

THE SOCIOLOGICAL HITCH

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Abstract

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The Sociological Hitch focuses on my experiences in and related to higher education. I examine other major social institutions, such as work, law enforcement, and family. My major objective in the study is to offer a socially poignant testimony through the utilization of the auto-ethnographic method. The work of the classical Sociologist C. Wright Mills inspires the undertaking, namely Mills's notion of the Sociological Imagination. Feminist theory, and its experiential epistemology, in conjunction with New Left ideas about power, influences the scope of the study. Beyond the use of Mills, feminism, and Leftist social thought, I utilize auto-ethnographic materials and essays pertaining to auto-ethnography as a distinct methodology. The major method I employ is auto-ethnography, which involves the disclosure of personal experiences in the aforementioned institutions with a focus on higher education. Self-disclosure of direct experience, coupled with extended narration and reflection achieve a detailed account of a specific subjectivity. Through my subjectivity emerges an intrinsic social critique. In addition to the major method of auto-ethnography, *The Sociological Hitch* likewise employs open-ended interviews with thirteen interviewees. Through these interviews, I explore and investigate experiences interviewees had with social institutions, namely the aforementioned higher education, work, law enforcement, and family. The interviews reinforce my subjectivity and provide context for the social milieu under consideration. Analysis of the interviews in light of the auto-ethnography generate the findings that: 1) Biography confirms socio-structural reality, 2) Police, family, school, and work reproduce Society, and 3) Social problems translate into material problems. The major underlying conclusion *The Sociological Hitch* resonates the work of C. Wright Mills by declaring that assumed personal problems ought to prompt consequential social action.

How do you do? My name's Gavroche.
These are my people. Here's my patch.
Not much to look at, nothing posh
Nothing that you'd call up to scratch.
This is my school, my high society.
(Look Down, *Les Misérables*)

When will you take off your clothes?
When will you look at yourself through the grave?
When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites?
(Allen Ginsberg, excerpt from "America")

"The class struggle begins in class."
(Jerry Rubin, *Do it!*)

I dedicate this manuscript to every oppressed person in the world; past, present, or future and to anyone with the desire to humanely transform reality.

Acknowledgements

I give many thanks to each person who ever inspired me, whether you know it or not. I give thanks to every person who in kind gave me their time, attention, and help. Finally, I offer a special thanks to C. Wright Mills for essential contribution to the academy.

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(...)The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world (... .)
 (W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming")

Chapter 1: Introduction- Why Hitch?

The Sociological Hitch refers to a project; that being this manuscript. *The Sociological Hitch*, after all, is the manuscript's title. So, the title signifies the manuscript. In a crude sense, then, *The Sociological Hitch* is the manuscript. But it is not that simple. This is because title *The Sociological Hitch* is not arbitrary.

The operative words in the title, *sociology* and *hitch*, have personal resonance for me. I chose a title with personal resonance because in my own opinion, good titles have personal resonance to the respective authors. I think this is even more important for this manuscript because of its personal content; that being auto-ethnographic content.

But *The Sociological Hitch* also refers to an experience and a sentiment. It refers to my experience, in general, in the academy. It also refers to how I feel about those experiences; it is both incident and feeling. At the moment I cannot neatly separate the experience, or incident, from the sentiment or feeling. This lack of clarity, rather than conveying actual confusion to me, expresses itself as the very crux of the Hitch.

Perhaps the lack of clarity comes from an inability to decide whether my experience with the academy, that being "the hitch," is something the academy did to me or I did to the academy. Instant recounting of my experiences in higher education prompt me to admit quietly, to myself, that it has been a bit of both. Experiential dissonance riddles my memories.

Noting the dissonance reminds me of my simultaneous occupation of the social world as both oppressed and oppressor. I am a white woman; so oppressed and yet so privileged. I

further grew up in middle-class suburban United States and can identify as heterosexual. Yet, sexism stands in my way. When I ask why, I wonder:

- Are attacks against me punishment for challenging the status-quo?
- Do I have great sensitivity to sexism because it stands in stark contrast to the otherwise default privilege I possess?
- Where is the social agency located?

Maybe the title itself contains clues to help answer the above questions.

What does the title reveal? The title has two operative words; *sociological* and *hitch*. I chose *sociological* because this discipline occupies a hegemonic space in my university education. I graduated with a BA in Sociology, later earned a MA in Sociology, and continued to minor in Sociology as a doctoral student. I further used *sociological* because explanations of my experiences seem to require macro-structural, or sociological, concepts. In other words, my “hitch” carries institutional implications and therefore sociological implications.

The sociological, or institutional, implications of my experiences form the basis for my claim that my experiences have theoretical relevance. This is the most fundamental basis for my desire to undertake this project. This project, auto-ethnographic and highly personal, is thus not a solipsistic activity. Rather, its format and content will reflect the highly social material my experiences consist of.

And what can I make of *hitch*? The first image that comes to my mind is that of a hitchhiker. I have seen them on the road. I have one acquaintance who hitchhikes from place-to-place regionally and locally, and sometimes further. I have another friend who recently planned to hitchhike, to an Earth First! sort of environmental action convergence, and interestingly enough to educate against the building and expansion of I-69. But when I called

her last September to ask her about it, she explained that a comrade from Detroit picked her up and said: “thank God I didn’t have to hitchhike, I hate that.” I also recall my father reminiscing about hitchhiking in the 1960s. But it remains on the periphery of my experiences, at least in the literal or automotive sense.

To me, the most fascinating quality hitchhiking possess is its own dissonance. Hitchhiking represents one of the least preferred modes of transport, at least in the conventional sense. My friend’s quote conveys this well. Still it is one of the most romanticized modes, as my father’s nostalgia represents. Hitchhiking, marginal as the abject, albeit romanticized, transportation that it is, occupies a marginal place in my experiences. I do not consider myself a hitchhiker, nor do I intend to *become* one.

There is one exception to hitchhiking’s marginality in my experiences. Once, in the spring of 1995, I was on the way to a summer job interview. It was during my sophomore year as an undergraduate. I very much wanted the job, which involved working at a disabled children’s day camp. On my way there, on foot, I noticed that I had underestimated the walking time and realized I would be late unless something changed. Shortly after, I concluded I would convince a motorist to take me to the interview site. This is exactly what I did.

I think I might have stuck my thumb out, in the cliché way, to indicate I needed a ride. Or, I might have explained the situation to the driver after waving down the car in order to indicate to the driver to stop. Either way, I recall explaining my dilemma to the white male motorist in a sports car. After my explanation, he offered to drive me to my destination. Desperation led me to do something a nineteen year-old woman was *never* supposed to do; that being take a ride from a stranger.

But I had found my way and I would be on time to the interview. I knew I would get the job. I just had to be conventional and appear on time. As always I was on my way to my destiny, or at least my near future's destiny. But there was one complication. The motorist had insisted, apparently, on buying one of those pin-up air fresheners for his car. This air freshener, in particular, featured a woman with bleached hair who appeared to have a problem covering her buttocks even though they had less surface area than most. The plot had offered a twist in this way, and I felt the latent and general sleazy quality and irony of myself riding in that car.

After dull conversation during which he mentioned his daughter, the car soon arrived at the interview site and I left the car unscathed; save for my psyche. But I had unintentionally subjected myself to adverse stimuli; a sleazy man with a sleazy car and tasteless air freshener. Somehow my participation with the most militant feminist community in my small college town had not shielded me from this unfortunate consequence of conforming myself to conventional social norms, such as making an appearance at a job interview on time.

I had asked for the ride and the motorist abided. I had not, however, asked for the visual stimulation of that air freshener. My sudden need, beyond my control at the moment, had led me to total subjection; at least my nineteen year-old understanding of Total Subjugation. I arrived at the site on time, but could not get the image of the bleach-blond woman out of my head. A decade later her pose and demeanor still exist in my memories. The experience left a defining impression on me.

At that time, a full ten years ago, I was likewise not unaware of the dangers associated with hitchhiking. Along the way to the site, the ideas of rape, murder, and abduction floated through my head. I realized that was unlikely yet completely possible. So while the air

freshener annoyed me, it seemed to serve as a reminder of more grave adverse possibilities while also marking the limits of adversity in the situation.

This brings me to the gravity of abject mobility. In the case of hitchhiking, mobility is aspired to, assumed, or anticipated and likewise the steadfast outcome. While hitchhiking may provide transport, and therefore mobility, the accompanying circumstances may provide a range of possibilities from excitement and adventure, discomfort and inconvenience, to relatively minor or grave endangerment.

~

Mentioning grave endangerment reminds me of a conversation I once overheard about hitchhiking in the literal sense. In the summer of 2001, several weeks before I left for New York City to do an internship involving the unionization of gourmet grocery store workers, I attended the “Underground Publishing Conference” at Bowling Green State University. I arrived in car, with an elder friend who spoke of her vision of herself as a Jainist nun along the way as she drove, where I laid my twenty-five year-old eyes upon the cemetery adjacent to the BGSU campus for the first time. I remarked on the cemetery, expressing a gothic interest when my elder friend said: “That’s where they probably used to bury the professors.” My response negated this idea, asserting that campus did not look old enough for this sort of arrangement and, besides, professors do not make that much money anyway. And I felt justified in saying so, especially after a semester’s stint as an adjunct at a small, private university.

Shortly there after, as I recall it, my attention turned toward Raya as she played hacky sack with some boys in the parking lock in front of Olscamp Hall. She had been the one to bring the conference’s existence to my attention. There she was, like the Rote Zora herself, at the

forefront of an otherwise all-male youth group. It was all an idyllic scene if you just refrained from scratching the surface.

~

One night at my friend Jeff's house, on a snowy night, Raya had come to visit. Jeff had announced her arrival, excited, and those who knew her were likewise pleased. About eight in total, we were the band of generation-x "kids" who weekly served food through Food Not Bombs in an urban center, somewhere in the Midwest. That night, at Jeff's house we watched the Sundance film *Dark Days*; a chronicle of homeless people who had once lived under the subways of New York City. Most of our clientele, through Food Not Bombs, were homeless and two of the relatively older guys in our stronghold had been conducting their doctoral research on the local homeless population.

Without Raya the female-to-male ratio would have been 2-to-7, but with her it was 3-to-8. She was beautiful with her curly brown trestles that just touched her black, wool scarf. As we watch *Dark Days* she sat, tipping the gender ratio, cross-stitching a bright pink salamander as she held on to her thirtieth anniversary issue of *Living on the Earth*; the hippie home economics manual par excellence. She showed us the salamander and said: "I am going through domestic phase." Perhaps this description seems too subjective, but at the time I was sure it was objectively certifiable. She was beautiful, powerful, and informed. And, I am afraid, only my expressed subjectivity will ever attest to this.

After the film Jeff led a group discussion, always the dutiful Teaching Assistant, and we discussed the politics of homelessness. Jeff declared the existence of a "homeless continuum," and he talked about "couch surfing." I told everyone about my friend, later turned mechanic, who had dropped out of one of the most prestigious universities in the Midwest and lived in his

car for sometime. As I recall, this is how he amassed an impressive radical book collection, which he took it as payment for letting one of his friends from the homeless crowd stay at his house for awhile several years and one mortgage later. Jeff eventually stood up, went to his refrigerator, and brought one can of cheap American beer and opened it. He took a large gulp, as if to declare himself an authentic man of the people. I explained why we ought to regard renting as occupying a relatively close position to homelessness on the continuum.

In so many ways Jeff had reached authenticity. He lost his job in New York, for being late repeatedly as he said, and because he would not stop dying his hair green. So what was a college grad from an exclusive private school with an art degree to do? As he has explained to me, he just could not make it in the work world. So, he lived as a homeless guy for a year or two in New York. And now, hanging on the wall of his apartment, were beautiful photos of a bonfire set in New York during a housing riot. He could talk of the barricades in New York City, years before the Battle of Seattle in '99. I had seen *Les Miserables* when it came to town, but to me he had become one of them for real. He played Gavroche, the militant youth at the barricade, in real life. Years later, now a doctoral candidate at a private university, if anyone doubted his seriousness they would have to reconcile the cheap beer and his zealous interest in homelessness as a social phenomenon. Eventually, the theoretical discussion stopped and Jeff started talking about the voicemail system he had built for homeless people in the area to use as a way to communicate with potential employers, but the conversation about the proliferation of temporary employment agencies steered the conversation toward Theory again.

Directly on my left sat another guy, named Durk, who had failed as an undergraduate out of the university I obtained my MA from just a year previous. He had been in Advanced Placement in his high school and both of his parents dedicated themselves to the institution of

education. Still, he had left school and did not plan to return. He spent a summer surfing couches after his mother kicked him out of the house. We almost always cooked the Food Not Bombs food at his apartment. Others of us had gone to that same public university, Kent State University, and had done well – or not. Two others had graduated and at least one became a teaching professional and teacher’s union leader. Penchant for social theory and professional orientation aside, things did not always go our way.

~

Or was it that we did not always go the institution’s way? About a year or so ago, in particular, one of us anarchists had been thrown out of Kent for leading a crowd around campus as he waived a Anarcho-syndicalist flag and led the crowd in the chant: “The People Run This Mother Fucker.” Call it naivety, call it brash, but Clinton was president and we had dreams. I marched and chanted, as did many others; including the tenured professor who was to become the chair of an important Social Science department a few semesters later. The university president personally expelled and inevitably suspended him. Apparently, an above average GPA and heightened social awareness did not make him Super Man, nor did it summon Super Woman to our rescue.

The expulsion troubled me. I attended the march and believed in the freedom to do and say such things. I felt it as an attack against my political kin. I phoned the expelled brother and told him about New College of San Francisco, an open-minded college with a BA completion program. We talked for hours about the politics of the expulsion, my troubled love life with a fellow anarchist, and the dismal political situation in our country in general. I wanted him to finish his degree and join me in my academic crusade. There was room for us in the academy, I

urged, and the academy needed us. After hours and one big sigh, he said: “Jeanine, right now I am planning to become a full-time activist.”

I was optimistic, always ready to look for solutions. New College seemed symbolic of the liberal America I knew existed; the sort of society we could build. We were, after all, part of a great American tradition of Left activism that dated back to Ralph Waldo Emerson. We should declare, assume, and take our rightful place in society. We *were* the society. So, to me, it seemed often a matter of meeting the right people, going to the right places, and creating the right circumstances. The people could run this mother fucker. But why did the others not see it like this? Where was the sense of despair and defeat coming from? Could they know something I did not? Or had I developed some immunity to hypocrisy and conservatism? Had I become numb, oblivious, denying, or worse yet hypocritical? And if the people were not running it, then who or what was – the machines? It scared me. When again would *my* time be up? I had already suffered, but could more be on the way?

I was not alone. The expulsion bothered some liberal-minded faculty members. Soon after the expulsion, about five professors organized an evening program about freedom and education with a final focus on the expulsion during which the expelled brother spoke on stage. The program began with mostly innocuous discourse but ended with our brother most militantly declaring his commitment to overthrow the status quo. The audience took it well, because on that same stage Angela Y. Davis spoke on campus about the Prison Industrial Complex less than a few years previous. Unfortunately, neither I nor the friendly faculty members stood in a position to make a policy change. Liberal culture was not enough, apparently, we needed an operating structure; which we lacked. Our lack served our adversaries well.

The entire situation impressed itself upon me greatly. Our expelled brother's situation, i.e. a brilliant mind and a bum deal, left me feeling needy for resolution. It also harkened to a similar tragedy, its description in a forthcoming chapter, which happened when I was in my senior undergraduate year.

~

My best friend, Angie, had failed out during her junior year. The combined pressures of recurring flashbacks of severe sexual abuse at the hands of her father and his extreme physical abuse toward her mother made school difficult. To make matters more challenging, Angie's mother rejected her after she came out as a lesbian. Perhaps the most graphic description I received from Angie about the mother's rejection took place when Angie had visited home. Angie stood in the laundry room with her mother, while her clothes began a wash cycle, her mother lost her temper and screamed about Angie about being a lesbian just prior to her mother announcing she must leave the house immediately and not return. Angie had to take her wet clothes from the dryer, and leave.

When she told me her eyes were still red and swollen from crying. I do not recall how Angie transported herself from her mother's house to our university's city. I think maybe a friend drove her. The last time her mother lashed out, Angie was seated in the passenger's seat as her mother drove and screamed; cursing the affects of Women's Studies on Angie's mind. Months later, Angie needed more therapy, no longer had her mother's financial support, grew increasingly interested in self-medicating with drugs more intense than marijuana, and had simply failed out of school. I tried to convince her she could still finish her degree and move on, maybe by going to New College. Surely the people at New College understood us; they must have made the BA-completion program for situations like this. This *could* have a happy ending.

~

Angie would have liked Raya. That night at Jeff's I thought of Angie, missing her painfully, and wished I could introduce the two. They would have made a great couple. My heart ached, literally, for the first time ever. I thought maybe it cried.

Toward the end of the evening at Jeff's, when we all admitted we must go home, we slowly made our way out of the living room and toward the kitchen-foyer adjacent to the entrance/exit. The conversation continued, as we enjoyed each other's company, as we put our winter gear on. I stood in the kitchen, across from the refrigerator. I stared at the magnets. Behind one magnet was a small flyer for the "Second Annual Underground Publishing Conference." I quickly asked about this conference. Raya told me of her plans to attend, and began planning my own road trip.

~

And now Raya was the Red Zora. The Red Zora, the name of a German women's terrorist group, bares the name of a character in a Hungarian children's tale of a mischievous group of boys led by one girl with red hair. Raya, playing hacking sack with a group of boys, spoke and they listened to her. As I got out of the car, my elder friend and I approached Raya. Raya led a discussion about hitchhiking as she used her ankle to pass the sack. Standing in front of Olscamp Hall, I commented on the location of the conference, asking why this hall. She said because it was new, but that Olscamp "was an asshole." Evidently, according to multiple accounts, Dr. Olscamp served as the university's president and did not have any qualms marketing education as a consumer product. Her labeling of him, however, struck me as harsh and I wondered about the conclusions drawn. But, I deflected in knowing that Raya's

gaucheness might stem from struggling to find her own voice. Sometimes grace amidst struggle becomes a scarcity, and besides she had more grace at the hack.

I eventually heard Raya describe a narrow escape from a driver attempting to rape her during one of her hitching trips. I sat and listened to the conversation. I believe I also participated by sharing my story about the air freshener. Raya elbowed the guy really hard with her elbow, opened the passenger door, and ran. Another way to get away, according to her, is to pretend like your interested and then get away when the guy is distracted and the car is slowing down. Hitchhiking is not the same for everyone and women have more of these experiences.

Still, one young man in Raya's gang of boys reported similar experiences. He hitchhiked often now, but had spent some time as a teaching assistant in a MFA program. But he dropped out after feeling too confined. Hitchhiking provided freedom, even if only the ephemeral sort. Yet the sexual vulnerability contrasted strikingly against this fleeting freedom.

I concluded Raya and the boy were authentic hitchhikers. But what makes someone a hitchhiker? I had come to the conference as a passenger in someone else's car, for the conference but to also check out the doctoral programs at the university. I had an interest in the American Culture Studies program, because of its interdisciplinary foci. It was still my first year outside of the academy as a student, I had completed my MA a year previous, followed by a semester as an adjunct instructor, and I needed to find a PhD program I wanted to do. I knew I could gain entry into the program and with funding too. I only needed to decide if this place was habitable.

Was I a hitchhiker? I had a story to tell, but it did not seem authentic but rather spurious. But there I was plotting my path through the academy. If I was not a hitchhiker in the literal sense, maybe I was in a metaphorical sense. Some professors, after all, had exploited my

vulnerability. I quietly recalled when a professor at Kent shoved me into a chair, during a visit in his office to discuss my work, and another, graver situation from my undergraduate years. Ironically, the professor who shoved me at Kent wrote extensively on the May 4 massacre and in a sympathetic way. The academy just was not my highway and the offices these incidents happened in were not my cars. I wondered if my refusal to accept the hitchhiker identity was denial, or worse yet, *essentialist*.

To avoid the traps of denial and essentialism, I will return to the previously posed questions. Here they are:

- Are attacks against me punishment for challenging the status-quo?
- Do I bare great sensitivity to sexism because it stands in stark contrast to the otherwise default privilege I possess?
- Where is the social agency located?

I intend to address these questions in the course of this manuscript, the *Sociological Hitch*. But to begin, I will look at the words that make the title. Definitions are good places to start.

hitch: v.i. 1. to move jerkily. 2. to become fastened or caught. v.t. 1. to move, pull, etc. with jerks. 2. to fasten with a hook, knot, etc. 3.[Slang], to get (a ride) in hitchhiking. n. 1. a tug; jerk. 2. a limp. 3. a hindrance; obstacle. 4. a catching or fastening. 5. [Military Slang], a period or enlistment. 6. in *naut.* Usage, a kind of knot. (Webster's, 1970)

sociology: n. the study of the development, organization, and problems of society (Webster's, 1970)

sociological: adj. of or pertaining to sociology (implied by aforementioned definition)

The words contain clues. But maybe the questions themselves contain clues. These questions beg the question, and I think they should. The three aforementioned questions reveal that someone or something attacked or attacks me, and I stand opposed to the status-quo. The questions also reveal that I suffer at the hands of sexism, but that I garner privilege nonetheless. Finally, the questions also reveal the elusive existence of social agency. Herein lay clues, clues to the premises of my study and the ideas that require examination and explanation. But where are the other clues? I am afraid that the other clues hide in the depths of my experiences and social contexts they occur in.

This manuscript, after explaining my theoretical and academic rationale for doing so, will review and analyze my own experiences in higher education. Later, it will introduce the experiences of some of my peers, and others in my social world, for greater context and analytical dynamism. Ultimately I must conclude on thoughts more than simply descriptive; I must make conclusions that support interest in progressive social change.

For reasons mentioned above, the next chapter will articulate the theoretical foundations that can address the content of my experiential review. Those foundational areas will include sociology, feminism, politics, and method. Chapter 3 contains the actual experiential material and that will be the *auto-ethnography*. By auto-ethnography, I mean a focused and analytical auto-biographic segment. Chapter 4 will begin integrate the experiences of my peers by way of interviews. The concluding chapter, Chapter 5, offers polemical insight and direction.

Reader Challenge #1

- 1) Acknowledge the title.
- 2) Note the different “hitches” mentioned throughout the manuscript.
- 3) Compare your notes with *Reader Challenge #1: Author Feedback* in the concluding chapter.

I cannot ignore theme of transport, or movement, and the politics therein. Hitching means to move or fasten, after all, and the *Sociological Hitch* might describe movement, constraint, or both. So come along for the ride. I will lay the foundation, or theory, before building the auto-ethnographic path.

Along the way, I ask you to believe me. Too often people just do not accept me as a credible subject. Lent credibility might help subvert vocal clumsiness of this novice Subject. So, I ask of you, please grant me the authority of a Subject –even if it is temporary.

Remember our expelled brother and what the informed faculty did for him? That touched me. It touched me enough to write about the experience for a semi-peer-review journal edited by an established anarchist-independent-scholar who left the academy to pursue his independent work. He, the anarchist-editor, sent the manuscript back to me. He denied the credibility of the teach-in the friendly faculty organized by writing “that is unlikely” in the margins next to the section that described the program.

Do not worry, believing does not mean agreeing. Just entertain that I am neither a liar nor insane. If you should feel particularly generous, forgive my clumsiness and apparent crudity, banality, and anti-collegiality. In return, at the end of the auto-ethnographic path awaits a lavish pot of insight into this historical moment as an exemplar of social-structural configuration and its

macro-structural and micro-structural linkages. But, at any rate, come along and hitch a ride with me. Adventures into temporal and spatial vortexes abound. Both the truth and our future, which we must save, hang in the brink. In the absence of Super Man, Super Woman, or even Cat Woman we must implement a DIY (Do-It-Yourself) textual tour despite danger. So join me as we explore social power's institutional workings along the auto-ethnographic path.

Chapter 2: Foundations: Sociology, Feminism, Politics, & Method

Are you a victim of Chance? is this the way to succeed?
Or just a crack in the wall of what the people believe,
(Ministry, "What About Us")

"Columbus sailed the ocean blue to find a home for me and you."
-- my fourth grade teacher

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

-- Margaret Mead

10-10-05: Here we begin on the auto-ethnographic path...But first let me remind you that you are about to embark on a harrowing adventure. I am not a chauffeur. I cannot offer any first or second-class tickets. I trek with you, just a fellow hitcher. But let me be your guide.

Remember, we are *hitching*.

Oh yeah, and one more thing. Textual hitches look like this: ~. You have already seen some. Please do not mess with them. It could be dangerous for us. We need to go *somewhere* else. This place seems too boring, too constricting for us. Without our hitches, our transportation ceases. So please let the hitches serve their purpose.

See, we might have to hop a *textual freight train* made up of textual segments, "textual box cars" if you will, to get to another place. Like many adventurous hitchers sometimes we will know exactly where we are going, other times we will hop into a car just for the thrill of the adventures.

So yes, this textual hitching and train hopping involves some danger. But, in return you get adventure and the wisdom only a quest can provide. Besides we will have fun.

~

It is Monday of Fall Break. I stepped out of my apartment, early in the afternoon with my boyfriend. He unlocks his bike and I notice the large dark blue pickup truck before us. He reads the front plate. He quotes it: “Save yo’ confederate money boys, the south is risin’ again (sic).” The plate features a uniformed good ‘ole boy in uniform, still clutching a rifle and Confederate Flag. And then he says: “That is bad.” I say, “Isn’t it Columbus Day?” He says: “I don’t know.” I say: “I think it is.” It is really, really Columbus Day, I think to myself.

My boyfriend is the treasurer of our university’s Amnesty International. Before stepping outside he had explained to me that Vision, the campus queer group, wants to borrow my progressive campus organization’s button-making equipment. He is also the Activism Committee chair for Vision. I wonder what would happen to progressive politics in this town without us. I wonder what we are responsible for, I wonder what we have accepted responsibility for. But the Confederate plate defied even this sense of dread.

~

I met this guy named Galvin while overseeing a protest against the appearance of David Horowitz on our campus last spring semester. Horowitz came to speak about his position on so-called “liberal bias” on college campuses, and especially in lieu of Ohio Senate Bill 24. The Bill would have criminalized many of us if it had passed. The year previous, Horowitz came to instruct undergraduates on how to rid their classrooms of liberal professors. I took the thing very personally.

Galvin attended the protest, Horowitz’s speech, and the panel discussion I organized about academic freedom that followed. His face eluded me for the several hours during which I presided, in academic style, over the panel. Being one of the last audience members to speak during the Q & A, he spoke passionately about politics and managed to mention the political

prisoner Mumia Abul Jamal in what seemed to me like one breath. I vowed to get his e-mail address before leaving that night. I rationalized that he was already one of us and should be in our activist community. And after all, I had never seen him before.

~

Last night Galvin and I talked about how we had met. I joked by saying we should write a thank you letter to Horowitz. He says: "That would be horrible." I am reminded of the last time we talked about Horowitz, and I mentioned that he is Jewish and talked of his Leftist past. Galvin, a Jew himself, tells me: "That would make me anti-Semitic." His honesty leaves me, a German American, unsettled and I tell him the story of how I wrestled a Neo-Nazi on my front lawn at fourteen years old and how another one attacked me at an academic summer camp when I was sixteen one more time. He is less receptive to these stories than my younger, German American friend. Galvin likes to say: "I've heard about the six million six million times." He asks for an explanation for the Neo-Nazi stories.

My boyfriend and I go our separate ways for the day, he on bike and me on foot. I make my way to my campus office. I plan to look on-line to see if it is actually Columbus Day or not. This is what I will do as soon as I sit in front of the computer, I think. I need to know. The serendipity taunts me. After I check on Columbus, I will e-mail the President of Vision about my button making contraption. I promised, after all. Then I will get to work.

I enter my office and take my seat. The phone rings, I think it must be Galvin because who else would know I just arrived? But I look and see the cell phone number of my good friend Tani. I pick up the phone and she explains she needs leads for a newspaper article she is writing on the law enforcement versus decriminalization controversy surrounding prostitution.

We attended the Second Annual Conference on Prostitution, Sex Work, and the Commercial Sex Industry at Toledo University several weeks ago. I am slightly annoyed. She is the journalist, not I. I had suggested she take information while available at the conference, but she wanted me to carry it for her. The issue is important to me, so I e-mail some leads. Once in my account, I notice new messages posted from Jake about the Neo-Nazi's designs on demonstrating in Toledo, OH next weekend. Jake is my young German American friend. I make plans to respond to Jake and work on that issue after dealing with Tani's bid for help but before getting the scoop on Columbus Day and contacting Vision's president.

I realize I need to do more with the prostitution issue, so I spend the next half-hour consolidating contact information of agencies, organizations, activists, and professionals. I e-mail the list to her and then call her to explain the nuances of each piece of information; what are the best ways to speak to a prostitute, how to reach someone in varying degrees of law enforcement, how I got the home phone number of a detective dealing with human trafficking, and how she might reach a key social worker whose workplace recently changed. I also point out the contact information of a key academic, but mention that if she had done her work at the conference that bothering this academic for the information would be a mute point. I tell her I am glad to supply information not accessible but explain how and why she could and should have done the majority of it herself.

Tani becomes defensive, and calls what I am doing "bitching." Unable to recuperate the exchange, I reaffirm that I have done a favor. I explain that using me as a resource for otherwise unattainable information is good and exploiting me to avoid doing her own work is not. I explain that not everyone will do this for her. I tell her the use of the word "bitch" toward me is disrespectful and sexist. She defends herself by saying: "You could have easily said no." I

explain that leaving her with incomplete information would have been irresponsible and try to get her to appreciate that she is the one that should be responsible for complete information and that she ought to gather it when appropriate. I hope to convince her, through the conversation, to do this next time and not to rely on me or some other real or fictive person. This does not happen. I know she believes I do not respect myself, on account of leading a heterosexual lifestyle, and this belief filters through the phone. She is self-righteous and presumptuous, I think. I end up telling her: “Tani, fuck you. You have gone too far. Do not call me back.” And I hang up the phone. She does not call back.

I start to feel guilty when I think of the second wave feminist book *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* by Robin Morgan. Then I privately liken her testimony that I am responsible to say “no” to the rape trial that happened where the rapist went free because “she never said no.” I feel vindicated. Sisterhood *could* be powerful. I am not blaming anyone, but I think it is true.

Once I recover, I do a search for Columbus Day to clear the path for Vision. After that I can focus on my own tasks. How can I work so hard and feel so unappreciated?

I think about when I was in fourth grade. My teacher taught us this: “Columbus sailed the ocean blue to find a home for me and you.” He attested to the slogan’s Truth. The teacher had a PhD and was rumored to be a former FBI agent with esoteric knowledge of the Kennedy assassination. I most distinctly remember him as the teacher who developed complex rationalizations for why I was *not* “gifted.” This is me. This is my situation. This is us and our circumstances. This is Columbus Day 2005.

With Columbus out of the way, I temporarily forget about Vision. I have to see what Jake wrote. Buttons can wait, anti-fascist duty cannot. I open Jake’s e-mail. It details where to

meet to discuss our plan of action in retaliation to the Nazis. He suggests I bring along my Class Struggle board game, for fun. I respond to the e-mail, explaining my interaction with Tani as a rationale for not attending.

Jake e-mails soon after, and he urges me to come. I am the one with the most experience he argues. He is correct. I am almost 30 years old and I have done this for almost two decades already. Besides, I am the only one with the vintage Class Struggle game.

~

I first came across Class Struggle the board game while living in a vegetarian co-op; the 90s version of the commune. It was the summer of 1999 and I worked for Americorps as a reading tutor at a ghetto school where some kids did \$100 worth of damage to my LOOK-I-AM-WHITE-AND-MY-PARENTS-BOUGHT-THIS-FOR-ME SHINY-MOUNTAIN-BIKE by bending one of the rims. Ironically, they never touched the student-supervisor's LOOK-I-AM-WHITE-AND-MY-PARENTS-IN-RICHER-NEIGHBORHOOD-BOUGHT-THIS-FOR-ME-AND-WE-CARE-NOT-ABOUT-GLOBAL-WARMING-SHINY-JEEP. I guess it was like Lewis Coser explained in *The Functions of Social Conflict*, the closer the relationship, the more intense the conflict. I mean, I read Bobby Seale's *Seize the Time* before I got my BA and I totally care. My white buddies brought Eldridge Cleaver *and* Bobby to campus. It was the first time in ages they were seen together. But I guess Class War and friendly white gestures just cannot satisfy all. At any rate, my housemates kept the board game in a closet.

Bertall Ollman, a Marxist scholar currently occupying a prestigious faculty position at NYU, created the game. I wanted the object back in 1999 when I saw it for the first time. It hurt to say goodbye to it when I returned to campus for the fall. I valued it at \$200, but managed to purchase a copy from Ebay several months ago for about \$30. I think Ebay represents

everything loathsome about short-sighted capitalist exchange, but was able to ignore that for the sake of the game. Maybe the Panthers were right. The ends can justify the means. Why else would such a game ever sell?

One time I invited two Americorps co-workers to my co-op to see the game. I rode in the backseat of a worn, used car as one of them drove to my co-op. We walked in and opened that closet and took the game out. I graced my right hand across the cover and began talking about the game and its significance.

~

Jake has some good values and expressed a need to play the game. Again, I could not say no. I took responsibility for the person I am and reaffirm my commitment to attend the pre-anti-Nazi demonstration meeting. In my next e-mail to Jake, I typed: "Well I will be there because I want to be sure to be loyal to my collectivist ideals. It is best for the group, and it will be an example of how in the face of petty differences the struggle goes on because the Nazis will be together even if we are not." Jake then responded with: "You often have important lessons to share Jeanine. Thanks for them."

I am alone, except for my virtual connections, in my office. I begin to wonder about my life and my continual encounter with Neo-Nazis, haunting specters reminding me of the Holocaust. I think to myself. When did World War II end? When did the Civil War end? Does a war ever end? I think they never end. But when do they begin? Last year after Ohio's Issue 1 passed, criminalizing same sex and unmarried heterosexual couples, I hung up flyers around campus with broken hearts on them reading: "Fascism Starts in The Heart." War starts in our hearts. But why did I have to wake up to World War III, to the weird Confederate license plate?

I continue to think, alone. Now I think at least someone needs me for my button maker. I realize the Social Contract restores itself. I contact Vision's president and let them know that I do not need the rental money they offered for the contraption and e-mail Jake one more time. This time I type: "Thanks, I appreciate your respect. Your insight is rare." My organization had to purchase our own button maker, because an ephemeral "anyone-but-Bush" voting-drive group would not lend theirs last year to us. I dedicate myself to stopping vicious anti-social cycles once again. Without trust we have social bankruptcy.

~

I think of myself as a Marxist. I like the idea of praxis, meaning the fusion of application with theory. I try to live my values. I also think of myself as a feminist. Long ago, at some CR (consciousness raising group) some said: "The personal is political." When I was an undergraduate, Marilyn Frye taught us that meant that feminism operates with an experiential epistemology.

Marilyn Frye used to tell us that her father persisted in treating her like a child, even after she earned her PhD from Stanford. I am intimidated when my father asks: "You're not a communist, are you?" As adults we still face abandonment.

Theory does not have to be, but can be, superficial. An honest, detailed description of a segment of my day scratches below the surface. Community, friendship, and academic achievement portray a nice image. But if image solved problems why would anyone spend a lifetime, or even a semester studying any sort of Critical Theory?

~

That snowy night at Jeff's house, we watched *Dark Days*, and discussed the work of another guy's labor historian dissertation advisor. We eventually brought ourselves outside to

get into cars and go our separate ways. We stood on the hill where Jeff's house stood. Large flakes of snow fell from the darkened night sky. Bright stars gave the illusions that the large bits of snow embodied the stars incarnate. Suddenly I noticed the snow covered rocks intermittently dispersed through out the sparse, hilly, snow laden land.

"Look at those rocks, aren't they beautiful?" I say. Durk responds dryly and a matter-of-factly: "Those are not rocks, they are gas tanks." "They are corroded", he continues. My perceived reality shifted and I took inventory of the industrial wasteland around me. How else could a graduate student afford a spacious apartment? Durk managed to take us away from postmodernism and back to materialism. Then, standing directly behind me on slightly higher ground and posturing in an older brother-like way, Jeff puts his hands on my shoulders, applies light pressure and says: "I agree with Jeanine. *They are beautiful.*" Truth can be subjective and shifting after all. Truth can also contradict while avoiding mutual exclusivity. The gas tanks, they achieved beauty. But this did not change the reality of Jeff living on substandard property.

There is a tension with Theory. It might superficially mask underlying issues. Theory can likewise aid in exposing the issues. Using theory for amble affects, then, demands careful tension. At the risk of coming across as completely bowdlerized, it is like knitting. Achieving the needed form requires a tension neither too loose nor too tight.

For my purposes, I want to implement Theory. To avoid masking underlying issues, I will self disclose. I have, after all, already begun a course of self-disclosure. I will continue to self-disclosure, and concentrate the majority of it in Chapter 3. As an auto-ethnography, self-disclosure acts as a key component of this project. Theory, however, will help with working through the self-disclosure. Theory can make sense of otherwise overwhelming and seemingly

chaotic and disjointed pieces of information. In other words, theory will quicken the auto-ethnographic dough.

But finding the correct tension is not a science. It might involve aspects arguably scientific and empirical, such as describing actual events. But this is not a science. Tension must vary, according to utility, and will vary according to perspective, taste, or opinion.

Sociology

I need to contextualize the concept of “auto-ethnography” relative to the historical development of qualitative methods in Sociology. The role of methods labeled with names like “introspective sociology,” I reason, should receive attention. Auto-ethnography has historical, theoretical, and methodological pertinence to auto-ethnographic methods related sociological research.

Qualitative methodology seems increasingly on the fringe within many university Sociology departments. In a supportive gesture towards these methods, I will not collect or interpret the volume of qualitative sociological work relative to quantitative sociological work. Rather, I will recollect my own experiences as a student of Sociology.

I began college with a major in Sociology. Well, technically, I began as a Chemical Engineering major. I declared myself a Chemical Engineering major when applying to college as a sixteen year-old. By the time I had reached the age of seventeen, however, I decided social issues demanded my attention more so than chemical formulas and the companies that would have employed both me and the formulas.

Perhaps it was the subtle sexism I observed from the industrial male scientists who offered lectures to high school students in my Explorers chapter; a co-ed, career-oriented version

of the Boy Scouts. One time, when passing around a strip of Titanium metal, a metallurgist dared all the boys to bend it. But, when it reached the one-and-only other female Explorer, the metallurgist cautioned her not to try. She bent it anyway. That was one push factor.

But, the stir of social activism was the pull factor. Sociology seemed sexier. The lure of radical politics enticed me with micro-printed newspapers from Left and anarchist groups. Like the future-Engineers-of-America, the young-Left-propagandists were mostly boys. But, the propagandists would entertain conversations about women's interests more so than the Engineers.

So, when I attended my freshman orientation in the late summer before my first fall semester in 1993, I presented myself at the appropriate office and filled out paperwork to officially change my major to Sociology. This did not, however, transpire without some degree of drama. I recall my mother's response to this decision upon my announcing it. She said, with some dismay in her voice: "I can't tell you how to live your life." My father said: "I think you should keep it Engineering." Fortunately for me, mom planned to pay the bills.

I became a Sociology major. Later, in my second freshman semester, I added Women's Studies as a second major and Spanish as a *cognate*, meaning a sub-major. And while my academic major in Women's Studies, and cognate in Spanish, invite their own set of issues with which I could write about just as well; that would require a digression of such significance that I must table for the time being.

I thoroughly enjoyed my new identity as the Sociology major. Quickly I established myself as the most involved Sociology major in the Department. I so awed the faculty with my keen and precocious social insights that they learned my name, despite attending college at a vast "flagship" State University and soon they extolled me with departmental awards.

I, admittedly, had begun a love affair with Sociology. In a serendipitous way I repeatedly heard faculty, in classes as well as at meetings, refer to the idea that women relate matrimonially to their careers. I remember hearing: “Women often treat their careers like marriages.”

As a second major in Women’s Studies, I guess I became somewhat of an academic “switch hitter.” Maybe this explains why the resident Marxist scholar in the Sociology department called me that one day at a curriculum committee meeting. But I still seemed like a bride to the discipline.

The mention of Marxism reminds me of Heidi Hartmann’s classic essay titled “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism.” The essay, in response to Hartmann, written by Carol Ehrlich is lesser known. Here I am reminded of how I made a spectacle of myself in my sophomore year by distributing copies of her work titled “Socialism, Anarchism, and Feminism” to all the students in my undergraduate sociological theory class. I then proceeded to announce what I was doing and call to attention that my actions were in response to the neglect of Ehrlich’s work in addition to the professor’s failure to adequately present anything other than dominant male theorists of sociology.

It also bothered me that he had placed Hartmann, the only woman sociologist to receive any attention in the class, at the very end of the syllabus. Ehrlich’s current work is titled *Women and the Spectacle*. Despite the general lack of consideration in the academy Ehrlich’s work receives, bell hooks references her work in *Outlaw Culture*.

At any rate, I took the liberty of distributing the essay to every classmate despite implication of copyright and disinterest in asking the professor’s permission. Sometimes I remember his face red with anger, other times I just remember him diminishing my efforts. The manner in which he accomplished this reeked of indignation and sexism. This professor

eventually came to sexually harass me. Still, the day I did this, the male teaching assistant seemed to appreciate the essay.

I later referred to the action as a direct one; e.g. *direct action* or as a guerrilla action. Sometimes I can remember walking into that theory class with a black bandana around my face. Marcos of the Zapatistas says, after all, “Its better to die on your feet than live on your knees.” And that was so easy to quote when I was nineteen years old.

Besides Marxist Feminism, other sociological concepts I learned as the Sociology major impressed me as a young undergraduate. The word *stratification* became a part of my vocabulary. Likewise, the word *patriarchy* entered my vocabulary; albeit as a Women’s Studies major. Marxist Feminism and associated words, however, did not revolutionize my world view. I had, after all, read the entire *Communist Manifesto* as a fourteen year old. Likewise, by the time I was fifteen I consider myself a feminist.

The real revelation I experienced as the Sociology major I owe to C. Wright Mills. The world revealed itself to me in a new way through my coming to understand and appreciate the *Sociological Imagination*. I came to conclude that this was the premise of sociology, meaning to understand the connection between personal biography and social phenomenon.

Sociology and Theory

To return to the issue of the marginalization of qualitative research in Sociology, I feel the need to point out that this led me to turn to the Humanities after earning my MA in Sociology. Qualitative marginality marks the position its respective methods have after a long struggle in Sociology between the Humanistic persuasion and the Positivistic persuasion. And,

on the topic of C. Wright Mills (1916-1962), he and his *Sociological Imagination* stand in opposition to Positivism.

Todd Gitlin explains: “In the *Sociological Imagination* and other works Mills insisted that the sociologist’s proper subject was the intersection of biography and history” (Gitlin, 2006, p. 28). To clarify, C. Wright Mills became the champion of a personalized approach to sociology. He, furthermore, worked to merge Sociology with social criticism (Gitlin, 2006, p.44). Mills, far from apolitical, once wrote in 1956: “way down deep and systematically, I am a goddamned anarchist” (Mills and Mills, 2000, p. 217).

Other highly relevant struggles, besides the battle against apolitical positivism, in Sociology have ensued. The most well documented one is the struggle that spawned Social Work as an independent discipline. Sociologist Mary Jo Deegan documents this well in her book *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892-1918*. Although many of the same social dynamics played out in the Jane Addams controversy, that being humanism versus positivism, the advent of the Social Work profession marks its own distinct development for the academy as does the qualitative/quantitative divide. Regardless, I often identify with Jane Addams.

In simple honesty I also identify with C. Wright Mills. George Ritzer describes him as a rogue and radical outcast in the classic sociology textbook *Sociological Theory* (Ritzer, 1996, p.211). Mills brought Marxist theory to the discipline of sociology in a time, arguably, when no one else would have done so. His interest in Marx’s intellectual contributions, along with concepts of his own invention such as the Sociological Imagination, generated what we now call Radical Sociology.

Respect for Marx allowed Mills to introduce a critique of capitalism into American academic discourse. This put Mills in opposition to Talcott Parsons; the leading Functionalist at

the time. Functionalism, often seen as the fraternal twin of Positivism, opposes both Radical Sociology and the related Humanistic Sociology.

To help consider the relation between Radical and Humanistic Sociology, keep in mind that Radical Sociology is almost always Humanistic Sociology and Humanistic Sociology is often Radical Sociology. But, despite the overlap between the two, the terms are not entirely interchangeable. Likewise, Functionalism and Positivism are not completely synonymous but simply related.

Humanistic Sociology, and therefore Radical Sociology and its correlates Marxist Sociology and general Conflict Theory, differentiates itself from the Functionalist/Positivist persuasion with specific idiosyncrasies. A moral commitment exemplifies one such idiosyncrasy. This, arguably, denotes two idiosyncrasies, those being the moral and the committed, in addition to a moral commitment transcending the pairing of its individual components. According to sociologists Robert Notestein, "Mills' moral commitment was to reason and freedom (Notestein, 1964, p.49)." Notestein, about the relevance of the sociological imagination in relation to the moral commitment explains (Notestein, 1964, p.51):

Mills was a successful American practitioner of the sociology of knowledge. He conceived of the "sociological imagination" as designed to examine issues raised by the intersection of history and biography. The conception of the "sociological imagination" was in turn formed by his belief that it is the felt threat to cherished values- such as those of freedom and reason- that is necessary moral substance of all significant problems of social inquiry, and as well of all public issues and private troubles.

In addition to the moral commitment that sets Humanistic sociology apart, and especially the variety associated with Mills, is the stress on content. Anatol Rapoport explains: "Mills' main critique seemed leveled at the trivialization of content in contemporary 'scientific' sociology (Rapoport, 1964, p. 95)." Mills did not, however, suggest content negates the utility of

coherence. Rather, Mills advocated coherence in Sociology. Rapoport, again, explains:

“Scientifically relevant research is that which contributes to the emergence of a coherent picture of some aspect of the world (Rapoport, 1964, p. 98).” Mills, furthermore, recognized the importance of emergent understandings (Rapoport, 1964, p. 100).

Considering his unique and powerful contributions, it should not come to great surprise that Mills established himself as a visionary in the field. His critique of establishment Sociology and its ‘scientific’ strivings toward objectivity, in particular, highlight the visionary quality of Mills’ contributions. Rapoport concisely clarifies: “In other words, the self-proclaimed detached objectivity of the sociologists is not objectivity at all but a commitment to a status quo by people who have internalized a set of values (Rapoport, 1964, p. 102).” See Figure A for a listing of components of good sociology, according to Mills. Also see Figure B for a listing of there corollary contaminants.

Figure A: Key Components of the Radical Sociology of C. Wright Mills

(See Rapoport for a full explanation.)

- morality
- commitment
- content
- coherence
- emergent understanding
- direct experience
- sensitivity
- consciousness
- imagination
- creativity

Figure B: Four Potential Contaminants of Sociological Theory, According to Mills

(See Rapoport for a full explanation.)

- bogus claims to objectivity
- adherence to the status quo
- allegiance to power
- rigid method

Based on the information in the above figures, the political dedication of Mills becomes apparent. C. Wright Mills, the founder of Radical Sociology and major contributor to the humanistic persuasion, consequentially became associated with the New Left. But, besides the obvious distaste for structural domination, what were Mills's politics and how do they relate to social inquiry? In a general sense, Mills sought analysis of political power (Fox, 1964, p. 480). This general approach to understanding power, in turn, led Mills to advocate comparative methods (Mills, 1959, p. 483). More importantly, however, the methods Mills employed prompted him to critically analyze powerful institutions such as the economy, military, government, and the academy. Byron Fox, dated but just as relevant as ever, explains (Fox, 1964, p. 487):

We must recognize opposition to the position that has been outlined. Several forms of resistance can be identified: the pressures and momentum generated within American society toward the perpetuation and strengthening of the economic-political-military complex, as pointed out by Mills, and also, interestingly enough, by former President Eisenhower. Closely related is obsession with the cold war, and preoccupation with "winning" it at whatever cost. Lastly, there are pressures from within the social science establishment.

Fox continues, insightfully, to explain (Fox, 1964, p.487):

The very growth of quantitative methods and empirical research on problems of small groups can be related to the attempt to ward off socialism by means of social reform. This is re-enforced at the present time through pressures against radical and unpopular positions taken by American social scientists, especially in the area of foreign policy.

Fox, notably, positions Mills in against what Fox refers to as "Cold War strategies."

Such nationalistic strategies entail the following: 1) the political economy as exemplified by the military, 2) the drive to "win" the fight against Communism, and 3) the academic manifestations

of the two previous (Fox, 1964, p. 487). While the focus on the Cold War could signal passé concerns, Todd Gitlin explains that the War on Terror acts as a “surrogate framework” (Gitlin, 2006, p. 37). Mills, furthermore, advocated a shift away from discourse pertaining to anti-communist nationalism to discourse about conflicts threatening social well-being in general (Fox, 1964, p. 479). Based on this information, I suggest that C. Wright Mills would stand in opposition to the use of the War on Terror to stifle critical academic discourse.

Mills and Beyond

Mills, thus, introduced important influences to Sociology of particular value to qualitative researchers in general and those interested in auto-ethnographic methods in particular. While pretending Mills had an awareness of “auto-ethnographic” methods as we do today would constitute the most egregious Present-ism, ignoring the similarities and complementariness of the sort of sociological craft Mills advocated with auto-ethnographic approaches would constitute a myopic negligence.

The Sociological Imagination, specifically, stands out as the most dramatic addition to the academic lexicon. Through the invention and introduction of the concept, Mills legitimized the use of autobiographical detail in academic work. He furthermore challenged those using such detail to locate and critically analyze their direct experience in order to understand the relevance to greater social phenomenon. In many ways, a crafty use of the Sociological Imagination and auto-ethnography mirror each other despite their temporal division.

Despite Mills’s failure to work through the remaining twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the influence of Mills continues to surface in contemporary sociological discourse. The turn toward narrative technique, for instance, exemplifies this influence. Recall that the

sociological imagination refers to the ability to see connections from biography to historical circumstances. The Sociological Imagination, then, comes to be about a sort of consciousness. As Richard Quinney writes: “The re-creation of history- the coming into consciousness of history- creatively involves a transcendence of the past, an elevation of time into the perspective of meaning (Quinney, 1996, p. 241-242).” As usual, the method of exercising the sociological imagination adheres to the qualitative concern of describing, understanding, and re-creating meaning. Quinney explains (Quinney, 1996, p. 41):

The autobiographical narrative is grounded necessarily in concrete historical reality. Autobiographical reflection makes possible, in fact, the coming into consciousness of history. The autobiographical narrative is the form this consciousness takes. The subject of autobiographical is in part the self, a self becoming conscious of itself in and as history. In the self-examination of autobiography there is the interaction of the private self with the greater public and historical reality. The self is grasped in the context in history, and history is made conscious in the writing of autobiography. Both the author and history are reborn in the process of autobiographical reflection.

Here Quinney reminds us that the narrative, although superficially simple, ultimately cannot accommodate simplicity. Rather, meaning manifests implicitly in the narrative. The sociologist, thus, does not invent understanding and meaning from an autobiographical narrative. The sociologist does, however, identify and locate meaning. Likewise, the sociologist ought to interpret, analyze, and bring to clear consciousness. From these steps comes explicit understanding and the sort of coherence Mills advocated.

Stated directly, autobiographical narratives contain sociological data. As with any other sociological data, such as interviews, surveys, or field notes, the autobiography becomes subject to content analysis and other related analytic methods. Just as the autobiographical narrative ultimately cannot contain simplicity, neither can the methods employed for its analysis nor the concepts associated.

The most visible conversation related to the concepts associated with sociological analysis most relevant to autobiographical narration's sociological significance bares the label "the micro-macro link." The term "micro" refers to small group interaction and personal experience, while "macro" refers to institutional experiences. Historically, sociologists tended to be either "micro" theorists or "macro" theorists. Karl Marx and Max Weber exemplify the macro persuasion while George Herbert Mead and Erving Goffman exemplify the micro or *Social Psychological* persuasion.

While macro sociological theory tends to embody two opposing factions; functionalism and conflict theory, as associated by Max Weber and Karl Marx respectively, micro theory became associated the Symbolic Interactionist perspective in Sociology. Mills became a key figure of conflict theory as he established Radical Sociology in the American academy and *named* the mechanism that would expose macro-micro link. The Sociological Imagination is the mechanism.

To review, Symbolic Interactionism represents "micro" sociology. C. Wright Mills represents conflict theory and therefore macro theory. C. Wright Mills, however, never adhered to the narrow confines of Conflict Theory. Rather he gave us The Sociological Imagination, an approach with an implicit understanding of the micro-macro link. Mills, therefore, demonstrated that the micro/macro divide is nothing more than a false dichotomy. To really understand Society, according to Mills, we must explore the link between biography and history. For these reasons, I explore my biography through auto-ethnographic methods in Chapter 3.

Mills and His Sisters

The personal is political. It is a second wave feminist slogan. But how does C. Wright Mills figure in? He is a New Left figure, and the feminist second wave shares history with the New Left. History matters. But why is Mills Sociology's New Left figure and not Kate Millet? Power matters. Privilege matters.

Power and history matter because they shape, and even arguably determine, collective consciousness. Despite the politics involved, and politics matters too, Sociology thankfully has Mills to provide a bridge between established sociology and feminist activism and feminism's consequential academic contributions. I am committed, and some would say married, to this bridge.

Feminism

I was a known campus feminist as an undergraduate. As a fat acceptance focused comrade often said: "You are ready to break free from the shackles of oppression." I spent many years making gestures of that sort.

~



Guide Post #1: Flashback to my sophomore year

I can recall Marilyn Frye's lectures on oppression's nature. Oppression deceives. Thus, deception is part and parcel to oppression. We also discussed feeling crazy and being angry in her feminist theory courses. Anger and "insanity", having been so near to me and my experiences, allowed me to appreciate Dr. Frye in the way some did not. So, the list of female friends I had, and my leg hair, grew while my tolerance for sexism could not.

At the time, around the years 1994-1996, Dr. Frye had a cult following. Her current heights, unforeseen in the 1990s, indicate to me that I now live in an altered era. I remember Marilyn as a friendly, inspiring, brave, and controversial figure; always honest and challenging. She never compromised her values. She asked the question: “Can a heterosexual woman be a feminist?”

Despite my social ties to the “enemy”, I endeared myself to the ultra-radical women’s community at my university. One of the coolest student separatists, with dread locks to boot, declared me as “a woman-identified woman.” So I gained honorary status as a lesbian. I was cool. I was so cool that sometimes in Marilyn’s class I argued for the need for a co-ed youth movement. And the coolness made me stay up late, talking to a boy or a girl about social revolution and trying to plan it, and I once found myself not being able to keep my eyes open in her class. That night a former member of my co-op returned from Germany, having been on another overseas study trip, and told me all about the Rote Zora.

I sat by Angie, who I gotten to know better, because she had moved into the same vegetarian student co-operative house. This is not the house from summer of 1999, but the house of academic year 1995/1996. She had moved in fall 1995, when I had, and we ended up with bedrooms next door. She laughed every time I dosed off that day. I met her for the very first time when she wandered into the Women’s Council office to talk to me about the campus feminist group I was a Co-director of. She picked up a photocopied article featuring photographs of women being arrested and dragged off while trying to block the entrance of a local strip club. I had to explain who Andrea Dworkin was that day. She had since become my housemate and classmate.

Adjacent to us was our Eco-feminist housemate who occasionally poked me with her pencil to jolt me from slumber. Eventually she stopped, and I missed a good twenty minutes or more of class while asleep. I left class that day wondering if Marilyn attributed my drowsiness to not being a lesbian, or was it guilt? Regardless, I wanted Marilyn to approve of me.

We were Generation X at college. We simultaneously flirted with and feared downward social mobility. We dressed sloppy *or* campy and complained that we would never get our Social Security. As the years went on we met freshmen who no longer cared about Social Security, referred to it as a “myth”, or did not even know what we were talking about or why it mattered. The last straw was when one of them called me on my land-line phone repeatedly and said nothing but eventually responded with “listening to your arteries harden” when I asked: “What are you doing?” At 21 I retorted: “If my arteries are already hardening, I’m really going to need that social security,” and then I put the phone on the receiver.

We knew it was time for a new political strategy, one that could deal with class in a post-industrial economy, our environment, and animal rights along with the standard race/class/gender combination and its sexual orientation add-on. In addition to fusing these political approaches, we needed to work the anarchist and anti-fascist groups into the vision. But it had to be feminist. We did not want to disappoint Marilyn, at least I did not. How could I?

I believed she really cared about us, and still think so. Besides, no one had a better definition of oppression than she. How could we overcome, challenge, or overthrow oppression if we did not know where or how to look for it? In her words, emphatically: “I care about women.” Or sometimes: “Of course I care about *women*.” I felt the goodness of the approval and wanted to share.

I wanted people to understand, appreciate, and use Marilyn's conception of oppression. I still want that. Basically, her conception of it is that oppressive forces intersect and comprise an interlocking grid of oppression. Frye writes (Frye, 1983, p. 4):

Cages. Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in a cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere.

~

Perhaps one of the biggest contributions Frye made to feminist philosophy was to articulate clearly why men are not oppressed as men (Frye, 1983, p. 16). In other words, if men suffer oppression it is not *because* they are men (Frye, 1983, p. 16). This, further, does not mean that men of certain groups do not experience oppression, but rather that both men and women of such groups experience oppression as members of that group (Frye, 1983, p. 16). For example, a man may experience oppression because he is a member of an oppressed minority or because he lives in an oppressive society, but this oppression does not stem from his maleness but rather his racialized or ethnic identity or other status within a given nation-state or lack thereof. Women, thus, experience oppression regardless (Frye, 1983, p. 16). She notably never claims that varying group allegiances do not mitigate the oppression. In her words: "We need to think clearly about oppression, and there is much that mitigates it" (Frye 2, 1983, p. 2).

Making this distinction, between oppression and not, begins for Frye with differentiating oppression from simple suffering. Suffering is not a sufficient indication of oppression, but rather a seemingly necessary indication. Men can suffer at the hand of gender roles, but this does not mean gender roles oppress them (Frye 14, 1983, p. 14).

Oppression conveys a lose/lose situation; a choice between two different kinds of path toward loss. In other words, entrapment typifies oppression. Frye explains: “The woman’s restraint is part of a structure oppressive to women; the man’s restraint is part of a structure of oppression to women” (Frye, 1983, p. 15). The two losing options, furthermore, share a systematic relation such as choosing between being a “prude” or a “slut” (Frye, 1983, p. 15).

These premises of a feminist position on oppression have methodical implications. Since “one can study the elements of an oppressive structure with great care and some good will without seeing the structure as a whole (...)” (Frye 5, 1983, p. 5), my read on Frye is that we ought to study elements of oppression with the intention of working toward or achieving a view of the structure as a whole. To do this, Frye suggests looking at the suffering, harm, and limitation in context (Frye, 1983, p. 10). Next we need to ask if the barrier mobilizes or demobilizes (Frye, 1983, p. 11). Here are some major questions (Frye, 1983, p. 14):

- Who constructs and maintains it?
- Whose interests are served by its existence?
- Is it part of a structure which tends to confine, reduce and immobilize some group?
- Is the individual part of the confined group?

This is an *experiential* epistemology, a feminist epistemology. C. Wright Mills’s *Sociological Imagination* is also an experiential epistemology, based in biography and therefore experience. Likewise, auto-ethnography is yet another experiential epistemology. The *Sociological Hitch* has a tri-fold experientially epistemological approach, using Feminism, the *Sociological Imagination*, and Auto-ethnography. The three have distinct histories and scholars, but belong under the same epistemological “umbrella”.

Politics

My friend Violet, the lesbian separatist with dread locks, often remarked that black women cannot separate being black from being women. She further said she could not separate being a lesbian from being a black woman. Black lesbians, then, needed their own politics. I agree. So, I cannot separate being young from being a woman. I am a young woman. Since I generally do not occupy any other socially marginal identities, I have and continue to engage in youth oriented feminist politics or feminist oriented youth politics. I am a third wave feminist.

My friend Aaron, a successful F-to-M (female to male transsexual) by our senior year, used to say that Marilyn was a “dinosaur” and “essentialist.” She argued with Violet. When she became he, he argued more intensely. I was caught in the middle, but did not have any issues with Aaron being a man. Much like ethnic women feeling a sense of allegiance to the men of her culture, I went through my first college years feeling an allegiance to young male activists.

Much like my presence as the token straight girl in the radical women’s community, I represented 10% of the 30% female presence in the vanguard-Left in my university’s radical activist scene. In other words, the female-to-male ratio was 3-to-10 with my presence preventing it from being 2-to-10. I, however, had a strong influence in this community. It is like Frye says, much mitigates oppression. But it still oppresses. Aaron, notably, repeatedly felt alienated in relation to the radical Leftist scene.



Guide Post #2: Feminism is part of the Left political landscape

Despite the male orientated and alienating aspects of the Leftist scene, it matters. Or at least it matters to me. It can explain my use of Marcuse here. Marcuse, specifically, thought that the United States was subliminally, or covertly, fascist (Marcuse, 1969a, 1969b). I hold this

opinion as well. So did many of my peers from the co-ed scene. I, noticeably, was one of the few women actively engaged in this discourse. I must conclude, must admit, the ability to engage in such confrontational discourse either comes from sheer desperation or comfortable privilege. For us it was the latter. I had enough to mitigate my oppression as a woman, that I could be a tomboy throughout my four years in college. Being one of the boys, I talked about the state with them and the finer points of how anti-authoritarian Leftists should relate to traditional Leftists and saw ourselves standing in stark contrast with the overt fascists and their genteel covert chums.

All of this still matters. Our attitudes, whether or not any given person or group of people agree, appear in recent academic discourse. In a recent interview, Henry Giroux said (Pozo, 2005, p. 96):

The new research agenda is grounded in ‘scientifically-based research,’ a term that comes right out of the Bush administration, which used it as a euphemism to undercut any kind of research that connected education with viable social consequences and issues, that linked education to the culture of questioning, or to the knowledge and skills that expanded the horizons of critical citizenship and social agency.

This means, in one word, Fascism.

Method

Listen my friends
I have done as I said
I have been to their lines
I have counted each man
I will tell what I can
(*Les Miserables*, “One More Day”)

Auto-ethnography as a genre of social inquiry has different names accorded by different scholars in varying universities or disciplines. Arthur P. Bochner, for example, discusses “poetic

social science” and “alternative ethnography.” Bochner describes this genre as narrative in quality (Bochner, 2000, p. 269). He explains: “(...) the purpose of self-narratives is to extract meaning from experience rather than depict experience exactly as it was lived” (Bochner, 2000, p. 270). Standards for evaluating the quality of narratives, according to Bochner, include the following: emotional credibility, vulnerability, and honesty (Bochner, 2000, p. 270).

Bochner further explains that rather than a confessional or “victim art”, that self-narrative can be a “source of empowerment and a form of resistance to counter the domination of canonical discourse” (Bochner, 2000, p. 271). So, in the Foucaultian sense, self-narrative and thus auto-ethnography, does not capitulate to repression. Bochner continues to explain that self-narrative can de-stigmatize, rather than repress or re-stigmatize. So, like the New Left in general, auto-ethnography has its own liberation narrative.

This theme of grappling with auto-ethnography, as Bochner does, also surfaces in the work of Banks and Banks. In their essay “Reading ‘The Critical Life’: Autoethnography as Pedagogy” they review Ron Pielas’ article “The Critical Life.” Banks and Banks identify three major contributions that auto-ethnography makes. Those contributions are: 1) self-reflexivity, 2) subjectivity as reliability, and 3) critical self-disclosure (Banks & Banks, 2000, p. 235-235). As for “The Critical Life,” according to Banks and Banks (Banks & Banks, 2000, p. 236):

As a critical autoethnography, “The Critical Life” invites readers to reflect on asymmetries of power, unequal opportunities to render judgments, and mal-distributions of responsibility and rewards in our institutional lives, perhaps to help us better recognize the obstacles to creating more effective communities. For many scholars, students, and administrators community is a focal sustaining element in the academic life, personally and professionally. Rather than pursuing community as a political abstraction, Pielas implicitly instructs us to engage it phenomenologically, to see our need as one of establishing interpretive communities and to act

affirmatively to change our institutions so they are more hospitable communities.

Here Banks and Banks put forth an agenda. The agenda represents academic and socio-political interests concurrently. They locate the auto-ethnographer as a social actor enmeshed in a socio-economically specific social locale, that being the academy. This implicates the auto-ethnographer in the problematic social relations within the social locale while simultaneously indicating the existence of a path that can create a social alternative to problematic social relations. Herein lay the self-reflective potential of auto-ethnography.

Four Bodies of Literature, Four Directions

On the Native American medicine wheel are Four Directions. In sacred myth, colors or animals typically represent the Directions. And while I do not want to imply that the four reviewed literatures, Sociological (read Mills), Feminist, New Leftist, and auto-ethnographic are or function as the Directions, I do want to borrow the concept as an analogy for the sake of clarification.

Mills sits atop our Circle's zenith with his establishment privilege. To the East lays the New Left, having altered our orientation. Where the sun has not yet set, to the West, reaches Feminism. At the nadir of our Circle rests auto-ethnography. This is "our" Circle for now, but more accurately describes my Literary Wheel for the purposes of this project.

The center of the Circle holds the goals of the project, that being to conduct an experimental auto-ethnography as Mills would like to see. Because we cannot consult Mills face-to-face we must improvise and complicate Mills. Feminism complicates Mills while the New Left explicates him. Auto-ethnography anchors him.

This project takes place following, or proceeding, a complete 180 degree rotation. Just as

the circumference rotates, the center migrates. As in the words of Yeats, “the centre cannot hold.” The method of the project entails the pursuit, however elusive, of the center; that is a Mills styled auto-ethnography complicated by feminist consciousness and informed with a New Left political sensibility all the whilst acknowledging its simultaneous envelopment of victim and malefactor.



Guide Post #3: Reflections on Les Miserables

But what does *Les Miserables* have to do with all of this anyway? The role Jeff played in New York, as Gavroche in the barricades during the rent riots in the ‘90s, haunts me. And, I wonder why Ronald Pelias mentions a *Les Miserables* tape in his seminal essay “The Critical Life.” What is the connection, besides the play itself? Pelias writes (Pelias, 2000, p. 227):

NPR is over. You slip in your *Les Miserables* tape. It plays
 “One Day More” and you sing along with volume, with passion,
 with a voice that your mother insisted that you only use when not
 in public.

Further investigation into Pelias’s use of *Les Miserables*, and the specific reference to “One Day More” which ushers in “the barricades of freedom,” Javert describes an investigative strategy. If taken out of context Javert sounds like a qualitative researcher. Javert’s two part monologue, however, describes a subversive plot to infiltrate the revolutionary ranks. The first segment refers to “schoolboys” and thus carries an allusion to the academy. Javert declares (Kretzner 1986):

One more day to revolution
 We will nip it in the bud!
 I will join these little schoolboys,
 They will wet themselves with blood

The second segment describes a qualitative pedagogical strategy. He continues (Kretzner 1986):

I will join these people's heroes
 I will follow where they go
 I will learn their little secrets
 I will know the things they know

A superficial read of the song "One Day More," then, helps position the auto-ethnographer in the academy, as Javert, while likewise making a simultaneous pedagogical and methodological statement. Javert, however, is a Napoleonic undercover agent. A more sophisticate read, thus, reminds us to remain skeptical about quantification and social inquiry without heart; namely as Javert says: "I have counted each man."

Through examining Pelias's use of *Les Miserables*, we learn that undertaking and reading auto-ethnography has serious political, methodological, and pedagogical implications. For this reason, as we read Pelias's auto-ethnographic essay "The Critical Life," my dissertation or any other piece of auto-ethnography, we need to keep in mind that what we read has implication for politics as well as methods and pedagogy. To return to the issues of "objectivity" versus subjectivity, auto-ethnography rejects claims to objectivity and instead embraces, celebrates, and utilizes subjectivity and a humanistic orientation.

When reading auto-ethnography, then, we need to approach it in a particular manner. First of all, we must allow Gavroche to be Gavroche. This is the case for whoever is playing Gavroche at the moment. In this sense, I mean whoever writes the auto-ethnography, thus "becoming" Gavroche, must do so without contrived restraint. Without Gavroche, Javert's inhuman agenda endures. Here Gavroche finally exposes Javert during the song "Little People" (Kretzner 1986):

His name's Inspector Javert
 Do don't believe a word he says
 'Cause none of it's true

Consequently, the challenge the reader faces is to allow their self to process the given subjectivity and thus defend humanity. Ways to process the given subjectivity might involve a quasi suspension of disbelief. In other words, to access an auto-ethnographic subjectivity we need to lend credibility to the author.

This brings us to the approach with which to read the forthcoming chapter, which is the most singularly auto-ethnographic component of this project. To begin with, let me be who I am. Then, try to process my subjectivity as presented. The process might entail techniques like suspension of disbelief and lending of credibility. The suggested approach, as easy as A-B-C and written in utilitarian form, looks like this:

- A-cceptance
- B-elief
- C-redibility

This is not to say that I am asking for readers to accept what I claim, or what any other auto-ethnographer claims, as doctrine or simple fact. Rather, I offer the A-B-C technique to ease access to a given subjectivity. The reader determines the extent of the access, whether endearing, ephemeral, or somewhere in between. The A-B-C technique simply asks for a minimal degree of involvement for the purpose of understanding the presented perspective. Reading auto-ethnography, thus, requires a sociable stance relative to the text.

Chapter 3: The Auto-ethnography

In a society where the good is defined in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, there must always be some group of people who, through systemized oppression, can be made to feel surplus, to occupy the place of the dehumanized inferior.

(Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference")



Guide Post #4: Auto-ethnographic Freight Train Hopping

I got no fare to ride a train
I'm nearly drownin' in the pouring rain
Hitchin' a ride, hitchin' a ride
(Vanity Fare, "Hitchin' A Ride")

Part I: Freshman year and those subsequent

"Hello, is this the Audre Lorde house?" I ask.

"Yes, it is," a young woman responds.

"I am calling about the Women's Council meeting. I want to topple the empire that feeds on the rape of over half the population" (Preying, 2006).

"Where did you see that?" she asks referring to the slogan.

"I saw it on a flyer in my dorm. My RA, she is cool. She is a feminist."

"Oh," she says.

"Can you give me directions? It says the meeting is off campus."

"Yes, I can give you directions."

It was fall 1993; I was seventeen years old and I wanted to get involved. I had read books and articles written by Naomi Wolf and Gloria Steinem and felt ready to become an active feminist. The vintage book *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, as I sat reading until the very end as

my best friend and high school boyfriend came to pick me up in a run down car just months before when I was a senior in high school, had irritated me with repeated references to “making girls.” I was in college now and I was about to embark on a meeting with radical feminists and I knew they were the coolest people in school.

I left my dormitory in that evening. As I walked past the dresser, standing in front of the door, I glanced at the fragment of my book collection that I had brought to college with me. On the shelf was a hand-me-down copy of the *Communist Manifesto*. I left *On the Road* at home along with Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth*. Someone gave me Marx’s book, I ordered Wolf’s book from a typical book club, but on that shelf atop the dresser stood books from a new edgy bookstore in my home-town’s metropolitan area.

That bookstore was called Redeye Books and their slogan was “Read Your Eyes Raw.” Two purportedly gay men owned and operated the store in the conservative section of the city I had spent my childhood in. They kept two cats in their store along with reading couches. A copy of *Communists like Us*, from Redeye, sat on the shelf with the others.

In the fall of 1993 a conservative neighborhood task force, citing “pornography,” had not yet put Redeye out of business. Kurt Cobain had not yet died. So, I left my university’s “Sexual Assault Guarantee” that was slide under my door by some campus police officer, on my desk in the dark with Marx and the others. But, we were on the cusp of a makeover.

Still, I attempted to stave off the undesirable renovation by signing a defensive petition in support of Redeye. I did this while on a weekend hometown visit at the store itself. But neither my signature, nor the signature of the others, on the petition protected Redeye from the conservative momentum.

After shutting my door, walking down the stairs and out of the large front doors of my dormitory, I began the walk through campus to the main street in my university's town. Once I reached the main street, I turned left as the woman on the other end of the phone instructed me to do so. Her name was Veronica and I felt excited to meet her. She would be at the meeting. If she had not told me on the phone already, she would eventually tell me that she was a lesbian. Later she would tell me it was for political reasons.

As I turned left, I bypassed the Grateful Dead "tracking" store that sold hippie gear, paraphernalia, and tickets to shows. Jerry Garcia, after all, was more than a year farther away from death than Kurt Cobain. This was fall 1993.

Turning left and walking in that direction brought me closer to the other hippie store in town. Like the Grateful Dead tracking store, it sold gear but had more clothing and did not sell tickets. I liked its airy, soft atmosphere. I reached the intersection I needed to turn at and headed toward the feminist house.

I passed block after block passing rental properties and fairly stately Fraternity and Sorority houses. Across the street from a white Sorority house with large pillars, seemingly reminiscent of a Southern plantation house, stood a large brick house with a purple door in apparent opposition. *Look for the purple door* I had been told.

I likened the purple door to the *Polka Dot Door*, the name of a children's television program referencing a majestic polka dotted door offering a path to another world free of constraint where imagination reined. The door looked like a portal. It even had an arched top, like its polka-dotted friend. I took a deep breath and knocked on the big purple door.

A woman with short brown hair, in a plain t-shirt and jeans, answered the door. I told her I was the "freshman" that called from my dorm. She smiled and invited me in warmly.

I entered through the purple threshold. I had made it, I was there. I walked with Veronica past the foyer and to my left was a parlor sparsely furnished. The room lacked even a single decoration. The lights were off, it was evening, and it would have just been creepy if I had not have wanted to be there.

“We are meeting in the basement” Veronica said and she led me toward the back of the house. I silently compared her to Riff Raff the hunchback butler from transsexual Transylvania in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and wondered what was to follow. But I thought that I was not like the hapless normal girl Janet, play by Susan Sarandon, nor her geeky fiancé Brad. I was not going to become a victim like Janet and Brad had in *Rocky Horror’s* plot. I continued to follow her and when we came to steps leading to the meeting, I asked: “Do you have to meet in secret?”

As Veronica led me down the cold and grey concrete steps leading to the basement, really more of a large cellar, she responded with a “no.” But she answered with a short, nervous no. I then thought about the flyer that had attracted me to the meeting. They were really doing their part to topple the empire, I thought, and this is why they seemed so cagey.

Once I reached the cellar floor, I saw women sitting at a large twenty-seat dinning table. At the head of the table sat a woman with long wavy hair. She had acne on her face and did not wear make-up. But she let her hair flow beautifully. She did not seem self-conscious but distinctively confident. When she spoke everyone listened. I wanted to be like that. She was like Naomi Wolf, who I had seen on *The Oprah Show*, but better because we went to the same school. I wanted people to listen to me and take what I said seriously. Suddenly, she flipped her long mane to the other side and dramatically declared: “We don’t care *who* we alienate.”

Not a single man or boy sat at the table, nor stood in the cellar. I gladly took my seat and listened to this woman. She spoke of Mary Daly and the possibility of bringing her to campus. She also mentioned Andrea Dworkin, Nikki Craft, and Catharine MacKinnon. During what seemed like a speech, one of the group members interjected and said: "Rape is the theory, porn is the practice." That evening I did not recognize any of these names and I did not know I had heard a direct quote from Catharine MacKinnon.

I mostly listened. I knew I belonged but felt a tad intimidated because all the other women were at least sophomores. As I listened I learned about the idea of women-only space. I understood what I could talk about when my boyfriend or other guys were not around, but I was not aware that a developed political concept about it existed. As I listened more and more, I realized that the purple embodied a consequential meaning. I had entered a membrane and I was a welcome guest. I felt embraced and nourished.

Despite my enriched, college preparatory, and at an award winning Class-A High School nonetheless, and early college admittance to a local college the year previous, these women could tell me things I did not know. They had been telling me things I could not have even imagined. Astonished, toward the end of their meeting, I began asking questions. First of all, I wanted to know what they studied.

Most of them, possibly every single one, studied Women's Studies. I recalled the Women in America class at my High School. It was critical, but this new sort of Women's Studies of the evening impressed me.

They wanted to know why I had come. So, I told them about my experiences with what I recognized as sexism; about catcalls, threats of sexual violence, stories I had heard of sexual

violence, and unhealthy beauty standards. I let them know how angry I was and they validated me. I told them about the weird “sexual assault guarantee” I received in my dormitory.

We talked for some time after that and I listened to each woman still sitting at the table. I met Kate, who described herself as a “liberal feminist” who said she was there as a liaison for the campus NOW chapter. A different woman named Phoebe, sitting next to Kate, told me that she was not a liberal feminist. She described her convictions, that women should not work within the “system” and that the culture and its system based itself on violence against women. We must destroy it. Eventually Veronica returned to the table and took the side of the radical feminist; literally.

I wanted to stay longer, but the dorm had a curfew for those under 18. Realizing I would be late and locked out of the dorm otherwise, Veronica offered to drive me home. She did not trust the men of the campus to respect me or my body besides, she explained. I took a ride with her because I did not want the dorm monitor to lock me out. In her car she emphatically declared her identity as a lesbian and tried to explain the relevance of “giving all her energy to women.”

I came to the university to learn and that night I realized having a major in Women’s Studies would be an ideal way to do just that. I learned that feminism was more complicated, important, and dynamic than I had known. As I exited Veronica’s car, I stood, shut the door, and looked up at the sky. The moon stood full against the dark night sky.

* * *

Freshman year I lived in my dorm, even though Veronica thought I should move into the house. All freshmen must live in dormitories, and not have a car on campus; those were the rules, excepting a few stringent exceptions. Veronica thought perhaps I could keep the guise of living on campus, while actually living in Audre Lorde. I choose to stay on campus.

My roommate, having been assigned to me, was a Republican. She talked about “liberals” pejoratively and her “liberal” roommate became the butt of her jokes. It seemed in relative good humor, and in 1993 it did not feel threatening. Apparently she had braced herself for me after I sent a letter to her that summer previous.

I had stationary made from recycled material. I used it to write to her, and on the outside of the envelope I wrote: “Congratulations, you have won a roommate.” I intended to introduce myself, so I wrote about myself and what I like to do, and invited her to do the same.

Instead she called. She expressed discomfort and seemed simply neurotic. We spoke of our friends, our boyfriends, our majors, and hobbies. At last she asked: “Are you a *liberal*?” So, as I pulled the spiral cord of my pink phone toward my bed, I sat down. This conversation would last awhile, I thought. I told her of my involvement with the Ethnic Awareness club in High School, my participation in the racial unity march in Detroit, the books I liked, how I earned extra credit in my Global Awareness class by volunteering for Bill Clinton’s presidential campaign, and why I was pro-choice. I even told her about Redeye Books and the great guys who owned it. I likewise told her about the neighborhood I grew up in; the head-shop, the pink gay bar down the street, and Thai restaurant. She listened.

I must admit, for where she came from she was brave. She did not request a new roommate, and for the duration of one academic year, we lived together. We stayed up some nights in the dark, me in the bottom bunk and her in the top, just talking. We talked about all kinds of things, the cafeteria, our boyfriends, and abortion. I worked on explaining the merits of legalized abortion. Eventually she made concessions on her opinions of the issue.

She had joined the Honors College and I refused too. I had to make an anti-elitist statement, I thought. I wanted to know what the majority experienced, I argued. Besides, I

needed time to be an activist and make my presence known. I saw myself as a pre-eminent local activist and did not want petty status differentials to stand in the movement's way. We had a world to re-create, after all.

She could be kind and decided to introduce me to another "liberal." One evening, my roommate, her boyfriend, their liberal classmate from high school, and I went ice skating on campus. She and her boyfriend skated hand-in-hand; making derogatory comments about liberals. Or this is how I remember it, at least. We also skated, but as individuals.

He and I eventually grew bored with skating. We spoke to one another, while my roommate and the boyfriend skated as lovers skate. The conversation turned toward politics, as this was the rationale for our meeting. He informed me that he was a "Left-liberal." So, I told him that I identified as "radical," and not "liberal." I told him about Audre Lorde.

He asked if I knew why my roommate had suggested we meet. I explained that I did and that it was because he was a liberal. He was cute, and he liked the new music group Jane's Addiction as much, if not more, than I did. In his dorm was a poster of Perry Ferrell, the lead singer, dressed most ornate in silk and silver with an adorned entourage following him. Majestic. In his dorm he had a lovely prayer rug too. Like me, he wanted to be a professor. I found out these details of his room the night he told me he planned to save himself for marriage.

But our conversation turned toward our movement. Was he part of the movement, I asked? We knew of the same anarchists, some living on campus. We talked about anarchist and socialist newspapers, and the direction we wanted things to go in. We recognized that this dimension of being a "liberal" went beyond the scope of my roommate's. I explained to him that it was the Out-group Homogeneity Affect, a new Sociological concept I had recently learned.

We spoke to each other clandestinely as my roommate and her boyfriend enraptured each other. This is why we have the no-dating-other-activists rule, I thought out loud. We cannot afford distraction. He affirmed our norm, but asked: “Is that what you think?”

He was one of us, after all. He liked punk music with a message and had a *Misfits* t-shirt that he liked to wear. He knew of the anarchist punk rock band the Dead Kennedys. He even knew the lyrics to “Kinky Sex Makes the World Round,” an anti-war parody of a conversation between the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada. Who wanted political incest, anyway?

* * *

Maybe I was having some roommate problems. And maybe I had not proved myself as a pre-eminent local activist quite yet. But my grades were good. All the most influential professors in the department of my primary major, Sociology, knew me by first my name. Before the first semester of my freshman year was over, I was on first-name basis with the faculty. This was achievement, held higher than Honors College participation, at this mega-university.

I never missed a chance to explain my Marxian rationale for not joining the Honors College when a faculty or academic staff member inquired. I needed to impress, I needed distinction. I needed to win those undergraduate academic awards in Sociology. So, I competed with the two other Sociology majors who were my contenders. My strength was my use of the word *praxis*. I felt invincible at times.

To socialize, I went only to brunches where graduate students were in attendance. Or, I attended parties at co-operative houses affiliated with the university. Most often, I went to political meetings. Sometimes they were off-campus, if I went to a meeting at Audre Lorde, but

some political meetings were held on campus as well. I knew the rape statistics. They were high, and I did everything possible to prevent a fraternity boy from raping me. We were in college. I was in college, but a *West Side Story* mentality prevailed among us. At any rate, I did not socialize with them and they reciprocated. Or was it the other way around?

But one night, as my roommate glided through the dorm applying extra makeup and taking more time with her hair than usual, and announced her intention to attend a fraternity party. She suggested I go, but I declined. When she pressed on, I developed paranoid images of them concocting a plan to gang rape me because I was a liberal. So, I told her: “No. What if they decide to play ‘let’s gang rape the liberal’?”

If there were two rival clique factions it was the Greeks vs. Co-ops. Both groups held off campus houses. Both hosted large parties. But one oriented itself toward upward mobility and competition, the other toward downward mobility and cooperation. I knew which group I belonged to. At least I knew after I went to Audre Lorde, one of the co-operative houses, that first time. That night I decided not to join a sorority.

It is not that I thought none of our boys ever raped. I was sure that at some time, some where it must have happened. But that sort of incident seemed isolated. Enlightened people just did not do those things. How could one of our guys, who stayed up late talking about gender oppression with us, do anything like that? If they did, I rationalized, it would be a spurious occurrence. We were better, I thought. The trouble with the fraternity rape culture, I reasoned, was its anti-intellectual and competitive persuasion. Any similarity within our subculture, I believed, indicated a kind of contamination from the fraternity rape culture. We were not to blame. He among us might be to blame, but never us. They, the philistine mass, were to blame.

I had some troubles, some worries that year. But my next door neighbor had more. I heard her problem the first night I slept in the dorm. I, missing my parents and boyfriend from high school, began to cry myself to sleep in the dark.

That night, since I was the first one to arrive on our wing besides her, virtually no one was around. That is no one was on our wing, except myself, her, and her boyfriend. But at first I thought the third was Satan himself.

It began late, maybe around 2:00am. I could not go to sleep because I heard loud throwing noises next door. I heard loud throw after loud throw. It sounded like a noise a poltergeist might make. Was I in the dormitory alone with a demonic presence next door? Was I dreaming? I was terrified. I did not want Satan to enter my room.

As these noises continued in the months to come, I eventually figured it out. Her boyfriend threw her around the room. He picked her up and threw her on the walls and on the floor. He threw furniture on her. This is all I know, because I could never see what he did. But I noticed a correlation between the amount and extent of noise and the amount and extent of bruises. Now I had to admit, it was not Satan's fault alone.

I became very afraid of this co-ed. I wondered if Satan had taken control. His anger seemed something other than human. I did not have a way to talk with anyone about this. I had never witnessed anything like this.

I did not know what to do, or who to talk to about it. Could I call the campus police, with their "sexual assault guarantee"? Was this sexual assault? It just seemed like assault. Maybe I did call the campus police. Did they tell me there was nothing they could do if she kept letting him in? I cannot remember.

I feared him. I thought he might hurt me if I successfully involved the police.

Apparently all the other girls on our wing did not know what to do either. We never talked about it. But I tried to talk to some of them about it. Would this guy kill me if my talking got him in trouble?

This place where my neighbor's boyfriend threw her around the room, apparently it was the same place that I had wrestled a Neo-Nazi down at and where one attacked me at summer camp. It did not really exist. It was the place where things happened that no one believed. It only happened if it happened to you. I knew this, because when I talked to most people about these things, they changed the subject or told me I was lying. Like my parents said, I made up stories about Neo-Nazis at my high school. "Is someone making up stories again?" they would say in a patronizing tone.

But one day while I ate lunch in my dormitory cafeteria, I read the campus newspaper. I noticed a classified ad inviting volunteer applicants for a "battered women's shelter." I read on, and realized that my neighbor's boyfriend was a *batterer*. Other people had figured out that it was not just amorphous evil too and there was a whole organized group of them doing something about it. New words were amazing. The advertisement and its language brought this out of that place and into reality. I had just learned *misogyny* in my Women's Studies 101 class, and now I learned *batterer* outside of class. This was real life praxis. I planned to take this discovery back to my dorm, to my roommate, for her to deliver to her honors college associations.

I returned to the dorm and dialed the shelter's business number.

"Hello, I am calling because I want to volunteer. I saw your ad in the university's newspaper."

"Well, if you are a student you should contact your school's Service Learning Center."

"What is that?"

“You can look it up in your school’s yellow pages. You can volunteer on your own, but the university likes you to register at the Service Learning Center.”

“Oh, okay, I think I can do that. But I want to start right away.”

“You can sign up for a volunteer orientation and training before registered with Service Learning, if you want.”

“That sounds good.”

So I became a volunteer Crisis Intervention volunteer. At the orientation and training session, I listened to social workers lecture about battered women’s syndrome and I gradually began to understand what took place next door. In a group, we played the Drawbridge “game” (Katz, 1978, pp.70; Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, pp. 72). In this game, curiously developed by Sergeant Charles Howard of Fort Lee in Virginia, the facilitator reads a story set in a mythical kingdom where a queen dies at the hand of the king’s guard after leaving the castle against the king’s wishes (Katz, 1978, pp.70). At the end of the story, listeners have to rank each character according to perceived guilt for the death. Then, we discussed “blaming the victim.”

When I returned to Audre Lorde for another meeting, I found out that the feminists knew about the shelter. I talked about my neighbor, her boyfriend, and about how the abused neighbor, and her roommate, were the only black women on the floor. I told them I could not distinguish between feelings of awkwardness about our ethnic differences and racism.

* * *

The next year, my sophomore year, I did not live in the dorm. I lived in a co-operative house, one affiliated with the group of co-operatives that Audre Lorde belonged to. Unlike Audre Lorde, most of the people living in the house were men. The ratio was about 1 woman per 5 men. A total of 20 people lived in that house.

I had decided not to move into Audre Lorde, politics became like my work and I wanted free time. The vegetarian house was just too far away and as a lacto vegetarian I feared the wrath of some vegans. Since I had decided I needed a new boyfriend, I chose the house with an inordinate amount of men.

As for a new boyfriend, I found him in that cooperative. I was a nineteen year old sophomore when we met, and he a twenty-five year old doctoral student. He studied philosophy and knew intricate detail about feminist philosophy and because of this the department assigned him to Marilyn Frye as a teaching assistant.

One night he knocked on my door. I, in the middle of writing a paper on Marxist Feminism, told him to wait a minute. I needed to finish typing out a thought. So, after typing the thought and saving the work, I opened the door and allowed him to enter my room.

As he entered, his posture seemed to communicate that he thought the room was his. I ignored this and sat down in front of my computer again because, as I told him, I was thinking faster than I could type. He sat on the edge of my bed, took off his shoes and socks, and made himself at home.

I took the scene in with my eyes, noted it might need correcting, but returned to my work; which engrossed me. With his face to the back of my head, I sensed him stand up and walk over to me. At once he stood, to my left, looking down on me as I typed.

When ready, I looked up at him and inquired about what he was doing. He conveyed to me that he had plans for me other than completing my paper. I told him something like this: “Well that is too bad. I’m busy.”

He never wanted to do things when I wanted to, and now it was his time to wait.

He tried to carcass me but his hands felt harsh. Next, I pushed my chair away from the screen, stood up, looked him in the eyes, and told him to leave my room.

I felt his open palm smack against my left cheek and I had never been hit so hard. Something happened after that. Bits of conversation from the battered women's shelter I answered crisis calls from flooded my mind, my body recalled the fear of Neo-Nazis, and I literally felt the adrenaline course through my veins. I feared for my safety, I feared for my life. I moved. I pushed him away from me.

But the effect was more extreme than a push. Apparently, I had thrown him. I saw him, air bourn, land safely on my bed. The room was small, and there had been almost no other place to land.

I, and extra-personal forces, moved me to jump to the bed and pin him down. He was like the Nazi. I had to overcome him. So I did what I did with the Nazi. I pinned him down, I demobilized him. I told him: "I am going to let you up, and when I let you up you are going to walk away." I got him to agree to this, just as I had the Nazi. But this time that was not enough. I took retribution. I used the flat palm of my hand to smack and humiliate him as he did to me. When I lifted the pressure from him, he got up and walked away; just like the Nazi. I told my therapist and gradually learned about post traumatic stress disorder.

I initiated an in-house bureaucratic follow-up on the incident. My ability to defend myself had, after all, put me in an awkward position vis-à-vis the bureaucracies outside of the co-operative house. I notably began discourse and policy initiatives for discussion at our council meetings. Through an eventual need to disclose my inspiration, my housemates' sentiments consoled me.

He never hit me again. At first I thought I had won. But he invented new ways of hurting. He, for instance, made plans with me and broke them after I prepared for them. He, having attended high school with Cindy Crawford, would compare my nineteen year-old body to hers and suggest an increase in activity and reduced calories. When I challenged what I recognized as sexism, he would use radical feminist rhetoric against me and tell me I should be a lesbian; that I would be better off.

* * *

The following year I lived in my first vegetarian co-operative. I wanted to avoid the drama in Audre Lorde, yet eat better and have more women housemates. The house sat atop a slight hill in an upscale residential section of our college town, about a mile from campus.

The house, however, transgressed the neighborhood norms in a variety of ways. The house's aesthetic quality left much to be desired. It was, after all, a large square house build of red brick; a real brick shit house. The lawn looked wild, with tall grass and in back sat compost heaps. Inside were beds and beds of wheat grass and other foliage. As legend had it, one day a middle-class woman walked her poodle past the house and said: "You people do so much to lower the property values."

Almost everyone who lived in that house was some sort of an activist. One of my housemates was a naturalist and Native American activist. Another housemate played an active role in the campus environmental group. I was the resident feminist. The year previous, the house used to serve as the headquarters for the local Earth First!. That earned us some surveillance.

In response, I encouraged public announcements declaring the absence of Earth First! from our co-operative. Others in the house also concluded we had a Public Relations problem,

and we took steps to clear ourselves from this guilt by association. Despite the homespun PR campaign, the problems continued.

Sometimes men, seated in a car, would spend hours watching the house. The naturalist thought they belonged to the FBI. One time he bought doughnuts, something never seen in our house since we ate locally made bagels for breakfast, at the gas station next door. He walked up to the car, opened the doughnut box and asked: “Would you like some?” The phone, at times, behaved in ways that indicated likely tapping. But we did not have a way to verify this.

If one of us lacked a direct role in a social movement, we had some sort of cultural or philosophical commitment justifying the inactivity. We lived with an African refugee, turned political science major, who consistently affirmed his Rastafarian identity. I vividly recall one jovial day when he and I sat at a kitchen table laughing. We lived in *Puzzle Place*. I had walked through the *Polka Dot Door* to find *Puzzle Place*. Another housemate, and avowed Foucault fan, distanced himself from the social structures our activism produced. Yet another resident, an aging burnt-out hippie, kept himself at the periphery of our youth-centered activism.

There Angie shared a corridor with me. At first we both had boyfriends. Her boyfriend was an unabashed hippie, and so was she. And, for the first few months of the school year, my relationship with the philosophy graduate student was on the skids. Our relationship never fully recovered from the hitting and throwing incident, and eventually it dissolved.

Our corridor, on the second floor of the house, contained three bedrooms and one bathroom. As you ascended a staircase and reached the second floor, our corridor’s entrance stood at the right. Passing through the entrance, to your immediate right was my room. A little further was Angie’s and then Nick’s. Nick was the president of the entire co-operative association.

Nick, when home, talked casually about making our house clothing-optional. It might have worked, if he had not come across as having some kinky interest in sharing one of the house's corridors with two slightly younger women. The red flags, for me, were his excited, wandering eyes and the suggestive content of all the conversations he initiated. But for awhile he had my interest. The house did not have central air, and wandering about naked seemed like a reasonable idea. And so I devoted myself to involved conversations about the social merits of nudity. Body Politics, at the time, were very chic.

But one day, Angie knocked on my bedroom door. I liked when she did this, I enjoyed the attention. She was one year younger than me and seemed to admire me. She knocked on the door and I opened it. Then, she came in and sat on the chair in front of my computer. I moved to the end of my futon and we would talk. One time, she brought her Liz Phair CD with her. She put it in my player, and selected 'Fuck and Run' as she told me she had a crush on Liz Phair.

Another night, as she sat and looked me squarely in the eyes, she asked: "What do you think of Nick?" Before I could answer, she asked: "You like him, don't you?" Eager to disclose, she immediately asked: "What do you think about his clothing optional idea?" But she had a reason to come to my room. She wanted Nick to wear clothes. Already she had seen too much of him in his thong or nothing besides an American flag wrapped around his body. For her, it was all too untoward. Her face reddened with embarrassment.

The more I listened to Angie, the more I realized that Nick and I had a different idea of what nudity meant. I told Angie about how he had once asked me an odd question, when wearing goggles. "What did he ask you?" Angie asked me. I told her that he had asked me:

“Are you into water sports?” At first I had thought he was referring to scuba driving, water skiing, and such. But now we both wondered.

Maybe Nick would have had his way if Angie and I lacked a special connection. But we had a special connection. At the next house meeting, in the dining area consisting of four round tables with chairs, we took a vote. Nick perhaps had one supporter at this time for his clothing optional idea, but no more. He had lost. With his face a deep angry red, he jolted up from his seat and stormed out of the room. He returned and yelled incoherently.

I sat at one of the tables and suggested we move onto the next item on our agenda. I thought of Nick’s anger as an isolated, single event. He was one of us; a vegetarian. But my philosophy graduate student boyfriend had been a vegetarian...

* * *

Angie kept returning to my room to sit and talk. She told me of her troubles with her boyfriend. This relieved me because his habit of throwing a rock at her bedroom window, which he had programmed her to open the side door for him and take him to bed and surrender everything with, routinely annoyed me. He took her for granted, I thought.

Besides telling me about what it was like to be an underappreciated girlfriend, she told me about child sexual abuse, and bisexual feelings. I wanted to be there for her, and whenever I could be I was. She began crying almost everyday. Rather than spending her day alone in her room, waiting for a rock to hit the window, she spent the day crying and ignoring the rock. I grew increasingly concerned.

Eventually Angie and I grew very close. I heard more and more about her childhood, and she detailed her father’s abuse. Initially she told me about how her father beat her mother and how easy it was for him to go without reproach because of his local prominence. Everyday, all

day, she had flashbacks. It haunted her. Her parent's carpet in the master bedroom still retained a bloodstain, even though her Dad had died from cancer years before. Nooks and crannies everywhere harbored mementos of the abuse.

She conveyed to me that I was the first person outside her household to know these details. One time, I asked her: "What else could I be the first person to know of?" Her head fell, her face grew bright, and she began to tremble and then cry terribly and darted out of my room. Her bedroom door, next door, slammed shut and I heard sobbing. The sobbing left a dull pain in my chest and sharp pain in my heart. I hoped she would return.

Angie returned, less than twenty minutes later. She had dried her eyes. She sat down, squarely with good posture, and with a deliberate look in her eyes, she said: "My Dad used to rape me and my sister." That day I was twenty years old.

* * *

After fall 1995, no longer a teenager, I began to take stock of what I had accomplished since my arrival on campus two academic years previous. I made the Dean's list every semester; save for one when I missed it by one-fifth of a point. I had served on departmental committees and student government. I lectured at small academic venues and at the city capital. The year previous I led the Take Back the Night march while serving as the Director of Women's Council. The local press knew me and covered my events. I met bell hooks, virtually befriended her, sat on her hotel bed, and drank from the same glass when she offered me a taste of her yogurt drink. I had won every departmental accolade for undergraduates thus far; meaning I had the highest GPA of all Sociology majors in my undergraduate cohort. It also meant that during my senior year, next year, I would have a small grant to fund research of my own design; under the

supervision of a faculty member. I stood out in all the ways I wanted to. I authored my own destiny.

On and off campus, people knew me as a young intellectual and activist. Even if people did not like me, but they usually did, they respected me and my opinions. Despite the violence and misogyny around me, at twenty years old I did not see any reason for believing that advancing through graduate school, securing a tenure-track job, and gaining tenure would come to me with as much ease as being a successful and popular undergraduate had. I was here to *help*. Things worked for me.

Eventually I would find out that while girls do not intimidate, women do. But I had some time left as a girl; just being a person. Later it would be my time to need help. But at twenty years old I did not know this.

After an incident occurred in my co-operative house, I helped the victim as I always did. This time it was a housemate; the environmentalist who happened to be female. She, like I, was a lacto vegetarian.

Her name was Christie. She and I used to talk, just not as much as Angie and I talked. I even told her the torment I endured as a little girl who was not allowed to learn how to play the guitar.

One night, Nick and the two other vegans in the house decided to play a practical joke. They all wore sunglasses or goggles. But, I must admit, I was not present. I heard this, second hand, from Christie between her tears.

The vegans entered her room, without permission or announcement. One held a stick. Nick pinned her down, and whispered unmentionables in her ear. I saw signs of trauma in her for months afterward. At the time, I knew Nick would *never* have done this to me.

Maybe Nick really would not have done something like that to me, I do not really know now. But he did not. I was not at home that night. I remember Christie saying over and over again, nearly chanting, “you weren’t home that night, you weren’t home that night.” I wondered if she had wanted me to be home to protect her. Caught up in bravado, I told Christie what I would have done if I had been there that night.

But, perhaps a part of me realized that she could have been inferring that Nick could have done that to me. The vegans could have done that to me. I ate dairy, after all, and I played a key role in ending the clothing-optional discourse.

Whatever the case, we expelled Nick as a member of our co-operative at our next house meeting. Several male members resisted, but the majority us thought Nick’s behavior proved too volatile to have a housemate; both male and female members thought this. Not a single female member, however, defended him.

After the aging, albeit Ivy League educated, hippie communicated our decision to Nick, what followed became the most dramatized series of events in the co-operative community in years. Nick left a nasty letter to all of us, citing “gender wars” for the cause of his troubles. According to him, the house was just “too feminist.” It had too many feminists in it, he conveyed. He would leave us. He had secured a space in another co-operative house for himself and it was “good riddens.”

~

11-07-05

Yesterday I turned 30. This is the oldest I have ever been. Not knowing what to do with my age, I trod on. Now I take stock of a decade; this time in writing.

I chanced upon several friends earlier today, in the student union, while on a meal break. They call me to them and tell me the “Nazi’s have a hit” on one of us; one that is not present this moment. Thinking back to a 1999 killing of two anti-fascist activists at the hand of Nazi thugs, which ran in the New York Times while I worked on my MA at Kent, I ask: “What do you mean?”

My nineteen year old friend responds: “I guess they want to beat him up or something.” I feel measured joy. I am not prepared to handle a death. It is a decade and a half since I wrestled that Neo-Nazi down and they still try to keep us scared and inside our houses. I want to hear more but it is dinner time and I have not eaten lunch. I ask: “Can we eat?”

My friends follow me to the food court and we talk about our friend in jeopardy. I explain my plans to contact him. Eventually we resolve the situation, for the time being, and I tell them about my attendance at the Misfits concert last night. I stood before them, unzip my knitted black hoodie to expose the concert t-shirt, and say: “Look.” My friends look at the black baby-tee with a gilded skull on it beneath an equally gilded scrawl of *Misfits*. “That’s cool Jeanine,” my young friend says. The stability of hardcore punk bands, like the Misfits, and the community and coolness I manage to maintain comforts me in the face of danger and loss.

Yesterday, on my birthday at the concert, just before the *Misfits* began to play, I went to the lobby to locate merchandise from the opening band *Rock City Morgue* for sale. Their overall artsy, macabre presence combined with the lead singer’s stylishly ghoulish personae and the former guitarist from White Zombie’s skill, magnetism, and oh-so *ele-goth* look steer me to the lobby; even at risk of missing the first bit of the Misfit’s performance.

I, standing in front of the stuff, look over the t-shirts and music. It looks like there is more, but for the moment I focus on the music and apparel. The t-shirts, sporting an abstract

outline of a coffin reading the group's name Rock City Morgue, bore me and they look like about five other shirts I already have. So, I move on to the music. I see a piece of vinyl, with a sign saying "German", and two CDs. One CD is \$10, the other \$15. I asked the vendor: "What is the difference between this CD and that?" He explains: "One is an EP, the other an LP. The EP only has 5 songs and the LP is only available in New York and Los Angeles."

I am moved to buy the LP, but perhaps not as impressed as I could be. My friend in LA could buy it for me and mail it. I keep this to myself and graciously hand over my \$15 for the CD titled *Dead Man's Song*. Next, I hand over \$6 for a *Rock City Morgue* pennant. I admire their co-optation of sporting paraphernalia, complete with their emblem; a skull complete with crossbones. The male vendor touches me gently on the shoulder, and referring to the band, says: "Hey these guys are going to be around here in just a minute." In less than a minute, one of the guitarists shows up and the vendor motions him over to us and explains the intention. Humbly, the guitar player says, about the lead singer, "Rik is coming out soon."

11-06-05 Back in time...

Rik, I thought to myself, is really cool and I truly admire his performance. But the other guitarist, the one from White Zombie, is beyond cool. I gently touch the male, because I want no confusion over whose autograph I want because I may never have this chance again, and say: "I want that girl guitarist's autograph." The male guitarist, still standing near me, looks around the lobby and says: "Sean is coming out soon."

I stand, waiting, and wonder if my boyfriend Galvin, who is treating me to the concert as a birthday gift, will worry about me. Less than five minutes pass and Sean appears. She has an unintended entourage, the members of a band in the string of four local bands that played before

the Misfit's actual opening band, that being Rock City Morgue. This band's name escapes me. They relied on comic material to compensate for less than par material, even by punk standards, and subjected the entire audience to their song "Fat Girls Have Friends", where they affirm that not only do fat girls have friends but "fat girls swallow too." The lead singer also repeatedly used the words "bitch" and "fag." He, using an old punk stalemate technique of insult and offense in a potentially reflective way, took it a little too far and this had actually encouraged me and my boyfriend to make comments to each other during their performance.

The lead singer of that offensive group follows Sean, in her personal space, and tells her that it was a good show. His lackeys do likewise. She nods her head and quietly thanks them. They do not interfere with her cool, strong, and feminine stance. I, not missing my chance to be on the scene, approached Sean with my pennant and say: "Sean, will you sign this?"

She, turning away from the guys, pulls out a black marker, faces me and says "yes." As I hold my pennant near the left side of my chest, Sean autographs it. The guys look on, and the offensive local lead singer imitates in a high pitched faux-female voice: "Hey Sean, will you sign my tit?" He could not resist the coloring of my interfacing with Sean as a girl-on-girl eroticized encounter, apparently.

I could have confronted him then and there about his offensiveness, but I care more about Sean than him. Satisfied, as Sean walked toward her fellow guitar player, the entourage dissipated and I returned to where my boyfriend is to wait for the Misfits to start. I walk away, feeling a sense of victory. It would have been different, I think to myself, if the guitarist from White Zombie that was the talk of the event had been the guy. Then I would have felt obligated to confront that nasty guy. But it was Sean who even wore a skirt. I cannot wait to tell my friend, who complains she can never find enough serious women musicians for her band; which

must be all-girl. People discourage girls from seriously pursuing musical interests, my friend often complains.

When first hearing about the “guitarist from White Zombie” I think most people envisioned a man. My boyfriend did, I know, because he said “there he is” when the male guitarist came onto the stage. I believed him, but did not say anything. For this reason, when the only woman band member walked on the stage and lifted up her coffin-shaped bass guitar and someone announced: “Here is the guitar player from White Zombie!”, I was able to lean over and playfully whisper in his ear “sexist.” At first he was a little defensive, until I explained I had been duped too.

Sean also played the key board, as it turned out. The musical features of each song depended greatly on her as she alternated between playing her guitar and the key boards. Her guitar playing sounded and looked superior and she enraptured me. I made my mind to tell my friend with the all-girl band about her as soon as possible. For the meantime, I made my way back to the stage area. Soon the Misfits play the anthem “Rise Above”, so popular among alienated white youth from the marginal middle-classes and the lyrics surfaced:

We are born with a chance
 Rise above, we're gonna rise above
 And I am gonna have my chance
 Rise above, we're gonna rise above
 We are tired of your abuse
 Try to stop us, it's no use
 Rise above, rise above, rise above
 We're gonna rise above
 We're gonna rise above
 We're gonna rise above

~

This enraged the woman in the house who taught self-defense for women. This was yet another feminist; neither Christie, nor Angie, nor myself. Ironically, I always thought of her as

the least radical. But, she took action. Before a month past, Nick no longer held his position as President of the co-operative community. According to gossip, this only infuriated him more.

Somehow the matter managed to pique the interest of a professional Clinical Philosopher residing in New England. The Clinical Philosopher facilitated a community dialogue about the matter. Everyone implicated in the situation, in any way, ought to attend; so the aging hippie and other authoritative community members urged.

I attended, as did all prominent members of the community. The meeting began with Nick's bitter testimony, after which each one of us were asked by Nick to account for our role in the matter. As the evening proceeded, the Clinical Philosopher continually reminded her audience of her lack of responsibility. She just facilitated. Nick named each of us, one by one, from the house who had voted him out to the house. When he arrived at me, he addressed me formally with my surname. He had never done that before and it amused and annoyed me simultaneously.

I had to explain, in front of the entire community, why I had voted the ex-president out of out house. Angie sat near me, muttering "I can't believe this." As a co-operative, the victim's community stood trial. I spoke, and the council took notes. I said something like this: "We concluded that individual members of the house were not safe with Nick in the house." The aging hippie came to my defense.

This evening proved too much for Christie, who ran slowly out of the room, crying with air gently lifting up her Indian print peasant skirt. "You can't leave!" someone in Nick's court shouted. Angie stood up to follow, with me walking behind. We found her in the large corridor, crouched near a corner doorway with her skirt encircling her, and head turned away, weeping. When she spoke, she said: "It's not my fault."

* * *

While living in that vegetarian co-operative, I began considering moving into my own apartment for my senior year. After Nick's episode, I no longer considered. I found an apartment for the next year. That summer following my junior year, I moved my things to the apartment.

I expected a fabulous year, without housemate troubles. I would turn 21 in the fall, conduct my own research with funding, wait for an offer from a graduate program, and graduate with honors. I had great friends too.

Angie, although neither of us stayed in the vegetarian co-op, still routinely knocked on my door. She had moved to a co-operative house near my apartment building. My apartment was like my bedroom, only bigger.

Besides Angie, I spent time with nascent trans-gendered buddy Aaron and his girlfriend Felicia. Like Angie and I, Aaron was an undergraduate. Fed up with being a woman in a patriarchal society, he decided to take hormones and pass as a guy.

This incensed Violet whose allegiance to the lesbian separatist faction grew and deepened over the years. The two would engage in theoretically anchored insult matches over an internet group that academic year, and I would hear about it from both sides. Once I told Violet a story about Aaron, hoping she would understand that he was truly a man.

One time when I felt especially depressed after a difficult therapy session, Aaron came to visit me when no one else would. He drove from his house all the way to my co-op. As I sat at the end of my futon and cried, he sat down next to me and put his arm around my shoulder.

"That arm," I said, "was a man's arm." "I felt male energy, not just masculine energy." You

have to feel that presence, I thought to myself. But Violet would never get close enough for Aaron to put his arm around her.

* * *

Another time, Angie knocked on my door. As usual, I opened it. She, viscerally angry and out-of-character, entered with haste. She, yelling, told me she wanted to do something drastic. Silently, I began to fear this anger might turn inward and into a suicide attempt. Her therapy sessions, talking about the abuse, were taking a great toll. I want to soothe her, but knew I had to validate the anger.

As she sat on my folded futon, the same futon I had in the co-operative, I stood and turned left toward my bookcase; the one that came from a women's furniture co-operative in Ecuador. I had to save my friend. I reached for my collected works of *Hothead Paisan the Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist*. She grabbed the book with as much haste as she entered and said:

"What do you want me to do with this? I have seen it before."

I felt inept, but kept trying. I said: "We could make collages."

"And then what are we going to do with them?"

"We could display them somewhere."

"Oh"

Angie and I did these things together. At the time, prior to the 1996 election, we used to alter people's DOLE KEMP bumper stickers. With quick hands, a division of labor, some liquid paper, and blue marker, we turned Republicans into DOPE HEMP supporters. Presto Progressive! We would wonder how long these people took to figure it out.

Her face slowly began to revert back to the face I normally saw on her. I knew this would take awhile and I had field notes to type and analyze. But I cared for her. So, I gathered

scissors and glue. Then I declared: “First we have to go to Kinkos and make copies. I’m not cutting the pages.”

After making copies and initiating the process, both of us sat diligently entertained while we focused on our collages. Hours passed and our collages grew increasingly intricate. Together we came to feel selfish for keeping all this fun to ourselves. So, I called Aaron.

About fifteen minutes later, Aaron arrived. He joined the fun. With his influence we began writing on the flyers. I made satirical rhyming verse. Someone, maybe it was me, suggested we create a new organization to claim the flyers. That is how FUKU (Feminists United to Krush the Universe) came in the world (sic). My poem read:

We’re mad
 We’re pissed
 We’ve made a list
 And you’ve been bad
 Just when you thought it was safe
 To turn you back...
 Because you’re a man
 And think you can
 We’re closing in for attack
 You think the world is yours to keep
 But we’ll take it back
 With a powerful whack
 And stand over you as you weep
 For women your eyes are filled with hate

You think you have all the power

But that won't change your fate

When we cum, you will cower!

Some time later, Angie and I returned to Kinkos; this time with Aaron. We made at least 500 copies of our collages. With our copies, we set ourselves upon the campus to display our work.

As we left Kinkos, we were already on the cusp of a new day. It was late. But we did not care. Our work tickled us and we could not control our laughter as we went from bulletin board to bulletin board. Eventually we ran out of bulletin boards to tack collage copies to. We needed to ensure that wherever anyone went on campus, at least two square miles of it or so, they would see FUKU. So we worked threw the night.

We taped flyers to bridges, buildings, side walks, and anywhere they would stick. We intentionally displayed evidence of our being in a fashion as brazen as fraternities during Rush Week. Why not? That night the campus would be ours. But back of our minds, we feared the campus cops. We were not a fraternity, after all.

As the more and more hours passed, we grew weary. I insisted on using every single flyer, no compromises. We had five left. We should go to the Student Services building I thought, we had not taped posters to that building yet.

We descended onto that last building. We walked up to the front of it and taped flyers up to it. We had one left now. We could tape it to the side walk, adjacent to the building. Angie dropped the last one on the concrete. I took the tape and began ripping it. I put strips of tape on the right and left sides. I still needed to tape the top and bottom.

Suddenly we had company. The campus police had driven to us, with headlights on. As I took note of the scene, I took note of two cop cars with flashing headlights. A woman cop stood next to her open car door, with her dispatcher pulled to her mouth, and spoke these words: “It’s them. We got them.”

The next thing I recall is their approaching us as they asked: “Do you have any fire arms?” They were rough and scuffled Aaron up a bit. Before I could speak, they slapped cuffs on my wrists and secured them so tight that I felt my circulation lapse. I told them repeatedly that we did not have guns and began to plead with them to loosen the cuffs. With their hands on my head and left shoulder, pressing hard, a cop stuffed me into the back seat. I asked again for loosened cuffs. It was less than a month before my next birthday that morning, and I was still twenty years old.

* * *

I arranged for the three of us to visit an on-campus lawyer. At first he expressed reticence about taking the case. But, with my clout as a student government official with some knowledge of the legal system and contacts with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), I was able to persuade the campus lawyer to defend us. We were eventually acquitted, but it took months.

We never served time, and I occasionally remarked that if we had been black we would have been more likely to receive jail time or a sentence. I went to Marilyn Frye’s office one day to tell her the story. For awhile she displayed a FUKU collage on her office door.

That day we won the acquittal, however, brought other surprises. As I closed up the case, with cash fresh from a campus ATM for fines, I walked diagonally across the street toward a fraternity house. No one cared or noticed that I had j-walked.

It was a warm day, in early spring; quite beautiful. This surprised me and I pushed up my long sleeves. I had not expected such lovely weather. The sun shined on me like a promise.

My crossing had purpose. Across the street from the municipal building stood a demonstration in response to two racist beatings that took place at the fraternity house. I told someone I regarded as my comrade that I would return with my bullhorn. I had to go home and get it first.

I walked home, retrieved my bullhorn and resumed participation in the protest. I wanted my presence to resonate. The frats admitted to the beatings but got off completely clean, with not as much as a fine. And yet I had paid for what Marilyn Frye could recognize as postmodern feminist (therapeutic) art.

Within minutes, the police arrived at the scene. This time five cop cars with headlights on came. One immediately approached me. I, being the only Caucasian among a Chicano crowd, looked like the “leader” to these cops and they set about trying to arrest me on the spot.

With craft a comrade and I gradually distracted the cop’s attention away from me. They did not arrest anyone that day. Instead, they issued every single person protesting a ticket for \$150. This is justice, you can beat minorities for free but protesting violence taking place inside a stately house will cost. If I had any doubts as to which side I was on, that day it became clear.

As clear as this distinction between us and them became that day, however, it blurred at times. The fraternity house, although predominately white, could claim one Latino member. This Latino member pointedly stood in front of the house’s door and announced that the fraternity was not racist because he belonged to it and was Latino. He notably did not consider the politics of his identification as Latino, as opposed to the crowd’s collective Chicano identity. Another such fraternity member, but white, approached me and tried to use my ethnic identity to

defuse our solidarity. These tactics did not work. But, they were not the only ones to challenge our solidarity.

Between my crowd and this resilient Latino individual lay humanity in limbo; suspended between bifurcated aggregates. His announcement rung in the air like a siren reminding conflict comes with consequence; real human consequence. For these reasons I mention him despite his inability to singularly alter the situation.

Unfortunately, one protester resorted to sexist slurs that day. Across the street, the fraternity had a supportive female stronghold residing in a smaller house. On that day the four of them assembled themselves and picketed against our protest whilst shouting insults like “cry babies” at us. The only other person present with a bullhorn, really a dedicated Chicano male activist, retorted with accusations such as: “You are their whores!” I wondered what the Latino fraternity member, nameless to me, would think of this choice of words.

* * *

Weeks later, a district attorney had finally managed to clear all fifty or so protesters of the Civil Infraction charges the \$150 tickets pertained to. I would like to stop here, but I cannot. Before completing my senior year as an undergraduate, racist cops were about to seem like trite nuisances.

~

To make a very long story short, one day a professor hit me on the head in his office and raped me. This professor had overseen my funded research. I have told the story many times, to friends, to strangers, to therapists, and others. I have written the story before. I originally wrote the story to keep myself from having to write it again. I do not enjoy the story. But I must tell it. Here it is:

I can tell you what I was wearing- the pants, the shirt, my bra and underwear. I remember how I walked out the door of my apartment before going to the professor's office. I have a fuzzy memory of him calling me at the apartment, perhaps asking me to come to his office. I remember walking to the campus building where his office was and opening the door. I remember him reaching for something behind my head. I remember falling on the floor, eventually to be placed on my back hardly conscious, trying to scream. I remember him above me slowing getting ready to mount me but also taking off my thick Wigwam socks. I also remember my pants and underwear got pulled off. My head hurt. And I was trying to get him to stop, but I could hardly move.

After managing to abscond from his office and attending to my immediate needs, I eventually made a call to the police. I said to the male officer on the other end of the phone line: "My professor raped me." He responded: "What did you get in his class?" I hung up the phone in shock.

Later I called again, to explain that I had earned an A in the last course I took with that professor as I had in all my other courses that semester. I shouted, spewing many details about my solid academic performance and how I was not carrying out a fictitious vendetta. The lack of response did little to encourage me to "come in" as they asked me to. An officer continued to berate me for showering for hours without coming in for the obligatory "rape kit"; I had morphed into an unmanageable rape victim.

I thought back to the beating at the fraternity house and the police's sympathy toward the perpetrators. I began fearing the police would gang rape me if I sought the police's services. I refused. I hung the phone up again and returned to the shower.

I said I cared about Angie. I did; no lie. I defended Aaron, but still listened to Violet's side of it. I cared about Aaron's girlfriend Felicia too.

She was an MA student in the Humanities. She taught on campus. I admired her, and considered her brilliant.

As with my other friends, we talked. She told me about a professor who had invited her to his house. "He treats me like a *mistress*," she said. She maintained a lavish presence and the story seemed to leave her with ease. From her I heard stories of his brushing her hand with oil in class; very lavish. He had sung Opera and maintained posh surroundings which he availed to her.

Like me, she would graduate in May 1997. I assumed she would want to teach a community college, since she did not want to pursue a doctorate immediately. But she claimed this would not be possible, she would have to compete against people with PhDs. Instead, she would work as a dominatrix in another city, in another state.

My nagging to the contrary would not alter the circumstances. I repeatedly declared she deserved better; had too much to offer. She spoke of her student loans and lack of jobs in the Humanities. I persisted and when she began to feel disrespected, I stopped.

Part II: Tales from the aftermath

If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stomping on a human face -- forever.

George Orwell, 1984

Some battles I would not win. But in August, I moved to the campus where I would begin my graduate studies. I survived the attack and knew it was not my fault. Still, I could not accept what had happened.

I had lost battles but I could still win the war as that old adage claims. I would complete my MA and move forward to the PhD. I felt confident. In my Sociological Foundations course, we spent many meetings learning about and discussing spurious correlations. That is what the rape had been, a spurious correlation.

But circumstance would eventually shake my confidence in me and the potential spuriousness of any violence occurring in an academic office. Specifically, more violence at the hand of a professor would arise. It happened, as before, in his office.

While the rapist-professor had been middle aged, the violent professor from my MA program was an elderly emeritus. Like the rapist, everyone held him in high regard. Neither of them, to date, has suffered even the slightest reproach of any serious consequence..

The emeritus turned aggressor taught the “teaching” class. In that seminar, we listened to him talk about what a great teacher he was and how the undergraduates so enjoyed his company and antics. People liked him. He kept a charm about himself.

For our course requirements, besides functioning as an ad hoc fan club, he required each pupil to keep a journal. He specified little about the journals’ parameters, but wanted us to relate the content to teaching or our experiences as students. He mentioned a journal from a former

student, describing her waking up with a stranger one morning after binge drinking, repeatedly in class. Consequently, I surmised his standards for content were relatively liberal.

When I turned my first collection of journals into this emeritus, the 20 or 30 pages contained mostly details of working as a teaching assistant, my thoughts about it, and writings about pedagogy. Since he seemed okay with personal reflections, I decided to experiment as well. So, I wrote about the time I was 19 and caught in a rainstorm in Sausalito. I detailed a conversation with a friend, during that time in Sausalito, relating to education in general and teaching. I included a poem.

About a week later, the emeritus summoned me to his office via e-mail. I made an appointment and arrived at his office door and knocked at the appropriate time. He opened the door and told me to sit down. I did not sit down. What was he going to do anyway, rape me? Lightening never strikes twice... I thought, figuring he wanted to tell me that my journals were great. I said: "What do you want to talk to me about?" Without warning, as I still stood, he gave one swift shove to my right shoulder causing me to fall into a chair, knocking my right hip against the chair's arm, and sit. My hip would retain a bruise for several weeks. Then he threw my journal collection onto a table, with it open to the page with the poem, and with his right index finger pointed, declared: "This!"

I concluded the poem had annoyed him, but I was not prepared for what he had coming. The scene reminded me of being raped, and then placed in that chair before the rapist-professor's desk. Now he had me where he wanted me. Stunned, I sat and watched him walk toward his window with one hand folded in another and placed behind his back; Hitler style. As he turned slowly to stare pompously out of his far office window, I saw evidence of a subdued turgid state concealed behind trousers. Then he said: "You shouldn't be in graduate school."

* * *

Ironically, under the auspices of an underling of the eminent-social-psychologist-of-the-minute turned Assistant Professor, I listened to lectures on common Social Psychological concepts like labeling theory and self-fulfilling prophecies. I knew I belonged in graduate school. But that did not stop the nervous breakdown that would have next semester; the second semester of my MA program.

I left abruptly one day and did not return. Every day, every minute the rape's memory played in my mind. I suffered alone, trying to concentrate on survey research methods, statistics, and mundane tasks assigned to me as a graduate assistant.

My memories, and the current pressures, were things I need to run from. Everything at my new university seemed to echo rape. Every day when I passed a wall sculpture on the Sociology building's stairwell, I heard the echo. It echoed rape, and fragments of that horse-on-girl sculpture in the university hotel of my alma mater.

The on-campus Hotel's lobby featured a statue seemingly representative of bestial anal sex between a female child and a horse on two legs. The child aspect of the statue wore two long braids at each side of her head and a classic looking girl's frock with lace trim and puffed sleeves. Her pose, dynamic and faltering, gave the appearance of a fall caught between grace and gawk. The fall exposed her underclothes, producing an oblique cheesecake affect. Behind her stood an excited horse, with pelvis at virtual symmetry, on hind legs.

This wall sculpture, however, conveyed its meaning abstractly. It consisted of a fragmented piece of wood, with a gapping oblong hole in the middle, and one colossal nail. Having been driven into the wood with force, the nail stood, wedged into the wood. The nail,

apparently, made the gapping hole. Someone had been nailed, someone was always getting nailed. Every 5 minutes a woman is raped; or something of that sort

* * *

For several months, I convalesced in my mother's house and saw a psychiatrist colleague of hers. I needed medication. At first I need tranquilizers, and then eventually just antidepressants. For several days, I lost my ability to speak. Someone, whose identity I will spare, believed I needed a complete "evaluation" to determine my sanity; since I claimed a professor had raped me. I refused to go along with this, the psychiatrist had not ordered an evaluation and believed me sane and I insisted the rapist needed evaluative attention.

My mother grew tired of what she perceived as laziness and on one sunny day she abruptly approached me and told me that I "had to get a job." Or, maybe she just needed to hide in denial. Or, alternatively, she knew San Francisco had recently gotten more expensive. She asked: "What are you going to do?" And I responded: "I'll substitute teach." At any rate, this is how I became a substitute teacher for the two or three months prior to leaving for San Francisco to visit friends, hang out with other young radicals, and present a paper at the American Sociological Association conference. I planned to spend most of the summer in San Francisco. I could neutralize the affects of the rape, even if the rapist-professor would be there presenting; which he would.

I worked in the high school I had graduated from. Generally, I found returning to the high school a pleasant experience. I was only 22 and the students tended to like and identify with me. I cannot say I did not have discipline problems, I did. But I enjoyed being in a different role and having the chance to tell stories about what the school was like in 1992 or

1993. Many of the high school students thought I was cool. Often enough, I would return from work with a smile on my face.

Eventually I found the courage to call my graduate school department. I had recovered quite a bit, but would still tremble if I forgot to take my medication. They had not spoken with me since I had left and I intended to explain to them what happened. Generally the conversations were awkward and the result entailed my needing to send medical documentation about my illness in order to resume study in the fall.

The conversation I had with the Social Psychology underling, however, proved worse than awkward. Despite the fact that I had worked with a rapist-underling of Erving Goffman, and Goffman had many underlings, my thoroughly macro-structural approach to social phenomenon combined with my relatively lower status had always put me in a disadvantaged position relative to her. Oddly enough, she conceded to me being her teaching assistant again in the fall. According to the professors with administrative powers, however, I would not have an assistantship for the last semester because my assistantship had been a two year contract only. In other words, the nervous breakdown cost me one semester in the academic sense as well as the financial. Sympathy and money for me were both scarce resources. So scarce were any resource, even patience, that when my hosting parent grew tired of my continual presence that she announced my need to leave on one rainy day in late spring.

As for the resource of time, she gave me one hour to vacate the premises. This took place after my sister, three years elder, instructed my mother with these words: "It's either me or her." I would cry but much of that I would need to defer. I had only one hour to move out. As I rushed about gathering necessities, I thought about Angie and about how it would be to do this in the middle of a wash cycle.

I finished substitute teaching that spring and for a month I worked as a hostess at an Italian restaurant before leaving for San Francisco. I greeted costumers, folded napkins, poured wine, and stood. I had never held a job of this sort, and the routine fascinated me.

I had relocated to my father's house temporarily, before leaving for San Francisco. With some money behind me, I left for the Bay Area. As for my new temporary place of residence, I probably would not need money for lodging. My friend Fiona said I could stay with her. I knew Fiona in college and I had introduced her to Angie.

At the time Angie no longer kept in contact with me or Fiona. Neither of us understood why. But Angie had moved to San Francisco too. Fiona had told me over the phone about the time she had seen Angie ride a bike down the street in the Mission district. Because of this, I hoped to see Angie that summer of 1998.

I stayed with Fiona that summer, as she requested, and committed myself to exploring the area. The conference would last a week, but I would reside in the Bay Area for weeks. While there, I would stay in two different addresses since Fiona had a move planned during my visit.

Initially, she moved into a room in a shared apartment in Oakland Heights. Rent steadily rose in San Francisco, and Oakland Heights offered an alternative. During this part of the visit, she would apologize profusely about the location of her domicile. But that part of Oakland Heights proved charming, with its small, artificial lake standing in front of Fiona's apartment building and array of idiosyncratic shops; typically owned by a local person. I spent hours wandering around the neighborhood and talking to people.

After the passage of several weeks, Fiona announced her move and we relocated to another apartment. This time the apartment was in San Francisco per se. Near the Mission

District, it sat about a block away from St. John's hospital. I did not know what this meant, but I would soon find out.

This apartment was the only one in San Francisco that Fiona could afford. The only job she was able to secure at the moment, with her recently awarded BA, had been a telemarketing job. The people living in the small three-apartment building were also young and generally students or those recently graduated. The woman Fiona shared the apartment with, in particular, attended San Francisco State.

Every time we exited the apartment, Fiona seemed exceedingly concerned about which way we turned. Each time she wanted to turn right at the apartment's main door. I did not understand this and began asking questions. At first, she would just tell me that St. John's serviced the sex worker population for free. I understood this but could not understand how a simple turn would make a difference.

But, one day, we did not leave the apartment on time. Because of this we did not have time to walk a few blocks to the Mission and avail ourselves to its public transportation. Instead, we would have to turn left and wait at the bus stop in front of St. John's. This pained Fiona, and the strain showed on her face as she put one foot in front of the other cautiously with hesitation toward the bus stop.

The bus stop was about ten yards away from Fiona's building, much closer than the Mission. Two other women sat on the stop's bench, so Fiona and I stood. The women looked younger than me and wore glittery clothing in pastel colors, with matching make-up. I made small talk and asked:

"What brings you two here?"

One woman, wearing blue, responded: "We were at St. John's."

The other, in pink, responded: “We are prostitutes.”

“Do you like the services at St. John’s?” I asked; hoping they were adequate.

“They are good,” said the one in blue.

“It is Catholic, but it is okay,” said the one in pink.

“Jesus had a brother,” said the one in blue with her eyes full of knowing.

Our bus arrived as I heard the word “brother.” Fiona began boarding the bus and I gave my farewells. I kept my head turned toward the women as long as I could as I inched my way slowly toward the bus. Their shared, calm, and patient demeanor left me impressed.

* * *

As the days past the conference grew increasingly near and Fiona became less and less invested in maintaining the taboo against walking toward St. John’s. Consequently, I experienced another esoteric encounter at the bus stop. This time Fiona and I waited at the bus stop alone and I had time to examine the surroundings.

St. John’s looked enormous and old as if nothing took place within it. Built of dull red brick, a fence topped with barbed wire surrounded it. I said to Fiona: “I am glad I don’t have to go to that hospital.” Fiona nodded her head.

We would not be alone for long. Soon enough a boy and a man past middle aged approach the bus stop. The boy asked if we were prostitutes and I said “no”. Fiona continued in that vein, with strain reappearing on her face, for some time. She had her coping mechanisms, as did I.

The bus seemed to take its time and I began making small talk. As I did so, I noticed that the older man carried a plastic grocery sac filled with Wonder Bread and Bit O’ Honey candies. I wondered how anyone can afford to pay for sex in the neighborhood and felt sympathetic.

The boy inched closer and the older man remained distant. The boy blurted out: “Satan talks to me.” He talked more, about Satan, and stood in front of me. Fiona, with her back directly behind the bench, stood between. The boy and I began to face each other directly as we talked. He, most responsive to my efforts at small talk, showed me a black notebook. “This is where I write everything Satan tells me,” he said.

He displayed his writing, page by page. When he arrived at his “favorite” page, he stopped. “This is a poem about raping,” he said as he handed it over to me and said: “I want you to read it.”

I read it and tried to maintain the causal rapport I had with this obviously unstable person. I looked to him and Fiona. I noted the satanic pentagram worn on a chain, around his neck. Two points faced upward. Then he was directly in front of me, we were eye-to-eye.

Fiona, having heightened interest in New Age spiritualism since leaving the Midwest, wore a Wiccan pentagram around her neck; one point faced upward. She lacked interest in the exchange about good and evil. I wore a crucifix. I started wearing one after the breakdown. The boy and I stood in opposition, with Fiona in aloof moderation. I told the boy that rape is evil. I felt relief when our bus arrived, and the boy and the man remained at the stop as Fiona and I entered the bus.

On the bus Fiona said: “Christianity and Satanism are the same.”

Wanting to indirectly correct her, I said: “They share the same paradigm.”

“What is that paradigm?” she asked.

Later she asked why I read the poem.

* * *

That bus stop was the most single memorable place that summer in San Francisco. The air about it seemed to carry a trashy mysticism. But do not get me wrong. There were other memorable places, events, and even the most memorable words. While in San Francisco that summer, and this was not my first time in the City, I visited many intriguing places and basically had a great time.

I visited Allen Ginsberg's bookshop City Lights, among many other vanguard bookstores. At City Lights, I bought a satirical novel titled *Lives of the Monster Dogs* about mutant Prussian dogs with human traits who collectively commit group suicide in Mid-town Manhattan. I attended the tenth anniversary of Radio Free Berkeley; an illegal pirate radio show. They played *Kinky Sex Makes the World Go Round* on the air to open the show that night. I ate at great restaurants too. I even saw a magazine someone had created linking Noam Chomsky to S/M at one of the bookstores.

I met some interesting people that summer too. Being 22 years old, and having brought a wardrobe of mini skirts and halter tops as they were the latest trend, I specifically had the opportunity to meet some interesting men. I purchased those ensembles because they were in-style and good for California weather, and perhaps I wanted to live the Take Back the Night chant "No means no, yes means yes, wherever we go, whatever we wear." I had for instance, met a nice waiter at a West African restaurant. He harped on how I looked and refused to charge us for our meal as a compliment. In return, he asked for nothing. One time I even let some guy drive me from one part of the city to another. He asked for a date, I refused, and that was the end of it. I saw him as neutral.

But not everyone had a kind, or even neutral, heart. As I meandered around the city one day, this time in a purple miniskirt and halter top complete with complementing accessories, a

man in his later twenties or early thirties offered me a ride. He drove an expensive looking sports car, but he seemed nice. Wow, I thought, people in San Francisco sure are friendly.

Knowing I would be okay, I got into his car and sat in the passenger seat. He conveyed his interest in my appearance, and I just thanked him. It was a new look. I told him where I was going, to my friend's Fiona's place and how to get there.

He muttered, under his breath: "I knew it."

"No," I said, "I am not a prostitute. We are just there because the rent is cheap. I am staying with my friend for the summer and she lives on the *right* side of the street."

As we approach Fiona's neighborhood, he said: "I bet you know why I picked you up."

"No," I said.

"It's because I want to ask you out."

"I am uncomfortable with that because your perceptions of this neighborhood affect the dynamics."

He parked in front of Fiona's building, and I felt relieved for this, as his facial expression turned from friendly to tense. He wanted a date, and thought I should not tell him no. He began to yell.

As he yelled, I opened the door, stepped out, and spoke a retort. As I walked toward the apartment entrance, he abruptly started his engine again, shouted "FAT BITCH" and sped off. His words left a sensation of biting and tearing on my flesh. As I entered the building, in a size large miniskirt and top from a famous boutique selling juniors and misses clothing, I reflected on how his approval of my body depended on his access to it. "Fat bitch," those words left burn marks on my memory; much like the air freshener did three years previous. Unlike the air freshener, the words were meant specifically for me in malice.

* * *

I went to a Middle Eastern night club while in the Bay Area. Samir took me there. I met him in China Town and he took me to dinner. He treated me well and we had great conversations about Allah and God. I enjoyed his company.

I told him about being called a “fat bitch” and he offered me sympathy. He wanted me to see what it is like to drive across the Golden Gate Bridge. So, we did, in his car. The conversation about the United States being the Big Satan in conjunction with the view allowed me to feel like I had overcome mundane convictions.

Having learned that I like to dance, he suggested while on the bridge that we spend the evening dancing. He asked if I could dance to Middle Eastern music and I said: “of course.” So, he suggested going to his favorite club to watch a professional exotic dancer dance. I expressed approval of this idea, since I admire Middle Eastern exotic dancers.

We arrived at the club and men dressed in suits greeted Samir graciously. Surrounding us hung intricate tapestries telling stories from the Middle East. The host led us to a table near the small dance floor, to sit. We sat on tall cushions and Samir ordered red wine after he asked what sort of wine I like. Later we ate Baklava after dancing.

When the professional dancer came to the floor everyone sat down. Samir explained this to me, it being the custom. She wore a circle skirt and jeweled bikini top. She had dark hair and looked to be in her 30s or 40s. Her voluptuous body defied and superseded beauty standards set by our fashion industry and she impressed with her distinguishing beauty. I watch her dance and she continued to impress me as she used dance to interact with every audience member.

Samir seemed to know much about her and explained that the club owners had rescued her from her country where she would have lived as a prisoner because of her occupation. He

explained that this sort of dance is illegal where she is from. I felt intrigued. At the end of her performance a group of men jumped up to follow her as she walked behind the staging area, presumably to a room. I concluded this must be part of the act.

* * *

I liked Samir. He took religion seriously and thought critically. He possessed an intellectual mind and attended the University of California at Berkeley. But one experience I had with him left me less trusting than I had been otherwise. One evening, when visiting him in his apartment, he tried to pressure me into sex. I refused but I had to tell him that I thought he was trying to rape me. This is how I understood the situation. We talked about it and were able to agree to stay in contact with each other even after I left the Bay Area. I believed we could overcome this difference.

Despite distractions I attended the annual American Sociological Conference where I would present a paper. I knew the rapist-professor would be there and I concluded that I could find therapeutic value in publicly voicing my issues about what he did. So, I noted when he would speak.

I attended the session he was to speak at and sat in the audience. When each of the panel members had spoke, and the audience had the chance to answer questions, I sat waiting for my turn to speak. The rapist-professor had spotted me in the audience, initially smiling with amusement and eventually showing signs of nervousness. When I finally asked my question, I began by explaining who it was for. I slowly stood up and asked what he thought of professors raping students on their office floors. Before he could answer, I walked to the podium and took the microphone. I told my story, no holds barred, to the audience.

Once my emotion caught up with me, I wanted to flee. I left the podium and nearly jogged, in a miniskirt and healed shoes, away. As I reached the exit door, I turned around and yelled: “Rapist!” and left the room crying. People followed me. I distinctively recall a kind, supportive black woman.

I did not know what would follow and did not care. I gradually resumed my routine at the conference. Several hours later, however, a bell hop ordered me out of the hotel that held the conference because of my “disruptive” behavior. Once outside, I faced the bell hop and told him why I had to behave as I had. In response, he told me that I could return to the hotel.

Not wanting to follow him again, I spent some time outside. During that time, I met a black man selling radical Black Nationalist newspapers near a Bart (the Bay Area subway) entrance. We talked and he managed to get some donation money from me. I did not care that their vision of an improved society did not include me. No one had to tell me why hurt and oppressed people needed that sort of vision.

I returned to the hotel that day and attended more panels. Sometimes people approached me, usually to tell me I was brave. I thanked them. The next time I saw the rapist-professor he was walking past the hotel bar, inebriated. He, with a red face and sloppily relaxed muscles and gait, needed a pal to lead him down the corridor. I heard a woman say: “That poor *man*.” I witnessed this alone, but felt in some way I had support. I thought about the nice black lady who followed me out and when she saw the tears on my face, announced a matter-of-factly: “He raped her.”

* * *

Early in the week that I would take a plane from the Bay Area to return to the Midwest, Fiona and her roommate would have a new roommate. Now three people would live in the apartment to reduce individual rental expenses. The new roommate happened to be a man.

Although I would leave soon, Fiona wanted to introduce me to the new roommate. We spent an evening talking to him and the conversation invariably turned to sex and prostitution. I explained my critical view of prostitution, which he resisted. But, I thought little of the conversation. His attitudes seemed typical, but not pathological.

Months later, Fiona would call me to complain about this roommate. Sometimes she would cry. She eventually moved out of the apartment because he had propositioned her. He offered to pay her share of the rent, in exchange for regular sex. This angered her and she also called me to yell about it. She just could not make sense of it.

She would never find resolution in the United States. She had studied German in college, was nearly fluent in the language, and traveled there multiple times. "I am going back to Germany," she said over the phone. She never talked about that roommate in a frantic way again.

* * *

That next fall the underling spent many class sessions explaining the social economics of sympathy. Apparently, another junior Social Psychologist had taken to publishing articles chronicling sympathy "exchanges" and theorizing on how an individual can transgresses their sympathy allotment. The theory seemed accurate and true to experience. But from my vantage point, she seemed a little too comfortable with stinginess in sympathy.

I was now almost 23 years old and, to me, the world seemed absolutely mortifying; a mortifying farce. My nervous trembles had turned to nervous laughter and I found completing the coursework a minor challenge compared to maintaining a seemingly sane composure.

I returned that fall of 1998 after losing the spring previous. Because my program had a particular structure with specific requirements, I could take the courses meant for fall 1999 that fall of 1998 and then last spring's courses, which I abandoned, the following semester. This, however, meant that fall of 1999 I would not need to take classes but once spring 2000 arrived, I would. In other words, required courses were offered specific semesters; either fall or spring. I lost one spring and wanted to return to campus as soon as possible, so as not to lose yet another semester of funding. So, I enrolled in courses in an order other than intended and had one semester without any courses at all. The semester, the one without courses or enrollment, would be fall 1999.

That academic year of my return, fall 1998 to spring 1999, went reasonably well and without any major incident. I defended my thesis prospectus successfully and would collect the data for my thesis that summer. I would collect data on unconventional body piercing and tattooing. I decided to collect the data in the city of my undergraduate university because not only would I find enough interviewees there, but I found a summer Americorps position tutoring inner city children in the area. I would also be able to visit friends.

Like the previous fall and spring semesters, the summer would prove generally successful. Despite the breakdown, and temporarily leaving my graduate program, I could graduate. I felt a sense of victory. I sought as complete a victory as possible. So strong was this sense of, and desire for, victory that I decided to confront the rapist-professor again.

I returned to the scene of my office rape to calmly tell the rapist-professor that what he did was wrong; obvious but I needed to say it while not feeling vulnerable. I strode into the office, while he sat behind his desk. I stared into his eyes and told him what I thought. Taken by surprise, he responded by thrusting his pelvis not only out at me but up at me as well. He made this statement: “Obviously Jeanine, you don’t know what is normal or you don’t care.”

In retrospect, that summer I confronted my rapist, collected all necessary thesis data, found an important legal contact, participated in a positive government sponsored program, and managed to have a good time too. That fall, although I would not enroll in classes until the next spring, I would transcribe my interview tapes and prepare to write my thesis. Because I would need money to pay for my last semester, I would live at my father’s house and substitute teach for a second time.

* * *

I spent that fall of 1999 substitute teaching as I had spring of 1998. This time, however, I expanded my options by teaching all grades in three different suburban Detroit school districts. I needed money for tuition now. One day I dealt with adolescent problems in the High School, then next crying children in kindergarten. Every day introduced new challenges. Unlike when I was only 22 years old, the High School students thought of me as cool less and less. I was 23, eventually 24, and beginning to look like a trait trope of authority.

The days consisted of classroom work, the evenings of note transcription. I kept in contact with my mother, although she had thrown me out of her house, despite my parents’ refusal to communicate with each other. I also used the time at “home” to spend time with my elderly grandmother, my father’s mother, and she routinely asked me for an explanation for why no one on my mother’s “side”, in including my father’s other daughter and thus my sister, never

talked to my father's side; including her. Although I spent a considerable amount of time addressing that need of hers, I never answered her question successfully and sometimes resented being the unappreciated buffer between "sides."

The winter eventually came. In the midst of the cold, my father, in the middle of a clinical episode, capriciously shoved me out of the house; as my mother had about a year and a half ago. He did not allow me even one hour to gather my things. I had not the time to even put socks on and while I dodged violent gestures managed to put each of my feet in boots. Without any sense of assuredness, I walked and cried. When I reached the nearest payphone, I called my mother. She agreed to take me in again.

My father denied his behavior later. He also denied other strange behavior that preceded his throwing me out. The strange behavior included menacing behavior such as hitting me once, and other such examples as strewing an open *Playboy* across the arm of his leather couch located in the parlor in an exhibitionistic fashion; apparently for me to see.

I attended two holiday gatherings that season, one at Mom's and one at Dad's. I listened to each side complain and speculate about the other. These complaints and speculations always managed to bypass my existence in both, and either, side. Always were these conversations about how vial the other side was, never about how both shoved me aside onto the other despite my commitment to both. No one apologized but everyone felt righteous. My mother's side's favorite question was: "Why do you talk to them?" My father's side's favorite question was: "Why won't they talk to us?" I would refer to "Honor they mother and father" to address the question from my mother's side. I was the only one available to hold responsible. Answering the other question, however, became increasingly difficult as my father's mother's health

worsened and the lack of communication increasingly troubled her. My weight and inability to secure my own address, which I heard about too much, also troubled her.

* * *

At 24 years old, older, fatter and with my miniskirts no longer fitting, I return to Kent for my last semester. That spring semester, I would complete coursework and defend my thesis. Now that my academic situation no longer seemed out of control, I vowed to make new friends also.

I arrived on campus and moved into my graduate dormitory room as soon as I could. After being thrown out by both parents, I wanted to be on my own again. Once I arrived, however, a new nuisance came my way. My neighbor, specifically, had the habit of talking at an unbelievably loud volume, incessantly throughout the night. Sleep became a challenge.

I finally decided to talk to him about the noise. I felt angry as I walked toward his door. He greeted me with a big smile and asked my name. My disposition changed and we became friends. Throughout that semester I would spend time drinking Arabic coffee with him, on his couch talking.

His name was Tevel and he was from Israel. He had dropped out of the Israeli army. He loved telling the story. This is how he told it:

One day I was sitting with a bowl of candy. And one of them came up to me, hit me in the head with a rifle and said: "Why aren't you running?" And I said: "I am tired of you guys abusing me. I am not going to be in the army anymore." And I ran away. Then I came here.

In one of the heights of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Tevel posed in the student newspaper with a Palestinian student. In the pose, they sat side-by-side.

Soon I also befriended a Finnish guy named Laars who lived at the end of the corridor. I saw him, felt an attraction, and decided to knock on his door and make conversation. He shared

his Scandinavian licorice, *salmiakki*, with me. My familiarity and appreciation of it impressed him and soon we became friends as well.

Laars and I took a trip to Chicago. He wanted to see the city, and I had a conference to attend and preside over a panel discussion at. Laars brought his German friend Otto with us. We had a great time seeing the sights, sampling food and drink, and just being free-spirited.

While in Chicago I chanced upon an indirect confrontation of the emeritus who had pushed me. By this time I had long since told the professors administering the program, but even though the emeritus had admitted to pushing me, he did not suffer a single consequence; save for having a conversation or two about the incident. But, when I saw his wife at the conference, I knew informal channels were my only hope for further sanction. I walked toward her, as she recognized and greeted me, and told her the story. She apologized and told me she would talk to her husband about it.

Back in the dormitory, Laars, Tevel, and I acted goofy together. Together we were loud, whereas Tevel used to be loud alone. Undergraduate students, working as security, routinely came to our floor because of the noise. At the end of the semester we pulled our mattresses out to the hallway and had a slumber party, one last hurrah for security.

* * *

Despite the forces to the contrary, I completed the requirements for the MA and graduated. I braved a committee that included at least one hostile member and came out with the degree. Still, I did not feel comfortable matriculating into the PhD program as originally planned. I felt ambivalent about Sociology in general and about beginning a new program specifically. I decided I needed more time between degrees.

My father attended the graduation ceremony. My mother refused. Friendlier than usual, my father also decided to host a graduation party for his side of the family. In the face of my mother's refusal to attend commencement, my father's gesture reassured me.

The level of comfort, however, soon came to a halt when my father finally explained why my older cousin Cynthia would not attend the party. I sat on the leather couch in his parlor, with my back straight. After I asked him for the third time why we could not invite Cynthia, he sat down and said: "She is a whore." At first I did not take this seriously, that is what I heard my father call my sister repeatedly when he discovered her unplanned pregnancy after all. But he continued. After listening, uncomfortably, he effectively explained that she is, what I came to understand, an expensive call girl. Then I realized why she had her own yacht but cannot dock it in the family's yacht club.

I, shocked, asked why I had never been told. He told me I was always too young. At 24, he reasoned, I could hear these things now. I, minding my precarious position in a parents' house, tried to convey that the harsh word "whore" offended me.

Beside myself, I continued on with the routine of visiting my father. After several days, and the party to mark the end of those days, I would return to campus. I had graduated, but I would spend the summer working for a summer camp for underprivileged albeit college-bound high school students.

The day of the party came and having heard my father tell me several times that he would "take care" of the food, I relaxed as I did not expect to prepare anything for the day. But, hours later, my father returned. He handed me bags of food and told me that I was responsible for everything but what he would prepare; the meat and one side dish. I spent the next few hours

working, frantically preparing salads and a decorative fruit bowl. Later he ordered me to set the table.

This is my party. I take a picture of the table looking beautiful beset with china, celebrating the fruits of my labor. I am alone.

* * *

While working at the summer camp, I obtained an interview at an area university for an adjunct position in Sociology. I also obtained the position. So, in the fall I would move to Cleveland for that adjunct position. Despite my continued labor in the summer, I lacked the financial resources for even the most modest relocation.

I was able to persuade my mother to give me some money. In exchange I listened to her yell, for more than one hour, about how she was enabling me to teach. In an hour she managed to credit herself with every accomplishment of mine, in conjunction with repeated comments diminishing my efforts. She lauded herself for paying for my undergraduate tuition and expenses. After more than an hour passed I, with a throbbing headache, asked her to stop. Besides, as I mentioned, she had used an inheritance to pay for my tuition as an undergraduate and she devised ways to make me pay regardless.

My mother's money was enough for a bus ticket to Cleveland, a cheap hotel stay, and the ability to find an apartment once I arrived. I would, however, after paying for a hotel need one pay check to put a deposit and pay first month's rent at an apartment. I packed what I needed in two suit cases and got on the bus.

In route an annoying man sat next to me. He talked about his career as a high school Algebra teacher. In a loud, nasally voice he complained about the trials and tribulations of dealing with students who skip steps in Algebraic formulas. After hours of hearing this, he

began to ask questions about why I would be in Cleveland. So, I told him and he asked more questions. He wanted to know what I was going to do once I got off the bus, so I mentioned that I would take the city bus to my hotel. Thinking it odd that someone would take the city bus with luggage, I had to explain that I did not have the extra cash for a taxi. This troubled him; the idea of a woman taking a city bus with heavy luggage, so he said:

“I will give you money for a cab.”

And I responded: “No, that is okay. I can take the bus.”

“No, I insist. It just isn’t right; a woman having to do that.”

“If you insist, I will take it for a cab.”

How threatening could a high school Algebra teacher be? Once we arrived in Cleveland, and exited the bus, he held a twenty dollar bill in front of me. Thinking he wanted me to take it, I reached for it. He pulled it away, and with his eyes wincing, said suggestively:

“Aren’t you going to go out with me?”

“No,” I said, as he began putting the money into his pocket. I continued, using those handy Social Psychological concepts: “You are exploiting the norm of reciprocity.”

To make a long story short, he threatened to report me to the police. He did this when I suggested he ought to follow through with his promise, even if I would not go out with him and so forth. I pointed out to him that he was trying to blackmail me, which was truly illegal whereas refusing to socialize with someone is not. After a lengthier explanation of this, he recognized that I was too well-spoken and informed for him to successfully coerce me into any activity. He surrendered the promised money and walked away. I did not have much money, but I had an education. I, in the Greyhound station, stood as an educated woman.

I had the address of the cheap hotel where I planned to stay until I found an apartment. With the extra money, I called for a cab. It arrived and I gave the driver the address of my destination. He said: "Are you sure you want to go there?"

So, I was on my way to the ghetto. On the way, the cab driver explained that the hotel once hosted prostitutes, but the current owner had recently reformed it. Still, there was another hotel across the street that functioned as a brothel. He offered to take me elsewhere.

Not knowing where else I could go, and still afford to eat, I said I would go there. I thought to myself that surely no one would just hit me on the head, incapacitate me, and rape me if the sexual script they *might* associate with me was to pay me first. Their offering of money would at least allow me time to alter or flee the situation as I had with the Algebra teacher minutes before. I thought too of Felicia and Cynthia. Before I went to college, I had not known the world to be like this. I wanted it to end. Surely it would, I just needed enough education and experience to overcome the obstacles.

The cab arrived at the hotel and the kind driver helped me with my luggage. I entered the hotel, walked up the clerk sitting at a desk behind the plastic safety shield and looked at the price list. The list included rates for hourly, daily, and weekly increments. I chose weekly because I planned to be out the hotel before a month passed. Besides, I could not afford a month even if it was better deal.

I pulled my luggage down the hall to my room. The hotel lobby was clean. Obviously, per hourly rates, the hotel retained some of its sleaziness. I passed a couple engaging in play, perhaps a pillow fight, along the way. They were loud, but sounded like they were both having fun. I smiled.

I put the key in the lock, turned it, opened the door, and entered the room. As soon as I was inside, I locked the door. I still knew little about the surrounding area. I arranged my things, and prepared for bed. While in bed, I turned the television on with the remote control and flipped through the channels. I soon discovered that the hotel had its own pornographic channel.

The scenes had been acted out and taped within the walls of the hotel; I noticed the matching interior. Most scenes were boring, strictly sex. But some scenes had more substance to them. One in particular piqued my interest. This is the “plot”, if you will:

A middle-aged woman kneels on an office desk in a “power suit” and high heels. Three men enter the room. She goes into a hot, menopausal frenzy. This is obvious because her face brightens and she shakes her head from side to side manically to the point of wetting her hair with sweat and she is the oldest woman shown on the special channel. Maybe she is having a hot flash; she is a hot menopausal career-woman waiting for three men to come by. As the three men get closer, she removes her suit in one sweep. (Apparently the costumer assembled a one-piece faux-suit held with Velcro, or something to that effect.) One man joins her on the desk, and she mounts him. The next man takes his place in her anus. She cannot leave the last out, she gives him oral sex.

Women in offices are there to fuck, apparently. This is the ideology. Most of the other scenes, each lasting a few minutes, seemed innocuous; including one featuring a biracial pair performing vanilla sex in the missionary position. But one scene stood out as strikingly dehumanizing.

Not to dwell on it, but to give witness, it consisted of a woman in a chair apparently in a drugged state; seemingly from barbiturates. She sat, barely conscious and dangerously still. In front of her, with his back to the camera, stood a man using her mouth for base purposes;

repeatedly. He ejaculated on her face, manipulating himself to create a “painted” affect with his emissions. The situation reminded me of Linda Marchianos’ *Ordeal*.

~

I met Linda when I was 18 years old. The Women’s Council had invited her to speak at our Take Back the Night. She spoke softly and talked about her family, husband and children, and how she aspired to teach elementary school. Linda referred to the last name “Lovelace”, her moniker from *Deep Throat* as her “slave name.” I walked alongside her during the march and she extended her hand to mine and after I clasped her hand, we walked hand-in-hand. As Marilyn Frye marched with us in the crowd, I looked to my left at Linda and into her eye and I said: “I promise to teach people about you.” Then she asked: “Really?” and I said: “Yes.”

* * *

The hotel’s makeshift pornography motivated me to move sooner than expected. Because of my haste, I moved to an apartment building across the street. It was about a block from the other hotel, rumored to function as a brothel, but according to my research the apartment building was clean. I had met the building supervisor, the brother of the female owner, and he seemed like an ethical person. He even helped me move my things from the hotel to the apartment.

Now, admittedly, I could have taken the opportunity to stay with someone in the neighboring middle-class suburb where I taught. While at an upscale restaurant with my father, months previous, the waitress suggested I stay with her daughter who resided in that neighborhood once she learned that I recently graduated and would teach part-time at the university. I did not avail myself to this. This is not to suggest that I “deserved” my new surroundings, or that I made the wrong decisions. Rather, I am suggesting that the possibility of

other options does not exist for everyone. If my father did not have the money for such a restaurant, I would not have received that offer.

Regardless, I lived in the “ghetto” for nearly a year. The first half of that year I taught at a nearby Catholic university. Each morning I taught, I stood in front of my apartment building and waited for a bus to transport me to the better neighborhood where I taught. I spent the days that I did not teach researching doctoral programs and applying to professional jobs. Not finding a better job to begin after my adjunct contracted expired, and not having access to another adjunct position until fall 2006, I began looking for anything to pay the rent. I happened to live next door to a high school and signed up to substitute teach there.

* * *

In the meantime, I taught. I liked sharing the expertise I had acquired and taught one introductory sociology course and one social psychology course. Generally students at this university, being small, private, and Catholic compared to the large, public, and secular schools I had attended, remained distant with measured respect. Two students deviated from this tendency. A 25 year old white woman and an 18 year old African American man deviated from this tendency.

While seated in my basement office, located adjacent to the housekeeping closet, my eldest student, the 25 year-old, walked in with subdued frenzy and sat down during my office hours. She introduced herself and briefly spoke about content from class. Then she remarked about how she was slightly older than me. An explanation of how she took some years away from school followed. Getting to what most likely had been the motivating reason for her visit, she told me about how she used to do phone sex. Interestingly enough, a phone sex company

had recruited her via the phone in her dormitory during her first stint as a student. I listened, because I knew she needed me to.

Terrance also deviated from the aloof stance most of the students took. He also visited during office hours. We talked and once I ate lunch with him and his friends in the school cafeteria. During that lunch we talked about the labor movement and professional union organizing. Terrance would eventually invite me to see *Dude, Where's My Car?* and we would become friends. He was my only black student and the only student I befriended.

I recall one other student visiting me during office hours. She was white and about 18 years old. She came to me to talk about the academic articles I had included in the course pack pertaining to youth culture in the 1990s, i.e. the rave scene, punk, and grunge. At this time, it was still the year 2000, so this content set me apart from other lecturing personal; especially at a private Catholic university. She came to talk to me about the rave scene, as she participated in it. I gave her guidance on how to remain safe at a rave and she accepted it as a younger sibling might, gratefully yet derisively.

The raver returned to my office hours, after I had marked an A on her paper and suggested she keep writing. She took a creative risk with the paper, writing her essay in a fiction-styled manner. She expressed surprise in the grade and I reassured her that I had meant to place the A on her paper. Soon enough she spoke of a boyfriend. This boyfriend was a graduate student and, according to her, did not take her interest in creative writing seriously. As usual, I listened. Only students brave enough to admit unfulfilled needs or weaknesses visited me.

* * *

The semester would end. By this time, I had met other hip young people. I knew Jeff, Durk, and everyone else in the anarchist scene. Some stayed continuously in Cleveland, others

passed through while on their way to other political projects or universities. This was my first, and hitherto only, year away from school and I enjoyed the carefree atmosphere of our meetings.

I had learned about Food Not Bombs, a mainstay in many anarchist circles, in our city while listening to a local university radio station. After hearing the group's motto, including the part referencing the redistribution of resources away from "weapons of mass destruction" to food, I called the phone number, and started going to meetings. At the meetings we would make gleaned food into meals for the city's homeless. We transported the food at 4:00pm every Sunday to Public Square, in front of upscale hotels and the city's premier shopping mall. The police despised the spectacle and used surveillance against our public activities. About Food Not Bombs motto use of the term "weapons of mass destruction" referencing weapons in the United States used against nations such as Iraq, I spent a considerable amount of time convinced our government intentionally co-opted the phrase.

With the semester ending, and my lease continuing, I spent more and more time searching for a job. The 2000 election would come and go and leave a trail of tears for many. Temporarily needing to defer the search for a career-oriented position, I needed something for the rent or I would become like the people we cooked for. I, admittedly, came very close to working as a cocktail waitress. This was the only relatively lucrative possibility available. But, I stayed committed to my feminist lifestyle and worked as a cook for the local natural foods co-operative.

I notably crystallized as a feminist at the time Andrea Dworkin reached the pinnacle of her success and I had consequently come to understand such work as contrary to feminist aims. I could not, furthermore, abandon the image of Gloria Steinem working as a cocktail waitress as depicted in the film *A Bunny's Tail* and adapted from her essay "I was a Playboy Bunny." A

feminist in a cocktail lounge, it had already been done. As the old adage goes, those that do not learn from History are condemned to repeat it. Fortunately, I had learned, did not have any dependents, *and* I had alternate skills.

As I worked as a cook, I continued cooking for Food Not Bombs on Sundays. One day, while a dedicated member of Earth First!, who liked to talk about *Redwood Summer* and *Pick Axe* as much as possible, was passing through town before returning to school in Washington, I met his sister. She had been working as a cocktail waitress. She was less than 20 years old. She defended herself against the criticisms she received at the Food Not Bombs meetings by saying that it was only job available to her that paid enough to allow her to pay the bill remaining on her tuition after her parents defrayed the costs and she used financial aid. I came out of the closet as a potential cocktail waitress to verify her claim.

At the natural food co-operative I worked with two other cooks and one head cook. The two other cooks were both women. The head cook was a man. One of the cooks was a black woman who eventually told me of her drug dealing brother who had been shot and killed several years previous at a bar doors away from my apartment building. The other was a European woman who had left her country to come to the United States, at sixteen, after being disinherited. The head cook usually acted reasonably. But, sometimes he would “happen” to brush up against me too closely.

The head cook did not have a college education and was a Greek American. He had attempted his bachelor’s degree at a city college, but never finished. He talked of visiting his wife, then fiancé, at Miami University and would say, sardonically: “To me it was a resort!” He had worked since he was fourteen years old, always with food.

As a cook the single person at the co-operative I worked with most, besides the other cooks and head cook, was the produce manager. He also studied Sociology and worked on his thesis and for the co-operative simultaneously. We talked because we seemed to have things in common. Sometimes I needed to go into the produce cooler to get something to use in a recipe. He used this as an opportunity to do erotic improvisation with his produce. Initially, I found it an amusing interruption of my mundane tasks. But he became increasingly aggressive with these antics, and when he called me “whore” one day, in a genuinely malicious tone, I began talking about it. Ironically, according to the co-operative’s by-laws, I had to tell my immediate supervisor. For me, that was the head cook who liked to rub against me. To his credit, however, he sympathized with me and confronted the produce manager.

* * *

To the world, I thought, women are whores. If we were not really whores, we were whores waiting to happen. I thought of Felicia, working as a dominatrix with an MA, my cousin, the women in the videos, and myself. Someone, something, wanted us, expected us, to be whores. Whore. You are a whore. Aren’t you a whore?

No, I am not a whore. But sometimes people thought I was. Sometimes people treated me like a whore in a script; smacking me, raping me, treating me with disrespect.

One day while I walked from a bus stop to my apartment building, some man in a truck mistook me for a whore. He honked his horn, gestured me to his truck, and followed me. I ran and ran. People think it is okay to rape whores, especially. I feared for my safety, for my life. Discounting asthma, I entered my building and ran up several flights of stairs faster than I ever thought my body could take me. I threw myself into my apartment and locked the door. I lacked the strength to do anything but slide down the door and sit with my back propped against it. My

chest hurt and for about twenty minutes I sat heaving and catching my breath. Then, I was able to stand and walk to my futon to relax.

According to various informants, most white women living in the neighborhood were whores. The white teachers and social workers went home at the end of the day. Those who knew me discussed this with me. Those who did not asked me if I was a whore. No self-respecting white woman would allow herself here, besides to administer to those less fortunate; that ideology emanated from the questions. My mother upheld the ideology by refusing to visit me during the entire time I resided there. Patriarchy, alienation, racism, what a triad they made in that neighborhood.

The affects of the triad seemed to grip everyone at times, even bus drivers. I recall one evening on the bus on the way to my apartment. I sat near the driver. She, a large African American woman, sang an impromptu song with these lyrics: "It's over, thank God its over." She repeated this line over and over again. Suddenly she turned and looked at me, and said: "Is that what you say at the end of the day? Is that what you say when it is time to leave work?" And then she laughed and sang her song again. The song turned into a story. "You strip. You are stripper." It was odd, but not so much. I had, after all, considered working as a cocktail waitress.

Hitting, whores get slapped; bitch-slap. The European cook at the co-operative, Serena, was bitch slapped. Her father bitch slapped her. Her father came all the way from Spain, after not seeing her for years, to bitch-slap her. She told the story.

She ran a small boutique in Cleveland, across from the co-operative. She attended the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City years ago and achieved some success in the industry. Several well-known fashion magazines used her work, she had her own website, and

three boutiques around the United States; one in Cleveland, one in Manhattan, and one in Santa Monica. But when her Dad visited, he bitch slapped her in her own store and told her she should not sell the sort of clothing she made. They were too skimpy; whore clothes. Like me, Serena survived rape. Three hippies gang raped her when she was sixteen when she first arrived in the United States.

* * *

Not conforming to the role of sex worker of some variant, I needed more than one job to support myself in the ghetto. The first six months I lived there I lectured at the university and additionally worked at a woman's boutique as a sales clerk. Without the lecturing gig, I turned to food service. I no longer worked at the boutique but took an extra job at an Italian restaurant. I did my hours at the restaurant after doing my time at the co-operative. But the work, behind the kitchen, at the Italian restaurant proved back-breaking especially after standing on my feet all day at the co-operative. After less than three months at the restaurant, I gave my two weeks notice and secured a job as a cashier at large university bookstore. I worked many jobs, did not have any insurance, barely made rent in a substandard building, and could not pay all of my bills; sometimes none.

While I worked at the co-operative and the bookstore, I took a of day substitute teaching whenever possible. I lived next to the high school, after all, and the elementary school was not far. As with most school districts, the process of becoming an eligible substitute teacher involved getting finger-printed. This school district, unlike the suburban districts I worked for in the past, had a finger printing machine inside their administration building. The high school principle took my fingers, pressed them to his automated scanner, and said: "I was deputized for this job."

Working in the ghetto as a substitute turned out remarkably similar to working as a substitute in the suburbs. The major difference was the age of text books or utter lack therein. One day of working with first graders, however, became the most intriguing of my days at that district. One little girl, referring to the strict second grade teacher next door, said to her classmates:

“Be quiet or that *white teacher* will come.”

Minutes of extended conversation about that white teacher followed as I sat, wondering how they perceived me, and feeling a sense of belonging. But suddenly, another little girl flinched, pointed at me, and declared:

“Look at her, what color do you think she is?”

“I don’t know,” said a little boy.

“She is white.”

“I don’t think she’s white.”

“She’s white, she’s white! She is white!”

The little girl who had initiated the conversation, and then the debate, stood up from her chair. She walked over to me, as I sat behind the big teacher’s desk, extended her small arms to touch my head on each side, and examined my face. She announced:

“She is not white.”

The controversy continued, so I told them I was part Irish. For several minutes we talked about how the English used to consider us other than white. “I knew it,” she said.

That little girl was not alone. Most people in the neighborhood recognized me, and accurately so, as white. But, on a humid day, I walked into the apartment building with my hair having responded to the moist air by loosing a straight form and reverting to frizzy ringlets and

waves. A neighbor looked at my hair, and said: “Your hair is more nappy than mine!” This developed into a conversation in which he talked about having met Sicilians with darker skin than his. The social construction of race happens in real life. It is not just a textbook matter.

* * *

The neighborhood overwhelmingly consisted of African American residents. I, a few purportedly white prostitutes, and an Arabic minority stood out as the only exceptions. Many of the Arabic women wore the full *hijab* and even a veil. Sometimes I saw them walk gracefully down the street, usually with a male escort. But on one occasion, I had an opportunity to talk to some of the Arabic women.

I enrolled myself in a continuing education class, sewing specifically. Between working many hours and searching for a career oriented job, I dashed to the school for the sewing class. I would be late and I rushed from door to door to find the right place. A black, male security guard strode over to me, and asked accusingly:

“What are you doing here?”

“I’m here taking a class.”

Approaching from the left walked a young Arabic woman wearing a *abaya*, *hijab*, and veil. The security guard left and I vented to this woman about how he probably assumed I was a prostitute. She then told me about how she is stereotyped as an Arabic woman, with her hands up above her head, said:

“It’s like, what do you think? I’m going to bomb the place?”

We laughed together for the first time, outside the building. As each class took place, we learned more and more about each other. She talked about her husband and her new sewing

hobby. She asked me about my education and my career. I listened as she and her Arabic friends talked about trips to New York to buy georgette for veils.

~

I found an internship in New York City, working for the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Workers), for the summer of 2002. As an intern, I would learn about the labor movement, unionize gourmet grocery store workers, and shout “*si se puede*” during street demonstrations. It felt like poetic justice to me after working in the award-winning natural foods cooperative for \$7 per hour and not receiving fair compensation for my knowledge of obscure and specialty foods and how to prepare them. The internship lasted for several months that summer. I made a little money, learned new skills, made new contacts, and the union would paid for my housing on the Columbia University’s campus in uptown Manhattan.

I would miss my friends, but not the lack of opportunity. I had not found a decent job, and I felt optimistic about New York. Many of the positions in the non-profit sector I had an interest in, after all, were in New York. I made a plan to conduct a job search, while already in New York, during my months as an intern. The free housing would take some financial burden from the process.

Before I left the Midwest, I attended the second annual Underground Publishing Conference at Bowling Green State University. I learned about it one night at Jeff’s house, on a snowy winter night. But spring had come and soon I would leave. Although I did not feel ready to apply for doctoral programs, I developed an interest in the university’s American Culture Studies program.

Prior to visiting Bowling Green, I was more interested in a doctoral program in Social Welfare. I became familiar with a new campus while screening art films at the *Cinematheque*

and other campus events such as Howard Zinn's visit and lecture. I treasured so much about the area, especially the people, but circumstances seemed to push me elsewhere.

Before leaving for New York, I passed through the Detroit area to visit my parents. Within several days, I would leave for New York. I left, as I had before, in a Greyhound bus.

Still not owning a car, I needed someone to drop me off at the bus station. The bus stop with more choices of when to leave sat in the heart of downtown Detroit. Because, by this time, all of my high school friends in the area no longer lived nearby, I had to ask a parent to drop me off. I could have left from another city, thus evading the need for parental help, but I wanted to visit my parents. I did not anticipate returning to the Midwest any time soon. I did not want to.

Much like her refusal to visit me in ghetto Cleveland, my mother refused to go to that area in downtown Detroit. So, my Dad dropped me off. We arrived at the station. He exited his new Mustang briskly, opened the truck, and plopped my two suitcases down on the sidewalk where I stood. Taking a nervous look around him, he said: "I better go soon." Perhaps we hugged, I am not sure, and then he darted back into his car.

There I stood, about to leave for New York. I expected success and adventure. I could even see Serena's store in Manhattan. I waited for the bus and it came. As I transported myself, and over-stuffed carry-on luggage filled with essential things for the summer and beyond, a man with hair dripping with sweat approached me.

He announced, with a hand protruding from his coat, that he had a gun and I needed to give him my money. I realized perhaps he had a gun, or possibly not, but if he did indeed have a gun that he might or might not use it. I felt slightly scared, but mostly annoyed. I explained to him that I could not spare any money and that he should understand. He insisted I give him a piece of luggage and I did. He left but managed to do this in the daylight without attracting any

attention. I barely had time to report it to the Greyhound personal but managed to before the bus left. Until that day I had never been mugged.

The ride took hours, but I slept through much of the night. In the morning, I awoke to large, shiny, grey buildings, outlining a clear sky. Soon I would arrive at Central Station and from there I would call the Intern Coordinator to pick me up and drive me to Columbia University.

* * *

In the day I attended meetings and workshops with the other interns. We had much in common, being less than 26 years old and almost universally college educated. But our degree of privilege varied. Among us were myself, a senior from Cornell, an 18 year old Latina who had worked in an Upstate sweat shop, a male student from a state university who served as the president of SAS (Student Against Sweatshops), an African American community college student, and other college students generally from large state universities. During one of our workshops, we watched the training video that Walmart routinely shows to their new hires; blatantly anti-union. When not at sessions, we organized workers and participated in street demonstrations.

On weekends and evenings and in spare moments I conducted my job search. I applied to a considerable amount of positions but managed to receive only two interviews. The first interview I obtained was with the Barnard Women's Studies program. They needed a new Administrative Assistant. For that interview, I had to walk across the street from the dormitory I stayed at in Columbia University's campus and to the Barnard Campus. I found the building and room easily and the interview went well, except one comment from the Women's Studies

Director. She told me that the position was an ideal one for “someone with a life.” As I left the room, I was not sure if that included me or not. Regardless, I did not get the position.

While in New York I received one more job interview, this time with ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now). ACORN is a lobbying group for housing, education, and community interests. I took three subway trains to reach this interview. At the end of that interview, the ACORN representative and I came to the mutual conclusion that if I worked for ACORN, it should be in the Detroit area.

* * *

As the summer weeks progressed job interviews grew increasingly scarce and I picked up the phone to call home; with much hesitation. I needed to do something I never wanted to. I needed to call my mother and ask, for the third time, to live in her house temporarily. Otherwise, I would simply not have anywhere to go when the internship ended. She took a deep breath.

She told me she would call me back with the answer. When she called me, perhaps a day later, the answer was yes. For me, it was a strange predicament but I made arrangements to spend the upcoming year working and applying to doctoral programs.

* * *

That academic year, of 2001 and 2002, I would substitute teach once more. It felt like a routine living with an unreceptive parent and substitute teaching. Of course I applied to doctoral programs as well.

One morning I lay in bed. The phone had not rung to summons me to a one-day teaching position. But, an hour or so later, the phone keep ringing and ringing. Waking more fully, I answered it. My mom spoke these words in a low tone: “Something bad has happened.” At first I thought something bad had happened to family member or friend. But my mom said: “No.

Something really bad has happened.” I was not sure what that meant, but sleepily conveyed that if everyone was okay I would go back to sleep. I hung up the phone and put my head on my pillow.

The phone rang again so I reached over for the receiver. My mom said: “It’s bad, I mean *really* bad.” I have heard these words before from my mother. She went on to describe the details surrounding 9-11, at the moment still incomplete. This caught me off-guard. I was not expecting something of this sort.

She mentioned the World Trade Center and then I mentioned I saw it while I was in New York. I think I made a short comment about how I was glad not to be in New York anymore. Dealing with the chaos would be difficult. Did she say she was glad I was not there too? I cannot remember.

I fell asleep. I knew the situation would not change if I slept or not. And honestly if I opened the front door to see nothing but a bottomless pit surrounding the house’s entirety for as far as the eye could see, regardless of 9-11, I believe I would have done the same; sleep. I slept after the rapist-professor committed his defining act and I could do it again.

Eventually I woke up again and started asking questions. Everyone was home now. I began watching the television and saw the buildings fall repeatedly. I was afraid to say anything wrong. She could have thrown me out again.

I said little. As the days progressed more details about the events of 9-11 become visible on television and newspapers. On a particular morning, my mother left a copy of the newspaper on the kitchen table, looked at me, and said: “Here.” She left without acknowledging it or saying goodbye. The house sat still and completely quiet. I picked up the newspaper, without anyone to watch my facial expression, and saw the face of a dark man in Felon orange. We captured a

terrorist. His name was Zacarias Moussaoui. Beneath his mug shot Moussaoui said something to this extent: “Every day I pray for the demise of the United States.” Regardless of his deeds, regardless of the facial expression I wore, I saw a man in orange.

* * *

My substitute teaching continued and I noticed a negative correlation between my age and the dignity of respect the students allowed me. During this third time I worked as a substitute teacher, someone threw a plastic, finger-sized penis at my head while I was turned, eyes to the board, explaining an Algebraic formula. A girl left me a note detailing how I was fat, ugly, with bad breath, and did not have any friends. I dealt with this on a regular basis, not every day, but on a regular basis.

This discouraged me and I took a more stable position teaching daytime adult education; mostly “problem” high school students. Like the cliché says, out of the frying pan and... At first the students seemed relatively receptive. Many of them seemed to lead difficult lives, living without parental support and sometimes on public assistance. One girl, in particular, appeared to have a severe mood disorder.

The difficulty continued. Students resisted and one invented a song about raping me. But I wanted to teach them.

Another day, I entered my classroom, and the girl with emotional problems screamed at me “B-I-T-C-H!” in a blood curdling pitch. Once I overheard this girl talk about her friend. According to what I heard, her boyfriend raped her. She said to another student: “Eventually I told her to stop telling me.” I wanted to intervene so I told her to listen and believe her friend, and to tell a trusted adult. She looked at me inquisitively and said: “Really?”

The middle-aged male director of this school approached me after school one day. He told me not to listen to these students about those issues. I challenged this, trying to explain the need to do the opposite. He was firm, I should ignore them.

The girl began routinely screaming in class. She routinely screamed directly at me. I could not conduct class at times. Once I asked her to visit the director. So, she left.

Next, she returned and said that I was “in trouble” for sending her to the Director’s office. During the break she described her latest interaction with the Director. Her fellow students wanted to know why she was not in trouble. She told them: “I gave him head.” This alarmed me but I maintained a distance to get information.

Because it was break the students started to leave one-by-one. She remained looking directly at me and told me that this was routine. He asked her to do this to get a reprieve rather than a suspension from school.

After the school day ended I walked to the Director’s office. I knew he would not be there. I walked in and asked the Administrative Assistant details about his immediate and more distant supervisors. That evening I made phone calls and wrote letters.

* * *

The victimized female student wanted to know why I “told.” I do not think I was ever able to answer her question to her satisfaction, but I told her that I cared about her. With the Director gone, I was offered the job. The students wanted me to take it, without a Director their education might have been interrupted.

I began to gather the material to teach the majority of courses, to take the Director’s position, and took them home to organize them. I felt overwhelmed. I needed to complete my

graduate applications well enough to gain entrance and an assistantship. It became agonizing but I had to refuse the position.

The next several weeks, before officially leaving, were difficult. But I left and left those students behind. I returned to substitute teaching.

I had my share of easy days with cooperative students. But many times I was not able to conduct class because of uncooperative students. The school administration, most often in the high school, did not want to intervene when necessary. I developed the habit of following up on discipline problems and talking to administrative staff about the cases.

The Administration did not like this and resisted my efforts. When I confronted the school Principal by saying: “You are asking me to take abuse.” He responded, without a flinch: “I am.” That convinced me that I made the right choices.

* * *

That academic year, my second year not being enrolled in a degree program, came and went just like all the others previously. I was as distant from the academy as I would ever be, I thought. The year before, fall semester, I taught as an adjunct for one semester. The following semester, I lacked an official institutional affiliation but spent time with doctoral candidates and other university students talking about social theory and dissertation topics. Next, I stayed at Columbia University while doing an internship. This last fall I made a meager wage as an educational worker and applied to graduate school.

I knew at least one school would accept me and offer an assistantship. My application had been strong. The spring of 2002 had come and gone and I received a decent offer. I would begin doctoral work in fall 2002. The years away from school had been spent in a limbo

suspended between the academy and society. From this I learned that the two are interchangeable.

That summer I read Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* page by page, from front to cover. I own an autographed copy from when he came to Case Western Reserve University. I gathered and collected other books to help prepare me for interdisciplinary study. My degrees were in Sociology and I wanted to ease my transition. But mostly I treasured the chance and time to read it completely. I enjoyed the entire book and especially appreciated the chapter "The Coming Revolt of the Guards."

One evening that summer I spent time in my mother's basement organizing books pertaining to American Studies and Cultural Studies. I left the radio on with the dial set to a local Detroit station and as the hours passed a radio talk show began. The Detroit Teacher's Union hosted the show and that night they chose 9-11 for their topic. An African American man with a strong voice represented the predominantly black union and challenged the mainstream perspective of the incident without apology. I, notably, recall him stating something to the effect of: "How do we know we can trust what they are saying? Maybe we should be happy this happened." With my bare feet on the basement's cool tile floor, the night sky falling, I thanked providence for the radio's low volume and listened. I thought of Radio Free Berkeley and wondered what the people currently said on it.

* * *

On my first day on the campus of Bowling Green State since the Underground Publishing Conference in summer 2001, I returned to introduce myself to faculty and staff at my new university. I would later return for orientation but made this additional visit as well.

I met an important administrative figure involved with my program, made brief introductions, and discussed plans to meet for lunch. In the meantime I would meet the supervisor involved with the program I would teach for in the fall; a program set apart from my home program.

Still in the morning, I set out to walk to another section of campus to meet the supervisor. We already talked over the phone and I knew he was not American; English to be exact. After locating the hall, I entered it and looked for the appropriate office. As I spotted it, I walked forth and knocked on the door. In a British accent, I heard: "Come in."

I walked in the small office and took a seat next to the supervisor's desk. He sat at the desk and began to talk. He talked about where I am from, what I have studied, and why I chose the American Culture Studies program; the usual. I asked him about his hometown in Britain, what he did his dissertation on, and so forth. It turned out he wrote a dissertation on Ismael Reed. I liked him, he and I got on well and I was sorry to hear that he would leave. The university did not renew his contract and he needed to return to England.

His mentioning of going to Europe sparked a discussion of travel and the conversation turned to my travels. I imagined enough people at the university to be like him; casual, friendly, cosmopolitan. It is a small town, but a university town after all.

But I voiced some of my reservations about living in a small town and disclosed my inwardly sensed fear that somewhere, somehow a secret cabal of Ku Klux Klansmen runs the town. A little paranoid, yes, but this was raw emotion. He listened.

We talked of curriculum, method, and content. He recommended using Traci E. Ore's *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality* to teach class. Maybe I asked about the students, I do not recall. But he warned me: "They are the

rural middle class.” I told him I have never heard of such a class and wondered what they are like. I imagined students like the characters in a 1980s *After School Special* about nuclear warfare who keep their hot red sports car in the barn with hay. I felt curious.

He told me that they have been isolated and lack experience. He advised: “You have them for three hours a week, expose them to as much as possible.” “They are the *rural* middle class,” he said again and he gripped my right wrist, which I had resting on his desk, as if to help brace me for the shock and challenge.

I looked at him, a peer. Based on our conversation, I understood he lived a life like mine. He was maybe ten years older at most and I reflected on how people our age have lived the same lives. We go to Europe, they come here. There is an international culture. Where have these others, these isolated others, been for so long? What do they look like? I imagined classes full of normalized white kids. I hoped I would not scare them. What would they think of me?

After leaving the office, I made my way to the hall where I could start my new campus e-mail account. Along the way, I saw a key faculty member of my new program. He was sitting on a bench. He said hello and I walked over and joined him. We made small talk about my participation in the program and he turned toward me and said: “This is not going to be a walk in the park.” I concluded he was referring to doing a PhD in general, but I feared the controversy surrounding my arrival had some bearing on the comment.

I received my acceptance letter, with an assistantship offer, early. It did not surprise me. My application had been more than adequately strong. But the contract had been slow to arrive. I would call the office, making inquiries. Finally, a key faculty member explained that *someone* did not want me in the program or on campus. He refused to give me the name but I wanted it so

I could avoid that someone. According to the key faculty member I would get my contact. The resistant person would not be able to do anything but slow the process down.

There I was, at the end of my 25th year, I would start my doctoral work but would arrive on campus for my first fall semester already being on someone's blacklist. Being an optimist, I believed that I just needed to figure out who it was and avoid them. I did not expect it to be a global or diffuse problem. Avoidance would serve me well I thought.

That day, the introductions, and the paperwork would pass. But first I would spend a night in the Days Inn in Bowling Green. I had not been there yet and returning there for the evening and to sleep would be my first encounter with the room.

As I inserted the key card, opened the door, and entered the room, I was not prepared for what I would find. No, it was not a dead whore, a trope to later become an overused joke at graduate student parties at my new university, beneath the bed. But, elongated white stains accented the carpet. I took a closer look, someone, some man had brazenly decorated the carpet by waving his genitals about while ejaculating.

This was my life. I tried to think of who knew I would be here, who might have done this. I did not believe it was meant for me per se. It was a coincidence, but not really. It reminded of me the time I hung flyers around campus for Take Back the Night, the one Linda Marciano spoke at. We used Veronica's car, but when we ran out of staples we went to a store to buy more. As Veronica parked her car she and I noticed two men having a petite circle jerk in their car. Veronica, jittery, told me: "Get out fast!" We exited the car, and entered the store, briskly.

When we returned to the parking lot, we observed how the men had decorated her car with strewn ejaculatory fluid. Veronica, on the way to the car wash, said: "This is *not* a

coincidence.” They even spelt B-I-T-C-H in their fluid. I remember how she positioned a hose in front of her pelvis and mocked the waving motion, as she hopped up and down with her face red, laughing at *them* in jest as she sprayed the car with water at the self-serve car wash we used.

I wondered what awaited me in Bowling Green in lieu of this foreshadowing, but discounted this irrational thought. I could not help but think of the video of ejaculatory facial paintings in the sleazy hotel. What were these aberrations of reality following a step ahead in my path anyway? God help me.

* * *

The fall happened and I taught a class from a social constructionist, intersections approach. I taught my students about the social construction of race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, and their intersections. I taught them about oppression and resistance. I did not have any major problems that semester. Students argued with me, defending the system, but in general they gave me their attention and a decent amount of respect. The most troublesome comment I heard that semester came from a male student who compared my teaching to: “Having your mom nag you about something over and over again.”

Besides teaching I spent time talking with my officemate who taught another section of the course I taught. We shared stories about teaching. We also shared stories of being students. I told him about the rapist-professor. I felt safe doing this because his was gay, progressive, and kind. He told me about how a professor sexually harassed him. We swapped stories again and again. When I told him about how the rapist-professor thrust his pelvis at me, and said: “Obviously Jeanine you don’t know what’s normal or you don’t care!” he laughed and almost tumbled over. I laughed uncontrollably too and that statement became our inside joke. We laughed at him. The joke was on him.

Eventually the memories of the rape motivated me to express my concerns to the rapist-professor one more time. I decided to write a frank, open letter via e-mail. Here is the first paragraph, excerpted and verbatim save for the name represented in pseudonym (J. Pfahlert, personal communication, September 2, 2002):

Dr. Brown, I am writing to you in an attempt to discuss your past treatment of me. I hope you recall that the last time I tried to do this during the summer of 1999 in your office you thrust your pelvis at me in a mocking gesture. Please note that during that academic semester I promptly spoke to another faculty person about your behavior (...)

Jeanine

I further resolved to make a police report and explore legal options. But in order to reach that point in my recovery, and I currently have a report dated June 30, 2004, I required years of help from a social worker, victim's advocate, and of course the fêted therapist. In the winter of 2004 I notably I worked up the courage to join a rape survivor's support group.

Coming into a sense of being able to make the police report, even after seven years had past since the rape, proved only part of the difficulty. The police, as they had before, expressed more concern about the accused than me. Once I established contact with the police again, I received feedback about *his* rights. Still, I made the report.

My dream, my goal, as I declared in my survivor group was to obtain a copy of my rape report. That is, to make the report and see it. After months of the group sessions behind me, I began working toward making the report and finally accomplished that. But, the police haggled to keep a copy of the report from me. Ironically, per the police's demands, I had to file a

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to obtain a copy of a police report: a) about someone else and b) that I had made; all this for something that supposedly exists in public domain, i.e., a criminal police report. Because my exposure to FOIA had always been about people requesting their own FBI files, the process left me with the feeling that the police held the report to be information about *me*, rather than the rapist-professor. I felt in the eyes of the “system” the report criminalized me.

* * *

Spring semester began and I noticed a positive correlation between my officemate’s frank outspokenness about the professor’s harassment and the amount of times a faculty member called him to question in the office. When returning he would look beat and forlorn. He eventually began talking about leaving the university before completing his PhD.

We both taught the same class as the semester before. That semester my students resisted the material more so than last. Still holding on to what he could, my officemate asked me for suggestions of material to use in class. I suggested the Drawbridge, the very one used at the training session for the domestic violence shelter I volunteered for when I was an undergraduate.

He used it the semester before I did. One day, after using it, he swiftly entered the office we shared and put down his books and materials firmly. With his eyes moist with potential tears, he said: “They all said it was her fault, they all thought it was her fault.” I immediately began asking him about how he introduced the exercise. I felt skeptical. I did not consider the same sort of scenario might occur in my classroom.

The day came when I used the Drawbridge in my class. I had similar results with a significant number of students, perhaps a majority, placing blame on the dead woman. Still,

several exceptions allowed me to feel hopeful. I expected these attitudes to change as we progressed through the unit on institutional violence.

I knew I successfully educated many students that semester. But I cannot forget the one student who passionately argued, with a passion I have yet to see in any other student at this university for any other topic, “sometimes women deserve rape” and alternatively “some women deserve rape.” He argued with me, expected to persuade me. After I returned to that office that day, I had the moist eyes and I cried alone and in the dark.

That semester I also discussed experiential knowledge and epistemology. I allowed and encouraged students to write about their own experience of, or related to, oppression or oppressive systems whilst referencing course materials such as the text, lectures, group activities, and discussion. Many students met this challenge well, and I felt good about my teaching, even though many of them did not seem to “like” me.

One student in particular, one of my best students, wrote about a friend of his. Someone, an acquaintance of his friend, entered her room one night and turned the radio to a louder volume. He put his hand over her mouth and raped her. The expression on my student’s face the day I collected papers told me the scenario was nonfiction. Later, I spoke with him and referred him and his friend to the Victims Advocate at the Women’s Center.

Knowing students still raped and abused other students in dormitories, and discovering that the taboo against blaming the victim did not even create a façade of compassion at my new university deeply troubled me. And, like the semester before, students still characterized me as a nanny figure in their off-hand comments. One student, on the last day of class, when I allowed them to leave early for the first time ever, said: “That is not fair; you are supposed to be here for the kids.”

Classroom dynamics seemed backward, in the literal sense, but also in the cultural sense. The backwardness reached beyond the classroom. Justice itself remained upside down.

That academic year I received a phone call from my mother. The campus police, in the same station as the people who had arrested me five years previous, called her house referencing my e-mail to the rapist-professor. According to her, I needed to call the station. I did not, but rather scheduled an appointment with a lawyer who advised me to not call.

Despite the trouble, I felt disappointed. Still needing to deny the worst of the situation, I hoped for a resolution or at least the beginning of a resolution. Instead, I had to accept the finality of his cruelty, selfishness, and hypocrisy along with the institutional advantages he kept over me.

* * *

The following summer I took classes. The summer passed without great incident but involved one interaction that continued to upset me for a substantial amount of time afterward. It took place in the building housing the department I would teach for during the academic year of 2003/2004. I had a mailbox in the building and occasionally visited it.

The first time I set foot in the building I went to visit the very department I would teach for in the fall. I visited them, not about teaching, but about adding their discipline to my interdisciplinary course load as a minor. I went to the building to meet with a particular faculty member about being a minor.

Our conversation about using the discipline as a minor seemed fairly normal on the surface. One dimension of the conversation, however, frustrated me. This professor seemed very irritated that someone could autonomously, without having to take a qualifying exam in his discipline, elect to have the discipline as a minor. Troubled with his lack of executive power in

the matter, he talked of hypothetical scenarios involving students needing to sit an exam in order to minor.

That aspect of the conversation frustrated me. But something else the professor did gave me a sick, creepy feeling. As he sat behind his desk, with me in front of him in a chair, he formed a prism with his hands and placed them directly before his groin and thrust his elevated pelvis somewhat discreetly. He moved in this fashion, for my eyes to see exclusively, as if fucking a physic prism pussy he constructed with his bare hands.

After the experience, I talked the conversation over with a key faculty member of my doctoral program. I first wanted to make sure I would not have to sit an extra exam to minor in that discipline. The key faculty member allayed my concerns and said: "I have never heard of anyone having to sit an exam to minor." Next, I told him about the physic prism. I took care in this matter, after all, what could I prove? He hesitated to accept my interpretation of the scene and attributed it to a clinical condition he knew the person in question had.

I felt defensive so explained that a professor had raped me as an undergraduate and that the pelvis thrusts had reminded me of the assault. The key faculty member's face turned red, he put his head in his hands with elbows folded on his desk, and eventually stood. As he stood he shouted: "My sister!" and strode out of his office. I sat not knowing what to do.

Several minutes later he returned. Before I could begin speaking again he told me a story. He said: "One day, my sister's professor raped her in an elevator. He refused to write her letters for graduate school. He kept her out of graduate school." Then, he laughed without restraint.

The psychic prism pussy materialized the first time I had entered that building and the aftermath of learning that a professor raping me came with its own historicity had come and

gone. Still, I could not forget either. That day would be a normal day. I just had to check my mailbox, after all, just like everyone else did.

Wrong. I was not like everyone else. I wore a dress that day, albeit a very modest and long dress.

I saw a box of discarded books placed near the elevator, and as usual, I rifled through them for anything useful. This department, being positivistic, collectively discarded a healthy dose of cultural texts. I, bent over in my dress, and began picking out books of interest.

The faculty member, not the one with the psychic prism pussy but the one who would oversee my teaching next academic year, happened to pass by. He greeted me and I stood up to respond. As I began to stand, I saw his hand go over his mouth as if to signify “oh my” or “oh no” and his mouth took a circular shape and his eyes widened, as if he had seen a “naked lady” as opposed to a bent-over student or scholar.

At 26 years of age I realized the men of this department had socially constructed a floating, hysterical psychic prism pussy. Because of my opportune presence I served as the perceived abode of this entity. Little I knew, however, the power of perception. I naively assumed that Psychoanalytic Feminism had good reason to leave macro-structural details to Marxist Feminism. So, I went about my day as usual and tried to rid myself of the perversity that clung to my body.

* * *

The fall of 2003 marked the start of my teaching assignment with the department that the psychic prism pussy originated in. For the first time ever I would conduct class in a large lecture hall. Because I wanted to share the knowledge I accumulated over the years I felt grateful for the opportunity.

While working for this new department I moved my office items out of the office I shared with my officemate-turned-friend. I would miss his company and our conversations. Now I would have an office in the building of my doctoral program with much of my cohort.

My office, shared with three other male students, sat at the end of the hallway. A key faculty member called me into his office one day, after I moved my items in that office at the end of the hall, and suggested that I move into an office closer to the main office. He portrayed discomfort with my presence in a distant office with three male students. I mollified his fears, thinking he had some deep-seated issue because of what happened to his sister.

Meanwhile, I found my students' behavior in the large lecture hall akin to the sort of behavior among students I witnessed as a substitute teacher. They, apparently, did not think I deserved their full respect. I thought about this quite a bit and concluded that without being able to construe me as a mother or nanny figure, I seemed like an anomaly to them. I believed, however, that I would overcome this.

The behavior of the students never improved that fall. To make matters worse, the behavior of many male colleagues toward me worsened. Many tried, and sometimes managed, to interrupt, insult, or chastise me in our seminars. Clearly, they viewed me a woman in need of reproach. I did not adjust to this.

In line with the fixation on the whore trope, one male colleague indirectly referred to my analysis of a film as "this old who'rish argument around somewhere". Like the Prism, this argument led a rogue existence. This treatment did not remain in class, either. In reference to how a professor raped me, one night as I related the story outside in the starry dusk, another male colleague threw his head back and cackled to the extent that his head appeared to hit and

inevitably loll against the full moon. He, a film scholar, said: “I have trouble imagining this in any way but cinematic.”

I liked my back corner office. I could hide from all of this there. I hung a heart-shaped dream catcher above my desk, making a small haven. But that would end. One day, I opened a drawer and found a novelty condom with a wrapper reading: “Flowers seem clique and passé nowadays, so won’t you just hit the hay and be my lay?”

Initially, I did not think much about the novelty condom. I concluded that perhaps it had been there all along, before I moved in, and I just had not noticed it yet. But, I went to a key faculty member to inquire who had the desk last year so that I could ask them if it was there earlier. He told me: “I don’t have time for this.”

Another incident followed. This time I knew it was meant to bother me. It happened near Halloween, and in response I made this statement via e-mail to my colleagues (J. Pfahlert, personal communication, February 20, 2004):

Dear Colleagues,

One evening when I entered my office in 113 East Hall, I encountered my pose-able plush Kermit, on my desk, in a feminized sexual position. Kermit's legs were over his shoulders and directly in front, and beneath him on the desk's chair, was my plush Halloween snake. The subtext here is obvious (...)

Sincerely,

J. Pfahlert

I protested the incident and the social dynamics allowing it by refusing to attend the annual Halloween party. I explained my intentions with this protest-by-absence in the e-mail correspondence. I also placed a copy of the e-mail in everyone's academic mailbox. Next, I marched to the program office with a copy in-hand.

When I spoke to a key faculty member about the problem, he could not spend any time on it as before. He told me: "Well, I'm not going to investigate." So, taking in the cruel irony of receiving harassment that no one took pity on me for while getting tagged as a harasser for trying to make amends with my rapist, I returned to the office, shut the door, put my head in my hand, and cried. I started to wonder if someone would rape me again and my breaths become shorter and shorter as I sobbed.

When I spoke with him about it again he said: "I told you that you should have moved into an office closer to the main office." Always, I pointed out, when these things happen to women the response is to tell us what we need to do differently. I declared: "I don't need to do *anything* differently."

* * *

My grandmother, my last grandparent, on my father's side died that fall. She had a proper Catholic funeral, complete with an extended visitation period in chapel adjacent to a Catholic church. While she would be laid out over days during the span of a week, I took only the Friday of the funeral away from my teaching schedule. My students would only lose one day from class because of this major event.

I attended the funeral, unlike anyone on my mother's side of the family, and received the usual, obligatory questions about the whereabouts of those absent. In the middle of the mass, my cousin Cynthia took a seat in a pew. A man accompanied her. I had seen this man with her

repeatedly and he usually wore ostentatious clothing. For this occasion, however, he wore more subdued clothing. Initially they sat far from the immediate family. But I turned around from a front pew and smiled at them and they moved up to a pew directly behind me.

At the Wake, my uncle, the eldest son, gave the toast to the crowd. He spoke of my grandmother's lace-curtain Irish distaste for dinner rolls, as they were just "filler" and her unique talent of recognizing people's talent. Dinner would not include rolls or bread but the waiters would soon take orders, he explained. He ended with a note about my grandmother's generosity. She left this world shortly after willing money to St. John's hospital in San Francisco.

* * *

The fall semester would come and go, unlike the maltreatment of me. My students' behavior worsened that spring. They talked over me, ritually insulted me, and scowled at me. I wondered when a plastic penis might hit my head.

I worked in my office and sometimes one of the guys came in. One of them often conversed with me and he said one afternoon to me: "You are someone people love to hate." I was not sure what it meant, but I felt it rendered what I considered harassment as generic hate. I felt hated and hearing about how people hated me did not help.

So hated was I that the student tech workers virtually refused to do their job for any of the movies I ordered for my class. To make matters worse, my complaints to their supervisor lacked credibility to the extent that he chastised me for not being yielding enough to them. I asked my direct supervisor for intervention, to prevent escalation, and he blamed it on me and refused to help. This direct supervisor, by the way, had been the one to first recognize my body as the abode of the rouge prism. So, as it were, despite my plea for help, my students' behavior became increasingly disrespectful.

One particular day would be the proverbial last straw. That day I showed the class the Razanne doll, Islamic alternative to Barbie, for the purpose of introducing ethnic dress (Muslim, 2003). One student red baited me as a Communist while others mocked as if at a freak show. Another student yelled: “You don’t pay me, I pay you!” The events culminated with me having to resort to calling campus security for fear of one particularly angry student, after multiple warnings.

Rather than granting me the authority accorded to any other instructor, my supervisor upheld the “incident” as emblematic of my overall alleged incompetence. Other such calamities, such as a publisher not publishing one of my supplementary text books on time and thus preventing my students from purchasing it were also attributed to my own personal and professional failings. So, my final day of teaching at this university would come sooner than planned and without any formal warning.

My character underwent assassination and my professional progress hampering. Many students left me with insulting evaluations, including this favorite of mine: “Get RID of Pfahlert.” In response I began pondering its affect somehow paralleling Nazi sentiment towards Jews. Several students voiced grievances in my favor about the series of events. But not even the university unit accepting grievances and discrimination complaints would allow them to speak. Back into the closet all dissent went.

As for myself, I remained visible but on my last teaching day would come to be contained as well. My former supervisor, armed with a Dean, entered my classroom and announced their judgment. They stood in formation with blank teaching evaluations to distribute. I left in view of them as they threw a net over the Prism grown colossal, a monstrous vagina dentate that had been me.

~

When I spoke to a staff member at the campus Women's Center, telling her the whole story, from start to finish she urged me not to tell the story about being looked at with the "male gaze" when I bent over. As I tried to explain its relevance, my mind flashed to Angie. She had come to my apartment in one of those moods.

She worked at our university's Women's Center and she despised the reformist atmosphere it retained. She entered my apartment in a rage telling me about how she went around campus dumping the Women's Center's newsletters in trashcans instead of following orders and delivering them. "I am un-working" she said, referring to Valarie Solanas and her *SCUM Manifesto*. I wanted so much to tell Angie this story about what this comfortable woman said to me as she sat behind her desk but I could not. Essentially, she had said: "Gee honey, you better just keep that to yourself. It is best to be a dirty little secret."

I no longer taught. They castrated me. They gagged me. They intellectually gang raped me. Violet used to talk about "mind rapists."

I walked across campus on a late spring day and walked past the building housing the men responsible for the Prism. On my left walked another woman who taught for that department. I asked: "How are you?" She said, referring to the semester's teaching, taking a strained yet heavy exhale: "I'm just glad it's over." That is how I felt after the rapist-professor let me go.

When I was an undergraduate a coed who went on the same overseas trip as me invited his self to my apartment one day. He told me a story. When he arrived, I let him in. He sat down on my folded futon, next to me, and began to tell me about a fraternity party he attended

the weekend previous. Initially the story sounded weird, when did I care about those kinds of parties?

He sat, seeming to savor the moment of telling, and said: ‘I went to a fraternity party last weekend. A girl got so drunk that she passed out. They put her on a couch and on the pool tape. Everyone got in line and took their turn raping her. She deserved it.’

He reiterated “she deserved it” several times before I got a chance to tell him to leave. He made sure to say “she deserved it” several times again before leaving. He left and I locked the door behind him.

Before I continued my day, I sat down alone on my futon. I thought about this and wondered why he wanted so badly to tell me the story. I thought about the racist beatings at the fraternity house. The Chicano victims were actually invited to the party and I had been too. Fearing it a malicious plan to harm me, I refrained from even going to observe. Had they planned to do something like this to me?

The students ran over me. An academic “train” ran over me. My direct supervisor was the conductor. Just bend over, I pay you. You don’t pay me you whore. Don’t forget to smile and be nice.

~

As always, I redressed the situation. To begin with, I sought the help of a Dean thinking the situation would strike the Dean as egregiously unfair. When this failed, I decided to file an official Discrimination Complaint with the office in the university taking such complaints. In addition I appealed the appropriate Executive Committee but they too disavowed me.

While I supplied the office dealing with the Complaint with my witnesses’ names, they failed to contact those in a position to defend me but instead focused on those mobilized against

me in their “investigation”; which they wisely refused to call an Investigation. As a result, the office’s conclusions left me in the same position I had already been placed in. The Office, however, advised me to next appeal to the Provost and I did.

When I met with the Provost, tepid Women’s Center personnel-as-witness in tow, I told my story. He appeared uniquely empathetic and looked as if on the cusp of weeping as I related the series of events. Prior to the end of the session, he reminded me of my “right” to appeal once more to the university President if I found his forthcoming decision unsatisfying.

Incidentally, we met on the night of the 2005 Halloween party colleagues held annually. The year previous I had protested by not attending. This year I would continue in the protest spirit, this time by attending. As I exited the Provosts’ Office, he asked me if I had Halloween plans. I told him I was attending the departmental party as the Whore of Babylon from Revelations. I kept the allegories to my real-life situation to myself.

Just as I had begun the official Discrimination Complaint while waiting for the Executive Committee’s decision, I began exploring outside legal possibilities while waiting for the Provost’s decision. I started with a legal referral I obtained from the American Association University Women; the proclaimed “Best Civil Rights Lawyer in Ohio.” That produced a document from Mr. Civil Rights attributing the situation to my “eccentricity” and refusing to represent me.

Once I received the Provost’s written decision, I learned that I now needed to appeal one more time to the President. But, when I attempted to begin that process, his secretary coolly informed me that too much time had passed and the President did not have any obligation to hear me. Conveniently, the Office receiving my Discrimination Complaint, as well as the Provost,

failed to inform me of the deadline. The secretary explicitly communicated to me that no other course of action was possible within the Institution.

I tried to obtain good legal advice one more time after someone referred me to another lawyer. That someone was anarchist Anthropologist David Graeber, who had been recently dislodged from his faculty position at Yale for reasons associated with his political alliances. I had contacted David to share my story, as I had previously contacted Ward Churchill for the same reason, and David recommended the lawyer.

The lawyer was not able to help. But, because I reached out to other jeopardized scholars, I am aware that David is currently on an international speaking tour about the ideological discrimination he has experienced in our country's university system. And, of course, there were countless face-to-face conversations about my experiences and the associated issues with friends, colleagues, acquaintances, comrades, and strangers.

* * *

I went through the last part of spring semester without a job, without one for summer, and no such plans for employment for the fall. I was jobless. But providence would offer me a job. It happened one night, about midnight, when my friend dropped me off in her car in front of my apartment building. I opened the passenger door and stepped out.

I live downtown, near the clubs. A small group of people stood, contemplating on whether to go to the club Uptown or not. One of them, the eldest looking male, asked me if I knew the time. I told him it was midnight.

The interaction slid into small talk and he eventually disclosed that he made pornographic films professionally. They were from Los Angeles, just visiting. One of them would start school here soon. He suggested I consider working in pornography industry. The irony fascinated me.

With a piece of performance art, I had protested not being able to talk about *Deep Throat* in class, was fired for being strong, and now someone wanted to pay me to pose as a sexual object. There I stood with an MA and my doctoral coursework nearly completed and the only employment opportunity extended to me entailed bending over, getting used, and being nice about being a whore. He gave me his number. I never called him. I would spend the summer with minimal funds and like it.

~

Postscript: 11-21-05

This morning my radio alarm drew me back into the thick of it. I woke up to a comedian reciting jokes that first passed as normal to me. He mockingly claimed that marriage had saved his life. Before marriage he wore shoes in the house and breathed too hard. Thanks to his wife, he knew better and owed it all to her.

Annoying jokes eventually ceased but I could not prepare myself for what came next. The actor David Lopez, who allegedly killed his wife, had evaded a criminal conviction but would be held for 3 million dollars “liability” in a civil suit. I cannot ignore the connection.

I, in my drowsy stupor, thought about the last two times I have heard the word “pussy.” Both times, from males voices, I heard the word used either in offense or insult. About a week ago, as I walked to a friend’s house, a young man in the passenger seat of a truck yelled in my direction something about “getting pussy.” The rest was inaudible. But it seemed like my lone female presence, and I was the only one on the street, had prompted this declaration. I, alone, served as a walking pussy signifier and the declaration reduced me to the signified.

And, just several days ago, when walking to that same friend’s house, I passed another young man using the word. As I walked passed him, on the same sidewalk, he held his phone to

his mouth and called the person on the other end a “pussy.” His voice indicated an accusation. I thought to myself, it is not a good thing to be a pussy in this world.

In the simple sense, to be a pussy is to be like a woman. But what if you are a woman? The insult goes without saying, apparently. Of course, women are half the population and we are the real pussies of society. But what differentiates a woman who becomes the signified, as opposed to the rest who just signify in silence?

Based on my observations as of late, to become a female *signified* as pussy or *a* pussy, a male must acknowledge you. Corporal mobility, i.e. *walking*, seems to set up the reception or witness of pussy signification; in other words public mobility. Women mobile in public, then, receive a sanction for taking their pussies out-of-doors. Feminine visibility and mobility, then, are taboo.

When visible and mobile, we become at-large cargo for men to refer to, shout at, or have a go at. About a month ago, something happened that reminded me of this. I had been strolling down the street, on the way to that proverbial friend’s house. It was October 26, 2005.

As I approached a dark intersection, a truck stopped behind me and I heard a male voice say: “Hey do you want a ride?” The tires screeched and the voice’s drawl conveyed they had been drinking. Already irritated after a day of braving sexism, I turned around about to unleash my frustration and then the visual of the scene held me back. I was a woman, walking alone in the dark, and these two men in a truck were the only other people visible. So, I simply yelled: “NO!” and continued walking. I heard a diminishing: “Aw, come on girl...” while the other took the wheel cursing and shouting. The truck hurled forward, screeching loudly.

I turned around to look behind me after walking a half of a block and noticed I could no longer see them or their truck. I realized I had more than four blocks ahead before reaching my

friend's house. I hoped they would not return. I felt the fear, my fear and the fear of all the women who do not dare walk at 10:00pm. I trembled.

~

My story ends here, with a tremble on my path to a PhD.

Chapter 4: Coming Together, Community and Critical Analysis

"Yesterday I met one of the professors that I had a brief relationship with, but I only notice his jealousy and his wish to see me struggling, while he has power at the university to make a difference. It is like Mafia every where I go in this world, and I pray that God help me to survive it." Anonymous friend, September 29, 2005

Section 1: Contour

In the most open, casual since I must write, despite the bizarre, unbelievable experiences I am able to tell, that living my life in turn enables me to meet others with comparable experiences. For this simple reason, I have conducted interviews in conjunction with my auto-ethnography. In the Sociological sense I, after all, do not exist alone or experience reality alone. Rather, my experiences come from a socially situated lived reality.

For these reasons, I chose interviewees from my own social world. I consider many interviewees friends. Some are chance acquaintances, some closer acquaintances. I did not pick my "sample" randomly, and thus in the conventional language interviewees make up a "convenience sample." This terminology, however, does not give justice to my rationale for conducting the interviewees.

My rationale, in broad terms, comes from a deep desire to articulate and express the experiences coming from an otherwise marginalized social milieu. I am implying that this collective body represents a singular milieu? No, but I have an interest in exploring the commonalities, the patterns, shared between each milieu.

Each interviewee's relation to me I find highly relevant. The reasons for this range from circumstances under which I met them, to the resonances their stories have for me, and our shared experiences. The interviews, thus, extend my auto-ethnography while locating me socially.

The interviews play a paramount role. The role involves the process of acknowledging that my experiences, as described in the Chapter 3, do not account for an anomalous series of events without relevance in the social world beyond a single individual. Rather, through the interviews, I aspire to demonstrate and reinforce the social, institutional, and *structural* meanings my experiences have.

I interviewed 13 friends and acquaintances. The number reflects the small size of the interviewee pool. Specifically, I began with a list of approximately 25 people as possible interviewees. I had a roughly 50% affirmative response, and thus ended up with 13 interviews.

Figure 1: Interviewee Demographics At-a-Glance

Name	Age	Education	Sex
Alice	middle aged	PhD	F
Karen	mid 20s	Bachelors +	F
Faith	middle aged	High School +	F
Hannah	middle aged	Bachelors + -	F
Styx	mid 30s	Bachelors +	F
Cydar	late teens	High School + -	M
Tim	mid 20s	Bachelors +	M
Kelman	middle aged	Masters + -	M
Djuan	mid 20s	Bachelors + -	M
Randal	mid 30s	High School	M
Nick	mid 30s	Masters +	M
Penny	senior citizen	PhD	F
Linnea	mid 20s	Masters	F

+ aspiration for additional education - crippling resistance; financial, social, institutional

The above chart provides a descriptive overview only.

The gender ratio, exactly 7:6 female to male, came close to equally representing men *and* women, however, the sample represented more women than men. In terms of percentage, about 54% of the sample was female while about 46% was male. With the exception of one

interviewee being partially Latina in heritage and another being African American, all interviewees were entirely Caucasian. Thus, an overwhelming 85% of the interviewees were white.

While all interviewees were over the age of 18, ages ranged from 19 to 63. All other interviews were in their mid 20s, mid 30s, or were middle aged. The largest single age groups were those in their mid 20s and the middle-aged interviewees. Each of these groups made up about 31% of the sample. Interviewees in their mid 30s represented about 23% of the sample. Yet, a majority of interviewees were between ages 25 and 35 years of age or somewhere close.

Two interviewees, both female and representing about 15% of the sample, hold doctoral degrees. Three hold Masters degrees as their highest earned degree to-date and represent about 23% of the sample. One of the interviewees, however, completed doctoral coursework without completing his program. Five hold Bachelors degrees as the highest degree earned to-date, and represent about 38% of the sample. Of all those five, each expressed an intent or desire to earn at least a Masters degree. Of the three, and thus 23% of the sample, holding only high school diplomas, two were currently enrolled in post-secondary studies and wanted to further their education; one at a university and the other at a community college. One interviewee with only a high school diploma lacked an interest in furthering his formal education, but described satisfying informal experiences related to higher education.

While educational attainment varied, the group most generally represents an educated population if emergently or disengaged in some instances. The reasons for this are both because of who I am, but also due to the nature of this study; that being the exploration of experiences, both individual and collective, in higher education. But, overall this sample represents a mostly white population of college educated twenty or thirty-somethings. Dare I say young, white

(washed) and (functionally) middle class, and (effeminately) unisex? I shall say so, but must later complicate it. This quantified way of representing the data, after all, cannot convey the intricacies and nuances within the interview transcriptions. They nonetheless offer us a feel for the sample's contours.

But to continue with quantified description, about 70% of interviewees expressed aspirations for further education. Approximately 44%, a significantly albeit not majority, of that aspiring 70% expressed resistance to attaining that additional education that led me to conclude such resistant had a *concretely* crippling affect on their ability to attain the additional education. This crippling resistance came in the form of financial, social, or institutional difficulties.

The group describing crippling resistance represented about 31% of the sample. This means, in other words, that the majority of interviewees did not experience resistance, financial, social, institutional, or otherwise, that would lead me to conclude that such resistance had, has, or could very well have a crippling effect on their educational attainment. All interviewees, however, described some sort of resistance against their educational attainment but in the majority of cases the interviewees were able to overcome the obstacles whether financial, social, or institutional.

Half of those describing crippling obstacles specifically mentioned finances. Another gave an account of ethnic discrimination. The last, I am led to believe, suffered from some kind of social ostracism; whether intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect I do not know. Of this disgruntled group, there is a 3:1 male-to-female ratio. In other words, 75% of interviewees describing crippling obstacles were male.

I will discuss possible reasons for the strong male presence in the "disgruntled group" later, upon an intricate handling of the interview data. I intend, however, to actively discourage a

face-value reading of the data. I cannot, specifically, encourage a simple reading of this data as indicating that my sample implies that men experience more discrimination in higher education. While I remain interested in the intersection of masculine identity, within my sample, and this accounting of crippling obstacles obstructing further pursuits in higher education, I am unable to discount the clear testimonies from my female interviewees entailing sexism in the academy. In other words, the clues my quantifications offer suggest additional approaches to qualitative analysis; as opposed to delimiting qualitative analyses.

To return to the nature of the study, here are the questions I used in each interview:

- 1) In the interview transcript, and all subsequent writing, would you prefer me to refer to you with a pseudonym or by your true name?
- 2) Can you tell me about some of the important experiences you have had in educational settings?
- 3) What about experiences with other institutions, such as law enforcement?
- 4) How do you feel about this society?
- 5) If you could change something about this society, what would it be?

My study concerns itself with higher education, as an institution. I sought insight from interviewee's higher education experiences and their thoughts about them. Since I take higher education as a microcosm of society, I likewise asked for feedback about "society" at large; and let interviewees interpret the meaning of the language within my questions for themselves.

Since my own experiences encourage me to believe that education, including the "higher" sorts, operates with a hidden curriculum, works in tandem with other oppressive institutions, like law enforcement, I specifically suggested interviewees divulge details about

their own experiences with law enforcement. As for the later questions, perhaps they most reflect my general sociological orientation; that being a conflict orientation as opposed to a positivistic or structural-functionalist orientation. So, here I assert that our society suggests the need to entertain social change. Already aware of my own feeling about society and what needs to change, I asked my interviewees to participate in my process of identifying problems and suggesting solutions.

Section 2: Collective Narration

Each interviewee, while having an individual voice, represents one person in my community. As I listened to each response to every question, I found opportunities to consider measured differences in their experiences as opposed to mine. At the same time, I often heard my own voice echoed in theirs.

Narrative vignettes for each interviewee follow. I have titled each interviewee with a name implying an “ideal type” in the Durkheimian sense. I thus imply that each interviewee represents a sort of reoccurring experience indicative of socio-structural phenomenon.

Each vignette begins with a quote I selected from the interview. The quotes were picked because they conveyed a quintessential, poignant, or defining moment in the interview. The quotes, once selected, inspired the names for the “ideal type”, e.g. Aggrieved Artist, Innovative Insurgent, Conquered Casualty, and so forth.

The Durkheimian inspired approach to representing my data, however, does not aim to encapsulate any interviewee within the “ideal type” suggested. Rather, the labels function as signifiers and I therefore do not suggest that the individuals signified exist solely within the parameters of the forthcoming vignette labels. The ideal types are, further, neither mutually

exclusive nor exhaustive in detail or depth. They merely provide structure for the forthcoming comparative analysis.



Guide Post #5: Everyone has a story and that story matters.

A thumb goes up, a car goes by
Oh, won't somebody stop and help a guy?
Hitchin' a ride, hitchin' a ride
(Vanity Fare, "Hitchin' a Ride")

Reader Challenge #2

- 1) Who in your experiences do these "ideal types" remind you of?
- 2) What do the ideal types have in common?
- 3) Do you identify with them? Why or why not?

#1: Aggrieved Artist

"This society has completely crushed my growth as a person and I feel that most of my actions are in direct revolt against this society. I have never been given the opportunity to just naturally be myself and I hate them for that."

Linnea, Creative Writing Teacher

Linnea initially described an alienating experience with her MA program. Upon deciding to follow her finance, that later left her, to the locale of his doctoral program she met the tepid administrators of her program. After they failed to communicate with her effectively prior to the move, she approached their office only to meet an aloof secretary. As she explained: "She didn't

really acknowledge me and she made me wait for a really long time.” Eventually she met the Man-In-Charge.

He looked at me, he had that sort of authoritarian conservative middle aged man way about him, and he didn’t acknowledge me. He sat at his desk and started leafing through his information. And then he stared at me and said: ‘Do you really want to be in the program? It’s a lot of work.’ And I said: ‘Well it’s a Masters degree, I assumed it would be a lot of work.’

Unfortunately, for Linnea, the program itself proved just as frustrating. She, in particular, talked about a Young Adult Literature course taught by a self-proclaimed multiculturalist.

Linnea recounts:

She was always having us read these books about saving the day for a certain ethnicity; basically a formula of an ethnic group oppressed and a little white blond girl saves the day.

According to Linnea’s account, her own ability to think critically beyond a naïve and racist grasp of the “multicultural” translated into her receiving a C+ in the class. Linnea described the professor’s thinly veiled anger in response to Linnea’s challenge against the professor’s use of a book’s content to lecture on “how evil Middle Eastern men are.”

And I told them that what they were doing was the same as if people in India were reading a book about date rape in a frat house and assuming all American men are like that. So people in the class were extremely angry at me. My professor has a fake smile that she used to pretend to be docile and her smile kept flipping as she got angrier and angrier at what I was saying.

Linnea told me: “I refused to be silent and I don’t fucking care about it.” Indeed this is so, and she described a presentation she conducted in class on the work of Francesco L. Block, author of *I Was a Teenage Fairy*; a young adult book about “a young man attempting suicide

because he is gay.” But, the professor only told the class: “Don’t ever use these books in your classroom.”

She asked me to sit down without any of the usual discussion and question period. It was complete shame. She was employing a shame tactic. During the break after, normally people would talk to me. People would talk together and get their coffee and I was completely ostracized. I got a C on that presentation supposedly because my visual aids were not up to par.

While her academic life proved alienating, so did her private life. Her fiancé left her, and when she returned to their previously shared social scene those present met her with more negativity. As she described a departmental graduate student party: “Some of the people just gave me weird looks and let me know that it was inappropriate that I had attended the party.” One individual, who had not known her previously, approached her, indicated his identification as Republican and Christian, made sexual advances, and informed her that he had an erection.

And then he asked how someone like ‘me’ had gotten invited to that party. I informed him that I knew Lawrence. And he smiled and asked: ‘In the biblical sense?’ And I said ‘yes.’ And he said: ‘Wow, I didn’t know he was so kinky.’

So Linnea felt sexualized and ostracized. But the sexualization does not stop there for Linnea. Now a teacher, she must face the gaze of her students. About her students she said:

And they’re constantly trying to make me conform to their standard of what a woman is. Like they get upset when I don’t wear makeup and they’re very happy when I do wear high heeled shoes. The mother thing...they are constantly asking me when I’m going to have children and telling me that I’d make an excellent mother and asking me why I don’t date; like somehow I’m not fulfilled as a woman if I don’t have children and a man.

As for the police, Linnea said: “Police officers were super nice to me if I was not with someone black and acted entirely differently if I was with someone black.” She told me about driving with her black friend, because the friend needed to get a United States driver’s license.

She was driving my car, I was sitting in the passenger seat and she was driving well below the speed limit; doing everything you are supposed to do because she was practicing for her exam. And a police officer followed us around several blocks, just kept following us.

In another, similar incident a police officer actually pulled over the black friend while she drove with Linnea's then fiancé; immediately after they left the driveway.

She wasn't speeding, she wasn't doing anything wrong. There was nothing she did wrong, he just pulled her over and demanded proof that she owned the vehicle.

When asked what she thought about this society, Linnea said: "I want to radically alter it. I despise it, I guess...I am completely devoting my life to dismantling the system in any way."

When asked what she would change, she said:

Where would I start? I guess I'm trying to change it right now through trying to be a teacher, but the entire culture needs to change. It has to be completely overthrown.

~

Through Linnea's interview, we gain another critical female perspective on what it is like to openly oppose the status quo in education and its related settings. Like me, Linnea directly challenges authority despite repercussion. Another similarity between my experience and hers are the matronly characterizations from students, as well as the more sexualized characterizations from seemingly random men. Unlike me, however, Linnea's own experiences with police have not been so troubling. Yet, her experiences with police in general, or by proxy, have. One aspect of Linnea's experience that differs most radically from mine was her willingness to follow her fiancé to his desired graduate program. Linnea is like me, constrictively characterized and discouraged, but cops treat her better and she was willing to follow the guy in her life to his destination.

What seems most disturbing in Linnea's narrative are repeated poor educational experiences. In true irony, despite her attempt to seek out an enriched education, Linnea finds herself in situations where educational dynamics become mobilized against her value system and what it means to her to be an educated person. In this sense, a hidden curriculum of prejudice coupled with rejection and reduction to a female trope on multiple fronts explains her disdain for this society and her expressed interest in social upheaval and radical change.

What most generally characterizes Linnea's situation is a dissonance between her efforts in the academy and what she receives back from it. Linnea does everything right, but does not get a pay back. Her frustration, as expressed through disdain, represents a normal and healthy reaction to a nonsensical set of life circumstances; those being degradation, rejection, and lack of fulfillment.

#2: Innovative Insurgent

"I never went to college but have sat in a lot of classes over the years, particularly a lot of radical professors I've known, through my own activism. I've learned a lot from that and I actually think I got more out of the classes than the people in them."

Randal, Activist

Without formal higher education, Randal opted to involve himself in anarchist and Marxist groups and Marxist study groups with "students, workers, and professors." He told me:

There were radical Marxist Professors I met through activism and got involved in Marxist study groups and they invited me to their classes and I participated for free. But I felt I got more out of the one-on-one groups than the classroom setting. Even when I sat in on classes I felt like I got more than the students who were paying for it.

Unfortunately for Randal, law enforcement left him less maneuvering room. He told me, in summary:

Once I got into my 20s and I got involved in more political action, in Marxist and anarchist groups, I had gotten arrested at political demonstrations. I've been arrested 15 times now over the last 13 years.

About his first arrest, he said:

I was involved in a Trotskyite group. I was living in Ann Arbor at the time Darrel Gates was the chief LAPD at the time and he was speaking in Ann Arbor; talking about incident around the Rodney King issue. That was the first time I was arrested, I was arrested there. That was a, I think, a really good experience as my entrance into radical politics. We were trying to disrupt the event and I got grabbed by the police and they dragged me through the auditorium to make me an example. The republican pro-cop group was cheering that I got arrested and I yelled some angry things at them. I think I said something like 'fuck you bourgeois pigs' and 'racist cops' or something like that.

In vivid detail, Randal told of another arrest story; this time hitchhiking coming from a demonstration protesting the US occupation of Afghanistan.

I was still trying to get on my feet and find out why he was detaining us and why I was under arrest and he told me that it for resisting arrest and I then asked him why I was originally under arrest. And he said: 'Shut the fuck up or I'm going to mace you in the face.' And after that he called for back up and we were surrounded by 12 cop cars, which lights on, and a helicopter and some of the cops had there guns drawn; aimed at me. And they asked me if I had any guns or bombs on me. Me and my girlfriend were taken to the police station and put in separate rooms and they attempted to interrogate us.

Whereas Randal paid an \$800 fine and 8 months probation after the Rodney King related arrest, the police eventually dismissed the hitchhiking related arrest. Randal credited the dismissal at least partially to the fact that the ring leading cop got demoted after being caught

saying “get the fuck out the way you god damned niggers” while driving downtown on duty. As Randal explained, while referring to a race related killing in the aforementioned cop’s police car:

His getting fired was the culmination from being partially responsible for this man’s death, racist comments, harassing African Americans, and there was not evidence for arresting me when I was just hitchhiking.

When asked for his opinion on this society, Randal said: “I feel that this society, the main things are conformity and greed and a desire to be in power and have some type of hierarchy.”

On the other hand, he also said:

I do see some sense of community in some places and some individuals. [But] true individuality and true community is generally frowned upon. It is generally not the mainstream in our society in the most part, although it exists in some places in some times.

About the need for change, he said:

I think there should be more of a sense of solidarity and community among most people and more creativity; real creativity and people being more concerned while retaining their individuality and also being more concerned about other people in their community and society and not being as concerned about accumulating things or making money or being in positions of power.

~

Conducting Randal’s interview validated many of my feelings but challenged a deeply held preference of mine for higher education. As for validation, I could relate to Randal’s poor experiences with law enforcement and particularly politically implicated legal difficulties. His interview manages to expose the parallels between politically xenophobic police excesses and racist police brutality. As for the challenge that Randall offers, upon completing the interview I wondered if he was smarter than the rest of us. I thought, is he smarter than me for staying out

of formalized higher education? Perhaps college is a sort of double-edged sword; both privilege and peril. Randal is like me, with strong convictions leading to confrontations, but more forthcoming with his politics and without as much financial support.

Perhaps what distinguishes Randal is his innovativeness. Without enough resources, Randall finds ways to access information and challenge the status quo. He does not seem interested in gaining official approval and appears well adjusted to his position in society despite an ability to recognize society's flaws. Randal's lack of engagement with higher education in the formal sense also allows him to speak his mind without regard for standards of tact; hence his ability to refer to those he perceives as oppressors in the manner he most favors.

Randal's narrative reminds us of the connection between racism, conservatism, and authority. Other issues his narrative touches upon include militarism, education as a commodity, and police brutality. Randal likewise testifies on behalf of the need for community and the positive social dividends it can provide.

#3: Compromised Casualty

"My girlfriend had a short temper, and was in great need of anger management. After attacking me a couple of times, she was forced to see a counselor on campus. After being called a couple of times for these outbursts and attacks, security decided that since I wouldn't press charges, they would punish me by banning me from campus even though it was the campus of my alma mater, even though I had not done anything wrong."

Djuan, Concerts & Special Events Security Personnel

Unfortunately for Djuan, the situation with his girlfriend continues to bar him from the graduate school program of interest to him. He explains:

And the judge also decided to ban me from my alma mater for four years to prevent me from returning to grad school.

I can't believe nobody wanted to help with the situation. The person, the head judiciary, who gave me permission and said that he would write a letter to clear me decided not to after the security talked to him. I suspected the security would not allow him to write the letter.

Bared from continuing his education, Djuan turned exclusively to the work world but encountered problems there as well. Upon graduating, the job he held at that time terminated him. He suspects they feared his "over qualifications." He continued:

And with a college degree it was very hard, it was very hard, it took two years to find another steady job; that almost didn't hire me because I have a college degree.

About his thoughts on the society, he said:

Sometimes it really sucks, some of the freedoms are great but after the occurrences in 2001, after incidents of 2001, a lot of freedoms have been taken away. Rights have been overlooked to make people feel better and safe. I work security for Concerts and Special Events and I know first hand how intrusive things can be now as far as searches and situations trying to prevent dangers.

Djuan offered solutions, when asked about what he would change. In a straight forward fashion he said: "I would do away with the electoral college." He continued with: "I would also force or put great pressure on businesses to view everyone equally when hiring for lower level positions that the job's requirements or educational requirements aren't high." He elaborated:

For example, a position that only requires high school graduation shouldn't be allowed to disqualify individuals with a higher degree than simply a high school diploma. The idea of an individual being over qualified should not be considered reason to disqualify the individual from being hired to a position as long. As long as that person is willing to work they should have the opportunity.

He went on to say:

I guess presidents should be eligible for impeachment if the

people decide they are incompetent and unable to perform the duties they were elected to perform. Like I said, the electoral college should be done away with and each vote should count.

Djuan gave three other major suggestions, one being: “It should be made easier for an individual to appeal a judge’s decision.” In relation to his situation with his alma mater, he offered two additional suggestions.

I guess after an individual has attended and graduated with a degree from an institution of higher learning, a college, a university, etc., that individual should be considered a part of that university whether or not currently paying for services and whether or not that college institution, university, is privately owned or publicly owned; unless the individual actually does something to be dismissed from the association; the institution, university, college, etc..

Finally, he said: “And victims should not be punished for not pressing charges.”

~

Like me, Djuan’s private and public experiences have allowed him to see himself as a victim. His situation with his alma mater reminded me of the appeals process I initiated after losing my last teaching position under circumstances I held as unfair. With other people making decisions, Djuan and I have not fared as well as we would like. While he notably did not mention race as a factor, I began to think this would not have happened to him if he were white. Whether I could prove that, I do not know, but I suspect it. To me, his situation epitomizes the failure of the “system” to operate fairly. About his concern of feeling discriminated against for having a higher education, I am reminded of Randal’s willful handling of higher education as an active outsider. Djuan is like me, having checked agency, but black and temporarily barred from his desired graduate program.

One fascinating thing about Djuan is his clear identification as a victim. Having been in a relationship we can describe as abusive, he does not need to explanation of why women in

abusive relationships tend not to press charges against their abusive relations. I found myself identifying easily with Djuan and notably without his being a man interfering with that identification. I often feel like a victim and like Djuan express frustrations with what I see as poorly implemented and arbitrary authority. Djuan's situation seems, however, to offer fewer avenues for evasion of arbitrary authority than my situation. I will suggest that the race factor accounts for this difference. Like me, however, Djuan has some rather specific ideas about what needs to change socially despite his lack of ability to access policy changing mechanisms.

#4: Compassionate Critic

"I think capitalism is the ruling factor in our country. That is not necessarily bad, but it can be horrible for the people on the bottom. That's how I feel."

Nick, Chemist

Nick criticized the university's focus on *leadership*. About his education, he said:

I'm not criticizing the experience...I wouldn't trade it for anything. I'm glad I got the opportunity to go to graduate school but I think a lot of simple things...kindness is something that is lacking in higher education. They talk about leadership, but leadership is so...you know... leadership, leadership, leadership and sometimes I wonder if leadership is being emphasized because leadership means money. Leadership equals dollars, equals high-paying positions, equals top-notch; be it academic, be it corporate, but it is what you have. Everyone wants to be a leader; everyone wants to be a *leader*.

In addition to providing a critique of educational values, Nick also criticized law enforcement. In particular, he gave a detailed account of feeling discriminated against on one occasion.

I was pulled over and I remember...I thought to my, I'm out on 75, I've got the junkiest car here out on the highway.

And I just felt this young officer was looking for people that were poor. There were all these people speeding, doing 70, 80, 90 miles an hour and all of a sudden he pulls my junker off to the side of the road and wants to have a...there's all these people flying by and doing...it looked to me...I remember seeing people cutting in front of each other and stuff like that and all of a sudden here I am pretty much doing the speed limit. He pulls me over and he says oh you got a little bit of a shake in the back of your car. I thought you were weaving; it looked like you were bobbing or weaving. And I explained to him why I had a bent rim on my tire; on my rim. I said that is probably what it was. But I said I wasn't speeding and I certainly wasn't weaving. I said why did you pull me over? There are all these people that are cutting in front of people and you're on 75 and for some reason you went in all this traffic and pulled me over. I said sir I think you pulled me over because I have a junky car. He didn't seem...he didn't write me a ticket but he didn't seem too happy. I said I'm not trying to be rude but I saw all these people, here they are doing all sorts of crazy things, and suddenly you just picked me out of the blue to pull. And I just think it's sort of harassment. I mean you got a lot of people you can choose from.

Nick continued to add:

I see a lot of them where their main concern is chasing down speeders or running license plates or tags; for what I don't know and half of them are not active in the community.

And he continued to add:

It seems like they're more interested in getting the fines, the quick speeding tickets, and stuff like that and getting those money things and then the real problems when there is about to be some violence or when there is domestic squabbles that stuff kind of gets pushed aside.

Nick critiques focused on law enforcement. His critique, however, led him to criticize the enmeshing of law enforcement with business. As he accounted for:

But when it comes to automotive stuff or they're worried about speeding or someone going 10 miles over the speed limit or somebody having expired registrations or some kind of issue

with their car, they're all over that. They're like all over that, they don't seem to do much on the domestic front. It's like a profit making organization. I see the day of getting a cat out of the tree or settling disputes, they don't want to settle disputes. They want money it seems like in my opinion. I think also with insurance, they're like endorsing, they're doing the work of private industry now in some regard. They're sitting there looking at...we want to enforce car insurance. We don't even have health insurance in our country and we've got law institutions that are enforcing monies to private companies. It's almost impossible in many regards to operate without a vehicle. And when you look at law institutions they're backing that up. If you go through the Ohio Turnpike you'll see a Progressive Tag place on the Toll Booth. You've got an insurance company on a state ran facility that alone seems like they have no fear of operating in the open as combining their power to...they're worried more about insuring that there is money coming into money...these financial... insurance companies are linked, of course, to financial investing companies. So, I see the law enforcement turning into an extension of private industry. They don't care about the real well being; the personal and psychological well being of the people. I think they're more interested in control, maybe this isn't direct it's just whatever influences them; whoever has the money is influencing the way law enforcement is being shaped. I see that it is not stopping violent crime in many regards. I think they have very little to be able to stop violent crime, stopping domestic disputes, in fact they are more likely to make things worse in many cases. They don't have...they're not community oriented. I see that going on all over.

As Nick concluded his critique, he turned his attention to how law enforcement officials interact, or fail to interact, with individuals and the community.

I don't see how pulling people over and giving them speeding tickets necessarily stops gun violence. I don't see domestic disputes, problems such as that, they don't know how to address. I don't see them on foot enough. I see...why are you always in a car? Why aren't you out there walking around the neighborhood listening to hear if there is an argument? I mean...you hear an argument, you're a police officer, why can't you just go up to the door, knock on the door and say looking what's going on here, this is not the way people should conduct themselves. You don't necessarily have to arrest somebody or even write a ticket but you're job is to try to keep stability and keep things from getting out of hand and I don't see that going on at all. I see more of it just, it's

like another, solely...I think being turned into like *money*; more of a money thing; be it insurance, things that guarantee people's money flow more than taking care of real problems that people face.

When asked his about his overall opinion of the society, Nick began to talk about the institution of the family. He said:

In many cases, from my viewpoint, family is very important. I think a lot of people, though, if that element is missing they are at a big disadvantage. Me, I'm not really from a big family, I don't have a lot of family members that I'm close to. But I think our society has done a lot not to bred family closeness. It's almost a weakness, in some ways, to be associated with Your family beyond certain years; especially as a male, I think.

As he continued to talk about Society, he returned to leadership and values. Then, he began working with the idea of mobility and political issues.

They got this leadership idea, promoting leadership, but they're not really promoting...and they're not doing it on purpose I'm sure...they're not really promoting kindness. They say getting along with others; it's accepting that other people believe differently and not yelling at them or something. I sometimes feel that's kind of what we've got. I think tolerance in some ways does not really mean acceptance. Tolerance just mean yeah okay I won't like act like we're in a third world country and threaten to kill someone or some other crazy lunatic idea that would be in someone's mind if whatever...I shouldn't necessarily pick on third world countries that isn't fair either but...but marriage and society has a lot of good points. It has a lot of opportunity for mobility. I think it can be changing in some ways where we're getting less mobility, less opportunity to move around and do things. I think 911 was a huge factor.

After describing several difficult living arrangements he had been in while in college, Nick said:

I mean everybody; there is a huge fear of money loss, loss of control. I mean, I think so much of it is based on monetary. I mean I just talked about law institutions. I think they're being moved towards, just kind of worried about money flow. I see

people in living arrangements. The main thing that they're worried about is money flow. They're worried about their property and money flow. I'm not against money and not against property, but in general I see that broadly in American society. I think you're very disadvantaged...you'd better have some intelligence and smarts, I think, in our society to be able to make it and be smart enough to move...to get away from the traps.

And about American society, opportunity, and education, he said:

Because there is some very good people out there that will help people out for the most part and I've heard this from a couple people that are foreign students and they've come here and they've said I feel like I'm just on my own here. There is opportunity but you just feel out there by yourself. I think a lot of people, and not just myself, see that in American society. I mean, there is some safety. Your position sometimes can give you a little bit of safety and security if you...education, and the push to get an education are huge because of the fact of what you're going to get if you don't position yourself in our society. I think there is some book written about Trinidad, an island off South America, about this guy who is about 40 some years old; a Latino individual who had to keep moving from...so maybe it's a human condition, not just a you know...an American condition where he did not have enough money to own property. And he had to move to these different families and when I saw this book, I never read the book but I read the back of the book, I can't think of the author's name but basically it talked about how he had all these problems. You know, he didn't anticipate this. And what struck me...that was exactly what I thought. I didn't think people were this cruel or this controlling of their territory.

Nick also talked more specifically about mobility and transportation.

Mobility in this country is money. I think it's getting to be an even bigger and bigger factor. I think transportation costs are becoming a bigger problem. I don't think there has been hardly any attempt...I think infrastructure for public transportation in our country has dwindled. So...you can't survive very well without a car.

Before advocating for more kindness and consideration in our society, Nick offered a balanced view on our society.

Our society is hopeful. It's got a lot of promise, but we need to be weary of...sometimes opportunities, they seem like they're there for people. People think they're there for people, but I'm not so sure, if you really look at the fine...I mean they say intelligence is really understanding the fine points in the definition; not just the definition but understanding the fine points and what happens...you can make this statement and I can say Charles Manson is a good person. With that statement, you have to... well okay no, we know that obviously isn't right but I can say that about anybody else too. That is just a statement, you need look into definitions of what...you know...to get back to society/mobility. I mean, do you have opportunities? Are those opportunities just something you perceive? I think that covers it.

~

Like me, Nick has a graduate degree but little money. He feels critical toward the economic system, law enforcement, and widespread social values in ways that generally mirror my criticisms. He especially has developed a keen and focused critique on the convention of driving as transportation and its relevance to social control, government, and commerce. Nick is like me, educated but disenfranchised, except he owns a car and drives.

Nick, being distinctively reflective, had developed a coherent social critique incorporating multiple institutions. The institutions Nick incorporates into his critique include education, transportation, economy, and law enforcement. He additionally references governance when he mentions the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Djuan, notably, mentioned the attacks as well. In both instances, Nick and Djuan attributed the decreases in freedom to the US government's response to the attack.

Like Randall, Nick closes his narrative with a bid for community. Both narratives, as a result, underscore the failure of our society to foster supportive communities that encourage pro-

social values and social outcomes. This failure, I am suggesting, produces the sort of disenchantment with society that both Randall and Nick give voice to.

In the same fashion Linnea and Djuan have tried to seek fulfillment through participating in formal higher education, and conforming to the best of their ability, Nick has done the same. In all three cases, the conformity offers too few incentives and too many discouraging conditions. This state of affairs appears dismal indeed.

#5: Persecuted Prisoner

"You're such a good death row inmate, what will it be lethal injection, the electric chair, or hanging? I don't know. You pick."

Styx, University Student

Styx has opinions and takes action. Unfortunately for Styx, this can translate into trouble. During a curriculum related internship, for instance, she felt some friction.

All through the summer I was doing my internship, of course, of writing for the U News and basically I felt like my supervisor and that did not, I mean...he wanted me to finish up my internship and go; didn't want me to write there anymore because I have a tendency to write some controversial articles. Some of the articles I write get phone calls.

The friction led to censorship and cessation of opportunity.

After I was through with my internship with the U News they wanted me...they basically said you passed your internship we don't want you to write anymore and then I asked them what that was all about. And then they're like, well you get into too much trouble. You get into too much trouble; we need to protect our paper.

Styx's feedback about law enforcement began with: "Law enforcement...you give a guy a badge and he's waving his dick around like a porn star." She went on to recount an encounter

with a park ranger and a law enforcement official, after an impromptu topless protest against women's inability to go without a shirt while strolling through a public park, and the legal complications that ensued. About that situation, she said:

Well then I also found this ordinance in the park's district, Ordinance 97.06, which states that everyone, everybody except males under the age of 12, have to wear a shirt. So those two Java the Huts sitting on the park bench, they should have been cited too. And when I told the officers how offended I was they told me to just look away. They should have cited him too. They should have cited any man out there on the trail even if he looked like Brad Pitt. If he doesn't have a shirt on, he should get cited. I was discriminated against.

Committed to equal protection under the law, understanding patriarchal objectification of women, and resenting the lack of institutional support, Styx declared:

I told the judge that this wasn't over. I told him that it's not over. That this was unfair treatment, that I didn't like the selective enforcement of the law that I am standing against the sexualization of women to the point where it's...it's incredible because you know, its like society treats women as these sex objects that are like oh my god if you don't keep covered it will be anarchy, anarchy and chaos will reign and there will be erections all over the place and men won't be able to control themselves and oh my god disorder and chaos...you know...if women go topless that will happen, you know. It's just such bullshit and then my attorney on the way out she tells me you know if you do this again, she said as your attorney I have to tell you not to do this again, and then she said but if you do this again get another lawyer because I don't want to be associated with the woman that got it legal for women to go topless in the park; real advocate here people...

Styx also, as she began to talk about an anti-Nazi demonstration, mentioned: "I've been in a riot."

Several people were arrested including a guy I knew and the news footage was all about how it's these young black gangs, it's all their fault and that but you know what I didn't see on the News? I didn't see on the News cops *slamming* people to the ground. I didn't see cops arresting people and shooting

off rubber bullets, all I saw were protesters throwing rocks at the cop cars and such.

She began the next story with: “This one kind of ties into education and law enforcement.” Styx then told me about when she lived in the dorm; a time when her university decided to stop staffing the residence halls with security guards. She felt highly uncomfortable with this.

I went out and bought a gun because well the university wasn’t going to protect me. So basically, I kind of...I was caught in the dorm with a gun. I had to spend a week in jail.

About the situation, she explained:

Policemen are only there after the fact, after you’ve been raped, robbed, mugged; whatever. I was just afraid of... yeah...there were a lot of sexual assaults happening on campus. And they happened every day, they happen to this day.

Just as Styx had one story involving the intersection of education and law enforcement, she likewise has a story involving the intersection of work and education. Styx had worked for the university’s Dining Services. She explained how she publicly, by writing an article in the U News, exposed the university’s use of a make-believe Health Code to coerce Dining Services workers to purchase the very food they labored to create.

So the university could get more money, so the university could get more money...why not get more of your money back if employees are paying from their paycheck to buy the lunch at dining services? And the food there is expensive and if they can force you to buy their food or purchase their crap they’re going to and then I also went to some guy, I forget who it is, but he was on the 8th floor of the administration building and some kind of international student something and he said there has been several instances where students have tried to get their...to make food...like they have a culture night at the union and they want to make their food but the university said it wouldn’t because it’s a health code violation. And the university had, unfortunately, every

right to do this...movie theaters do this all the time...not food... no outside food and beverages...the university has every right to do that...we don't want outside food coming into our university. But why do that when they can blame it on some fictitious health code rule? Really we wouldn't extort your money, but we have to it's a health code violation, a health code regulation. We really don't want to force you to buy our food, but health code regulation...that's great to hide behind a health code violation...

When asked for her general opinion of Society, she said:

I think this society only benefits a very, very, very, very, very, very few people and those people are all in positions of power and it seems like everybody else is getting shat upon.

Elaborating, she explained:

Poor people are poor often time because they don't have any opportunity to advance. Society keeps them trapped in that state of being poor. I mean, there are some people that are working two jobs that can't even afford to feed their kids. They're working two jobs

About women and minorities and their work opportunities, Styx said:

They're stuck in these abusive relationships with men because they can't survive otherwise. They need a man there to help support them or somebody, in most cases it was a man. They can't afford to not be in abusive relationships because they'll starve...women that were afraid to call off work, although they were deathly sick, because if they miss work it would cost groceries for the next day. And this is a situation that society traps people in, the poor people and there is this glass ceiling for women and there is this unequal payment; that men get more than women. And the minority people will never have as good of jobs as white people. They have to really work extra hard to get anything. This society doesn't benefit anybody but the few that are willing to abuse others and step on others.

About the prospect of change, Styx suggested: "I would like people to be more empowered." Then she suggested:

I also think that the President of the United States should have

had to work in a shitty fast food restaurant at least 6 months and live on those funds. He would have to serve some little old lady her 6:00am on the dot coffee and serve some little kid their happy meal and learn what it is to serve people and even have to live on those funds for 6 months; build some character, know the other half lives. Right now we're being led by Harvard bred assholes.

~

Like me, Styx lost professional development opportunities following a controversial situation. My experience with these sorts of circumstances, as described in Chapter 3, allowed me to feel empathic about Styx's plight. She additionally has a critical view of law enforcement. Styx is like me, highly aware of discrimination, with the exception of her having actually spent time in jail.

On the subject of law enforcement, like Randall, Styx participates in street activism. For this reason Styx, like Randall, is privy to direct examples of police brutality. Like Linnea, Nick, and Djuan, Styx tries to work within the usual parameters of education or work to channel her social concerns and commitments. Like the aforementioned other three, Styx's attempts produce only limited success. This limited success appears to generate a shared feelings of frustration, restraint, and, if you will, oppression.

In a similar vein, like Nick and Randall, Styx voices clear misgivings about capitalism. A dimension that Styx adds, however, is how being a woman presents additional concerns. While Randall must brave police brutality, Styx braves police brutality *and* general violence-against-women. While Styx wants to protect herself, the police, the very people she fears, limit the way in which she can protect herself against generalized violence-against-women.

Styx, finally, like all other previous interviewees has a clearly cognizant understanding of how social forces shape her experiences. As with all other interviewees, this understanding does not translate into an ability to challenge the way institutions influence their respective lives in

negative ways. The failure for insight to ensure social influence, thus, emerges as a connecting theme.

#6: Precarious Pupil

“It was very difficult for me to get through school because I was dealing with the triple whammy of coming from an abusive environment, economic deprivation, and lack of family support and those things were working against me and that’s been a very hard pattern to overcome in my life; those three things together.”

Hannah, Freelance Writer

About herself and higher education, Hannah told me:

I’m not cut out for terribly routine work. I’m more cut out for creative work. And yet I didn’t have the stability to pursue my studies the way I really wanted to so I did a degree, a Bachelor degree, and started some graduate coursework and didn’t get through and that situation still haunts me today; that I didn’t finish and go on.

Hannah offered her own analysis about her limited educational prospects.

I have also felt at various times when going to school, a certain kind of a class anxiety. I come from a rather working class environment. Some people in my family have gone to college, but not everybody has gone to college. I think the anxiety is something I brought with me probably from my childhood when for a time when I was going to a private school I was surrounded by wealthy families; wealthy children and their families; people who came from wealthy families. That was not in my tradition. I was being raised by a single dad and we were poor by comparison. I think when I came to college and really had to scrape, scrape, scrape to get by I felt that anxiety too and that anxiety got further played out when I was depressed and would stop school for awhile and work jobs that were very mundane and routine and very boring for me and then go back to school and one point I left school because I had to have my wisdom teeth removed and I didn’t have the \$2,000 or \$1,500 to have my wisdom teeth removed and nobody... and that’s the kind of class anxiety I had and the lack of

support. I didn't have anybody to call on in my family to loan me that kind of money so that I could continue on with my graduate studies. So I stopped by graduate studies. So it was a constant pattern of stopping and starting and stopping and starting because there was not enough support. There were not enough resources all around, financial and emotional and that's about it.

When I did a study abroad program in France, for instance, the study abroad office kept telling me that I had enough money to go. I said I don't think so. So I go, quickly run out of money. My mom has absolutely no money to give me; nobody has any money to give me. So I'm there without money. It's things like that. These are the kinds of class experiences I think that make the university such a difficult setting for some people. It's a system that is kind, I believe, to middle class people and especially male people and the people who fall outside of those categories...now I'm a single mother thinking about back into the university system and that has all kinds of stressors...teaching assistantships. You can't live on that and I'm very anxious about taking out a lot more loans. That has been a pattern in my life; of trying to figure out how to have a meaningful and exciting career but not really having the structures to go after that kind of a career.

And similarly, my political science professor, I did this through the Political Science department at the university, he called my mom and said now send Hannah a few hundred bucks. She didn't have a few hundred bucks. Well that's the difference what other students get to take for granted and how the system is so hard on people who don't come in with that kind of structure.

As for law enforcement, Hannah began with: "I had a run in with both the police and the legal system surrounding my marital life."

At first what I took as kind of a pattern of self-stimulation... he would kind of have his hand on his groin while grading papers or something... I noticed that he was doing that with our son and I saw him outright masturbating and kind of gazing absent mindedly at our son and I don't know if our son was the object of his fantasy or if he is so deeply into his pornography that he just has these thoughts going through his head constantly...just compulsive of getting release and

thought he could get away with doing that in the tub. Anyway, I approached law enforcement and he was interviewed by a detective and by somebody from social services. They knocked on the door and he let them in and he talked with them and the outcome was very unsatisfactory. They said there was no evidence. They closed their investigation right away. They question him, my husband, about an internet story that he had been reading, about incest describing sixteen year old children but these are protected materials...no picture, nothing illegal. He is allowed to, by Ohio law, read as much about incest and sex with children as he wants and also allowed, by Ohio law, to masturbate in front of his children all he wants and once I found out that I felt like I had to protect our son; he wasn't verbal yet.

So, Hannah went to a shelter, got a protection order, and had her husband evicted from the shared apartment. He retaliated by accusing her of being psychotic, and she had to "jump through a lot of hoops" to prove her sanity. About child support, Hannah said: "It's very difficult to get the courts to make him pay up, even if there's a significant arrearage." Hannah continued:

He was still allowed the regular long-distance parenting schedule, which is that he gets the children for overnights and he has them for a month in the summer and once a month he can have them for a weekend. So there wasn't enough evidence to please the court system. So I feel like my children are in danger, the court did not even make husband to go into counseling. He admitted to what he had done, he admitted to the bathtub, in state of arousal and the court does not think that it needs to protect my family further.

When asked what she would like to change about society she said that she wants domestic abuse at the "forefront of our social issues." She also expressed a desire to see improved child support enforcement. According to Hannah, "the system is totally hostile to women and children." She elaborated on this issue:

Often through not enforcing its own laws and court orders it allows for men to continually punish women and children. So I'd like to see abusive men called on their behavior. I'd like to see men have to be responsible to their families,

have to pay up.

About the educational issues she discussed, Hannah suggested:

I'd like see more access to bigger student loans; for women, for children. I'd like to see teaching assistantships pay a living wage so that more students can go to college and so that people from working class backgrounds don't have to stop and start college which happens all too frequently. When that happens, and their loans become due and if they don't pay on loans they default and then they can't take out fresh loans. They get caught on the wrong side of the whole system. They get caught such that they're better never having gone to college in the first place rather than having attempted and gotten part way through.

~

When Hannah told me about being in France and not having enough money, I shared with her how I barely had enough money the last time I was in Paris. Luckily, my mom did put some money into my account. It was enough for a modest room, transportation on the metro, and very minimal food. But I was sometimes hungry. I could relate to her. But, I still did not want to fully embrace what it would have been like if my mother had not have placed the money in my account; especially because the political activists in Paris had not taken to me as they had in Tours.

Her mentioning of her husband self-pleasuring during grading prompted my memories of lecherous professors. Somehow the theme of sexual maligning and academic milieus repeatedly materializes. Consider, for example, the man with an erection who approached Linnea at the academic party. This pattern, in my opinion, indicates a male-dominated sexual capitalization on education.

The "pattern", specifically, refers to recurring inter-narrative themes involving seemingly misplaced erections that disconcert scholastic contexts. To review, a professor from my MA

program shoved me in a chair and responded to the scene with an erection. In Linnea's case, a man with an erection approached her at an academic party. And in Hannah's narrative, her husband grew aroused while grading students' assignments. In each of the three examples, a presumably out-of-place erect male redefines *the definition of the situation*, to use Erving Goffman's language, thus disrupting an otherwise stable social context governed by assumed collegial norms. I am surmising that this ability to redefine the situation to such a jarring extent somehow translates into a form of social capital.

To return to Hannah's narrative per se, her comment about some being better off without college also seemed to echo some of Randal's, Djuan's, and my own sentiments. The area where I most relate to Hannah, however, is how the abuse she experienced hindered her ability to perform in school. That part of her interview reminded me of the difficulties I had in my MA program following the attack during my senior year as an undergraduate. I am like Hannah, traumatized, but with more financial freedom and less responsibility. Unlike Hannah, however, I do not have the burden of neither a marriage nor divorce and do not have the responsibility of parenthood.

Hannah, finally, most certainly demonstrates social agency. Yet, her social agency stops at a certain threshold. Hannah, notably, recognizes where this threshold locates itself.

#7: Sincere Scholar

"I was doing way more research than I needed for tenure; plenty of service but I wasn't the type that...I didn't network, I didn't suck up, I didn't play the game. I had an opinion. I wasn't typical and so I was feeling ostracized."

Alice, University Professor

Alice described her first professorship as taking place at a racist, male dominated college where many students were wealthy and had two cars of their own. The average parental income at this institution was \$200,000 per year. She described it, as follows:

But then it was very much good 'ole boy and very, and I think, racist. There are a lot of problems with racism in that area and this little wealthy school was situated right in the middle and I think there were a lot of town-gown issues but I think the racism, which I thought initially was concentrated in the surrounding area not on campus, after awhile I thought there were racial issues on campus as well. It was more subtle and creepier almost. And it was very much male-dominated, I remember on my orientation day they told us female faculty could not wear pants.

Alice challenged the status quo at this college. In this scenario she shares one example.

There was one man who was in my department and was in charge of what they called the angels and the angles presented themselves...well who were from good families. They would greet the wealthy donors and the guests and this guy had all of these rules for the angels and it was so harassing to read it, like lewd comments throughout it and he just happened to print it and I made a copy of it and I sent it to the head of Women's Studies

About why she was able to do this, she said: "I grew up in the Northeast and [with] poor to middle income families. So I just could not relate to these Southern good 'ole boys; elitist."

Alice risked her position to do this, but elected to leave the college rather than leaving in response to coercion. According to one of Alice's colleagues: "Once they decide they want somebody out it's a very well orchestrated ostracization."

One woman, a black woman, had not been as fortunate.

And I had a friend, a black lady, she was given the red carpet to come in for the job, and then she tried to recover from depression and she was suicidal after a couple of years and nobody reached out to her at all. She wasn't showing up to classes, so faculty had a meeting and hired

somebody else to take over and I said: “Aren’t we going to tell Daphnia that her classes are no longer hers?” and they were like: “Oh yeah, I guess we should do that.” You know, like no respect for her at all. They ruined her, her whole...no motivation to teach afterward she was like...and I blame the environment totally. She was fine until she got there. We used to have her over to dinner at least a couple times a week. If she didn’t come over, she didn’t eat. She just really was...and she would go to the city just so she could see black people once in awhile. I mean it was so...and she is fine now. She got out. She got out a semester after I did. She is not going to ever teach again, she has had it. She is a clinical psychologist so she can go back. She had worked in the army and found this more stressful than all of her army work.

Alice continued to describe the college’s environment, conjuring the feel of a total institution in the tradition of Erving Goffman.

They required faculty to live on the domain; they called it which was the campus; the property of the university. You either rent or build on the domain and then you don’t ever own your land, you just own the house and they want you to have an extension of the university as your home phone. Some people didn’t, it cost you a lot more to have a phone outside of their...they couldn’t make you but you were enticed by the cheapness of that and they thought it would be easier for students to get in touch with us and all that kind of stuff and students felt free to call you at home, knock on your door, you like never left the job and so the students felt like...they would often like their phone conversations were sometimes listened too. A lot of people felt like that. I was even hearing clicking on my phone.

Alice described the job she held before deciding to return to school and pursue a career in the academy. With a degree in psychology, she obtained a \$6/hour job as a residential caretaker for a home sheltering troubled adolescents. About the job, she said: “It was not an easy job. They would hurl insults at you just for the fun of it.” She then added: “I could write them up for disrespect but they would find way to be disrespectful but not get nailed.”

On the topic of social change, Alice spoke of a need for more compassion and empathy.

She also said:

I think our culture breeds self orientation and I think it's destructive. I don't think it helps you as a human being to be that self oriented...a lot of people do token efforts to help others but I think if we were just more oriented in more of a community spirit; more tolerance for other people's perspectives. So I would like to see more giving and more tolerance.

~

Like me, Alice had held a job where young people routinely insulted her. In her case it was in a residential unit, in mine it was as a substitute teacher. What strikes me as another disturbing pattern in the interviews is the recurring incidence of abuse. In Djuan's interview, he talked of an abusive girlfriend. Hannah talked about a sexually abusive husband. Randall talked about abusive police. The abuse occurs in varying settings; such as work, law enforcement, or personal life.

Like me, she does not feel at home in a male dominated and predominantly upper-middle class environment. Much of what Alice said of this sentiment also reminded me of what Hannah recanted about class bias in education. While Alice's testimony of class *hegemony* differs from Alice's testimony of class *bias*, these sorts of hegemonies and biases nonetheless must bolster one another.

Alice, like me and the others, outwardly challenges convention. I publicly confronted the professor who raped me. Styx bought a gun when the security guards disappeared from her dormitory. Alice sent the "angels" code to the Women's Studies department. Nick talked back to the police officers who pulled him over. We confront and expose power without apology. Alice is like us, dissenting and confrontational, but has already established her career.

As a final note, Alice's concern with her black female colleague reminds me of Linnea's focus on how the police would follow her or her former fiancé when they were with their black female friend. In both cases, the interviewees recognized disparate treatment. Likewise, in both cases they expressed concern about the injustice.

#8: Out Outcast

"I had to switch schools. The police said that if I stayed there they would prosecute me. They made it crystal clear that they wanted me out of there or...like for example...any tiny thing I did there they would also prosecute me for that."

Tim, University Student

While at a liberal arts college, Tim had conducted research on the educational aspects of pornography. He downloaded images onto his computer as part of the project. But, when he took his computer into a shop to get a new program installed...

They discovered pornography on there that included children that I was unaware of. And according to the law in that state, that is illegal and a person would have to register as a child molester if they got caught with that; even if they never touched a person in their life.

So, in his words: "I got in trouble with the police." About how this related to education per se,

Tim said:

I feel education is limited because if you limit what somebody can research, you're limiting education and education is not any excuse. You cannot get up in a courtroom and say I was doing this for education research.

This situation led Tim temporarily away from the institution of education and into the institution of work. As Tim explained:

I had to get jobs for the one year I was in school because

I had to transfer and...one was...I was a busier. I was living with my parents; which was also very stressful. And I was a cashier.

As for his parents, they represent the institution of the family in which Tim had a defining and traumatic experience with. The background to the forthcoming description is his coming out story.

When I came out of the closet to them, they basically were very unsupportive, yelled at me, my dad took back the \$20 he had given me to go to that [gay & lesbian] center and spend with people there and as a birthday present that summer, I was forced to go to a bordello or also known as a whorehouse and I lost my virginity to prostitutes and I was scared. That's how I felt the whole time, was scared.

He told then the story in greater detail:

It was in a large apartment building, at least 100 stories high and twenty feet wide. It had metal detectors in the front. We took the elevator up there. A man took \$1,000 in cash from my mother for something I didn't want.

Tim gave more description and testimony by saying: "It had a shower in it, which they made me use after I was raped." Interestingly, as Tim described: "They put pornography on the television and I just felt like I had no choice."

They told me to shower, so I did and I met my mom downstairs and we basically had a long argument. She basically said do I understand that I'm heterosexual and I told her I wanted to be asexual. Did I like that experience?

Tim had a response to the rape. He said: "Suicide, for me that was the way out. I thought about killing myself. To me, at that time, it felt like the only way out." He added:

I had to go to a Psychiatric Clinic, which is an institution for insane people, twice because of anxiety attacks and it wasn't until my senior year when I read a book about bisexuality that a lot of my anxiety went away.

About society-at-large, according to Tim, society bases itself on legal reform or making more laws. Tim explained that laws cannot “make people better.” Rather, as he suggested: “The way to make people better is through education.” He continued:

The current society, the way that it's set up is the more money you make the better off you are; even if it's immoral. The thing that is currently going on in our government is ridiculous. I mean, I think abortion... they're trying to make abortion illegal, which is insane. There's going to be more death penalty; which is also insane. We're not going to have any rights. We're currently not allowed to say things on the radio or on the television. We have no freedoms.

And he continued:

The laws are supposed to be here to protect the people. But they aren't. They're here to prosecute the people. There are cops that are just standing by the side of the road while people are getting hurt on the street. One day I was walking down the street and a man pulled up a woman's dress who was wearing see-thru underwear. I am sure that some cop was just sitting somewhere waiting to ticket somebody. It's like why aren't they out on the street protecting the people, which is their job? They don't see it that way. They see it that what they need to do is defend these laws that are inside these books and make money for the government so they can keep their jobs.

About what he wants changed in society:

The government...I mean what I would change is... the entire government would be democratic. It would try and...I'd like to get rid of classes completely if I could, but if at the very least to try and get people in lower classes up. We should have one big middle class, not...1% of this country is really wealthy, why is that? And most of this country is poor. But that's my opinion. We don't need more laws either. We need people with brains. And the second that you censor what we can say, what we can see, you allow absolute government power, which is insane. That's fascism, in my opinion.

~

Tim identifies himself as a rape victim, as I do. Tim, therefore, like Randal, Styx, Hannah, and Djuan has endured some form of abuse. Like Djuan and Hannah, Tim experienced this abuse in his personal life at the hands of a person or persons who are assumed to care for him. Like the abuse Hannah described, the abuse Tim described had an obvious sexual overtone.

He likewise had undesirable experiences with law enforcement, albeit pertaining to child pornography. Ironically, considering the child sexual abuse component of Hannah's narrative, Tim's experience with legal troubles involved the specter of child pornography. His narrative contains the same sort of frustration with not being able to challenge the decisions of authorities that appears in Djuan's narrative. A similar grievance about a judge's decision appears in Hannah's narrative.

Like me, he is willing to imply fascism and refers to the government in the same conversation. Recall that Djuan and Nick also affronted the government for repressiveness. Tim, like nearly all the other interviewees thus so far, expressed misgivings about police officers.

Tim is furthermore like Randal and I, explicitly anti-fascist and anti-capitalist, but happened to study pornography in length and identifies as bisexual. Incidentally, pornography served an instrumental role during Tim's rape. Pornography also appears in Hannah's account of her husband's sexual abuse against their child.

On a more uplifting note, Tim was able to empower himself through self-education. Tim and Randall have this in common. Tim, however, like Alice's black colleague fell into a suicidal depression in response to extreme external pressure.

#9: Alienated Adjunct

“Compelling work requires a particular kind of labor and a particular kind of relationship to the labor which maybe we don’t see very much on campuses at this time.”

Kelman, Adjunct Lecturer

About his experiences with education, Kelman said:

I can sort of contrast that with some of my classroom time where I think unfortunately I have seen it from both sides of the desk now; both sides of the podium. Classes are very often constrained by all sorts of institutional pressures that means that we’re not necessarily giving, or getting, to our students the most efficient sort of means of developing the skills that presumably that we are there to develop.

About graduate school, he added:

I think in a lot of ways the grad school, the pull between what we’re supposed to be there for and what actually goes down in the classroom in the course of our studies is even; the pulls are even stronger, the conflicts are even more pronounced.

Kelman then turned his attention toward the discrepancy between ideology and reality.

But it’s tough you know, I think it’s particularly clear to grad students and people that look down the barrel of the job market situation and that all the things that I, its getting on over 35 years, that I’ve been living to one extent of another sort of in or in the shadow of educational institutions and their presumed values. I knew by third grade that that was all kind of nonsense but it keeps hitting you in new ways, all the way along. Institutions so often, particularly large institutions, don’t function according to their stated goals. They have their own inertias but they also have their systemic agendas and the things that are the way things really move while everybody waves as if they perhaps believe they are pursuing truth and broader minds and all the things we say we are doing in the academy.

Kelman had something to say about work. Within the realm of work, he began to talk about the deskilling. Through the issue of deskilling, he located the connection between education and labor.

I worked for one of the big thrift store chains. You see in general well meaning organizations working at entirely cross purposes to their stated goals. I worked for a large corporate book selling chain and probably the thing my district manager had most against me was the fact that I knew something about books when the management was really just about moving product.

There is a larger institution of corporate capitalist retail sales which is an institution in itself. It has trouble dealing with skills in a largely deskilled environment. That is true of the university too. Deskilling, we're soaking in it. It is one of the things that happened to labor all through the 20th Century that for a large number of us the labor processes have been enriched in such a way that most workers would pretend they are any sort of artisan but their skills would extend beyond a machine tending or system maintenance and I think if my skills on the ten key we're as important as any of my knowledge of books to the people I worked for in corporate retail. I think in a lot of ways the debility to just keep students flowing through the university machine is as important as our particular expertise to the university.

Returning to his ideology versus reality theme, he explained:

If you don't really, if nobody really adheres to the values that are lauded as the values of the institution and thus the concern with quality drops; you put production above quality; quantity production above quality.

In lieu of law enforcement, Kelman spoke about institutional constraints on individuals.

If you wanted to be a good politician or a good cop it is like being a good teacher within the limitations of the system. There is only so much you can do no matter what your values are. Obviously the treatment of individuals by institutions comes from that same kind of that there are things other than real value commitments that drives who gets arrested, who get tried under what terms.

When asked about society in general, he offered: “There is so little about the way the society generally works that makes anything of its own kind of sense.” Then he challenged the usual social critics.

Obviously, the way a society that is as confused and conflicted as ours stays together is that we rely on fundamentalisms, whether they’re fundamentalism of the right, to the left, religion, or science. We just don’t ask the questions. We spend all our time being exasperated and say well, the system sucks or we find our people to blame.

Kelman clarified, emphasizing the need for systemic change.

And it’s hard to see how people, even if more people really wanted to do the hard work of lifting themselves out of confusion and despair, how they would do it because of course the problems we face call for really systematic, system changing solutions and its quite likely we should be thinking really, really radically differently about the way we, say, live near coast lines or manage the land and yet the way these things get solved in the simple, simplistic, legalistic way where the market is being applied to everything as if had a market logic and in particular view of property relation which didn’t come down from heaven and has a particular kind of history as if those things had a sort of validity of its own from the validity of custom and as if in that realm there weren’t counter veiling customs now.

Kelman’s final statement, about social change, began on an affirming statement about American culture. Kelman, however, suggested the need for more integrity. He likewise called for courage.

American culture is full of rich historical and political context. You just imagine how much different the world would be if Americas meant, really meant it when they talk about their pride in our traditions and our history or at least their investment. People would take seriously the things that supposedly our exceptional state is based on. In general, if people would just take seriously the things they say they care about, whether it’s the Christians and the message of Christ or other religions and their particular belief systems or rationalists and reason or scientists and

science, teachers and real education or just the machine tending we are doing...this completely broken down wreck of a social system that we spend all of our time patching together or we spend advocating the collapse of...actually deal with the environmental crisis or actually manage ourselves. A little more seriousness and little less fearlessness and a little less trepidation seem to be the ingredients that are missing.

~

Like me, Kelman feels marginal in the academy. Other interviewees, in varying manners, expressed feelings of marginality in educative environments. Linnea received an alienating reception on her first day on-site at her MA institution. Djuan's alma mater left him in the lurch. Nick felt dismayed with the university's pathological obsession with "leadership." Styx's on-campus internship actively alienated her. Alice felt disgusted with the old boy campus she used to work at. As a working-class identified person, Hannah felt the academy's hostility. Tim had to run from his university's town. Needless to say, the academy is not always warm or welcoming. Often it is hostile and expelling.

Like Kelmen I have worked as an adjunct, but do not currently. Kelman also sees institutions as overpowering individuals, as I do, and for the worse. I am like Kelman, skeptical of institutions, only I do not currently adjunct.

Generally, we can sum up Kelman's interview as descriptive of alienated labor. Besides the handling of his employment as an adjunct lecturer, Kelman also spoke about working in a bookstore. Other interviewees, like Styx who described working in the university's dining services and Tim who temporarily turned to low-wage work, Kelman held a shoddy job. Djuan, however, notably the only African American interviewee, lamented difficulty securing even these sorts of jobs. Linnea and Alice, interestingly, have received treatment on-the-job indicating that clientele feel comfortable hurling almost any criticism at them however

inappropriate, irrelevant, or simply offensive. Certainly, interviewees find themselves subject to questionable work conditions and limited opportunities.

#10: Depressed Detainee

I remember a lot through high school, I wanted to kill myself. I couldn't deal with school very well. To make you do...things like they make you do is like...they make you focus on things that you don't really care that much about. The social atmosphere is really not supportive and it's not really accepting of individuality."

Cydar, University Student

About his entrance into higher education, Cydar said:

I think it could be a lot more than what it is. I think it's kind of, in a lot of cases I think, almost a waste of time and I kind of hoped that college would be a little bit different but it seems so much like high school.

Cydar, additionally lamented the lack of self direction and engagement, coupled with the high cost in higher education. Here he compares his experience with the university to private political gatherings.

For me, I'm sure a lot of other people [too], there is an economic strain to go to college and I'm not really sure where I'm going to get all the money and that's going to be problematic. But beyond that, I mean, I really wish like...like I've been going to conventions and stuff like that for quite a long time since I was in high school and at the workshops there, specifically ones that were run by anarchists. There was an atmosphere where learning happened. Everyone was actively engaged in what was going on to a degree, everyone was attentive. Everybody kind of wanted to be there learning the stuff that was being given.

Cydar had a particularly dramatic experience with the police, involving incarceration. Here he gives a synopsis.

At the end of August in 2004 I was in New York and I was marching in a march that estimates say there might have been

one million people there. It was a big march during the Republican National Convention and a fire...a float was set aflame, a 30 foot float and I was arrested during the protest. I wasn't really involved in that particular incident, and police basically fabricated a story and I was put in a jail called Riker's Island which is one of the most, I heard from locals, it is one of the most violent prisons in New York. And I was real lucky...I was charged with felonies, several felonies and which could have put me in jail for 25 years. I was real, real lucky that after being in jail for a week that the felonies were dropped for me, but they really weren't dropped for everybody that was with me, that was arrested, everybody was kind of lumped together. There was about 13 people that didn't even know each other before this arrest took place, the police claimed that we all knew each other and we all planned starting this fire, and beating people up, and fighting cops and tearing the city apart but none of us knew each other and they fabricated the story completely. And this trial, this case went on for nine months before...they didn't have any evidence, they just were essentially trying to drag this out and it was a kind of torture. It makes you spend lots of money that you don't have. Some people pled out and pled guilty for lesser charges because they didn't have money to keep coming out to New York City from Ohio, California, or wherever else they were from. People that were able to stick through had a lot of support from their family or their friends and everyone that stuck through was eventually acquitted. No one was found guilty of what they were originally charged with and the only people that were found guilty weren't really found guilty but pled guilty on lesser charges because they couldn't afford to come out to New York more.

This arrest, taking place after his high school graduation and before college enrollment, actually inspired his participation in higher education. He recalls:

I mean I guess that situation with the police led to my, well in some ways, led to my experiences at the university because at the time I didn't like high school so much and I wasn't planning on going back into an educational setting; like a formal one anyway, like a university. But I felt like I kind of needed to make myself look like I was doing something other than just sitting around or bumming around during the trial or during the court procedures or whatever. So I needed to do something like go to school, so I started applying.

Cydar described the discipline techniques employed in the jail.

I don't know exactly everything they would do, but would definitely rough them up a little bit like punch them and drag them across the floor or something like that and take them out of the room. I don't know what they would do with them outside, I couldn't see. And they wouldn't come back, they would be gone.

About the situation in general, he said:

I think prison is pretty much just a more violent expression of other aspects of our society, like more overtly violent as compared to subvertly violent. I've never been in a more extreme, extremely mentally violent or physically violent situation in my life. I imagine being in war would probably be more physically or mentally violent then this situation unless you're like flying in a fighter jet.

He likewise drew a connection from jail to society.

But these things, the feelings I that I felt in prison I also felt other times in my life; of fear and like a sense that I have to conform or I'm going to face dire consequences...like a sense that I can't really be who I want to be, like a fear of the future as in I don't know, like I have control over myself because what's up against me is way too powerful to possibly resist ...helpless, helpless feeling.

Addressing his opinion of society, Cydar noted: "I don't have a high opinion of it. Like I said...I kind of already...but...I guess in a word I'd say it's based on violence in many different forms." On the issue of social change, he offered:

I think something that is really important is compassion and understanding. And things like adventure and freedom, freedom of movement and some kind of sense of equality, not necessarily complete equality but those things I like to see and I don't exactly see right now. I mean I feel, you know, that society is about stifling adventure, stifling liberty. You know it's founded on inequality and I think there is some way to go about that differently to make it a more compassionate place to live but it's not being done.

My opinion of this society is in agreement with Cydar's. I cannot say I have a high opinion of it. This overall critical view of society appears repeatedly in the narratives. I am like Cydar, privy to a harsh slant on society, but ironically greater in age and possibility more sheltered in some ways.

Like me, he has had at least one serious confrontation with police. Cydar's legal confrontation, however, proved significantly more violent, time consuming, and traumatizing than mine. Styx, Nick, Linnea, Hannah, Randal, Djuan, and Tim also described poor experiences with law enforcement. In every instance, law enforcement failed to protect and rather preyed upon either the interviewee or someone the interviewee accompanied.

Unlike me, however, Cydar finds himself in a position of indifference toward high education at an age under 20 years old. At his age, I had a more naïve attitude toward college. Cydar is like me, only more precocious and preoccupied about finances. His concern about financing his education reminds me of the sentiments Hannah expressed about the matter. Like Randall and unlike Hannah, however, Cydar expressed skepticism about institutionalized higher education.

Like Tim, Cydar began to ideate suicide. Alienation, legal onslaughts, repression, and financial strain take their toll. In the case of Tim, Cydar, and Alice's colleague, they took a psychological toll in the form of a potentially life threatening depression and despair. I find it terribly ironic that in the face of what I recognize as criminalization that when an interviewee really represents a violent threat it is against none other than their own self. In this sense, at times, major institutions do not adequately serve the interviewees but rather create and exasperate their problems.

#11: Cast-off Caretaker

“In the course of our 20-plus year marriage, he told me repeatedly that I had contributed nothing and I was entitled to nothing and these institutions have confirmed that.”

Faith, Community College Student

Currently enrolled in community college, Faith finds her education an enjoyable and enriching experience.

It’s an experience that I’ve always wanted for myself and have always put on hold because other things always came first. My husband came first, my children came first, my family came first; my commitments to that part of my life always came before commitments to myself.

As for experiences with law enforcement, she began by saying: “My personal experiences with law enforcement have not been wonderful. I find that they have been very non-responsive to my needs.” Faith’s husband abused her emotionally and physically over the course of their marriage.

But when I finally involved the police, they were very non-responsive. They were blaming, they either blamed me the same as he did or they didn’t believe me and that follows through with the County court system as well. They either blamed me for the abuse or they did not believe me.

Her husband abused her with money as well.

He closed accounts without my knowledge. He changed accounts and put them in his name only. He took our savings bonds out of the safety deposit box and hid them. He changed passwords on e-trade accounts. He changed his direct deposit into a checking account in his name only. To make a long story short, he took everything; every last marital asset that we owned. He put everything in his name, including my inheritance that I had gotten from my mother when she died from breast cancer. Then he filed for divorce. And I had not money to hire an attorney and the court refused to order him to pay me anything. I got nothing in the way of child support. I

absolutely got nothing in the way of spousal support. They told me that I could support myself and my children on credit cards, which is what I had to do for a year and a half; directly. It's in the court records. That is how I had to pay for my attorneys.

Here Faith describes the circumstances leading to her taking a low-wage job.

I racked up over \$60,000 in credit card debt because they refused to order him to pay me any kind of support of any kind. I ended up in the long run, because I maxed out four credit cards, I had nothing else, I had to file for welfare. I was getting food stamps and Medicaid for myself and the children. I was working part-time at Kohl's making \$7 an hour. You have to understand, my husband has a college degree. He was worked for the Social Security administration since 1975, I think. He makes somewhere in the vicinity of \$110,000 a year as a federal employee. He is the head of a federal agency in Toledo and I have a high school education. And I have been a stay-at-home mom for 20 years. I have not been in the workforce. I gave up my career with the federal government back in 1985, when our first child was born. So, I was making \$7 an hour at Kohl's.

To make matters worse, the court ordered what they call a "rotation system" for the divorced couple's previously shared household. Under the orders of this court order, Faith would have the house and children for the weekdays and her husband would have the house and children for the weekend. The court expected Faith to live in her husband's new apartment on the days she did not have the house. But, because she wanted to avoid abuse she resided in her van those days. In effect, the court made her homeless.

The stakes suddenly became even greater one day when her older son did not return from school on a day she was to vacate the premises. Faith explained:

I had spent three hours looking for my son. I couldn't be out in 15 minutes; for one thing I was an emotional mess. I asked the police officer if he would notify my husband and let him know that I was certainly willing to leave, and was planning to leave, I just couldn't be out in 15 minutes and would he let them know that I would certainly be able to be out by two hours. And rather than wait the two hours, my husband decided to file contempt charges on me for not

being out on time. I was found guilty of contempt charges and sentenced to 30 days in jail.

Next, Faith lost custody of her children.

I lost custody of my sons. My attorney appealed it. She told me initially that it would be a piece of cake, that it was ridiculous and after she researched it she found out that it was not going to be a piece of cake after all, that there was no case law to support her original allegation that searching for your son who was missing was a legitimate reason to ignore a court order.

Here Faith offers her insight into the situation.

It's absolutely phenomenal that these men are not only treating the mother's of their children this way but then our courts are rewarding them. And our courts, who are sitting on the benches of our courts, male judges...I sat in that courtroom and was the only woman in that court room. My attorney was a man, initially...obviously my husband was a man; his attorney was a man. The judge was a man, the magistrate was a man; the court ordered psychologist was a man. The guardian ad litem was a man. Everyone in that room was a man, except me. And when I fired my attorney and hired a female attorney, she was abused by the system as well. My husband's attorney filed charges against her...some kind of contempt something...motion to show cause, I don't know what it was. And she stuck her head between her legs and cowered and from that day forward it was unclear who she represented because she stopped representing me and I still sat in a courtroom of all men. She was, like I said, she stopped representing me.

Faith reported that the abuse never received attention in court. Instead, her depression and alleged craziness did. About her husband's implementation of this dynamic, she said: "He brought up the fact that I had moved towels out of the linen closet and how bizarre it was." The court likewise refused to allow her children to testify.

In response to her plight, Faith conducted independent research on domestic violence.

Here she describes the fruits of her research:

I have documentation from the APA [American Psychological

Association], from the American Medical Association; I have documentation from Women's Against Domestic Violence; I have documentation from National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

About her thought on society, she said:

I feel that there is a lot more of them than there are of us. I feel that there is a lot more people, that when it comes right down to it, they're mean, they're hateful and they frankly don't give a damn about anybody else but themselves. They might talk a good game, they're deceitful and they're out for nobody else but themselves. They could lie to your face and stab you in the back and not blink an eye. They're your best friend when they need something from you, but when you need something in return they don't answer your phone or they're too busy. People who do care, people who want to make a difference, are out numbered 50-to-1. And this is why society is the way it is.

Faith wants to see more women in power. As she told me: "We would have more women in places that make a real difference. We would have more women in leadership roles."

If you look at our society where rules are decided on, where rules are made, and the rules are enforced starting all the way from the lowly little city council, in every little hob-nob town all across every rinky-dink State all the way to the White House of the United States of America every last one of them from city council to State government to federal government every single level what do you see? You see white male faces. They're all, every last city council, every last state government office, all the way to the White House is controlled by white men and until we have women and until we have people of color in those offices until we stop letting ourselves be ruled by white men, nothing is going to change.

~

Faith's lifestyle is perhaps the one most strikingly different from mine out of the entire group of interviewees. Higher education became a new and rare treat for her after the divorce. She had always put others first. Despite these major differences in experience and lifestyle, I could relate to Faith. Her story, full of tragedy, emanated a perverse and ludicrous cruelty that seemed familiar. The system is pitted against her and she knows it. Her experiences have taught

her this, step-by-step. Like Nick, she has an unusually accurate and coherent critique of institutional failure.

I am like Faith, perversely wounded, but am living a different life. Tim and Hannah also bare perverse wounds. In all three interviewees' cases, there is a conjugal or sexual theme infused with an element of legal trauma. Beyond this general tri-fold conjugal/sexual theme joined with legal problems, Hannah's case has the most in common with Faith's case. Like Hannah, Faith needed to leave an abusive husband. The nature of the abuse in each case, however, differed. Hannah found herself better able to contend legally with the challenge, but like Faith expressed dissatisfaction with the legal outcomes.

Faith's disparaging comments about her female attorney's inability or refusal to stand up to the male-dominated legal system mirrors Styx's criticism of her female attorney's less than feminist position with Styx's legal case. I think that Faith and Styx, specifically, did not receive equal protection under the law during their court cases. Faith, like Nick and Hannah, has a clearly articulated understanding of what is wrong with the social conditions that allow her to narrate in the way she does. Like Randal and Nick, she is a self-taught social critic. Faith, after all, conducted research on domestic violence.

#12: Minority Martyr

"I was accepted for a PhD program and I had a really great record and everything when I was teaching and everything and then at a Christmas party the Chair of the department turned to my husband, my first year, patted me on the hand and said to my husband: 'Get her pregnant, I'll never let a woman get a PhD from my program.' And of course with my personality it made me more determined than ever to get my PhD."

Penny, Retired University Professor

Penny completed her entire doctoral program; the Comprehensive Exam, the dissertation proposal, and even the dissertation itself. The chair, however, would not schedule the dissertation defense. When her husband obtained a visiting professorship in another state, she followed. Not until a substantial length of time passed did the *new* chair phone her and invite her to defend the dissertation. Penny explained this abrupt change: “We had moved into the 70s, they were worried about a law suit.”

Her conflicts with sexist males did not end there. As a faculty member, she met a particularly difficult male student. She told me: “He was terrorizing not only female TAs but he was terrorizing the female students in class.” Penny had to turn to the campus police because she felt physically threatened.

At another university, a different male student threatened to kill her in retaliation for a bad grade. Penny tells the story:

And they investigated it and they didn't find *enough* substantiation because I didn't have a witness. So I gave him a bad grade anyway. Fortunately the next semester I had a sabbatical. I had a campus security guard with me at all times after that semester and then I had sabbatical and then when I went away for six months and he was gone.

With the help of a male friend in the Criminal Justice department, her chair, and her husband Penny overcame the bully. But, according to Penny, he was destroying the class and:

My TA was destroyed, it never got back even though I took him out, I showed authority and took him out but they had seen that she was frightened. She would tremble next to him.

About the help she received from her husband, she said:

My husband came a couple times. But my friends say we don't all have somebody...and I must admit I have had years, I have two sons and I've had years of trying to convince my husband that it is different...my sons are interested, I've raised them...*it's different for women.*

While Penny did not have much to say about law enforcement, she did have something to say about the medical establishment. As she recalled: “I had a doctor who wanted to do a hysterectomy, he told me my uterus was useless.” After seeing another doctor, Penny had another child and forwent the hysterectomy.

About her career and life as a wife and mother, she said:

I had a very supportive husband. I had help from him. With my son I would not have accomplished what I accomplished but I didn't get my PhD until my first son was three. But I had to go for that defense when he was three. I gave up and started having kids. I shouldn't say that because I thought oh well I'm never going to have a PhD. Although I didn't use it as much as I would have.

Although she eventually earned tenure at the Associate level at a private institution before retiring and later taking a non-tenured position at a public institution, Penny initially had to get a teaching certificate in order to secure a job. She told me: “So I could get a job at a high school because there were not jobs in this [geographic] area.” But when she found a tenure track job, she “jumped like crazy because I wanted to use my PhD no matter what.” But soon gender roles beckoned her away from her goal of becoming a Full Professor.

It was my goal and then my mother got sick, very ill, and I had to go into early retirement...so 14 years and not a full career. But then [the public] university needed me, so I put some more years on there.

Despite conflict between her two major life's roles, those being professional and woman, Penny managed to earn tenure in a department hostile to it. She described the Chair as such:

She was a queen bee and she took notes and she hired, not hired, she paid student to spy...not paid but I'll help your scholarship or I'll take you to this conference if you tell me something bad.

On the subject of society-at-large, Penny said:

I've gotten more cynical as I've gotten older. I used to be such

an optimist; I used to be so naïve. But these last eight years I've been...not eight years, six years it's just been horrible with the war.

Fleshing out her statement, she continued:

And I went through Vietnam. Well Vietnam...I didn't... I regret it, I didn't get radicalized until they killed students at Kent State. I regretted it and with the first Gulf War I was still at the other institution. We had a teach-in and all sorts of demonstrations. Well it was there and it was over and I don't know what happened this time.

When asked what she would like to change, she told me: We should not have torture, period." She also said: "I can't believe what we've turned into...I just can't believe the things that have happened." In relation to election related phone calls into her home from conservatives, she divulged.

We kept getting calls because they kept thinking oh, they got to be Republicans. I don't know where they got this idea. And it stopped after the election, but it started up again and the latest thing is the gays are going to cause us to have polygamy; directly. If you don't support certain initiatives against gay marriage... that's what they want now, they want polygamy so they can have multiple whatevers; the gays. It doesn't fit at all. They are getting away with such outlandish stuff, and people are so stupid they are swallowing everything. How can they swallow this after it's been proven all the things that are wrong?

About change in higher education, she said: "Number one, I wish there weren't the numbers...this *proven* discrimination against women."

Just in general, why do they make it so *hard* for everybody to get jobs, to get tenure, blah, blah all that stuff...I don't understand and why people play these games, these awful games... the whole thing about formal education...and these charter schools and these religious schools, they are just taking money out of the system.

On that topic, she gave an example of the lived-in-reality of a young female academic she knows.

They don't believe in tenure, so it's an institution that doesn't give tenure. It's full time; over full time. They're on quarters and she is doing 4 or 5 classes a quarter. And most of her classes are composition because it is at school where most people do not understand literature and they don't understand and she has to do all this grading and she has to teach in the summer. She gets like three weeks off here and three weeks off...she is just dying and she is fairly young. She is in her 30s. And she is looking for a new job. I mean, I support her all the way because she is going to die. And they have this attitude like, you know, you're just lucky you got a job lady.

Penny then added: "They're treating all their faculty and a lot of their women [like that] because they can get part-timers they think are just as good as people who have all this training"

~

Like me, Penny witnessed male terror in the classroom. Just as I had to work as a substitute teacher to support myself, she had to work as a high school teacher. She also recounts gender discrimination in the university. The discrimination she faced, however, comes from the overt old-school persuasion. My experiences come from the revised edition of sexism; late 20th century and the new millennium. This new-school sexism, if I am to take Penny and I as exemplars of each, appears to relay more heavily on sexualization of the base kind and covert tactics as compared to the more paternalistic yet definitive old school variety.

Like me, no one would be able to convince Penny that sexist discrimination does not happen to women in the academy. The fact that she followed her husband to an academic job, however, reminds me of Linnea following her fiancé. But unlike Linnea's fiancé, Penny's husband reciprocated the support. I am like Penny, moderately overcoming terror and discrimination, only I will work in the new millennium and do not have a husband; supportive or otherwise.

Penny criticizes the general political situation and war, as did other interviewees.

Randall attended a demonstration against the US occupation of Afghanistan. Djuan and Tim rejected the government's response to 911. A pattern of rejecting militarization, thus, begins to emerge.

Penny, in addition, although currently retired, describes an exploitive work situation her lecturing friend suffers. Work, again, operates as a key oppressive institution. Penny points out that the academy operates like any other callous business, by expecting drone-like dedication from people with PhDs working as faculty, thus expanding the critique beyond exorbitant tuition making education inaccessible for many.

#13: Wronged Worker

"...other jobs where it was repressive...oh Dinning Services....basically how they were so strict...'oh you got to make up this shift even, even if I got mono."

Karen, University Student

Karen, a student, spent time as a student-worker. She described frustrations with impersonal environments at several universities.

The people in the offices such as Financial Aid, Registrar, they just didn't seem to want to help the students. Basically, well I was having a problem, I was wondering about the aid so I could take some summer classes, so I wanted to take them before I transferred here to save money because I was in state. The guy was saying, 'Well I guess you shouldn't take summer classes then or you don't get much aid in the summer, well if you can't afford them without the aid then you shouldn't take the classes.'

Karen continued to describe three different universities she had attended, previous to her current institution, as failing to treat students as though they are part of a community. She told me she felt this way, even though she had been involved in campus activities. Karen offered a concrete

example of the depersonalization, and that took the form of a lost transcript and other complications.

They said that they had one of the letters of recommendation. Then they said they didn't have any. And one of the professors said she sent them. Then they couldn't find a transcript, a lady had it on the screen and I looked and said that's what they are.

On the subject of other institutions, Karen focused on work.

McDonalds, they wouldn't always give you the breaks, even though it was illegal because in Indiana if you work six hours you're required to take a half-hour break or at least have it offered to you.

Let's see...factory work basically being so rigid a point system, even if you had a doctor's excuse you got pointed. So it was almost they'd rather you go to work super sick and then infect your co-workers instead of staying home. And I would have done it just so I wouldn't get pointed and lose the job.

Taco Hell is pure hell, pure screaming, yelling, stress, whatever, you could just see the tension. I came so close to basically ending up in the...I mean I thought I was going to end up in the hospital.

Another company I worked for, it was temp service; they have people work 10 or 11 hours a day, five or six hours a week... You can't leave the building at all during your break. They pretty much lock the door. You get almost no time off, like I said, just pretty much, pretty oppressive.

About society in general, Karen said:

I know I've had two really good jobs, and some neutral jobs that weren't super restrictive. But if I didn't have a good job right now I would be even more cynical about it, society, and think that all the work places are trying to screw with people basically and be so oppressive.

Karen then suggested a more liberal, tolerant, and secular society. She further described this society as: "not being so repressive, especially of women and minorities and the young."

Like Karen, I have worked some less than rewarding jobs. Karen, however, seems to have more experience of this sort. I am like Karen, proletarianized, but with less low-wage work experience. Karen's account of work in the university dining services, of course, calls attention to Styx's battle with the dining services regulation of employee meals.

Karen, like Linnea, described a university system ill-suited to serving students. Like Karen and Linnea, depersonalization and lack of support at universities have frustrated me as well. About depersonalization in general, Karen mentions working in a factory. Karen, the only interviewee to speak of a factory per se, nonetheless offers us a clue.

Kelman stated in his narrative: "There is a larger institution of corporate capitalist retail sales which is an institution in itself." Retail sales comprise a vast threshold in our free market society. Now, recall the discussions about tuition and the worries and varied abilities to afford higher education. Is higher education in the United States a retail transaction? Are universities, in effect, factories? Have you ever heard the term "degree factory"?

But to return to Karen's narrative, a *Financial Aid* officer discouraged her from enrolling in summer courses because of monetary issues. Class bias runs rampant in our universities. This class bias, besides representing a moral indignity and institutional failing, at least in Humanistic terms, renders education corrupt and degraded. Thrown out of our halls, like a difficult family member from the house, Education lingers somewhere in the margins of the United States with her panties torn off and raped. Day after day the vast majority of Americans put their time in at work to uphold this.

Education, with little time to recover from the rape, now stands on the auction block at the service of the highest bidders. Gang raped over and over, box car after box car runs her over. America built itself on slavery and sustains itself on slavery.

Section 3: Comparative Analysis

We have troubles. We want more. We are the Aggrieved Artist, Innovative Insurgent, Compromised Causality, Compassionate Critic, Persecuted Prisoner, Precarious Pupil, Sincere Scholar, Out Outcast, Alienated Adjunct, Depressed Detainee, Cast-off Caretaker, Minority Martyr, and Wronged Worker. But what can we make of all this? The following quantified charts and reviews address this question. Still worried? The next Guide Post approaches...

Figure 2: Major Issues At-a-Glance

	Abuse	Sexism	Legal Cruelty	Alienation	Fiscal/Work Problems
Aggrieved Artist		X		X	
Innovative Insurgent			X		
Compromised Causality	X		X	X	X
Compassionate Critic			X		X
Persecuted Prisoner	X	X	X		X
Precarious Pupil	X		X	X	X
Sincere Scholar		X		X	X
Out Outcast	X		X		
Alienated Adjunct				X	X
Depressed Detainee			X	X	X
Cast-off Caretaker	X	X	X		X
Minority Martyr		X			X
Wronged Worker	X			X	X
Total	6	5	8	7	10

- Generally marks on grid indicate issues as described in the respective Narrative Vignette. If discrepancy occurs, rather than in err, it occurs due to need to maintain confidentiality or because of highly sensitive content. This chart, furthermore, provides a descriptive overview only.

Retrospective Review

Interviewees varied according to the amount of support, recognition, or burden in their lives. They additionally varied according to their described lifestyles. The degree to which they experienced opposition, controversy, rejection, or marginality also varied. The role principles, transportation, or terror played in their experiences likewise varied. The presence of rape or institutional satiation varied as well. For this reason, if a larger study be conducted in response to this qualitative study, I suggest the following variables for conceptualizing and measuring: 1) social/financial support, 2) social/institutional terror, 3) lifestyle, 4) institutional satiation, 5) marginality, 6) rape, 7) recognition, 8) burden, 9) controversy, 10) transportation, 11) rejection, 12) principles, and 13) opposition.

While interviewees differed according to their suggested “variables,” the variables nonetheless express patterns emerging from the interviews taken as a whole. The patterns include the co-existence of opposition, controversy, rejection, and marginality across the interviewee sample. The patterns in turn indicate tenuous interlocking degrees of support, recognition, and mobility/transportation. Another emerging pattern expresses itself through terror, rape, burden, and systemic satiation. Finally, principles/values and lifestyles provide a function in the collective narrative. If these sets of co-existing pattern-implicating variable sets were collapsed to form meta-variables, here is what they could look like:

1) opposition, controversy, rejection, marginality → Integration (I)

examples: The student newspaper rejected the Persecuted Prisoner’s tendency to take controversial stories. The Sincere Scholar stood in opposition to the stifling environment at her first academic job. Penny’s academic chair discouraged her participation in her doctoral

program. These scenarios indicate a lack of, or barrier to, Integration. Relegation to a social ghetto is the ultimate implication of variable I.

2) support, recognition, mobility/transportation → Social Resources (SR)

examples: The Precarious Pupil had inadequate financial and social support. The Depressed Detainee wondered how he would finance his education. The Innovative Insurgent hitchhikes while Compassionate Critic drives a jalopy. These scenarios underscore limited Social Resources. Impoverishment and associated relegation to a lower social class, in one form or another, is the ultimate implication of variable SR.

3) terror, rape → Mistreatment (M)

examples: A male student terrorized the Minority Martyr. Two prostitutes raped the Out Outcast. The Cast-off Caretaker's husband abused her. Hannah's husband molested their son. These scenarios constitute Mistreatment. Insecurity, as expressed through the inability to take ownership of one's one body or personal space, is the ultimate implication of variable M.

4) burden, systemic satiation → Agitation (A)

examples: The Wronged Worker has taken numerous low-wage jobs. The Cast-off Caretaker is over-engaged in the family court system and the Compromised Causality suffered through the university judicial system. The Alienated Adjunct has become skeptical about institutions. These scenarios indicate Agitation. Lacking access to positive institutional experiences, while receiving negative "service", defines variable A and its implication is a generalized *hoi polloi* experience.

5) principles/values, lifestyle → Affective Preferences (AP)

examples: The Innovative Insurgent testified that his convictions lead to confrontations with authority. The Aggrieved Artist notices that people, her students or people present at a party, react strongly to her based on personal appearance. Linnea, Faith, and Penny played traditional female roles; being supportive of their male partners. These scenarios indicate Affective Preference. The implication of variable AP is that exercising personal choice, when possible, can cost dearly with prices fixed by those contrarily mobilized.

Subsequent researchers might be able to determine possible relationships between these variables. This, however, is beyond the scope for this project in general. What is more, the methodology in the project cannot accommodate such speculation but merely suggest and inspire it. Still, future studies could focus on concepts such as degrees of integration, social resources, agitation, mistreatment, and affective preferences within or between interviewee samples and control groups.

But, for theoretical purposes, I will consider to what end the emergent relationship between the various variables' implications point. The five aforementioned variables create an encompassing social reality in which dissident individuals find themselves assigned, beyond their control, to deprived social locales in which they own neither their body nor personal space all the whilst lacking access to remediation; indeed the locale's design prompts negative stimuli upon attempt to remediate. The layperson's translation for this is that we are screwed. This study offers the layperson a detailed account of the screwing *mechanisms*.

To continue, despite variance between interviewees and their individual degrees or quality of integration, social resources, agitation, mistreatments, and affective preferences in their lives, the interviewees have a greater, constant occurrence in common with each other. That occurrence is the presence of confrontation, and particularly in relation to a grievance pertaining to abuse, sexism, legal cruelty, alienation, or fiscal/work issues. For this reason, coupled with the presence of the aforementioned five themes that embody more divergent sub-themes; i.e., integration, social resources, agitation, mistreatment, and affective preferences, I am offering the following hypothesis in response to my interview data: *There exists a significant correlation between confrontation, as related to grievance pertaining to abuse, sexism, legal cruelty, alienation, or fiscal/work issues and these following variables: 1)integration, 2)social resources, 3)agitation, 4)mistreatment, and 5)affective preferences.*

In other words, as emblematic in any measurable correlation because measuring correlation requires aggregation, the above relation between variables and the constant of confrontation as described, indicates a *social phenomenon*. This social phenomenon surfaces in my own lived experience, as chronicled in Chapter 3 as well as the individual interviewees. Based on my finding with this sample, individual experience and thus social forces, transmit themselves through individual experience.

This is the very crux of *The Sociological Imagination*, as Mills explains: “understanding of the intimate realities of ourselves in connection with larger social realities (15).” I am therefore, validating the premise of C. Wright Mills’s theory of the sociological imagination; that premise being that individual “reality,” or experience, has connections with larger social realities or phenomenon through my implementation of the auto-ethnography fused with interviewees from my social milieu. As per my auto-ethnography, the experiences therein say more about

society than they do me. This means, then, that *individual lived experience, when the sociological imagination is applied, can reveal more about social reality than the individual under consideration*. This is the fundamental underlying premise of this entire project.

The fundamental underlying premise, to reiterate, is that lived reality embodies social meaning larger than individuality. Individual idiosyncrasies, losses, or triumphs indicate systemic forces at work. The absolute conclusion, then, is that C. Wright Mills was correct in his assertion that the Sociologist must concern himself or herself primarily with understating the relationship between individual experience and history.

To return to the sample in particular, and more precisely my relation to those in the sample, a collective profile appears to emerge from the interviews and the content's bearing on my auto-ethnography. We tend toward being educated, having agency, and being resilient. We overcome discrimination in many cases even to its occasional terrorizing extent. But, we likewise tend to be relatively disenfranchised with only limited agency and unsatisfactory resilience against hostile conditions. We experience perverse wounds, trauma, pejorative characterization, discouragement, and proletarianization. We have dissenting opinions coming forth from a vantage point allowing for a severe critique of society. Without false consciousness, in the Marxian sense, we notice discrimination and remain skeptical of institutions. We tend to be anti-fascist, anti-capitalist, or the like. These strong convictions seem to encourage confrontations of some sort or another.

Still we are individuals. We may or may not drive a car, study pornography, hitchhike, or gain access to graduate school. We may or may not have spent time in jail or have bad experiences with law officers. We have financial resources, personal responsibilities, an

established career, or not; we might adjunct or work for low-wages. We have varied degrees of support, shelter, and maturity. Our lifestyles vary.

Still, a unified profile emerges. Because this unified profile emerges, I suggest that *a network of experiences, laced throughout individual's lives, link discrimination and abuse with legal difficulties or feelings of alienation which in turn foster job, career, or money problems.*

This link, however, since it exists in aggregation, indicates social phenomena as opposed to individual phenomenon. Individual experience, however, implicates the larger social and historical forces at play. Recognizing these indicators requires use of the Sociological Imagination. In essence, this recognition *is* the Sociological Imagination.



Guide Post #6: Conceptual Compensation

Reading has its benefits. The benefits come in the form of new insights the interviews offer. The new insights have the abbreviated name of *PET* (Proof, Entanglement, & Transmission). Here are some major concepts, containing an implicit social critique, and their associated insights:

- Proof: Biography confirms socio-structural reality.
- Entanglement: Police, family, school, and work reproduce Society.
- Transmission: Social problems translate into material problems.

...as easy at A-B-C, P-E-T, do-re-mi! 

As previously stated, *individual lived experience can reveal more about social reality than the individual under consideration.* This is the fundamental underlying premise of this entire project and C. Wright Mills's *Sociological Imagination*. In relation to my auto-

ethnography and the interviews, specifically, the stories do not indicate psychological or personal problems but rather *social problems*. In the Sociological Imagination, Mills declared: Many great public issues as well as many private troubles are described in terms of ‘the psychiatric’- often, it seems, in a pathetic attempt to avoid the large issues and problems of modern society (Mills, 1959, p. 12).” In other words, it is easier to label someone as “crazy”, “disturbed,” “troubled,” or “deviant” and so forth than to confront and solve the social problems making such suggestions possible. The implication here is that this labeling impeded much needed social change. This is the body of the Sociological Imagination. PET articulates my own discovery of the Sociological Imagination’s anatomy, based on my observations.

Forthcoming Thoughts

While the analysis has seemingly identified a social phenomenon, that being a network of experiences collectively lived linking discrimination and abuse with legal difficulties or feelings of alienation thus producing or relating to job, career, or money problems, the analysis itself does not automatically and concisely answer the questions previously posed or implied. For one, what does this social phenomenon have to do with the institution of higher education, the experiences therein, and particularly my experiences as detailed in Chapter 3? What could all of this, if anything, indicate about hidden curriculums operating in higher education? How might hidden curriculums work in tandem with other oppressive institutions? Secondly, what do the intricacies in commonalities between individual lives, as described here, tell us? How do the interviews help locate me socially and thus extend my auto-ethnography? Thirdly, what are the specific social, institutional, and structural relevancies embedded in this data? Why did men, more so than women, express the feeling of crippling constraint when sexism provides the base

for this social phenomenon? Are we really white washed, functionally middle class, and effeminately unisex as I claimed earlier in this chapter?

Finally, what singular concept, if any, bonds all of this together? What is the problem, anyway? And what can we do about it? I will begin to answer these questions in Chapter 5.

Chapter Five: Conclusion: Practically Speaking

“The State, any State, that imposes its will with the threat of prison or poverty, is terrorist.”
(some internal enemies, *Green Anarchy* Fall/Winter ‘05/’06 Issue)

Preface

Status quo defenders expect, demand, and force silence from victims. Oppressors use persistence of voice, even a trace, as evidence that we provoked an attack or other punitive measure. When I was a little girl, someone told me I should suffer in silence.

From this, I extrapolate that we *learn* an inability to speak. Since we learn this, we can resist it.

Worse yet, voice can become indicative of inauthentic claims to oppression. In other words, if you can complain you should simply be thankful for voice. Either way, we are supposed to “shut up.”

While voice indicates active resistance, and thus forces which neutralize oppression to some extent, it indicates mitigation of oppression. This project, my auto-ethnography, actively resists oppressive silencing. My ability to resist indicates forces within my lived experience that mitigate oppression. bell hooks, in *Talking Back* explains: “In the act of overcoming our fear of speech, of being seen as threatening, in the process of learning to speak as subjects, we participate in the global struggle to end domination (hooks, 1989, p. 18).” So, *liberating speech* is not “just speech.”

I, in other words, occupy a social position that incorporates both privilege and oppression. Because I am progressive, I have an interest in using my privilege to challenge the oppression. I, honestly, have an interest in this because I sometimes find the oppression as overpowering the privilege. My auto-ethnography grapples with this binary by exploring my victimization while also acknowledging how I resist succumbing completely to victim-hood.

I would like to think that if I occupied a more privileged position that I would undertake such a project anyway, or at least support others in such an activity. But, the behavior of many relatively privileged people leads me to some skepticism. Perhaps I am too cynical. Either way, this project offers an opportunity to reflect upon oppression and mitigating forces in individual lived experience.



Guide Post #7:

We managed to cross a border. I must declare our baggage at Customs. Here I will make claims. This is *my* baggage.

The Experiential Network and its Meaning

The analysis in the past chapter leads me to make this statement about a *network of experiences*, while reviewing key questions. While the analysis has seemingly identified a social phenomenon, that being a network of experiences collectively lived linking discrimination and abuse with legal difficulties or feelings of alienation thus producing or relating to job, career, or money problems, the analysis itself does not automatically answer the questions previously posed or implied. The key questions follow, this time with a response. While the responses address the questions, however, they suggest avenues for further and more complete consideration in forthcoming projects designed for increased focus.

Q: What does this social phenomenon have to do with the institution of higher education, the experiences therein and particularly my experiences as detailed in Chapter 3?

R: The social phenomenon of a *network of experiences* exposes the modus operandi of institutional power; including the institutional power of higher education.

Q: What could all of this, if anything, indicate about hidden curriculums operating in higher education?

R: Higher education, like any other institutions, operates through a modus operandi of a *network of experiences* while producing and reproducing experiences for the network.

Q. How might hidden curriculums work in tandem with other oppressive institutions?

R. Hidden curriculums, and thus the institution of education encompassing it, works in cooperation with other institutions by reflecting and reinforcing social dynamics found in other oppressive institutions, e.g., family, law enforcement, and work.

Q. What do the intricacies in commonalities between individual lives, as described here, tell us?

R. The intricate commonalities between individual lived experience with institutions tells us that the *network of experiences* concept carries with it empirical validity and verifiability.

Q. How do the interviews help locate me socially and thus extend my auto-ethnography?

R. While I exist as an individual, I nonetheless exist as an individual within a social aggregate. The interviews present the relevant social experience in aggregation, in which I comprise a part.

- Q. What are the specific social, institutional, and structural relevancies embedded in this data?
- R. The data point to possible ways of considering how institutions work in tandem while giving specific examples of small group interaction as carriers of institutional power. Co-institutional cooperation, multi-institutional cooperation, and small group interaction as *institutional carriers* suggest processes of structural domination.
- Q. Why did men, more so than women, express the feeling of crippling constraint when sexism provides the base for this social phenomenon?
- R. The men in the sample were not more oppressed than their female counterparts. Rather, masculinity and its accompanying male identity presumes efficacy while femininity, and its accompanying female identity, does not. Thus, in the face of social forces guiding the male subject toward downward mobility, the male subject feels and describes greater resistance.
- Q. Are we, the interviewees and I, really white washed, functionally middle class, and effeminately unisex as I claimed earlier in Chapter 4?
- R. Most of us were white, a few not, and we tend to identify with the downtrodden. Some of us were male and some female. As a group we evade, or fail to emulate, the idealized, masculine image of the Free Citizen. We are middle class in contrast to many, but have experiences outside the supposed prevue of normative middle class life. To revise we are white washed but trifling as such, *tenuously functioning* as middle class, *effeminately emasculated*, and thus collectively unisex save for differential experience with sexism.

- Q. Finally, what singular concept, if any, bonds all of this together? What is the problem, anyway? And what can we do about it?
- R. The single concept bonding all this together is *mobility*; actual, metaphorical, social; hence my use of *hitch*. Constraints against upward or outward mobility, resulting structural domination, i.e., social stratification is the problem. I assert that we should oppose structural domination.

Gut Reactions

In the first chapter, I began with these rudimentary questions to “avoid traps of denial and essentialism.” Here I will begin to answer them, starting with my gut reaction.

- Q. Are attacks against me punishment for challenging the status-quo?
- R. Yes, based on my experiences I believe so.
- Q. Do I bare great sensitivity to sexism because it stands in stark contrast to the otherwise default privilege I possess?
- R. This is a possibility, as is would echo the male subject’s heightened sensitivity to social constraint relative to the female subject. Increased onslaughts against me because I am perceived as a threat to the status quo is another possibility for my sensitivity to sexism.
- Q. Where is the social agency located?

R. Based on my findings, and experiences, social agency operates mainly within institutions and through social interaction. *Oppositional groups, however, can expropriate social agency by altering their social interaction in lieu of how power operates through institutions.* To borrow terms from physics, in an oppressive social environment, the institution(s) and those empowered within them possess the kinetic agency whereas oppositional groups possess potential power. Opposition then, requires the transfer of potential, or latent, social power into kinetic, or manifest, social power.

On Marilyn Frye and Barriers that Mobilize or Demobilize

Before concluding, I must return to Frye's understanding of oppression. Recall her use of the "cage." As she explains: "If you look very closely at just one wire in a cage, you cannot see the other wires" (Frye, 1983, p. 4). Since I backed away from the "myopic" focus on myself in this auto/ethnography, I will answer the questions Frye suggests we ask (Frye, 1983, p. 14).

Q. Who constructs and maintains it?

R. The people empowered through (oppressive) institutions.

Q. Whose interests are served by its existence?

R. It serves the interests of the institutionally empowered.

Q. Is it part of a structure which tends to confine, reduce and immobilize some group?

R. Yes, it is part of a collection of cooperating institutions, e.g. higher education, family, law enforcement, and work which tend to confine, reduce, and immobilize people as represented in my interviewee sample.

Q. Is the individual part of the confined group?

R. Yes, I am a woman. I am a worker. I am a rape survivor.

Reader Challenge #1: Author Feedback

- 1) Acknowledge the title.
- 2) Note the different hitches mentioned throughout the manuscript.
- 3) Compare your notes with Reader Challenge #1: Author Feedback in the concluding chapter.

Answers: 1) The Sociological Hitch, 2) hitches include but are not limited to rape, slapping, arrest, detainment, prostitution, wounds, transience, oppression, imprisonment, hitchhiking, connection, (nautical) *sailing the ocean blue*, See also definition of “hitch” in Chapter 1.



Guide Post #8: Behind the Lines

Beyond Gut Reactions: From Janes's Addiction to Henry Rollins and back to Les Misérables

I love them whores they never judge you
 What can you say when you're a whore?
 They cast that pearl and it don't upset 'em
 They take their chances if they get 'em
 (Jane's Addiction, "Whores")

Perry Ferrell, lead singer of 1990s alternative rock band Jane's Addiction, pays an ambivalent tribute to whores in his likewise titled song. Whores will not judge, they do feel they have the right. They do not intimidate.

Perhaps the notion of voice, possibly coming from postmodern discourse, infiltrated the music scene of the late twentieth century and on to the new millennium. Henry Rollins, lead singer of the Rollins Band and former lead singer for Black Flag; legendary hardcore punk band, after all, demands coherence in the song "Ten Times" on his live CD *The Only Way to Know for Sure*. Check out the selected lyrics.

Get down off that cross, stand up so I can see you, back
up off of that microphone so I can hear the real you, speak
up I can't hear you, what was that you said? (...) when the
revolution comes you'll be the first one to get shot (...) ten
times the horror, ten times the hate, ten times the terror, ten
times the weight, ten times the power, ten times the fear (...)
Get down jump back your life's a photo op, Get down just
back you're just another future cop go bust

Demanding clarity, and the cessation of a righteous façade, Henry seems to challenge the aspiring revolutionary.

About "voice," as almost anyone in social sciences or humanities at an institution of higher education knows by now, Spivak suggests subalterns cannot speak. This establishes a binary; speaker versus subaltern. A whore is a subaltern, according to Perry Ferrell, and a would-be revolutionary speaks; albeit incoherently. Presumably, then, my ability to speak through this auto-ethnography challenges any tendency to perceive me as a subaltern. Yet, through my auto-ethnography I described experiences like those of a subaltern, or have I?

To answer that question, I will say that I do not suppose I have proved Spivak wrong by writing this auto-ethnography. So, if I am to capitulate to a speaker versus subaltern binary, then I must say that I am not a subaltern. But, how then do I reconcile some of my experiences? Is

there an intermediate position between speaker and subaltern? Or, have I ultimately failed to speak?

Reconciling some of experiences with my ability to act as a subject, I think, requires addressing the two latter questions. To answer those questions, I will turn to this idea of third wave feminism and the famous punk icon Henry Rollins. As for third wave feminism, I am referring to Leigh Shoemaker's essay 'Part animal, part machine: Self-definition, Rollins Style,' appearing in *Third wave agenda: being feminist, doing feminism*.

The answers to the questions under consideration are yes and yes. There seems to be an intermediate between speaker and subaltern; that being the experience of privilege and oppression simultaneously; white woman. I am a *white woman*. And, perhaps *I* have not really *spoken*. The failure to speak, despite the appearance otherwise, implies that my expressive attempts 1) do not constitute speech, or 2) are not really mine.

Perhaps in some ways they are Henry Rollins's. After all, according to Leigh Shoemaker, Rollins has the ability to act as a portal to quasi-subjectivity. Shoemaker writes: "Something happens to a person when her feelings are articulated so well, especially when she feels inadequate to express them herself" (Shoemaker, 1997, p. 104). In Shoemaker's essay we can see an emergent reconciliation of the contradictions inherent in a social position ambivalently between subaltern and subject; between oppression and privilege. Perhaps this explains why as my voice becomes increasingly coherent his words become all the more useful. I am, then, suggesting that while coherence satisfies the sort of demands Henry expresses, that it might inevitably implode my voice. And if we are to follow through with the song, that implosion might be the result of becoming a target.

Henry Rollins says: (...) when the revolution comes you'll be the first one to get shot (...) (Rollins 2002). I am afraid he is right. Especially after picking up the latest issue of *Green Anarchy: An Anti-Civilization Journal of Theory and Action* at the local "info-shop" (the millennium answer to the hippy's "free store") and reading an editorial satirizing and demonizing their ideological competitor; as embodied by the political community I am a part of, I am afraid he is right. Frankly, I did not foresee such a direct critique against us, against me, as I somewhat reluctantly put that journal into my satchel and went home with it. But, leafing through it that evening, curious about what *they* were up to, I felt attacked.

I would go about critiquing myself for having privilege, but I cannot do a better job than these green anarchists, "primitivists" as we pejoratively call them, did. So, I will start with their voices. They, referring to us as "Managers-in-Waiting," wrote: "these are the people who in all likelihood will be running the reeducation camps (...) anyone who believes it is their place to organize you, educate you, or in any fashion lead you is indeed your 'class enemy' "(Green Anarchy). Perhaps most devastatingly, they wrote (News, 2005-2006):

And just like the leaves of autumn or the blooming spring, the anarcho-Organizationalists are *upon* us again to rabble-rouse and blaze trails of shit through human lives until grad school beckons in another year or two. (italics added)

But there is another Rollins related complication. As, Leigh Shoemaker explains he not only is a punk icon, but a proto-fascist one too. Shoemaker explains, about Henry's being: "It is a fascist mode of being, and it currently exists as one solution among many for the deep malaise that seems to have shrouded many members of my generation, feminists included (Shoemaker, 1997, p. 106)." So, what about Henry's implication in fascist aesthetics? And, moreover, what does it have to do with me, really?



Guide Post #9:

What does the alleged Fascism have to do with me?: A Confessional Auto-ethnographic Segment

Now I can finally get off that cross...you see shortly after losing my teaching position and prior to filing the discrimination complaint, I felt the need for escape or at least a new hobby. So, after nearly a year of hanging around a faction of the “gothic” scene to gain a better understanding of it, possibly for a future qualitative study, I began frequenting a local club during its Goth Night. Donned in black and occasional German Cross hanging from my neck, I began to make my way to that club, week-by-week.

Perhaps the guilt using white identity in a frivolous way, without regard to others, would have escaped me otherwise. I had, after all, been careful to buy a German Cross reading “1914”, read pre-holocaust, on it. But, the club’s dress code seemed racist in its refusal to allow hip hop related clothing; white t-shirts, baseball caps worn backwards, and backpacks. To make matters worse, every Goth Night at midnight the DJ would play a song with obvious Third Reich references.

This was the routine, everyone would hear the air raid sound affect; the beginning of the Hanzel und Gretel song *Third Reich from the Sun* from their CD *Uber Alles*. Next, everyone, who was not already there, would walk on to the dance floor as the *Third Reich from the Sun* slid from whispering *Sieg Heil* (Safe Victory) in its background and into its beat imitating the sound of marching boots. With everyone marching/dancing in unison, the lyrics then started. The song, notably, contains multiple chants of “revolution,” along with such lyrics as “*mein reich!!!*,” “*mein blut*,” and “*das ist mein krieg*.” Translated, these phrases mean, “revolution,” “my empire,” “my blood,” and “this is my war,” respectively.

So catchy was the tune, I bought the CD. I was hooked, or *hitched* is it? I, admittedly, was not able to hear the German words well enough to understand anything but “*mein*” and “*blut*.” But when I bought the CD, much to my delight, the sleeve contained the every lyric for *Third Reich from the Sun* except for Sieg Heil (Loopy and Vas Kallas 2003). So I read them, and they became increasingly problematic for me, in lieu of my anti-fascist politics. Perhaps the most jarring was the song title *SS Deathstar Supergalatic*. So, I had to take action. I had to do *something*.

I decided to investigate. I had thought about organizing the club crowd, educating them; a sort of impromptu re-education camp if you will. I was used to that sort of thing. Not feeling like I could insist on organizing this apolitical crowd, I contacted the Minister of Propaganda of Hanzel und Gretyl himself. I would question him, and if his answer led me to believe I needed to take drastic action, I would. I contacted him, questioned him (J. Pfahlert, personal communication, December 31, 2004). And he responded (P. G. Sotos, Esq, personal communication, December 31, 2004).

Hello Peter, my name is Jeanine Pfahlert and I am a doctoral candidate of American Culture Studies. Much of my focus in my work relates to youth cultures, subcultures, ideology, and dress. For this reason, and I am directing the question toward you since you are listed as the “Minister of Propaganda,” I am wondering if the music is ideologically motivated or simply an ironic artistic gesture. In other words, is Hanzel und Gretyl fascist per se or just open to using fascist imagery?

Sincerely,

Jeanine Pfahlert

Hi Jeanine,

It is the latter for both. Think Hogan's Heroes!

Regards,

Peter
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While the Minister's response did not completely resolve my inner turmoil, it did make me privy to more information. When my friends would criticize the club's dress code, albeit passively, or wonder about Hanzel und Gretyl, I would encourage them and share the information I had. In this way, I encouraged reflection while I learned that organizing, educating, and leading a crowd might not always be the ideal response. Ironically, the cultural propensity toward fascism, real or imagined, in this society had been the major motivator behind young people like me concluding they had a responsibility to organize, educate, and lead. The Green Anarchy critique, notably, lacks an understanding of this and its historicity as documented in *A New World in Our Hearts* (San Filippo 2003). These issues, quite openly, together convey a complex social conundrum.

To purposively digress, consider Shoemaker's criticism of Henry Rollins. Were they fair and entirely accurate or simply convenient? To gather clues, I asked Henry Rollins about it after he sent me the unpublished lyrics to "Ten Times" as a favor. This is what I wrote to him, perhaps pandering to the [punk] patriarchy but hey I'm hot for Henry (J. Pfahlert, personal

communication, January 27, 2006). His response follows (H. Rollins, personal communication, January 28, 2006):

Hello, Henry...yes you did a favor and I appreciate it greatly. I am a fan. I am so excited that it is you.

It is too bad you don't have time for anything else. Anyway, I just want to make sure I cite them within my professional citation regulations and be legal about it; so as not to fuck you over.

BTW, I am JEANINE Pfahlert!

The essay talks about you, you should read it. I would even copy it for you and send it hardcopy or scan it and send it PDF. You say you don't have time, but if I were you (which I'm not) I'd want to know what people are saying about me. It's not the usual media mumbo jumbo, but implicates itself in social theory. You need to read it and intervene if possible. If I remember correctly, it equates you with patriarchy and fascism. I'm just trying to inform you since you don't know about it.

I would love to talk to you about the essay that would be cool. I am writing about it in my dissertation. I hope I can get it published and it would be much more respectful to you than that essay.

Love,

Jeanine

Jeanine. I've been equated with patriarchy and fascism? Good grief. I've finally made it. I don't care what anyone thinks of me really. Anyway, good luck with the thing you're writing. I hope it all works out. Henry

The fascism and patriarchy seems to have caught him off guard. Also, he does not seem to think the essay is of much consequence. These are just two examples of how not everyone perceives in a similar fashion. Social location plays a role in perception. In contrast to Shoemaker's read on Henry, he furthermore explained via e-mail correspondence that his song

“Ten Times” is directed toward “lightweights basically” (H. Rollins, personal communication, February 21, 2006). Henry named “coward, those who stereotype, dicriminte, etc.” (sic) when I asked him what he meant by lightweights (H. Rollins, personal communication, February 21, 2006). So it turns out that Henry is not a fascist after all. He even likes Zack de la Rocha of Rage Against the Machine, anti-fascist par excellence, and referred to him as “one of the good guys” (H. Rollins, personal communication, February 22, 2006). And while some might conclude he is a horrible speller, I will attribute the spelling errors to late night typing.

In the spirit of Henry’s response, the failure of the Green Anarchy critique to offer criticism while also acknowledging the humanity of what they critiqued, and thus offer a too glib judgment ultimately leaves the critique weaker than it could ideally be. For this reason, I made the decision to include self-critical components in this epilogue. It is one thing, specifically, to recognize structural domination and another thing to completely separate yourself from it in all situations unequivocally and without any residual traces. This critical self-account, furthermore, might help explain my ability to speak, if I indeed have.

As for social change, regardless of blame, for revolution despite residual privilege clinging to us like blood thirsty leeches, even if I am the first shot...call it *revolutionary suicide* in homage to Huey P. Newton. Recall, in *Revolutionary Suicide: The Way of Liberation* our brother told us (Newton, 1995 p.5):

Revolutionary suicide does not mean that I and my comrades have a death wish; it means just the opposite. We have such a strong desire to live with hope and human dignity that existence without them is impossible. When reactionary forces crush us, we must move against these forces, even at the risk of death. We will have to be driven out with a stick.

But what can *I* say? My subjectivity is so feeble. I could be a whore waiting to happen. So, let Rollins say it once again:

it's all on you and what you've got
 you can play it cool or make it hot
 I pay the price and take my shot
 Stay up for it
 I'm up for it
 ("I'm up for it")

Let me continue with the project of refusing whoredom and judge. Mills would approve.

In a letter to his friend Tovarich, dated fall 1959, Mills lamented the position of the Western intellectual as he wrote: "(...) many intellectuals have ceased to judge, have withdrawn their demands (...) (Mills & Mills, 2000, p. 277)." So, I must stand up in judgment and speak clearly. We must "pay the price" of becoming targets, otherwise social circumstances will not change. We will all be like Gavroche at the barricade and take the bullet. The difference between Javert's death, upon throwing himself into the river to drown, and Gavroche's death at the bullet of Napoleonic soldier perhaps more concisely exemplifies the difference between "reactionary suicide" and revolutionary suicide as Huey P. Newton taught us.

What? Yes...you guessed it. I am writing from that damned bird cage Marilyn Frye refers to. But does it matter that I am using one of the wires as playground equipment? Hanging on folded legs from a wire, I issue the jury's judgment: We find society guilty of *fascism* in the first degree and murder [of Gavroche] in the second. The Durkheimian handling of Javert's death, however, is beyond this study's scope.



Guide Post #10: End of Trip, This is where we get off.

A thumb goes up, a car goes by
 It's nearly 1 a.m. and here am I
 Hitchin' a ride, hitchin' a ride
 Gotta get me home by the morning light
 (Vanity Fare, "Hitchin' A Ride")

Conclusion: Dirty Crazy-quilted Survivor-art Humbles the Auto-ethnographer

My dear reader, I have given you something very special to hold on to. It is this dirtied, sullied crazy-quilt I made from scraps and stitched together with delicate movements. My dirty secrets cling to it. Small red blood stains dot its fibers bearing witness to painful needle pricks. I have given blood, what more could you want?

The stains humble me, as do the clumsy stitches. This crazy-quilt will never pass for a Commercial Comforter, the in-seamed whore of blankets. No, we are not looking for payment. This crazy-quilt gives freely.

Just like bell hooks explains in *Happy to Be Nappy* we need not mimic the oppressor's aesthetic. Do not deny me, accept me. In this acceptance, I stipulate my conclusion. Here it is: Auto-ethnography, in all its seeming failure to measure up to normative academic and aesthetic standards, needs only to measure up to its own standards.

In the spirit of the standards for "method" that C. Wright Mills set forth, I have truly adhered to his *crafting* notion. My work produced this crazy-quilt under the auspices of my Literary Wheel. Those desiring to incorporate this approach into their inquiries and writings may construct their *own* Literary Wheel.

Should you require a minimally substandard explanation, I shall entertain you. To begin with, C. Wright Mills never enabled a "sophisticated" sociological understanding of social phenomenon. He further rejected methodology in favor for what he called "intellectual craft" (Mills, 1959, p. 108). Crafting entails capturing "what you experience" and sorting it out (Mills, 1959, p. 196). Gitlin explains: "Methodology was rigor mortis, dead rigor, rigor fossilized into esoterica of statistical practice that eclipsed the real stakes of research" (Gitlin, 2006, p. 33).

Likewise, he advocated for the “fusion of personal and intellectual life” (Mills, 1959, p. 210). Mills also advised in favor of playfulness in scholarship (Mills, 1959, p. 212). This playfulness can take the form of: “continual shuttle between macroscopic conceptions and detailed expositions” (Mills, 1959, p. 126). We need, then, to weave since a *shuttle* holds the weft. But, in the absence of a loom, crazy-quilting will suffice and allow for more creative freedom than weaving.

Freedom, the word leads me to what C. Wright Mills called The Promise. Mills claimed that social science ought to promise freedom, along with reason (Mills, 1959, p. 173). Mills testified that “reason” would “formulate choices” and “enlarge the scope of human decisions in the making of history” (Mills, 1959, p. 174).

To return to the theme of transport, Mills was correct when he took that Left turn. We, academics, should continue due east. Instead, the Positivists confused us and convinced us to make a Right turn and continue straight, head-on. Wrong. We need to go to the Left.

The Sociological Imagination, further, in its free reason has a purpose. Mills explained that the sociological imagination should enable people to turn their personal troubles into social issues (Mills, 1959, p. 187). Personal troubles, which are shared by others, and not “capable of solution by any one individual but only by modifications of the structure of groups in which he lives and sometimes the structure of the entire society” (Mills, 1959, p. 187). Basically Mills was a revolutionary and a goddamned anarchist.

But, I digress. I, however, have one more confession to make. An adversary of auto-ethnographers inspired my “crazy-quilt” metaphor. Donald C. Shields, specifically, refers to auto-ethnography as a “crazy-quilt” of “challenges to social-scientific communication” in addition to ethnography, rhetorical studies, critical theory, Marxism, introspection and memory

(Shields, 2000, p. 407). Worst of all, according to Shields, the premise of auto-ethnography is “resistance, corrosion, and change of existing social order” (Shields, 2000, p. 417). Well, it sounds like fun and fitting to me. If C. Wright Mills were alive, he would join us.

Shields continues with his pro-establishment diatribe, his rant if you will, against auto-ethnography as all it could or might be. He describes auto-ethnography as “anti-establishment,” “activist,” and “even anarchist” (Shields, 2000, p. 406). He characterizes auto-ethnography as promoting (Shields, 2000, p. 406):

- experience, not objectivity
- self, not other
- resistance, not contribution
- retrospective-accounts, not data
- belief in dominance

I would revise and reaffirm this index, as follows:

- experience, not reification
- voice, not speaking for
- resistance, not collusion
- retrospective-accounts, not rigid data
- recognition of dominance

In the name of humble integrity, I embrace auto-ethnography in the state I find it in and admit that I am furthering the auto-ethnographic agenda. My experience as a victim brought me to this. I took being a victim and transformed it into art. This, according to Arthur P. Bochner is auto-ethnography. He explains that rather than a being a sort of “victim-art,” that auto-

ethnography can be a “source of empowerment and a form of resistance to counter the domination of canonical discourse” (Bochner, 2000, p. 270). Call it “survivor-art.”

But an important nuance is at stake. Auto-ethnography is not victim art, but it does humble and humanize. Lesa Lockford, for instance, writes about auto-ethnographic story telling as follows (Lockford, 2001, p. 119):

They are stories that others, perhaps made squeamish by the vulnerability these stories both describe and evoke, would sweep under the carpet in fear that they soil the floors of academe, a place that apparently some conceive is capable of clinical sterility.

Lockford continues to explain that describing our pain makes us most humble and humane (Lockford, 2001, p. 119). In straightforward terms, auto-ethnography epitomizes humanistic undertakings.

In the utmost straightforward terms, then, my auto-ethnography *The Sociological Hitch*, is a simple, rather than sophisticated, humanistic undertaking. The humbling process of describing my most vulnerable moments and thoughts prevents me from claiming more. I will not concede the notion that *The Sociological Hitch* nonetheless has academic import.

Some might wonder why I did not “clean up” *The Sociological Hitch* more, so that it can conform to conventional academic standards. But, I am too conscious to assume that convention’s wash rag will not further contaminate my work. And so, I humbly turn to another’s words. “(...)mother’s dishcloth restored hygiene, order of a sort, and regulated the surface chaos- inside we were learning god-knows what lessons about humanity and were storing them up for our own later collapses” (Linstead, 1998, p. 248).

In the end, you have gained something genuine and vital through reading

my auto-ethnography; that being entrée for progressive social growth. The *Sociological Hitch* gives access to otherwise over-regulated and often censored, ignored, or denied experiences while testifying to the necessity of revisiting the work of C. Wright Mills when implementing experiential epistemology; feminist, auto-ethnographic, and so on. I challenge the reader to develop a Sociological Imagination of their own and urge the researcher to implement it.

Without the Sociological Imagination we miss the opportunity to convert personal problems into opportunities for positive social change. And so I ask the activist to embrace and celebrate the Sociological Imagination. Directly stipulated, if you have a “personal” problem you need to resist the obstruction and become an activist. Go Left.

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Appendix

Fascism is the Word:

Exploring the Meaning, History, and Consequences of a Movement and its Ideology

“I am gratefully guilty as charged.”

(Henry Rollins, “One Shot”, *The Only Way We Can Know For Sure*)

The American Heritage[®] Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition. 2000.

<http://www.bartleby.com/61/>

fascism

SYLLABICATION: fas-cism

PRONUNCIATION:  *fəˈsɪzəm*

NOUN: **1.** often **Fascism** **a.** A system of government marked by centralization of authority under a dictator, stringent socioeconomic controls, suppression of the opposition through terror and censorship, and typically a policy of belligerent nationalism and racism. **b.** A political philosophy or movement based on or advocating such a system of government. **2.** Oppressive, dictatorial control.

ETYMOLOGY: Italian *fascismo*, from *fascio*, group, from Late Latin *fascium*, from Latin *fascis*, bundle.

OTHER FORMS: **fas-cis tic** (fəˈsɪs tɪk) —ADJECTIVE

WORD HISTORY: It is fitting that the name of an authoritarian political movement like Fascism, founded in 1919 by Benito Mussolini, should come from the name of a symbol of authority. The Italian name of the movement, *fascismo*, is derived from *fascio*, “bundle, (political) group,” but also refers to the movement's emblem, the fasces, a bundle of rods bound around a projecting axe-head that was carried before an ancient Roman magistrate by an attendant as a symbol of authority and power. The name of Mussolini's group of revolutionaries was soon used for similar nationalistic movements in other countries that sought to gain power through violence and ruthlessness, such as National Socialism.

The concept of *fascism* plays a vital role in scholarship related to nation-building. Ann Laura Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, for example, handles the concept. The book, which gives detailed accounts of the emotional economy at work in the Dutch colonial project in Indonesia, makes various pointed references to fascism and its corollaries; those being racial nationalism and such. One such instance occurs with the mention of the Fatherland Club. According to Stoler, this association had fascist links (Stoler, 2002, p. 34).

Besides relatively brief mentions of a particular fascistic organization, Stoler delves further into the relevance of fascism to the colonial project beyond the obvious white use of fascist racism as a means to social domination. Stoler additionally considers the fascist interests of the Indo-European movement in colonial Indonesia. She writes (Stoler, 2002, p. 108):

For the Indo-European movement, their *vaderland* was an Indisch one in dependent of Holland. For the Indies fascists, who defined their task as the self-purification of the nation (*zelfzuivering de natie*), their notion of the fatherland conjured "a tropical Netherlands" that would unite the Netherlands and Indies into a single state.

While fascist ideology allows hybrid fascism, and thus an Indo-European fascism, fascist social structures most often do not allow for the same flexibility. Stoler, after all, continues to explain: "Neither of these visions concurred with the native nationalists who were to oppose both of them" (Stoler, 2002, p. 108).

Stoler does not stand alone in her implication of fascistic values in the national and colonial projects. Namely, Laura Briggs in *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism* in Puerto Rico likewise implicates all that is fascistic in the national project. This time, however, Briggs works with the United States and Puerto Rico rather than Holland and Indonesia-- respectively. Like the example of colonial Indonesia, the nation-building concerns in Puerto Rico continuously expressed themselves as concerns pertaining to reproduction of race

and thus became transfixed on issues of sex, prostitution, and venereal disease. Just as in the Indonesian example, the colonists focused on the sexual behavior of those beneath them in the social hierarchy. Briggs writes: "... the sexual practices of working-class people had become a scandal, their reproductive and sexual practices the subject of intense official scrutiny" (Briggs, 2002, p. 49).

Fascism, thus, facilitates obsession with social class and the maintenance of social hierarchy. One path to maintain social hierarchy, as Stoler and Briggs demonstrate, involves the demarcation of racial distinctions. For this reason, demarcating racial difference repeatedly enters into fascist undertakings. While colonial histories provide excellent narratives of efforts to demarcate racial difference, these narratives appear in the mainland as well.

Wendy Kline, specifically, describes the on-set of the eugenic movement in mainland United States, in all its fascist implications, in *Building A Better Race*. In it she highlights three major phases in the eugenics movement, those being: 1) institutionalization or "segregation," 2) sterilization, and 3) positive eugenics. As Kline describes, the eugenics movement focused on class from its origins. She, about the first stage of the eugenics movement, writes: "During the Progressive Era, eugenicists and other moral reformers advocated the incarceration of sexually promiscuous working-class women" (Kline 2001, p. 32-33). Thus, as the eugenics movement, as it began in mainland United States, shows us; a major fascist tenet, that being valorization of social hierarchy, typically will manifest itself in the form of racial or class-based domination or some combination therein.

Fascist History & Features

But what is fascism and where did it come from? According to the American Heritage Dictionary the word “fascism”, as we know it currently, comes from Italy. Stopping here, however, would leave us in a modernist void. So, we shall consider other interpretations of the word.

Fascism, according to L. T. Sargent, has a particular theoretical base containing seven major components, those being (Sargent, 1975, p. 116):

- Irrationalism
- Social Darwinism
- Nationalism
- The state
- The principle of leadership
- Racism
- The corporate economy

According to *The Blackwell Dictionary of Social Thought*, fascism is essentially (Outhwaite & Bottomore, 1993, p. 223):

...the conviction that a process of national rebirth (palingenesis) has become essential to bring to an end a protracted period of social and cultural decadence, and expressing itself ideologically in a revolutionary form of integral nationalism (ultra-nationalism).

And, according to the *Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies*, fascism is “a political movement which aspires to a particular form of authoritarian class rule within a capitalist society” (Cashmore, 2004, p. 155). Fascism, based on the three given definitions, therefore involves extreme nationalism, rigid authority, and economic domination. Fascism can morph as an ideology, socio-political movement, government, or defuse social order.

Just as the word *fascism* has meaning, it also has history. Of course, the word conjures up images of the Second World War and Adolf Hitler as the arch-fascist. But, according to *The Blackwell Dictionary of Social Thought*, fascism surfaced as a literary influence prior to the start of the First World War (Outhwaite & Bottomore, 1993, p. 223). The *Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies*, however, places the emergence of fascism after the First World War. Yet, in-line with *Blackwell*, the *Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies* admits that fascism's "ideology has much deeper roots in European political action and political thought" (Cashmore, 2004, p. 155).

Recall that the *Encyclopedia* defines fascism as a social movement while *Blackwell* counted the fascist literary genre as fascism per se. Identifying the origin of fascism, thus, becomes tangled in its identification. Regardless, we can say that fascism emerges from Europe, and more precisely from European ideas. This begins to explain the development of "white" racism. At any rate, according to the aforementioned sources, fascism is a Modern European invention and the history of fascism is a history of Modern Europe.

But, to avoid the dread modernist trap once again, reconsider *Building A Better Race* and the United States as the official generator of the eugenics movement. Because eugenics repeatedly appears in nationalist projects, such as the colonial projects, and due to the extreme nationalism embedded in fascism; eugenics bares a severe implication in fascism. In other words, in a vernacular sense, eugenics *is* fascist. To escape more explicitly from the modernist trap, rather than concluding that fascism simply comes from Modern Europe, we ought to consider fascism as a transnational entity.

The Word's Conflicts, Contradictions, and Divergences

As I alluded to previously, fascism has flexibility in ideological form but not in structural form. This is its base contradiction. To explicate this, I am referencing the diversity amongst fascist ideologues. Take, as examples, Miguel Serrano and Savitri Devi. Serrano was a Chilean man, and Devi was a French-born woman of mixed Anglo-Greek heritage. Both supported Hitler. Devi, notably, propagated the “Hindu-Aryan myth” (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002). Serrano, likewise, found a way for notions of Aryan superiority to embrace his own contrary ethnic influence. This flexibility in ideology, notably, exploits the irrationalism that fascism touts. So, while the irrationality of fascism allows for ideological manipulation, the quintessential fascist belief in one master race, i.e. Aryan, does not allow for structural manipulation. Again, this is fascism’s base contradiction.

Beyond fascism’s base contradiction, lay fascism’s divergences. Such divergences often inspire the use of other terms. These additional terms can include authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and so forth. Martin Durham discusses fascism in *Women and Fascism*, by introduces other additional terms, as follows (Durham, 1998, p. 2-3):

In some ways, the term fascism may not capture developments in the post-war period and the terms that extreme right activists themselves prefer – nationalist or racial nationalists- might be more useful. But, for better or worse, they have not achieved popular or academic currency. I have chosen not to follow the direction of some recent studies and adopt such categories as radical right or new right, more appropriately applied, I would suggest, to sections of the right with which the extreme right is in competition. Instead we are left with the other term which I will use in tandem with nationalist- extreme right, racist and fascist.

In other words, fascism diverges. But, it diverges in a fascistic manner.

Lines of Thought, Critical Debates

Because of the significant reaction against fascism, *anti-fascism* emerged as its own political affiliation. So, ironically, fascism enabled its antithesis known as anti-fascism. Interestingly, Jean Barrot calls antifascism “the worst product of fascism” (Barrot, 1982, p. 8). Yet, he admits that reform efforts require anti-fascism; whether the reform efforts represent working-class or capitalist interests (Barrot, 1982, p. 12). He summarizes his main contention with this statement and final comments suggesting anti-fascism, with its tendency toward totalitarianism through a desire for a democratic State, will inevitably strengthen the State (Barrot, 1982, p. 12):

Fascism and antifascism have the same origin and the same program, but the former claimed to go beyond Capital and classes, while the latter tries to attain the “true” bourgeois democracy which is endlessly perfectible through the addition of stronger and stronger doses of democracy.

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