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Writing Assignment #2 - Memoir
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New Baby, Old Adage

Giving birth to my baby girl was the most joyful event of my thirty year old life. After listening to my biological clock bong away for three long years, I knew I was absolutely ready to make the ultimate “leap of faith” and not only bring another being into the cold cruel world, but bring her into that world well prepared to reach her potential. The planning was big. This was uncharted territory for my family. My baby would be the first grandchild on both my side and my husband’s side. He and I pored over tomes (sent by future grandparents) by Brazelton, Leach, and the like, and attended silly parent-to-be classes, completely oblivious to what was actually going to happen to our lives. None of our friends had children yet. We had no clue, and didn’t even know we were clueless, so lost in the magic and miracle of what the future held. My friends were so excited for me, and giddy themselves over the preparations. The dozens of adorable smocked and ruffled pastel frocks, be-ribboned bonnets and booties, and foreign contraptions piling up from the baby showers, where the new mother-to-be (me!) is treated like queen for a day, had an inevitable irresistibility about them. And for the big event itself; helping me with Lamaze breathing exercises, and choosing nursery colors, furniture, and accessories. It felt as if they were on the journey with me, so eager to feel a kick or make me tea after work. ”I hope I’m not too busy or tired to hang out with you guys after she’s born” I’d frequently lament, still adorned in my mother-to-be business attire, though not seriously,

(or so I thought!) at the time.

I had never before felt so isolated and alone as I did in the weeks and months after my daughter was born. After the joyous novelty wore off, and my husband returned to work, I was left at the helm of my new full time venture, by myself, and at the beck and call of a tiny helpless being for the entire day. No one came to visit on their lunch hour or after work. No one came over with their new baby to chat and commiserate. No one called to go out for a drink or movie. All of my friends were still childless. My situation was the one that had changed, not theirs. How I missed adult conversation! When I finally called my best friend Suzanne, she told me she assumed I was too busy or tired to go out. Of course, she was right. I didn't have time to take a shower most days, let alone get myself out of pajamas. I was shocked at my lack of foresight. I used to be an organized, well put together professional. I had somehow blindly leapt from the corporate boardroom right into the bottle washer. Only in hindsight did I realize how prophetic my prior lamentations to my friends actually were.

Robert K. Merton asserts in his essay "The Self Fulfilling Prophecy" "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences". Although I wasn't consciously defining a future situation, somewhere in my mind I knew my life wouldn't be the same. When I blurted out my suspicions about time and exhaustion, I was signaling to my friends part of what I believed my new reality would entail. They in turn, taking clues from my stated suspicions, were forming their own beliefs about my future new life. As

Merton states “they experience these beliefs, not as prejudices, not as prejudgments, but as irresistible products of their own observation.” I see now that this is what happened.

Another dynamic outlined in Merton’s essay also appears to have been involved in my predicament. I clearly saw part of my experience in his analysis of in-groups and out-groups. In part, because I had embarked on an adventure none of my friends were really on in their own lives, my experiences as a new mother were foreign to them. As such, they were unable to console me or commiserate with me without common ground or a shared understanding of my new quandary. Inherently, I knew I was in the out-group as far as my friends were concerned, and that there was no going back to the old in-group status for me, at least until their lives changed in the same way mine had. Emotionally, I was in mourning over that loss, as well as overwhelmed with my new responsibilities. I just did not know that at the time. Apparently, the old adage “hindsight is twenty – twenty” is an old adage for good reason.