When I am asked about my work in Africa, I can answer, but frequently my audience does not have the experiential base for understanding the cultural differences. Now, though, as I write my dissertation, I am confronted by the remnants of my family background and past, for I must understand them in terms of the knowledge I hold, combining the bits and pieces into a more cohesive whole. I believe such information and procedure are crucial to my dissertation.

Next to the youngest in my family, I was born on February 26, 1957, in a Chatham, Virginia, public health clinic. My father did not have sufficient funds to pay hospital fees, so I was delivered at the center. My mother stayed there overnight and went home the next morning. Although the bill was small for the clinic's work, Daddy never paid it. I guess he considered that another girl, number nine by ranking, was not worth the money in hard financial times. My family lived in Virginia until I was three years old. Then we moved to Caswell County in Piedmont North Carolina to the small township of Pelham. I do not remember much about my childhood in Virginia but can recall some memories about my early days in Pelham.

The first house to which we moved in Pelham was a shack on a dirt road. It had an outdoor well and bathroom john, my family at that time having never experienced indoor plumbing at home. My sisters were responsible for bringing in well water for cooking, cleaning, and bathing. We did not stay long at this house before Daddy had met a landowner who needed his help in tobacco, and we packed up and moved to another house in Pelham. It was much larger than the first but, once again, did not have indoor plumbing. It did boast, however, a long curving staircase, the railing of which was excellent for sliding down when Mama was not looking. I also attribute to this second house my first encounter with serious illness. My sister Kathy had brought

measles home from school, and I caught them from her. My nose started to bleed and, despite repeated attempts, would not stop. Mama finally resorted to mountain home remedies and hung a nail on a thread around my neck. For some reason, the blood stopped, marking the start of my recovery to health.

Following a pattern, we did not live in the second house over a year before we moved to a third house in Pelham, located next to the landowner. This house is the one that I considered home, because my family lived in it for about fifteen years. It had the amenities of plumbing, not to mention an inside bathroom, although it was so cold in the winter that I could see my breath when I got out of bed in the mornings. It was from this house that I started Pelham Elementary School and eventually attended Dillard Junior High, Bartlett Yancey Senior High, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In addition, I can remember scenes from my childhood, as sitting by the wood heater, rocking, and looking at pictures in magazines and my older sisters' schoolbooks. Daddy would lie on the other side of the heater in his lounge chair. He had suffered through the measles in his thirties and with his ability to walk impaired, required a cane to travel from one point to the next. He still farmed, though, or had us work for the landowner for hourly wages. Mama seemed always to be occupied. Daddy expected three

cooked meals each day, usually butter biscuits and sliced tomatoes for breakfast, pinto beans and cornbread for lunch and dinner, and fried chicken and fruit cobbler on Sundays at mealtimes. He sat at the head of the table and my mother at the other end, while my sisters and I sat at the sides. Conversation was limited at meal time, for Daddy said that we were at the table to eat and not to socialize. His word was the law in our family. Mama stood up to him when she thought he was wrong, but he always had the final say. We were taught to show respect for our elders, particularly our parents, and any signs of disrespect were punished.

Daddy also had his odd beliefs, his so-called "curious ways." We did not own a television set until at about the time when I started elementary school in 1963. No one in the family was to turn on the television except Daddy. Of course, being able to watch moving scenes and listen to sounds coming from the same screen were too much of a temptation for us during his absence. When he went to the store for groceries, my sisters or I would turn on the television set. One of us, usually the youngest, would be stationed at the window to watch for his return. When we saw his truck coming up the driveway, we quickly turned off the set and pretended to be doing some other activity. Daddy knew us too well, though. He always came into the house, went to the television, and felt whether or not the top of it was warm. If it was, then he fussed at us for our

disobedience, but besides a few muttered statements about the cost of the electricity bill, he never punished our waywardness. Seemingly, he expected the set to be warm, as though he, as well as us, was playing a game of rules and counter-strategies.

In the summer Mama took me to the barn where I had to pick up tobacco leaves dropped in the process of tying them to a stick for placement in the barn for curing. As I grew older, it was my responsibility to work in the fields and at the barn, just as my sisters and she did. We were not to complain about working eight, even up to fifteen hours daily in tobacco, for we were all part of a family and had to put our wages together for support. As long as Daddy was alive we gave our money to him. Mama took the place of banker when he died. We were told that the money we made went to buy supplies for school. At least, that was the case in Mama's control of the money, although not in Daddy's. He liked to drink alcohol, especially brews made illegally in the hills and called white lightning. At some time he had even engaged in running a still to make the potent liquor. Frequently, he took the cured tobacco crop to market and bought whiskey with the profits. His indulgences meant that we would have an even harder winter coming and with slimmer funds to support us.

Thus, my recollections about my childhood revolve around hard work and obedience. We were never to question

our parents, especially my father, about what they told us to do. Instead, we were to finish the assigned project. For instance, he told my sisters to sucker the tobacco field one Saturday while he went to town. Suckers are growths which come between the tobacco leaf and the stalk. They must be pulled off and an oil, which retards their growth, placed at the union of the leaf to the stalk. Daddy mixed sufficient oil for several acres of tobacco and left after giving the instructions to my sisters. They, however, had dates that night and wanted to spend the time preparing for their boyfriends. They took the sucker oil into the field and poured it out. With the oil no longer present, they came home and got ready for their dates. When Daddy arrived home, he went to the field to check on the work he had given them to do. Immediately he saw that they had, in fact, done little of the assigned task. He prepared more oil, returned to the house, and made my sisters go back to the field. They worked in the dark suckering the plants. That Saturday no one in our family dated, but the job Daddy had given them to do was finished. I was too young at the time to be a participant in the folly. My sisters recounted the tale to me, and I knew from the way I was raised that work was always to come before pleasure and that one's freedom could be controlled by an authority figure.

When I started school, I went with Mama to Pelham Elementary for an introductory visitation. Daddy sat in the

truck and waited for the meeting to finish. Mama could not drive, so she was dependent upon him for all of her transportation any considerable distance from home. I was scared and clung to Mama, but my first-grade teacher gave me a picture to color. Then I was treated to an ice cream bar. In the midst of the activity, I forgot about the strangeness of going to school for the first time. The ice cream helped me to decide that I liked going to school, as my eight older sisters did or had done. I wanted to be able to read a book, not just look at the pictures. I wanted to enter the realms where knowledge supposedly resided and learn the skills necessary to make it accessible to me.

The bus picked me up each morning five days a week, as I made the trip to school in order to learn certain forms of knowledge unaccessible at home. I liked school in the beginning but soon discovered that boredom was a large component to the school experience (Jackson, 1987, p. 109). I usually finished my assignments early, so what was I going to do next? I turned to books, a reinforcement of my earlier habit of retreating from the world around me into the imaginary world of words. I could forget the degradation of wearing homemade and hand-me-down clothing in the pages, as books provided me knowledge about another reality. In them, I could erase for the time the chores I had to do when I returned home--wood to split and stack neatly in the wood box, coal to be shoveled into buckets and

brought inside, kindling to be cut and placed behind the heaters, chickens and pigs to be fed and watered, floors swept and mopped, dishes washed and dried, homework completed, and lessons studied. School and books could take me away from the world of poverty in which I lived. Through reading I could become rich, have beautiful new clothes, and a white house to live in like the one Dick and Jane had in the first-grade reader. I could be more like members of other families, who bought most of their food from grocery stores rather than growing it in the garden. The long bus ride home, though, always brought me back to earth. The reality of poverty awakened me; work remained to be done.

The summers, however, brought a change of pace. Classes were dismissed, and my time became occupied with work in tobacco rather than hours spent in school. On the few days when I was not required to help in the fields or at the barn, I could play once more in the make-believe world. My sisters Kathy and Patsy and I had a play house at the end of the yard under the pecan tree. There we could fix mud pies and cakes, decorated with stray nut shells or pokeberries from nearby bushes. Our tin cans were stacked on a shelf we had constructed, and we could take turns on which one of us would be the father, mother, or child. All of us preferred to be either the father or mother because we could then prop ourselves by the pecan tree, in an imitation of our father, or make mud biscuits for dinner, in a

dramatization of our mother. No one particularly wanted to be the child, for we would then have to make strange unintelligible sounds and pretend to cry. Acting as a baby meant that we were under the domination of those older than us. No one wanted that authoritative hierarchy in our play life as in our work life, but we replicated our family structure as it was the only type we knew experientially.

After the field work had been finished for the day, Mama would call us to help her peel peaches, break up green beans, or shell butter beans on the large cement porch. Sunday afternoons were particularly suitable for such activities, as Mama tried to can enough vegetables and preserves for the winter months. With enamel pans positioned on our laps and newspapers spread on the porch to catch the discarded ends, two of us would sit in the porch swing. The back and forth motions, as we pushed the swing gently with our feet, lulled us into the pace of snapping or shelling bean after bean. The rest of womenfolk present would gather together in a circle with the swing. Sometimes, Daddy or my brothers-in-law would help with the tasks, but usually they congregated inside the house. They talked about hunting, cars, and the like, while Mama and my married sisters filled us in on who had been sick, recipes they had tried, or activities of my nieces and nephews. If Mama did not need me to help with the vegetables, she would place me at the kitchen sink to wash out Mason jars in

preparation for sterilizing them. I would squeeze my hands, slippery with soap, into the jar mouths and swish around the dishcloth. My fear was to get my hand stuck in a jar, but thankfully, that never happened. Still the place and duties of the female were impressed upon me. We were separate from men and should devote our lives to caring for them.

The years passed, as certain values and ways of life were impressed upon me. One main idea was that although men were supposed to be the stronger and more dominant, women were underneath it all the more courageous. Daddy just believed that the family control laid in his hands, yet Mama was the one who held the family together. She always scraped together enough food to eat and money to pay the rent. Ten times she suffered the pains of childbirth, many of which were without anesthetic. The midwife, Daddy's sister, told her to grit her teeth and bear the agony. One or two days after the childbirth, Mama was either back in the fields or working in the house, because there always remained work to be done to ensure the next meal on the table. She, thus, did not have time to recuperate from her pregnancies. When Daddy died, Mama, unaccustomed to even buying groceries, squared her shoulders in determination to act as both mother and father to those of us still living at home. She managed to take over the reins of family. Daddy, under the illusion of male superiority, never appeared to learn the secret of a woman's strength. As

females, we were to be seemingly indomitable figures like my mother and the women before her--unshakable upholders of the family honor and conduct--who appeared passive to the present males.

Of course, Mama had learned her behavior and mores from her mother and her mother's mother. We were to transmit the family tradition to our children, for:

> A mother does not merely pass on the messages of her culture; she also passes on her responses to the messages she received from her mother. Thus, every transaction between mother and daughter is in a sense of transaction among three generations. (Hammer, 1975, p. xiv)

She taught us that we were the ones to maintain family relationships as she and her ancestors had done. We were to carry on the female behavior of caring for others as one piece in a fitted puzzle of historical events. History, after all, was all around us, and I grew up hearing stories about my great-great uncles who had fought and died for the Confederacy in the Civil War. Even our house had been built before the Civil War. The old folk of the town described it as a gambling establishment for gentlemen to come and wager their fortunes. The room upstairs, with its split plank floor, rock chimney, and tiny windows, seemed to house their ghosts. I could imagine their presences, Rhett Butlers arrogantly throwing down high stakes of honor. The house across the railroad tracks from us sported marble columns. Behind it stood the falling shanties which had once served as slave quarters. Mama and Daddy were proud of their

Southern origins, for my ancestors had lived in the foothills of North Carolina and Virginia for generations. Everywhere around me were reminiscences of the past. I was born into a tradition which could not forget its roots and its function as a mainstay for relationships.

Relationships with my mother and father, as a result, have centered around authority and obedience. I was always to listen to their word and follow their advice, as they had done for their parents. They expected me to conform to their wishes, allowing for little resistance to their power and control. Needless to say, I underwent conflicting pressures. First, there were tensions coming from my parents in contrast to my desires for freedom, especially during my adolescent years. As most teenagers, I wanted to be in command of my destiny, to assert my identity rather than being an appendage of my parents. They expected certain behaviors and roles from me as their daughter, while I both wanted to acquiesce to their requests as well as assert my will to be a separate individual. With pressures as these present, it can become difficult to show the caring and love one feels for others. Instead, he or she is being affected by currents over which he or she has little control, to comply with others or to assume responsibility for his or her own being, to play the dutiful daughter for which one is conditioned or to develop himself or herself

regardless of the role. One is caught within the moment of confusion and questions his or her identity:

> Which do we kill, which image in the mirror, the mother, ourself, our daughter? ? ? ? ? Am I my mother, or my daughter? (Sexton, 1977, p. 40)

In the midst of internal struggle, one doubts himself or herself, but he or she can also gain strength from the confusion to continue in his or her self-development. He or she must, in other words, break away from certain relationships in order to return to them with different perceptions (Heschel, 1965).

An example of the friction between self and other lies in the opposition of my mother to my decision to attend college. To reiterate, she was worried about the expense of an undergraduate degree, in part because she believed that it was her duty to help pay the expense. I assured her that I could win sufficient scholarships for funding, and it was my choice to seek higher learning. She still, however, seemed to think that a good mother would bear the costs of a daughter's education. She could not spare the funds, though, and was left in the friction of her beliefs and reality. As a result, she seemed to perceive herself as a failure and to underevaluate herself as a mother, despite my assurances to the contrary.

I have, likewise, tried to understand my mother's reluctance by looking at other possibilities. First, my journey to Chapel Hill equaled my exit from home and her

control and protection over me. As she had little experience of universities, my sisters going no more than high school and her no further than the seventh grade, she possessed no sound basis for an interpretation of my college days. Experientially, I was going away from her. She may also have been bothered by my wish to improve myself. Of course, she wanted me to have a better and more successful life than she had had yet, in a contradictory fashion, worried that if I gained a college degree, would it mean that she was beneath me? After all, we had been subservient for years to the landlord, and Mama knew, in more ways than I, of the presence of a class structure.

From my perspective, there was an attractive aura about learning, for universities guaranteed training in how to acquire knowledge which was not available at home. They supplied entrances into middle-class professions, with the attached information on how to act socially. Teachers at the schools I had attended filled my head with stories about a college degree meaning economic mobility, and I came to see college as essential for the enrichment of my life and mind. I wanted access to knowledge, not only for leaving home but for defining the type of person I wanted to become. I pictured myself as a scholar, who could take the best of both worlds, the strength, honesty, and pride exemplified in my family with the professionalism and financial stability of academia.

Both my mother and I were experiencing to an extent the force of culturally patterned behaviors of a mother and daughter. We were taking the predetermined demands of our positions and were evaluating our relationship on the basis of a mythology. I believe that she wanted the best for me in her estimation of what constituted the best, but I saw the best in a very different light. We were portraying a typical and even stereotypical paradigm of mother-daughter relationships in our conflict:

> Because the prevailing social mythology of the American culture leads children to expect that they have a right to an exclusive mothering person who will offer unconditional love, meet all of their needs, and play certain stereotypical roles, anxiety and resentment are experienced when that expectation is not fulfilled. Mothers, too, are victimized by the mythology, for they are measured against an ideal fantasy that frustrates and confounds ordinary women. The overwhelming effect of the mythology is the perpetuation of extraordinary expectations on the part of children and inordinate guilt in their mothers. On the whole, American mothers are not confident in their mothering role and--faithful little mirrors that they are--children often confirm their feelings of inadequacy. (Kolbenschlag, 1981, p. 36)

The years at Chapel Hill do not stand out in my memories except for feelings of alienation. This was my first extended time away from home, and I went from a small rural high school to a large, city-based university. As such, I switched from being well-known in one setting to being an identification number in the other. It was very unsettling never to be called or known by name in classes composed of several hundreds of students. Then, I was required to take courses in which I had little interest and

to memorize knowledge that had almost no connection to my experiences. Boredom resulted, while one of my primary goals became to meet the predetermined course requirements rather than actively to participate in learning. I made no close friendships during those years, because I often had the feeling that I was in the wrong place. After all, I, who was from an impoverished family, had been allowed entrance into the middle-class context of a university. Subtle hints were present that the university world would better suit someone from another class. For example, my Southern twang was drained from my voice, and my grammar corrected. I learned, unfortunately, to be somewhat scornful of people who were not seeking academic knowledge, while I adopted the purported behavior of a scholar, one who walks around with a distracted look, books, glasses, and a disarrayed manner of dress. Such behaviors were adopted for the purpose of fitting into the academic setting. I learned, consequently, from undergraduate classes, to put on airs, to pretend to be someone or something which I was not. Although I ultimately acquired a credential from Chapel Hill that permitted me access to higher degrees, I also became distant from myself. One of the basic questions for me became the person I was and the reason for my existence. My search encompassed both the self and larger issues. Little did I realize that this is a procedure which many encounter:

> Imbedded in the mind is a certainty that the state of existence and the state of meaning stand in a relation

> to each other, that life is assessable in terms of meaning. The will to meaning and the certainty of the legitimacy of our striving to ascertain it are as intrinsically human as the will to live and the certainty of being alive. (Heschel, 1965, p. 54)

Driven by a search for my identity, questions of meaning, and the nurturing role of a woman, I volunteered for Peace Corps service in Senegal, French West Africa. I wanted to see what it was like to live without modern amenities of washing machines, televisions, and the like; to bake my own bread from yeast and flour; and to sew my clothing by hand. In the same fashion, I thought I could help others with the knowledge I had accumulated and share my abilities with others. As a result, I went from an English-speaking, predominantly white country to a French-speaking, largely black nation. When the airplane left Greensboro Airport en route to Philadelphia, I took my first plane trip away from the boundaries of the South. I thought I was leaving behind me factors which had influenced and molded me into the person I was, a woman unsure of herself and her place in the world. Instead, I took them along with me, like worn shoes which cannot be discarded. The plane's arrival in Dakar, Senegal, introduced me to life in a country of different customs, languages, and peoples. I saw poverty of a worse scale than in my family. I witnessed a determination for knowledge exceeding my own. People were struggling for survival, even scrounging in the garbage dumps and cans for food to eat. Teaching class after class

of malnourished children pushed me into a confrontation which I had avoided, that a large percentage of the world's people lived in poverty.

Monday through Saturday I taught classes ranging in numbers from fifty-five to sixty students each. I would have an average of only five females to every class, for the Senegalese belief held that the place for the woman was in the hut taking care of the husband or producing children to honor their father. In many ways, my mother's life paralleled that of the Senegalese woman. Men were dominant, despite the fact that native women had fewer rights than their American counterparts. A male was entitled to have up to four wives; she, only one husband unless in the case of death, whereupon it was the duty of a relative of the husband to marry her. In the rare divorce, the husband usually was granted custody of the children and rights to all property. She was typically illiterate, for an education would give her a greater chance at employment away from the home. She was largely powerless, a servant to her husband and children.

Once more, I was shown my place in subtle ways. Although I was white and educated, I was also female and required indoctrination into the superiority of the Senegalese male. Upon arriving in Ziguinchor where I was to teach at the College de l'Enseignement Secondaire, I learned that the principal had requested a meeting with me. When I

went to the school, the secretary informed me that the meeting had been rescheduled for the next day. This same pattern of having a meeting and then changing the time continued for five days. Each time I walked two miles from my house to the school in sand and along dirt roads for a session which did not occur. At last, when I did see the principal, he laughed at his behavior, confessing that he had been testing my dedication to teaching. He, furthermore, demonstrated to me that I was not that important in his scheme of things.

My time in Senegal was one of continual readjustment, extending from having few amenities in my house to instructing in a school with no electricity and ceiling. One day my alienation was emphasized when an owl flew into my classroom. The students reacted violently, getting up from their desks and rushing towards the door. My attempts to maintain order were of little use, for the owl, frightened by the clamor, flew into the next classroom. The students there started throwing stones at the bird that was going from room to room to escape danger. Needless to say, no one had class that morning, due to the simple disruption of an owl. When I asked about the confusion, it was explained to me that for the Diola and Mandinque tribes, the owl entering into an enclosed space represented death. Someone, according to their beliefs, would die unless the owl was killed first. Hence, the students were reacting to

a very real fear in an effort to protect themselves and others from evil spirits.

Similarly, several times each year the air would be filled with the beats and clatter of metal hitting metal. Women, men, and children at dusk would come onto the streets, clanging pots, pan, and tin cans together. The evil spirit on these nights was said to be flying from house to house. The noise was to keep it from landing, because if it rested on any one house, then superstition held that someone in the dwelling would die. Such beliefs were an essential part of their lives and marked my time in another culture. They, furthermore, illustrated lack of connection between the Senegalese and me, except for our commonality as fellow human beings who were responsible for one another.

I still enjoyed some close relationships in Senegal regardless of my alienation. I guess that the differences around me were so great that I was forced to connect to others for my survival. The principal became a friend, although I was always aware of the roles of authority and submissiveness in his presence. Similarly, my friendships included other Americans who were as estranged as I. We were perhaps unified by our alienation, so that, in a circular pattern of reasoning, alienation acted as a basis for our relationship. All in all, the knowledge I acquired about another people heightened my awareness of the other individual and our inescapable interdependence.

Part of my decision to be a volunteer rested in my desire to care for others outside of the family unit. I had been raised by my mother to internalize the role of wife in caring for her husband and children. I, like other women, had even come to evaluate myself through my ability to care, because:

> . . . women not only define themselves in a context of human relationships but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care. . . a responsibility to discern and alleviate the 'real and recognizable trouble' of this world. (Gilligan, 1982, pp. 17, 100)

The alienation, though, that I had experienced at Chapel Hill led me to question the importance of relating to other people, and in an effort to discover some answers I set off for Africa. I wanted to actualize the sense of caring, to take my behavior from my beliefs into action by teaching in a Third-World school. I had to find out the importance caring had to my life, and in Senegal I believed that my help was needed. The aspect of being needed and having one's caring accepted reaffirmed my existence. In other words, I discovered that one's reason for living is joined to other people. I was born to care for others in some form or fashion, in a manner of caring for others in order to care for the self and of caring for the self in order to care for others. This perspective:

> focuses on the dynamics of relationships and dissipates the tension between selfishness and responsibility through a new understanding of the interconnection between other and self. Care becomes the self-chosen principle of a judgment that remains psychological in

> its condemnation of exploitation and hurt. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 74)

After three years in Africa, from 1981 to 1984, I returned to North Carolina, rushed through my masters, and started on my doctorate. Once again, as I look at the white sheets in front of me waiting for the mark of my pen, I face certain elements which have appeared and reappeared in my life, namely the forces of rural poverty, Southernness, and womanhood. My time in Africa showed me that I cannot put them to rest. They compose a part of me, and unless I deny my identity, they will be with me to confront until I die. I bump against them continually, especially since I am now a student in middle-class academia. I try to reshape myself to fit into the present environment, yet the rough edges and protrusions of my background create a friction between my values and those of the university world around me (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). I am caught, as one representing many other individuals, within the consequential tensions surrounding relationships.

Section 2:

The Shadows of Class on Relationships: The American Dream, Higher Education, and Oppression

Introduction

The American dream, part of the ideology supporting inequalities, centers on social mobility. Most Americans are brought up to believe that they are free to leave the social or educational class of their parents and rise to other levels. They believe that they are not defined mainly on the basis of their parents' income or educational standing but, rather, are to be judged for the people they are. Education becomes the social institution for personal development and equal opportunity, a pacifier for women, minorities, and the like living in the grips of inequality, as passage through certain educational programs supposedly permits one entrance into an occupational ladder with expectations of economic success.

Nevertheless, many students of the latter half of the twentieth century have seen where the American dream has begun to fade (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The myth does not fully apply to our society. Although there have been dramatic increases in college enrollment, the possibilities of an upwardly mobile economic class are very limited. Most mobility happens within the stratifications of the same

class, as going from a skilled blue collar laborer to a blue collar supervisor. The progression from working class to upper class rarely occurs, and it is seldom that someone from the owning class ends up in the working class (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984, p. 2). Similarly, despite stress on higher education, with prescribed course requirements, the Horatio Alger myth of upward mobility, with one rising to riches through luck, no longer readily applies (Spring, 1980, p. 64). Often, professions help to set the requirements for colleges, so that some control is placed on the number of individuals who can eventually meet the criteria for admission into middle-class occupations. As a result, mobility which does occur is usually very small, for it is hard to leave behind the socio-economic classification of one's parents.

Moreover, according to some theorists, education has never been a major factor in economic equality, regardless of the American dream mythology (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 8). The degree to which income or job status has changed for the sons and daughters is slight in comparison to their family backgrounds. Likewise, educational attainment has also remained correlated to family background, and:

> . . . the evidence indicates that, despite the vast increase in college enrollments, the probability of a high school graduate attending college is just as dependent on parental socio-economic status as it was thirty years ago. (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 8)

Understanding that there is only a small likelihood for one from the working class to attend college, he or she can be an exception to the rule, as some avenues are present for a relatively meager percentage of people to experience mobility. Otherwise, the hegemonic declaration of economic progression would not work so effectively in our thoughts and dreams. If no one were to rise from one class level to the next, regardless of the smallness of the increase, then the American dream would lose some of its power. Yet, because some people do evince mobility, others cannot help but believe that they too have that potential. For instance, scholarships and loans frequently are based on economic need, as well as academic achievement. High performance on tests, like the Scholastic Aptitude Test, Graduate Requirement Examination, and Miller's Analogy Test, provides added chances for acquiring funds, although they also function to weed out a number of applicants from entrance into formal education. Hence, with the opportunity present for some students from the working class to enter colleges and universities, the knowledge of the academic milieu becomes available to them to explore and to acquire.

A university's academic world, however, tends to be middle-class. It relates to the dominant class in society and separates people from the industrialized blue collar jobs to place them in an ivory-tower pursuit of knowledge. Libraries are full of books on nearly every subject,

enabling faculty and students to read, discuss, or explore almost any subject imaginable. Freedom is offered for the acquisition of knowledge, and the more in-depth one goes in his or her studies, then the more knowledge he or she supposedly has access for mastery. With the credentials of the acquisition of such knowledge, he or she can supposedly become upwardly bound, to move from the non-professional to professional status in an attempted actualization of the American dream.

Still, faculty and students who come from the working class and gain admission to higher education often experience tensions. The hodge-podge nature of colleges and universities, with some mixture of class levels and a variety of fields of study, enables individuals from the working class who attend a university or college to acquire a middle-class finish. Driven by wishes for economic success, they are not totally satisfied with the class level of their births but, instead, want to gain touches of the middle-class world. That is to say, they want to be acculturated somewhat into a different class and leave behind them many of the facets associated with their original class, as poverty and factory labor. Such a transformation tends not to take place over night but requires time, a certain knowledge, and a critical awareness of the type of person one wants to become.

Some faculty who have risen from the working class see themselves as unfortunate supporters of the hegemonic structure which justifies oppression, while others are critical of it. They teach students from all classes, some of whom will be the bosses and supervisors of other workers. Because universities and colleges, like schools, relate to the norms of society (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), faculty members cannot escape the Catch-22 situation where they must perpetuate a system of privileges or lose their jobs. They even enjoy status and privileges over their students because faculty members have greater knowledge and more degrees. Still, they once were like some of their students and now are both the oppressed of the social system and the oppressors in replicating a potentially unjust society. They live in a state of tension where:

> . . . the academic from a working class background is the trainer and certifier of the sons and daughters of the dominant class who will, for the most part, replace their parents in stations of command. . . . If one teaches in non-elite public or private higher education, one participates in a "weeding-out" process which sifts the relatively few "worthy" members for the rewards that come with social promotion, and in so doing perpetuates not only the structure of capitalist class relations, but also the powerful myth of fair and equal opportunity for social mobility upward. All this is weaponry of the dominant class to sustain the legitimacy of their privileges, because the actual frequency of significant social mobility is quite different from what the myth would have us believe. (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984, p. 114)

As oppressors, faculty members are subjects with power to control others, while as oppressed, they become objects with a lesser degree of power. Such tension can be reflected in

their relationships, for they may be uncertain about the self in regard to others and about others in relation to the self:

> The individual sees himself from the point of view of the group. The individual sees himself from the point of view of other individuals and they from the point of view of himself. (Mead, 1982, p. 95)

Students from the working class who find themselves in the academic world frequently undergo class tensions, too. Their conflict is often internal, for in obtaining a college finish they must, at least to some degree, reflect upon some aspects of their original class. They are pressured to confront ways of their parents and adopt supposedly more appropriate mores (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). It is in the classification of not-as-good-as where much friction lies, for many students have been taught to respect their parents. Part of this respect is in obedience to them, yet students learn in academia to put on behaviors which tend to separate them from their community of origin, as in the case of the language they use. Frequently, being a student from the working class is like pulling and being pulled. The behaviors learned at birth and in college can be contradictory ones, with the result that the potential rise in class entails a split in character. At home working-class students must act one way, while at college they must act another way. For instance, in the classroom I am conscious of my use of correct grammar and vocabulary, for I am in an environment where I will be judged by students and

colleagues on such matters. When I visit my mother, however, I avoid terms I know she has not had exposure to and even catch myself making obvious grammatical errors. In this manner, I employ speech patterns to fit the situation, with the hope that the listeners will be better able to understand what I am saying. I also do not want to "put on airs" at home by flaunting the knowledge I have had access to but which my family has not. I want them to be comfortable around me and for me to be at ease around them.

Just as I am pursuing a doctorate at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, my masters and undergraduate degree were granted by state universities. My poverty determined to an extent which ones I would attend, and my family's social class closed the doors on admission to some colleges. Therefore, my education was not at the more prestigious Ivy League institutions, with the result that the reputation of the universities where one receives his or her degrees will determine somewhat how administrators view his or her applications for teaching positions:

> . . . the late arrivers on the professional scene, for the most part, end up somewhere towards the bottom of the prestige scale of the profession, if for no other reason, they are affiliated with second rank institutions. Assuming working class academics are to some degree assimilated into the cultural ethos of the professional, they may subjectively experience their social reality as back down on the bottom of the heap, as mass, indistinguishable and undistinguished. (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984, p. 77)

Hence, being from the working class affects somewhat the employment one acquires and relates to his or her sense of

self-worth. It can also function as a restraint in his or her attainment of certain positions, his or her acceptance in a particular setting, and his or her feeling of social alienation.

Analysis

Class, as evinced in the American dream, entails a hierarchy of placing one person above the other in a designation of class levels. Upper class students are prepared for executive and ownership roles, while working class students become employees of the upper class. One controls the other to a degree, just as one who comes from a working class background is socially perceived to be more disadvantaged than one born into a middle class environment. Consequently, he or she bears the taint of "not as good as" and can be perceived by others as inferior or powerless. For clarification, we can take an example of a bank president and a homeless individual. The economic power and control a bank president wields is obviously much greater than that of a street person. Because the president has access to more power, an inequality of subject to object results, a condition that is antithetical to Freire's dialogue:

> Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming--between those who deny other men the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. (Freire, 1986, p. 76)

By implication, the bank president's economic control provides the power to name reality, whereas the homeless individual will probably have the world named for him or her. One can conclude that class levels, thus, can lead to and even support an inequality of power--dominant and repressed, oppressor and oppressed--in one's relationships. Class relates to exemplars of subject and object encounters in an I-It world, where one person is using or manipulating the other.

I need to explain that I am not referring to Buber's I-Thou relationship here, because this union occurs by grace and without consciousness. In Buber's view, class does not enter into an I-Thou and is not a boundary for attaining the relationship. However, from my perspective, class can be a factor in Buber's dialogical state, which is somewhat different from his I-Thou union. Rather than partners encountering one another as subjects in dialogue, class seems to entail the perception of others as objects for manipulation and use.

Additionally, the oppressed often identify with the oppressors through hegemony, as the oppressed come to acknowledge the behaviors and morals of the oppressor (Freire, 1986). The modelling has the potential to remove people from their true selves or essences, for the behaviors they copy will not be truly their own. That is to say, the behaviors of one may be artificial when imitated by another

and act to distance him or her from authenticity. After all, only subject-to-subject encounters have the potential of authenticity (Buber, 1970); otherwise, we would be forced to admit that perceiving people as objects permits them equal status, dignity, and power as a perception of them as subjects.

The American dream, too, can function as a yardstick to determine the self-worth of others, where the mythology serves as a measure of economic success. Confusion, though, surrounds the American dream, for when one experiences economic mobility, he or she has demonstrated that the dream works, however limited the degree. At the same time, the smallness of the increase or the eventuality of no fluidity indicates that the myth is not true, that it is, as its name verifies, only a dream. One feels the pressures of believing and yet not believing in the mythology and its relevance to class:

> The real impact of class is that a man can play out <u>both</u> sides of the power situation in his own life, become alternatively judge and judged, alternatively individual and member of the mass. This represents the "internalizing" of class conflict, the process by which struggle between each man leads to struggle within each man. (Sennett & Cobb, 1973, pp. 97-98)

One example of this confusion is when people, as I, come from the working class and enter the academic professional class. Such persons must learn the rules of the new setting before they are fully accepted into academia, although total integration into a college or

university is always questionable. Their working-class backgrounds act as criteria for separating them from total assimilation, a situation which, in turn, can promote feelings of frustration. Some academics, who originally come from the working class, have had the opportunity to tell the story of their frustrations, as in the case of Robert Brown:

> I would do it [attend college] again without question. To be sure, there have been serious frustrations arising from my background, from attending less than first-rate colleges and universities, etc. But, I have not forgotten the frustration of farm labor, factory work, secretarial work, civil servant and naval enlisted man. They were so boring much of the time. So dead end, it seemed; always on the bottom rung with no security, no past, no future. . . (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984, p. 133)

Another professor relates additional tensions:

> In the eyes of my father, I'm pretty sure I'm a failure. That's a little hard to take, but it helps that my mother respects what I do. Respects it, though she doesn't really have much understanding of what is involved in being a history professor. . . . I get along well enough with my colleagues, but am not, do not choose to be--perhaps could not be--really close to them. The only thing--well, the <u>main</u> thing, anyway--that <u>really</u> bugs me about them is the game of one-upmanship . . . and how many books everybody's working on that never get published, etc., that takes place, especially at professional meetings. I just have to get away from that, and mix with some "real"--working class?--people. (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984, pp. 235, 241)

Once more, individuals can doubt the person they are, as well as lack acceptance by others in the I-It world. They can extend their anxieties onto others and resultingly experience difficulty in entering into dialogic relationships. They can even perceive themselves to be

objects rather than subjects, for oppressed are viewed by an oppressor as objects. They need to feel part of a group, as "the unity that makes up the self is the unity of social organization that makes one feel part of social process, where one is ready to put oneself in the position of others" (Mead, 1982, p. 164).

Thus, the frictions and frustrations which many people have felt within their relationships have been partially influenced by class. It is a factor of American life and helps to shape the identity with which one enters into relationships.

Section 3:

The Female in the Work World and in Relationships

Similarly, one who is thrown into existence as a female can undergo tension and frustration, for in a male dominant society, she can be required to change roles in her relationships and to adopt behaviors dependent upon the situation. She must master both male and female domains in order to function as a housewife and an employee in a public job, occupations which many women hold. She must, accordingly, switch from the nurturing and dependent role of a homemaker to the efficient and independent behaviors at the work world. Such variations within the character have decided effects upon her relationships, as well as her self-evaluation.

The woman at home traditionally holds an unpaid position as wife, caretaker, and helper whose responsibility includes the building and maintenance of relationships (Gilligan, 1982, p. 17). She is to take care of men and children, to run the household, to cook, to clean, and to transmit social and moral values. Through her nurturance she expends many hours dedicated to the care of others, perhaps even to the detriment of where her own needs and wants suffer as a consequence. She, though, is not socially worthy of high recognition for her care-giving jobs, because society tends to devalue this type of work. Despite the

hours spent in household duties, she enjoys no social security credit, wages, or other benefits for her expected female behavior.

From childhood women learn the roles they are supposed to play. They are socialized from birth to acquire certain behaviors and character traits which stress sensitivity to the needs of others. They are trained to take on Cinderella behaviors where it becomes a duty, as well as a responsibility, to care for others. Following in an imitation of their mother, they experience no gender separation as infants from her. Instead, they are bonded to the primary caregiver, usually the mother, such that they come to associate attachment to her as a part of their being. Attachment and intimacy that begin with the mother distinguish the female, whereas the male tends towards separation and autonomy. She consequently begins to define herself in terms of her relationships (Gilligan, 1982).

Men, on the other hand, do not tend to have this close connection to personal relationships. Rather, they fear intimacy and must undergo separation from their mother to differentiate their masculinity from her femininity (Dinnerstein, 1976). They come to see relationships, especially dependency, differently from a female, to the point that "masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, and male gender

identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 8).

Hence, men and women are socialized to assume different roles, one being traditionally that of agency and competition and the other being that of nurturer and facilitator. One of the female's main goals comes to be to ease conflicting situations so that she can maintain connections, whereas he becomes the primary breadwinner. Typically, he goes off for work in a socially accepted manner, and even as a youth thinks of his place in the world as a future worker (Kolbenschlag, 1981, p. 67). She, as a little girl, also imagines herself as a worker, although her work is usually perceived to be not as important as his. She may, instead, identify herself as a wife and a mother, for she is under social pressure to concern herself with relationships. Her employment tends to become secondary to her relationships, although she can be skillful in occupying both roles.

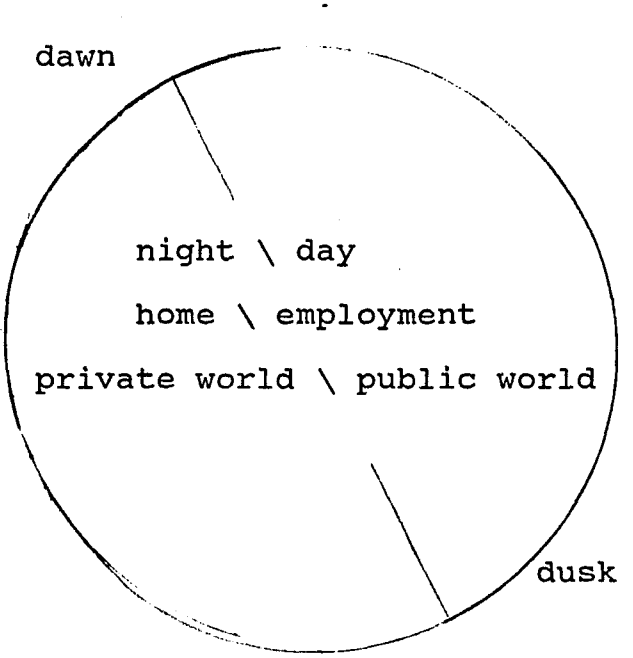
Women are still a vital component to the work force, particularly since the cost of living has increased to where the wife must supplement the family income. Her wages, however, do not tend to equal those of a man. For every one dollar he earns, she on the average only makes around sixty-nine cents (1988 Information Please Almanac, p. 54). It is not a question that he works harder than she, only that his

work tends to be valued more. After all, many work places have more male employees than female ones, especially in upper level positions. Her place and socialization conventionally center around the home, and with her entry into the work force, she can undergo a transition from the caring and nurturing roles of the traditional female to the competitiveness and autonomy of the male in employment. She must master both male and female behaviors in order to survive, to portray the aggressive woman at work and the gentle woman at home. Roberta Victor, a prostitute and interviewee in Terkel's Working, expresses this dichotomy for a woman:

> The overt hustling society is the microcosm of the rest of society. The power relationships are the same and the games are the same. Only this one I was in control of. The greater one I wasn't. In the outside society if I tried to be me, I wasn't in control of anything. As a bright, assertive woman, I had no power. As a cold, manipulative hustler, I had a lot. I knew I was playing a role. Most women are taught to become what they act. All I did was act out the reality of American womanhood. (Terkel, 1974, p. 103)

On the whole, because women experience a division between the work world and the home place, and between the aggressive character and the nurturing role, they are forced to become adept at switching roles relevant to the situation.

Taken from a sketch of the hermeneutic circle, a drawing can clarify some of the roles which a woman must master:



(Modification of drawing used by Dr. David Purpel)

A scenario of a traditional, working-class housewife experiencing role changes uses dawn and dusk as transitional points at which she must don appropriate masks and behaviors for the time and setting. That is to say, she arises early at dawn, prepares the children's school lunches, fixes breakfast for herself and her family, sees the children off to school and her husband off to work. She may also prepare for work in a change from the nurturing role to the business role. Next, our fictional woman heads off for work herself, perhaps in a position as a nurse, secretary, teacher,

waitress, or the like. Returning from her employment in which she must show efficiency, competency, and skill rather than care and emotion, she modifies her behavior and mask once more to suit the home environment. She resumes the caring role for her children and husband, as she prepares dinner, monitors the children's homework and bath, sees them to bed, takes care of necessary household tasks like laundry and ironing, and then retires herself. After a nights's sleep, she again participates in the different roles and the correlated masks. The duality she endures evinces the I-It world and a distancing of the self from her essence.

Such a housewife, despite social conventions, may be argued by scholars now to be a minority figure, due to the increase of single-parent families and the remarriage of divorced individuals. In the rural area where I grew up, such is not the case, for women as my sisters are still expected by their husbands to carry out these wifely and motherly duties. Even my sisters who hold public jobs must learn their nurturing positions and perfect their competitive skills at their jobs. In other words, the schema I am presenting is one with which I am familiar and one for which I was trained as a woman.

In the midst of such a busy day, a woman is faced with the secondary importance of her job and household duties in the eyes of society. Before marriage, her time tends to be consumed with her choice of a husband, so that any time

spent working publicly becomes a waiting period. She likely puts off any major career decision until after marriage, for once again she devotes herself to her relationships (Kolbenschlag, 1981, p. 73). She puts herself on hold until the supposedly right man arrives to sweep her away in a marital union.

A man, however, tends to be centered around work. He can give his energy to his job which becomes a means for his identity. He can go beyond the limits of the family into the social world and participate in a productive role. He can connect his work with a capacity for growth in a transcendence beyond the family unit (De Beauvoir, 1964). His time is not to be channelled into a reproduction of the species or completion of household duties. When he needs security and similarity, he can retreat to his home life. As a result, his roles and masks do not contain as large a shift as they do for the female. He develops, rather, a sense of autonomy and worth which he obtains partly from his work. Because society tends to be pieced together from masculine fabric, his gender allows him to fit more easily into certain social positions and employments.

I am not saying that women cannot find a sense of autonomy from their work. In fact, some do, but the tendency of women to see their employment as supplemental or to spend their days at home lessens their chance for

development and self-growth beyond the family unit. In other words:

> Without work, . . . the road to transcendence--to autonomy--is blocked. Full development of personality implies growth, a succession of acts of self-transcendence. Or as the philosophers put it, "selfhood consists in a continual relationship to the possible." (Kolbenschlag, 1981, p. 74)

In addition, I do not want to lead one to assume that a fulfilling career cannot be combined with motherhood. Commitment to a project beyond the family can make one into an even better mother in a successful combination of roles:

> Many . . . women find that combining work and motherhood makes them better at both. Work takes up their aggressive energies to shape and achieve, and keeps their children from being unduly worked on. They can relax with their children and relate to them as persons rather than as projects or jobs. Their mutual dialogue with their children is enhanced by their work outside of the domestic sphere. (Callahan, 1971, p. 46)

Some women, though, find the role modification to be overwhelming or even oppositional. They can become confused about themselves in the scheme of things and about the importance of relationships in a society that tends to undervalue their significance as people.

I have focused mainly so far upon married women in the sense of their definition of self through relationship rather than work. I, though, as many other women am not married and do not give my time largely to the nurturance of a family. I work as a teaching assistant, in addition to being a student, and find that many of my hours are spent in preparation or performance of my job. Yet, despite my

single state, I still feel pressures to conform to the traditional role of a female, to marry, and to bear children. Although I have some sense of autonomy, I do not think I have gone beyond the work role to the point where I can find self-fulfillment from my employment with which to enter into relationships. Rather, my energies are spent on activities necessary for survival. While I believe in the importance of work leading towards an extension of the self, I think that this connection of transcendence to employment refers only to certain types of work, jobs usually occupied by men. Custodians or waitresses may not achieve the same sense of fulfillment or of being needed as a medical doctor would. De Beauvoir's (1964) reference to work furthering transcendence seems to infer work of a certain caliber and with a particular pay scale.

As long as women find employment to be a secondary occupation, it will be difficult for them to aspire towards transcendence. They usually are working because they must or because they need a diversion from their family life. Hence, the job often is alien to their nature or interests, so that they cannot fit into some types of employment with the same ease as a male and, consequently, further their identity from its primary focus on relationships.

Women, overall, need to refocus their identities from a definition through relationships to include a definition beyond relationships, another identity of the self. One

avenue for this redirection lies in finding fulfilling employment, to the point where "work is an essential part of being alive. Your work is your identity. It tells you who you are" (Terkel, 1972, p. 470). With a sense of the self beyond the family, women can combine their care of others with a care of the self, to balance one with the other rather than being associated only with serving others. Then, they can prevent the pitfall of glorifying work as a substitution for relationships. By balancing work with relationships, the self with others, women can modify their position in society and as a consequence even society itself. Otherwise, they will remain in thoughts and perceptions as subservient to the male, a blockage to a dialogic encounter. The work place demands to be changed from its masculine nature; with women's equal participation, it can be altered into a more humane setting.

One may recall from chapter one a different sense of transcendence to which Buber refers. He sees the ultimate transcendence to lie in a particular type of relationship, or the I-Thou and I-Eternal Thou. An individual's experience of this relationship makes him or her more human. I am not opposing Buber's notion of transcendence but fully support it. What I am saying, though, is for women to have other forms of transcendence available to them. After all, one cannot seek an I-Thou union, which may, in turn, never occur for an individual. When it does

happen, it is through grace in the present moment, to exemplify a spiritual dimension to the transcendence. Thus, while women should keep Buber's transcendence in mind, they should also have some control over other means of extending themselves beyond the family for fulfillment. Work is one such avenue, on which I have concentrated. I am not ruling out other possibilities for transcendence, for I think they can and do exist, but I am firm in my belief that women, like other human beings, should have several avenues for both earthly and spiritual transcendence available to them.

All in all, women are caught within confusion. Just as the work place tends to exemplify masculine values and the home, feminine caring, the female, who becomes skillful at both roles, must learn to broaden her scope and the importance she places on her employment if she wishes to be defined beyond relationships. The socially dualistic perceptions of masculine and feminine qualities, in my eyes, demand to be replaced by human characteristics. In other words, the work world needs to demonstrate a caring environment, while men need to realign their focus to make relationships as important as careers. In this way, women have the potential power to shake off Cinderella behaviors of passive servitude and duty. Women then would no longer care from a sense of female duty but from a belief in human responsibility. They can furthermore experience a social transcendence beyond their family to promote personal

fulfillment. As long as they stay mainly centered on family relationships, the significance of which society is reluctant to acknowledge, they will continue to be entrapped as objects in a masculine rather than human world. Many women hope:

> That a women not ask a man to leave meaningful work to follow her.
> That a man not ask a woman to leave meaningful work to follow him.
> That no one try to put Eros in bondage.
> But that no one put a cudgel in the hands of Eros.
> That our loyalty to one another and our loyalty to our work not be set in false conflict.
> That our love for each other gives us love for each other's work.
> That our love for each other's work give us love for one another. . . .
> That our love for each other give us love for each other's work.
> That our love for each other, if need be, give way to absence. And the unknown.
> That we endure absence, if need be, without losing our love for each other.
> Without closing our doors to the unknown. (Levertov, 1975, p. 97)

Section 4:

Being Southern

Introduction

Being Southern involves a large number of expectations and connotations which the word South tends to evoke. We talk in terms of Southern ladies, Southern hillbillies, Southern poor whites, Southern gentlemen, and so on. Most Americans can easily typify someone into these categories, for we have been taught to define people with associations and labels, from a Southern lady with images of Scarlett O'Hara to a mountain hillbilly with pictures of Snuffy Smith or the Beverly Hillbillies. We tend to look for certain defining traits or conditions in order to categorize people into typologies that, in turn, provide some linkage to a mythology pervading the South and the concept of being Southern. After all, Southerners have been seen as "a mythological people, created half out of dream and half out of slander, who live in a still legendary land" (Tindall, 1976, p. 43).

In general, we carry with us much mental baggage originating from our mythology. We associate the South with pictures of the genteel plantation, with ladies in hoop skirts and men leaving home to fight the Civil War for honor and the preservation of a certain life style. We connect it with slavery, segregation, and oppression towards blacks and

women. Other images include the mountaineer in overalls, the rolling fields of tobacco and cotton, the poor sharecropping families, and the burgeoning industrial cities. We build within our minds mental structures to give us a distinct sense of the South. Our associations furnish us with a way to define and differentiate it from other regions, as well as build up myths which connect Southerners to the area.

Not only does the mythology link Southerners to one another, it also emphasizes certain common elements which they share. These commonalities automatically provide a superficial basis for a relationship, because Southerners have to some extent undergone similar sub-cultural influences. The language around them, for instance, has drawn-out vowel sounds and many of the same dialects. Similarly, the native cuisine tends to have a fried quality, as in fried chicken, fried ham, fried okra, fried tomatoes, etc. Having remembrances of a lost war, Southerners too have had a sense of defeat. They have had some of their faults nationally denounced and originate from ancestors who have participated in forming a similar history.

Despite its common elements, though, the Southern mythology can additionally create tensions within and among individuals, for the mythological images which surround the South can serve as role models or sticks against which to measure behaviors. One uses his or her knowledge of

Scarlett's ties to the land, as an example, to compare with a housewife's devotion to her garden or the strong drawing tendency of some Southerners to remain in the South. One grows up within the mythology and may not realize how ingrained it is in his or her consciousness. Even when he or she realizes its existence, it is still there to contend with. One comes up against the connotations of being Southern or against its mythology both in his or her self-evaluation and relationships. In other words, we tend to expect certain aspects when we learn that one is from the South--a type of manners, a mode of behavior, and a particular manner of speech.

My consciousness of the South, besides coming from studies of Southern literature and history, is confined to the rural Piedmont of North Carolina and the mountain foothills of Virginia, so that when I talk about being Southern, my information or statements may not be generalizable to the deeper South or to an urban environment. Although I have travelled in and know people from different Southern states, I still do not have their experiential base of personalized knowledge. Therefore, my use of the term South is limited, but I will try to broaden my physical experiences with information gained from other sources.

One must acknowledge, moreover, that the presence of a mythology is one form of a hegemonic construct. The

mythological imagery is part of an identity and works to mold people into forms that conform to social expectations. It also supports hierarchies through acceptable practices, as in a polite "yes sir," and can create a strong root to the past functioning against change. I will examine two aspects of the Southern mythology, namely the factor of manners and the sense of history, to see how they influence our relationships hegemonically.

Southern Manners

In one light, manners are an aspect that many Southerners, like me, have internalized to the point that they become part of the character. One is taught to show respect towards others by the creation of a hierarchy where he or she lowers the self and promotes the other through practices as language. Phrases as "yes sir," "pardon me," and "excuse me," which one can say many times each day, are in actuality asking the other to forgive one's identity or are supporting the other through compliance. He or she tends not to say words as "excuse my clumsiness" when he or she accidentally steps on the toes of another but, instead, says "excuse me," the person one is. Then, titles like "sir" and "mam" advance the listener over the speaker in a possible object-subject relationship where the speaker becomes an object below the listener. Hence, he or she is negating a subject-subject relationship merely through language.

Manners, however, comprise more that just language. They must be joined by certain actions, many of which tend to place the performer in a subservient position. When one gives one's seat to another, then that person can be acknowledging the right of the other to sit while he or she stands. On the other hand, the individual standing may feel ennobled through his or her actions. After all one was generous enough to give up a seat. In either case, though, manners become somewhat artificial as they entail some purpose or design. They admit the objectification of the speaker or listener.

Hence, manners demonstrate subservience on the part of the speaker or performer, although they can simultaneously be used to manipulate the other in an I-It relationship. Because one is acknowledging to a degree respect for the other through language or behavior, frequently the listener is pleased or impressed by the manners of the other. In some cases the listener may even attribute humility to the other for his or her politeness. It is almost as though the mannerly one is stacking the deck in his or her favor, just through the use of certain words or actions, to receive a favorable reaction from the listener. Inasmuch as one uses manners consciously for such a purpose, they become inauthentic. They change from politeness into a social tool to be employed in a usage of the other person.

Manners are still a phenomenon which society tends to advocate overall. I know that my mother continually hammered their importance into me, so that I complied with her requests and said or performed certain actions without critically thinking about what I was saying or what I was doing. I was taught that it was mannerly to be quiet when adults wanted to speak and that it was mannerly to give my chair to an elderly man or woman. Likewise, I learned to conform to social practices as putting a napkin in my lap, not to talk with my mouth full, and to keep my elbows off the table. Practices as the above seem to allow for social conformity and, to an extent, to permit people to live with one another in a type of order or harmony. At the same time, they act as practices that control the actions of the other. I was certainly reprimanded if I put my elbows on the table, and I conformed to the more of keeping my elbows off. Now, I wonder what this behavior accomplishes besides an unquestioning support of the society. When I conform, in other words, I give in to and even maintain through my compliance the hegemonic structure.

Yet, I do not want to portray polite manners in a totally negative light. One of their purposes is a demonstration of respect to others and a recognition of their dignity as human beings, as well as being a way of allowing some unity between an individual and a community through social and conventional practices. These goals are

noble in themselves, with the result that if one is mannerly as part of his or her behavior and with no conscious motives behind his or her actions, then manners may be seen as authentic. Even if they are genuine, they should, though, encompass no abnegation of the self but rather allow for a respect for the self as well as for the other. Only in this way can one make himself or herself open for a dialogic relationship.

Indeed, I seem to be once more in some confusion, for I am asking for a redefinition of manners in a relationship, where they become true symbols of respect rather than being used for other conscious and manipulatory purposes. If we employ manners as a recognition of the other as subject, they can involve no sense of subservience of one person to another. Too often, though, my use of manners has been to the reverse, where I have acknowledged the power or dominance of another over me, be it to a landlord, teacher, professor, or the like. What I would like to see is a time where manners, so much a part of Southern life, change with a modification of the society, where all persons can become subjects to one another.

A Southerner's Sense of History

Each one of us too comes into the world with a long line of ancestors. They form our heritage, the roots from which we originate. Thus, in order to have a sense of belonging, one must come to terms with not only his or her

past but also with that of one's forefathers and foremothers. We can in this way gain more self-knowledge to go out into the world and encounter others, for "what has been is what will be, / and what has been done is what will be done; / and there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes, 1:9). We are what we have been, what we are, and what we will become as we meet one another in the present moment. Our identity includes our history.

A major part of the Southern past lies in the Civil War. Not only was life changed for Southerners but they also experienced defeat and a time of reconstruction. They were shown through the devastation of war that slavery was wrong, as they picked up the pieces to start over again. Many Southerners, thus, have heard stories about their relatives who fought in the Civil War. These Southerners share some ideas about the strength and commitment their ancestors had for the land where they lived, even to the point of dying for their beliefs. For example, when I was a child my mother told me stories about my great-grandfather and his brothers who had volunteered for the Confederate army. She recounted tales she had heard, about how they would walk through the snow barefoot or with pieces of material tied around their feet. My great-grandfather, according to the narration, was even too young for service, but because he felt so strongly about standing up for the South, he lied about his age. He joined a regiment with his

brothers, all of whom were killed in battle. Only my great-grandfather returned to the Blue Ridge mountains to relate the atrocities of war and the deprivations he had suffered as a soldier.

Such histories connect one to an area, so that he or she has a sense of belonging. They are not only personal pasts but also fit in as a segment of the overall textbook history. If he or she leaves the region, then he or she may not have the same feeling of roots, although the distance can serve as a lens through which to view his or her past. For clarification, take the case of Faulkner's (1936) Quentin Compson in Absalom, Absalom!, who leaves Yoknapatawpha County to attend Harvard. At Harvard, he tries to understand the history of people with whom his grandfather and he have known. His roommate Shreve, a Northerner, and he take stories and rumors to reconstruct a plausible narrative. Quentin is physically distanced from his home in Mississippi, while Shreve serves as an outsider who lacks the commitment to the history that Quentin has. Shreve even admits his lack of involvement:

> Listen. I'm not trying to be funny, smart. I just want to understand it if I can and I don't know how to say it better. Because it's something my people haven't got. . . a kind of entailed birthright . . . of never forgiving General Sherman, so that forevermore as long as your children's children produce children you won't be anything but a descendant of a long line of colonels killed in Pickett's charge. . . .(Faulkner, 1936, p. 361)

Both characters, though, can never be sure of the accuracy of their history, as:

> Most important of all. . . Absalom, Absalom! is a persuasive commentary upon the thesis that much of "history" is really a kind of imaginative construction. The past always remains at some level a mystery, but if we are to hope to understand it in any wise, we must enter into it and project ourselves imaginatively into the attitudes and emotions of the historical figures. (Brooks, 1963, pp. 311-312)

Hence, their very reconstruction is vital to the sense of connection. If individuals do not in some way acknowledge their history, refashion it through a retelling, they cannot make the history their own. They then can be severing ties with the past or denying their link to the South. The Northerner, like Quentin's distance from home, allows for the gaining of some perspective on the events. At home, Quentin is too close to the story and to the people involved, whereas at Harvard his history becomes important in a discovery of the person he is threaded into the stories of his ancestors.

Similarly, just as histories revolve around the strength and courage of men, Southern women have shown emotional strength and courage in holding families together and in keeping the farms productive. Some wives have had to plow the fields, tend to the gardens and animals, split wood, and carry on similar activities to guarantee their survival and that of their children and other loved ones. Judith Sutpen in Absalom, Absalom! shows this strength. She nurses her half-brother Charles Bon back to health from the

yellow fever, cares for his son, and then later dies from yellow fever contracted from Charles. Likewise, Ada Fincastle in Ellen Glasgow's (1963) Vein of Iron demonstrates the steadfastness of the female during the Depression. She concludes that:

> She had a sense, more a feeling than a vision, of the dead generations behind her. They had come to life there in the past; they were lending her their fortitude; they were reaching out to her in adversity; this was the heritage they had left. She could lean back on their strength, she could recover that lost certainty of a continuing tradition. (Glasgow, 1963, p. 404)

Thus, Southerners, like me, feel that they are one in a long line of forefathers and foremothers. Their own life is unified by theirs, for:

> Units, because they are experiences, have already taken shape; from an endless, countless multiplicity, a selection of what is worth recording has been prepared. Between the parts we see a connection which neither is, nor is it intended to be, the simple likeness of the course of a life or so many years, but which, because understanding is involved, expresses what the individual knows about the continuity of his life. (Dilthey, 1961, p. 86)

Their history implies a relationship with the past as well as with the future, with what has occurred and what will happen. It gives them an understanding of the potentials of the human character in a certain environment and particular situation and furnishes them with a deeper sense of self-knowledge to use in relationships with others. It can provide them, furthermore, with a sense of connection which they can fasten onto as a shield against social alienation,

a commonality to unite one to the other in a relationship of a similar history with humanity.

Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that in our narration of a history, we can romanticize the events. We often do not look critically at the past inasmuch as we tend to see it as better than the present. This backward looking tends to hinder a view towards the future, where one perception is in conflict with the other. I hold that such a tendency functions hegemonically to depower individuals. They can become so engrossed in a search for the past, a time period which can never be regained, that their energies are mischannelled. They frequently overlook the tragedies or unfavorable events in favor of their more advantageous restructuring of the past. In general, the lack of critical thought acts against critical consciousness, against a praxis of power and liberation, and against change in the future.

Looking back supports the status quo of the oppressors and the oppressed in their subject-object encounters. So, we once more are entrapped by a tension where being Southern gives us a sense of unification with others but can, at the same time, function against the attainment of a critical perspective.

When we review traits with which we are thrown into existence, namely class, gender, and sub-culture, we are faced with conditions which can work as boundaries in a

Freirian and Buberian subject-to-subject dialogic relationship, yet not in a Buberian I-Thou encounter. Class suggests a hierarchy of one level over another, despite the mythology of the American dream that negates the significance of class. Likewise, women are socially connected to relationships, just as men are associated with the work world. I propose that women, besides the transcendence in I-Thou relationships, should seek another level of transcendence through a fulfilling career. This would demand a restructuring of the employment environment from masculine to human and of relationships from feminine to human. Then, we consider sub-culture, where being Southern operates to put one in a hierarchy through a consciousness of courtesy, deference, and manners, in addition to joining one with others through a similar history. Yet, all three traits can sustain the hegemonic dominance of some individuals over others and affect, as a result, our personal relationships. We become involved within tensions of supporting but not totally upholding the various complexities of our class, gender, and sub-culture.

The self-knowledge we gain, as we look at parts and pieces of our life, influences our relationships and knowledge about autobiography. I find that I was taught the subservient female position in a patriarchal family and also had ingrained within me the practice of hard work. The labor, however, was not a satisfying kind because it was

primarily centered around survival. As I was a daughter of a sharecropper, I discovered early the oppression centered around class, while I additionally made Southernness part of my identity. All three traits of class, gender, and sub-culture affect my self-knowledge, and consequently, my relationships with others.

Still, my early experiences and my years in the Peace Corps and at college have shown me some of the limitations for relationships present from birth, which I must overcome and which I have considered in this chapter. The results of our class, gender, and sub-culture include alienation and marginality, subjects for my next chapter, as we examine the end products of these boundaries on relationships.

CHAPTER III

THE EFFECTS OF LIMITATIONS ON RELATIONSHIPS: MARGINALITY AND ALIENATION

Introduction

In chapter one I briefly examined selected theories of relationships, primarily those of Buber, Freire, and Welch, while in chapter two I looked at factors affecting our relationships. These aspects--our self-knowledge, class, gender, and sub-culture--act as parts of our identity and, in turn, affect our perceptions of ourselves and our relationships with others. Eventually we must brave the results they have on our relationships, how they can work to distance us from ourselves and others to the point of marginality or alienation.

I plan in this chapter to consider another dimension of relationships, where one is placed in situations of aloneness or of a lack of participation. To help develop these themes, I will turn once more to a mixture of fictional and non-fictional references, besides using both philosophical and sociological perspectives. The philosophical view supplies us with a possible explanation for the existence of marginality and alienation, whereas the sociological side brings to light a political orientation.

All of these perspectives illumine facets of marginality and alienation to help us better understand the concepts.

Likewise, because the tension between theory and practice evident in relationships remains with us throughout our existence, we cannot have a neatly constructed sense of concluding our relational practices, needs, and aspirations. Rather, we are engaged in an on-going process of strengthening, changing, and forming ties with others, with nature, and with God. For this reason, I am using the material of this chapter as a stopping place for my dissertation research and have intertwined many of my own thoughts with analyses of the works of other theorists.

Because I have used my experiences and knowledge as support for the dialectic between theory and experience, much of this dissertation has been very personal in tone. I have grappled with the consequences of my class, gender, and sub-culture throughout my life and am drawn into some conflict about the way I feel about them. Present at birth, these facets have helped to place me into positions of marginality and alienation, that have led, on one hand, to a sense of aloneness. Yet, on the other hand, my distance from the social mainstream has allowed me the chance to step back and look critically at the events happening around me which highlights not only my own life but the lives of others and the nature of our culture. Through such separation I can re-examine myself and my relationships to

enter once more into them. Distance thus furnishes the opportunity to see more clearly the trappings of society. This perspective of marginality and alienation--distancing and its inferences of oppression, disempowerment, and estrangement--will form the focus of this chapter.

The Distancing of Marginality and Alienation

We employ words as marginality and alienation frequently, perhaps even as synonyms, but the two nouns actually have some differences within their meanings. Marginality involves notions of distance and exclusion at a level beyond the family, where one is not involved in some forms of participation (Germani, 1980, pp. 3-5). Alienation, likewise, connotes separation, yet the term does not necessarily pertain to communal participation. To clarify, persons can be alienated to the state of marginality or feel alienated when they are participatory, although in whichever case, alienation and marginality both indicate a distance from others, power, and culture.

Besides distance, differentiation is also mandatory for the occurrence of alienation (Kaplan, 1976, p. 120). We can distinguish ourselves from others physically, as in the case where some of us have brown eyes and others have blue. Our separateness is emphasized by our names at birth and then in the establishment of an identity. Heightened by aspects of our personalities, our individuality, and the society around

us, the differentiation among us leads us to a perception of ourselves as single, unique beings.

In a way, marginality too exemplifies differentiation of one from other persons to a degree, but it can also result from individuals' choices to exclude themselves from participation, when they purposefully distance themselves from others in a type of Buberian monologic existence. It can, furthermore, come about through social pressure leading to alienation. Whatever the cause, the commonality of persons with others is questioned, and their feeling of individuality can be heightened. They stand without a definite sense of place or belonging, such an experience of separation having probable end products of disempowerment and isolation.

I hold that most people have experienced aloneness or alienation at some point in their lives, though the degrees of distancing may vary. Some persons are on the edges of society, whether because of poverty, gender, or political and religious beliefs, while others are in some situations participatory and in others estranged. In such instances, people share in the differences in amount, intensity, quality, and degree of participation.

Hence, with marginality, as with alienation, comes a feeling of individuality, an essential experience for relationships. Individuals must have a sense of the "I" before they can enter into a "we." Otherwise, their

principle of being has not been defined in a comparison between themselves and others (Heschel, 1965). They must distance themselves from others in order to enter relationships in a dialectic between being marginal and participatory, of the self and the other, of powerless and power. They engage in a process that:

> . . . the principle of human life is not simple but twofold, being built up in a twofold movement which is of such kind that the one movement is the presupposition of the other. I propose to call the first movement 'the primal setting at a distance' and the second 'entering into relation.' That the first movement is the presupposition of the other is plain from the fact that one can enter into relation only with being which has been set at a distance, more precisely, has become an independent opposite. (Buber, 1965b, p. 60)

Without an actualization of the I, the relationships of an I-Thou or an I-It cannot occur. One must first realize the separation of the baby being unconnected to one's mother, for the child in his or her realization becomes a separate being, body, and consciousness:

> But once the I of the relation has emerged and has become existent in its detachment, it somehow etherializes and functionalizes itself and enters into the natural fact of the discreteness of the body from its environment, awakening I-likeness in it. Only now can the conscious I act, the first form of the basic word I-It, of experience by an I, come into being. The I which has emerged proclaims itself as the carrier of sensations and the environment as their object. (Buber, 1970, p. 74)

The I, with its recognition, has the potential to transcend the separateness into a reunification with beings. Distance is essential for relationships, the I for an I-Thou or an I-

It, just as relationships are necessary for one to perceive himself or herself as human.

To provide an example of the distancing of marginality and alienation, I find my thoughts going towards stories that illustrate how the severance of ties functions. Faulkner (1932) especially portrays marginality and alienation in works as Light in August, which concerns the actions of a man Joe Christmas alienated from society because of his lack of a race. Joe is a classic case of estrangement from the self and the community, "the most solitary character in American fiction, the most extreme phase conceivable of American loneliness" (Kazin, 1966, pp. 151-152). A man with no background, roots, or certain race, he is deposited as a baby on Christmas Eve at the steps of an orphanage where he mockingly acquires his name. A childhood experience labels him as a "nigger;" with no biological parents, though, his race is ambiguous, perhaps white or black or both. He searches for a stable identity, as he cannot live with both possibilities--black and white. The Southern society of his time clearly outlines certain expectations and patterns on how he should behave in either instance, but he has no model on whom he can pattern his character. As a result, Joe's emotional sense of himself conflicts with the social demands put on him. He cannot accept his white skin because he fears that he is part black, while if his skin were black, then he would know of

his race. His whiteness leaves room for doubt, so that Joe does not fit into the community. The town perceives him, parallel to his racial mistrust, in contradictions, shown by the predominance of buts and yet nots in the following description:

> He looked like a tramp, yet not like a tramp either. His shoes were dusty and his trousers were soiled too. But they were of decent serge, sharply creased, and his shirt was soiled but it was a white shirt, and he wore a tie and a stiffbrim straw hat that was quite new, cocked at an angle arrogant and baleful above his still face. He did not look like a professional hobo in his professional rags, but there was something definitely rootless about him, as though no town nor city was his, no street, no walls, no square of earth his home. (Faulkner, 1932, p. 27)

This lack of an identity leaves Joe estranged from himself and from the people around him. He has little ground for racial or cultural certainty and associations.

His alienation partially results from the rigidity of the social norms. The environment seems to be committed to defining people in terms of their race and cannot accept the possibility of an ambiguity in his whiteness or blackness. A black occupies one position in the Yoknapatawpha county town, while a white resides in another. There is no category for one of mixed races. The whites will not accept him as white and the blacks will not accept him as black. Despite Joe's attempts to live in both white and black areas, he is kept from integrating with a race by his own ambivalence and by that of the Jefferson citizens.

Furthermore, this character doubts his own existence (Mortimer, 1983, p. 20). His sense of the self as an object is severed from the self as an subject. He acts aggressively in order to have his existence affirmed by others. Seeming to have some need fulfilled by severe punishment, he wills and initiates violence in the other party:

> When the strap fell, he did not flinch, no quiver passed his face. He was looking straight ahead, with a rapt, calm expression like a monk in a picture. McEachern [Joe's adopted father] began to strike methodically, with slow and deliberate force, still without heat or anger. It would have been hard to say which face was the more rapt, more calm, more convinced. (Faulkner, 1932, p. 140)

In another beating:

> . . . perhaps the boy [Joe] knew that he [McEachern] already held the strap in his hand. It rose and fell, deliberate, numbered, with deliberate flat reports. The boy's body might have been wood or stone; a post or a tower upon which the sentient part of him mused like a hermit, contemplative and remote with ecstasy and selfcrucifixion. . . He felt like an eagle: hard, sufficient, potent, remorseless, strong. (Faulkner, 1932, p. 150)

McEachern employs violence to affirm systematically Joe's existence and thus recognizes the youth's autonomy by his capacity to endure pain. Joe realizes his humanness with each fall of the strap, while he suffers the pain needed to confirm the person he is. Demonstrating the essence of an identity, Joe must know who he is before he can encounter certain types of relationships.

Because of his ambivalence, Joe can never achieve a whole unity of the self, and he knows that he never will

(Mortimer, 1983, p. 12). He is black, but not black, and white, but not white. The fact that his body remains largely foreign to him is reflected in the distance and detachment he takes from himself when he is attacked:

> Lying peaceful and still Joe watched the stranger lean down and lift his head from the floor and strike him again in the face, this time with a short slashing blow. After a moment he licked his lip a little, somewhat as a child might lick a cooking spoon. He watched the stranger's hand go back, but it did not fall. (Faulkner, 1932, p. 205)

Joe's body becomes an <u>it</u>, an object separated from the self, as he tries to drag himself outside:

> <u>If I can just get it outside, into the air, the cool air, the cool dark.</u> He watched his hands fumbling at the door, trying to help them, to coax and control them. 'Anyway, they didn't lock it on me,' he thought. . . 'It never would have opened a window and climbed through it.' (Faulkner, 1932, p. 210)

This objectification is another form of disempowerment, for he does not acknowledge himself as a subject to go forth into a subject-to-subject relationship.

All in all, Joe Christmas is severely alienated from himself and the community. Part of his aloofness comes from his questionable race and the town's racist response to it. He too, however, chooses his destiny, because he could identify with one race and live in accordance to its social mores and expectations. Having open before him at least one possible pathway, he decides not to follow that road but instead to travel in circles, his thoughts switching back and forth from white-black to black-white. He cannot extend

himself and his individuality to encompass others although he has no biological family. He shows us the self-destruction to which aloneness can carry one. When the town turns against him, he is entrapped within his individuality and the tensions of a desire to relate within conditions hindering associations.

We can gain from Faulkner's tale an idea that sometimes marginality and alienation are beyond our control, social forces determining the degree of the complementary pattern of one with the community. I also have experienced this separateness, not because of race but because of gender and economic class, and become frustrated when I am not allowed or do not have the resources to participate fully. My frustrations are furthered when I realize the political implications of oppression behind marginality and alienation.

Political Correspondents to Marginality and Alienation: Oppression, Disempowerment, and Individuality

When people are cut off from participation beyond the family unit, they are often serving as the victims of actions rather than as actors themselves, for they have selected or been denied the right to participate. They have experiences done to them or for them but not with them. That is to say, they become the oppressed merely by not recognizing their power as human beings with certain inherent rights to form their own decisions. They can even

become resigned to the domination of those who do participate and through their passivity support their oppression. Overall, implicit within marginality and alienation lies a contradiction to humanness, for the state of aloneness negates the betweenness and dialogue which men and women must experience to undergo a fuller humanity than the monologic condition (Buber, 1970).

One can, furthermore, accept alienation in an internalization of oppression and a rationalization of one's lack of participation. Excuses can always be found to make passivity seem reasonable. Persons can say that they do not have the power to change oppression and to end their alienation, that they know the boundaries of their current state, and that the unknown future can hold dangers and pain. This attitude exemplifies hegemony at work, which partially explains why marginality exists. If certain people or sectors can be made to feel powerless, then they can be separated from others to lessen their social contributions, or they can be alienated from others to become powerless to instigate change (Gramsci, 1971). In both perspectives marginality is tied to disempowerment and connected to alienation in a circular pattern. One can cause the other which can promote the other. All are interrelated concepts.

As a result, one, alone by himself or herself, often lacks the strength or the courage to connect with others.

Pride can stand in the way, for we mistakenly think that by needing others, we are admitting a weakness or deficiency in ourselves and our independence. We remain passive, frustrated, and powerless, molded into the sequence of performing actions for people and not with them. Implying a hierarchical metaphor, the preposition <u>for</u> illuminates the "assumption of a dichotomy between man and the world: man is merely in the world, not <u>with</u> the world or with others; man is spectator, not re-creator" (Freire, 1986, p. 62). We perform actions for individuals, with implications of a hierarchical relationship, and not with them, more in line with a subject-to-subject encounter.

In one's present reality, however, hierarchies definitely exist, from bosses to the President of the United States. Our life and employment styles are based around one person having power over others. With the inequality which results, people can become unable to meet their need for independence and self-meaning in the structure of domination. They can begin to feel as puppets at the call of the master, without a recognition of their power as human beings. This domination, itself, becomes alienating:

> It maintains the oppressed <u>I</u> in a position of "adhesion" to a reality which seems all-powerful and overwhelming, and then alienates him by presenting mysterious forces to explain this power. Part of the oppressed <u>I</u> is located in the reality to which he "adheres"; part is located outside himself, in the mysterious forces which he regards as responsible for a reality about which he can do nothing. He is divided between an identical past and present, and a future without hope. He is a person who does not perceive

> himself as <u>becoming</u>; hence he cannot have a future to be built in unity with others. (Freire, 1986, pp. 173-174)

People in such a case do not attempt to integrate the notion of themselves as subjects with themselves as objects and do not tend to realize their full identities. Rather, they exist alone and powerless, perhaps needing help but not asking for it.

Without someone or something to oppress individuals, one cannot be oppressed, although he or she can be the oppressor as well as the oppressed, depending upon the actions one is taking (Welch, 1985). People can work as factory laborers who subserviently follow orders, oppressed beings who are dehumanized by their employment and employers. They can go home and vent their frustrations on a family member, where they become the oppressor and the second party, the oppressed. Consequently, they can occupy both roles, which are interdependent upon one another. Overall, to be an oppressor indicates some participation with other people. The scope of activity determines the marginal sector, for, in a parallel vein of thought, marginality cannot exist without an oppositional sense of participation.

One can thus be in a dual position, as the experience of power or freedom in one instance and lack of power and freedom in another can lead to feelings of uneasiness and discontent. Because of the dichotomy within people's

existence, they have difficulty in living authentically. It is like they occupy two positions on different poles and the distance between the ends leads to a split in their innermost being, oppressed and oppressor, marginal and participant. They are in a position between "acting and having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in . . . power to create and re-create, . . . to transform the world" (Freire, 1986, p. 33). They, like Faulkner's Joe Christmas, can come to doubt their identity in an alienation from themselves, where they as an object question themselves as a subject.

In a like manner, Bellah and his colleagues (1985) depict alienation in ways which add to Faulkner's (1932) portrayals, as well as provide examples which extend our understanding of individuality. The bond which ties the husband, wife, and children together as a unit leads to mores which parallel those of the culture (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, p. 92). Persons are taught by their parents to be independent, and reliance upon others becomes a sign of weakness. Rather, individuals are to take pride in their strong individuality. They even leave home to establish their own separate existences, but they are not taught about the darker side of oneness. They are not taught that their ideology of an upward economic progress entails alienation. They are duped in many ways

into adopting behaviors that hinder their recognition of their brotherhood and sisterhood. Individuals learn to view families as separate entities, each an isolated group within the larger framework:

> . . . the family is no longer an integral part of a larger moral ecology tying the individual to community, church, and nation. The family is the core of the private sphere, whose aim is not to link individuals to the public world but to avoid it as far as possible. In our commercial culture, consumerism, with its temptations, and television, with its examples, augment that tendency. Americans are seldom as selfish as the therapeutic culture urges them to be. But often the limit of their serious altruism is the family circle. Thus the tendency of our individualism to dispose 'each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends,' . . . indeed seems to be coming true. 'Taking care of one's own' is an admirable motive. But when it combines with suspicion of, and withdrawal from, the public world, it is one of the conditions of the despotism . . . feared. (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, p. 112)

Our culture, in general, gives us the ideological groundwork for aloneness. After all, we uphold individualism and are taught to go to great lengths to achieve it. We are not taught about the harm extensive individualism can do to relationships and to our identities. Parents want their child to replicate the American dream. They want their son or daughter to rise above poverty, to make a name for himself or herself, and for other people to recognize him or her as being an important person. The child's successes and achievements at some point will reflect upon the parents, and they will be recognized for their role in parenting. Hence, parents can fulfill the

American dream through their children, although one must consider that an essential part of the American dream is the competitive edge which the children have against others. They try to undercut other individuals, to perform in ways which are considered by set standards as better or higher. No where in this dream are they to try to help someone else accomplish the "better" level. Instead, the concern is for the self and in the interest of the self. Americans uphold the concept where:

> . . . the American dream is often a very private dream of being the star, the uniquely successful and admirable one, the one who stands out from the crowd of ordinary folk who don't know how. And since we have believed in that dream for a long time and worked very hard to make it come true, it is hard for us to give it up, even though it contradicts another dream that we have--that of living in a society that would really be worth living in. (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, p. 285)

Consequently, through our culture's ideology of individualism one learns the means of alienation, to the point where relationships can be threatened by competition. Ultimately individuals can become disempowered and unsure about how to relate to others.

In another light, we have within us a fear of conforming too much to society, of being too much like all other people. With the loss of individual differences, we open ourselves up until we reach the point where we are engulfed by the society. In sharing too completely with others, we are afraid of losing ourselves in the commonality of humanity. We find in our culture:

> fear that society may overwhelm the individual and destroy any chance of autonomy unless he stands against it, but also recognition that it is only in relation to society that the individual can fulfill himself and that if the break with society is too radical, life has no meaning at all. (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, p. 144)

Joe Christmas, overlooking his sadistic and masochistic tendencies, dreads being consumed by the society, as he has no permanent identity. He constantly tries to evince his separateness and, hence, his individuality. We look upon our individuality, like Joe, as a safeguard for our uniqueness, only to expose to ourselves the reverse side of "growing aloneness" (Fromm, 1941, p. 29). We must discover and maintain that essential balance between being in relationships too much and estranging ourselves from others in a quest for individuality. We must be individuals but simultaneously be participants within family, neighborhood, or community.

Estrangement

Additionally resulting from marginality and alienation, estrangement contains within it a possible discovery of the person one is, but this process can only be actualized in a combination of separation and relation. Without undergoing the tension of the dialectics, we are severed from defining ourselves by comparison with others. After all, only man and woman can form relations with others in a recognition of their humanity, commonality, and differences:

> An animal never succeeds in unravelling its companions from the knot of their common life, just as it never

> succeeds in ascribing to the enemy an existence beyond his hostility, that is, beyond its own realm. Man, as man, sets man at a distance and make him independent; he lets the life of men like himself go on round about him, and so he, and he alone, is able to enter into relation, in his own individual status, with those like himself. The basis of man's life with man is twofold, and it is one--the wish of every man to be confirmed as what he is, even as what he can become, by men; and the innate capacity in man to confirm his fellow men in this way. (Buber, 1965b, pp. 67-68)

People understand their own being first, or their existence in the world (Heidegger, 1962). Because they own their being, they have sole ownership of the comprehension. The understanding of being-in-the-world, thus, goes hand-in-hand with their existence, as an understanding of their own being-in-the-world enables them to meet others in the world and illuminate the others in their being. One's self is the most difficult of all beings for one, for he or she can cover up true understanding, conceal one's self, and alienate himself or herself (Heidegger, 1962).

In the estrangement of the self from the self, persons tumble into inauthenticity, in addition to powerlessness. They disown themselves in a world where:

> . . . understanding of the most alien cultures and their 'synthesis' with one's own will lead to the final and true clarity of man about himself. Many-sided curiosity and a restless knowing-all pretend to a universal understanding of man's existence. . . . In this reassured, 'all-comprehending' comparison of everything with itself, man's existence rushes toward an estrangement in which its ownmost ability for being remains hidden. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 178)

Men and women are driven from this estrangement into deep self-analysis. They become so preoccupied with themselves

that possibilities for an understanding of the self are closed. They fall into an abyss of inauthenticity and learn from being in the world some aspects of themselves and others, yet if they remain predominately engulfed in their alienation, they decrease their capacity for growth resulting from relationships with others.

Hence, through alienation persons are cut off from one another, themselves, and the society. They become imprisoned within their own world and perceptions, unable to break down the bars which keep them from relating to others. Their awareness of man and woman as individuals confronts them with a problem:

> . . . by being aware of himself as distinct from nature and other people, by being aware--even very dimly--of death, sickness, aging, he necessarily feels his insignificance and smallness in comparison with the universe and all others who are not 'he.' Unless he belonged somewhere, unless his life had some meaning and direction, he would feel like a particle of dust and be overcome by his individual insignificance. He would not be able to relate himself to any system which would give meaning and direction to his life, he would be filled with doubt, and this doubt eventually would paralyze his ability to act--that is, to live. (Fromm, 1941, pp. 21-22)

Without the unification and participation with others, life cannot have the same meaning, because "<u>the dignity of human existence is in the power of reciprocity</u>" (Heschel, 1965, p. 46). Marginality and estrangement negate the give-and-take implicit in relationships, and individuals can fall back on themselves and their individuality. They can also question the social forces or situations which lead them to

feel isolated from others. Distance provides the room for reflection and interpretation, with the result that people can try to go forth into new relationships. The friction between separation and relationship seems to be mandatory for individuals to have some meaning in their lives and for their existences. Marginality and alienation, as a result, not only furnish the distance for individualization but are in some senses too one-sided. Human beings can be so caught up by themselves that they fail to enter into relationships, a stymieing of their potential as a person among other people. They must fight the disempowerment and oppression contingent with marginality and aloneness, for otherwise change may not come. It is only with the hope for modifying the dehumanizing conditions around us that we face the future with a brighter perception. It is in the realm of possibility to struggle against marginality, estrangement, and alienation, so that persons can realize their power and promise as human beings:

> I live my life in growing orbits,
> which move out over the things of the world.
> Perhaps I can never achieve the last,
> but that will be my attempt.
>
> I am circling around God, around the ancient tower,
> and I have been circling for a thousand years.
> And I still don't know if I am a falcon.
> Or a storm, or a great song. (Rilke, 1980, p. 76)

AFTERWORD

When I reflect upon the chapters I have written certain thoughts filter through my mind. They concern some of the complexities I have experienced in the dissertation process, particularly in reference to my methodology. First, though, I will review some of the points which one can glean from my dissertation content.

Relationships between people, between people and the environment, and between people and a spiritual Being form a central part of many lives. No matter what we do or fail to do, we need to feel connected to others to some extent in order to know ourselves and to learn about other individuals. Even when we feel distanced and alone, we are engaged in a process of relating, for we are undergoing another dimension to our relationships, the discovery of the sense of I. A lack of having ties with others can lead us to self-knowledge where we plummet the depths of our being and gain another perspective on the necessity for being related to the world around us. Eventually we learn that without relationships we cannot exist as the people we are and will become in the world that we know.

Moreover, I have focused predominantly on the I-It relationships with other individuals, which tend to make up a large portion of our lives. I have tried to show how we,

catapulted into the world, must continually fashion and refashion our thinking in regard to ourselves and others. This self-knowledge, along with factors as race, gender, sub-culture, and socio-economic class, helps to mold us into the people we are. This is the person we perceive ourselves to be and the one we present to others. Sometimes, we can additionally experience alienation and marginality, other shadings of I-It relationships which aid or hinder the determination of our characters.

Whereas many people have experienced alienation and marginality, the inherent distancing of aloneness allows for the emergence of our identities, the I persona. With a sense of the I, we can go forth into relations to learn about others and, hence, about the self. Much of the requirement for separateness, however, depends on a notion of degree. Cutting ourselves off from others, we can live with ourselves too much, to where we can hinder our relationships with other persons. Similarly, we can be so captured by others that we detract from our self-knowledge, from the time we need to be by ourselves. What we work for in our relationships becomes a knowledge of ourselves in terms of others and of others in regard to the self, a dialectic which I have tried to use as one of my primary dissertation themes.

Furthermore, I have depended upon a dialectic between theory and practice. I hold that we can take knowledge, as

theory, and shape it to fit our experiences, as well as reinterpret our experiences from theory. We can also utilize our personal experiences to support our knowledge, as we continually learn from our interactions or strengthen our comprehension.

With the dissertation so close to me, however, I do not believe at this time that I can adequately sum up all of what I have gained from writing it. I have thought much about the aspects that I have learned from the process and would like to share this information, with the reasoning that perhaps, other students, like me, may undergo similar thoughts and confusions when they write their dissertations.

I have chosen a letter format for this expression, for a letter tends to employ a different tone from a more academic and objective form of writing. Because my thoughts are personal, I think I would have difficulty distancing myself from them to the point of assuring myself of their objectivity. Thus, I have decided to employ another mode of writing to convey some of my thoughts about a major aspect of my dissertation, the manner of research I have used.

A Personal Note on My Research Methodology

Dear Dr. Purpel,

In one of our conversations together, you suggested that I write a letter explaining some of the confusions and frustrations I felt when I was writing the chapters of my dissertation. You have helped me throughout the

dissertation process, for I would compose sections of a chapter and then give the pages to you for editing comments. There was an interaction between us, a relationship of professor-student, and you have played a decided role in the form and content of my chapters. Because you were there, to help me and to criticize my work, I wanted to write this letter to you. You were my dissertation advisor, as well as my friend, and I think you will understand what I am trying to say.

I wonder if some of my distress when I was writing could be explained by a series of dialectical relationships that I was experiencing. Macdonald used the term dual dialectic to denote a "reflecting upon the consequences of an action and sounding the depths of our inner selves." I believe that I was in the midst not only of such a dual dialectic, the self involved within tensions, but of what I call multiple dialectics. There were several seemingly oppositional concepts internally interacting with one another, with the result that I became uncertain about the person I saw myself as and the task I was undertaking. Some of these dialectics included subjectivity-objectivity, self-other, and self-culture.

When I first started thinking about my dissertation, I had ideas about what I wanted to do. I hoped to change the dissertation form, to make it more creative and expressive of its author or authoress. I thought about using a diary

structure to show the experiential component of my relationships, where I could reveal my thoughts, anxieties, and character in a subjective mode of writing. It wasn't long, however, before I found that I could not create a dissertation as I had wished, mainly because there were already existing criteria which were to be met before it could be academically accepted. These criteria were entrenched within its inherent format, and the way of writing I had envisioned was obviously not suitable for the subject matter. I could not, for instance, continually use the pronoun I as the expressive voice, for the work had to extend beyond me to include the experiences and thoughts of others. I had, furthermore, to support many of my statements and to become aware of the assumptions behind them. To uphold the phenomenological methodology I was employing, I, to be consistent with the research manner, was to distance myself from my experiences in order to perceive them more objectively and with as little bias as possible.

Yet, much of my dissertation centered around my experiences and perceptions. I described theories as I interpreted them and illumined what I gained from readings. Similarly, I narrated experiences I had had, as well as the background from which I came. This information is very personal, although I found myself having to step back and view it as if it pertained to another individual. I was looking at myself as an object, seeing my life history as

though it were reflected in someone else's mirror, to acquire the needed degree of objectivity. Somewhere in the tension of this subjectivity and objectivity, I began to question my ability to write in an academic manner.

Another aspect of the dissertation process lay within my interactions with you. Usually I would read or reread materials, think about the ideas for several weeks, and then write for two or three days. I knew what I wanted to say, and it was easy for me to understand the points I wanted to make. When I gave my work to you, though, I would receive it back with remarks as "explain," "overstated," or "needs transition." I learned after a while to review my paragraphs and to try and look at them from your eyes, the viewpoint of another person attempting to understand my writing. Often I could see that your remarks were valid, for I would skip from one idea or explanation to another without putting forth the mental paths I had followed. You gently explained to me that my writing demonstrated an internalization or identification with the knowledge to the point where I assumed other people would reach the same conclusions that I had. Perhaps your reasoning was right. I really don't know, although I think that the difficulties I experienced here were part of growth. I had never before written a work of the length of a dissertation, and when I had to retrace the progression of my thoughts for the benefit of another, I was learning an important point of

hermeneutics. I was discovering a new sense of sharing, not of material goods, but of something much more central to me, namely my thinking or my mind. I didn't picture myself in the past as a protective person, but in actuality I guess that I was. I wanted to keep my ideas and my interpretations to myself, for I thought that if I revealed too much, I would become too open and vulnerable. But, isn't this vulnerability part of the theories of relationships I was using as a basis for my dissertation? Once more, I became like two separate people. One person was hiding behind internal knowledge which only she had access, while another person, in line with phenomenology, was to be open to the input and interpretations of others. Often I would resent the intrusion of the other upon my writing, for I think that I was centered too much on the self. I had to let down my defenses in my writing so that I could be truthful to the person I pictured myself as--one who was honest and open to herself and the world around her.

As I reflect more on the dissertation structure, I can also pick out another tension I was experiencing, the self and the culture. I have become aware of this friction lately, particularly when I was auditing your moral dimensions class. You were explaining value clarification to the class and had given us a fictional, albeit corny, story from a textbook. The purpose of the exercise was to establish some sort of priority among our values, besides

clarifying exactly what we believed in. I responded to the exercise very quickly, but when I examined what I had listed as priorities, I was surprised to note that I really didn't think the way my answers indicated. Instead, I had responded as to how the pragmatic culture had taught me, rather than as to how I, the person, believed. I had believed myself to be more sensitive to cultural influences than the exercise proved me to be, especially as I had lived in another culture for three years. Yet, the ingredients of the American culture were very present in my character in ways to which I was oblivious.

This experience caused me to wonder just how the material I had written for my dissertation was indicative of me, how much was a part of the American culture, and how much was a product of how I had been indoctrinated to think. Perhaps I can't separate the three facets, as all are components of my identity. Still, I would like to know the dimensions of the person I am, which entails reflectivity. Although I attempted to be both thoughtful and critical in my composition, I am certain that cultural biases are present in the writing.

Overall, Dr. Purpel, I was not totally accurate when I answered your question about the amount I had learned from the dissertation process. I told you that I had learned very little. While I was largely truthful in terms of the content, I overlooked other areas where I had learned much.

I learned from the dissertation form about the accepted academic way of writing. I, additionally, became aware of the need for clarity and thoroughness within my writing to enable other people to share and to follow the train of my thinking. Then I began to question how the American culture has patterned my thinking, while I found out that understanding entails many layers of comprehension. Despite my understanding of the material about which I was writing, I started to gain a new perspective on it. The process was similar to uncovering veil after veil to allow for another, brighter sense of illumination. Maybe this procedure of differing levels of understanding will continue as I, other people, and our world change. In any case, I think that the dialectics I have experienced evince Buber's (1970) concept of betweenness. The betweenness wasn't merely between two people, besides in my relationship with you, but it was also within me. I was between subjectivity and objectivity, my perception of the self and other, and the discovery of the self in the culture. Captured within the friction of these multiple tensions, I found myself to be searching for a more definite sense of who I was and what my place in the academic community would be. I still am not certain about these two areas, but I can only try to gauge their complexities in the critical and thoughtful manner that you have taught and demonstrated for me.

Sincerely,

Carolyn

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